The Yellow Peril Discourse in

Anglophone and Sinophone Literatures and Cultures,

1895 to the Present:

Mutations, Reactions, and Reinventions

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Abstract

Focusing on appropriations of the racist Yellow Peril discourse in a range of Anglophone and Sinophone contexts from 1895 to the present, this thesis advocates a transnational and situated approach to the study of narratives of racialization. It seeks to challenge the discursive ossification of "Yellow Peril" in the existing English-language scholarship dominated by Asian American Studies. The shifting presences and absences of the "Yellow Peril" in a diverse range of cultural materials, including novels, memoirs, poems, song lyrics, and music videos, are examined with comparative perspectives. The three main sections of this thesis (Section I to III) investigate three different geo-cultural contexts. Section I looks at how the "Yellow Peril" trope found both its prototypical and archetypal fictional characters in fin de siècle England and how it turned into culturalist undercurrents in Ezra Pound's development of literary modernism in the early 20th century. Section II examines Chinese South African life writing about being "yellow" under apartheid, and analyzes the poetic images of China and Chineseness constructed by the "colored" South African anti-apartheid activist Dennis Brutus to counter the dominant "Yellow Peril"/"Red Peril" discourses in the country during the global Cold War. Section III examines the emergence and re-popularization of racializing discourses related to the color yellow in post-Mao China, or the Sinophone world inclusively conceived. Through detailed analyses of dissident writer Wang Lixiong's novel *Yellow Peril* (1988), the anti-locust discourse in Hong Kong, and the racial nationalism exhibited in selected patriotic songs produced by Hong Kong and Taiwanese celebrities, it proposes the concept of "Sinophone trouble" to understand the diverse and often paradoxical ways in which different Sinophone actors have appropriated or reacted to the Yellow Peril discourse. With these interconnected case studies, this thesis emphasizes the comparative nature of racialization and multiplies the ways in which the "Yellow Peril" can be imagined and engaged with.

Notes on the inclusion and Romanization of Chinese names and words:

This thesis uses the *pinyin* system for the Romanization of Chinese names and words. In cases where the name was transliterated into English with a different system but has since become conventional in academic and popular writings, such as *Sun Yat-sen* and *Chiang Kai-shek*, the conventional form is consistently used. In quotations of historical documents where Chinese names appear in a non-*pinyin* form, I add the pinyin transliterations in brackets after them for the sake of clarity. When citing Hong Kong, Taiwanese, and other Sinophone authors and scholars, I use the names as they appear in their English-language publications and the *pinyin* system if they do not have any English-language publications. In citations where the original Chinese and Japanese names or phrases are provided in parentheses to help readers with locating the mentioned sources, traditional Chinese characters (or *kanji*) are used consistently if not noted otherwise.

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Section III

Dissidents, Locusts and Patriotic Songs:

Constructing Yellowness in the Post-Mao Sinophone World

Abbreviations

AALATTFIT	Asian-African-Latin American Table Tennis Friendship Invitational Tournament
ANC	African National Congress
AWB	Afrikaner Resistance Movement
BBEEA	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (South Africa)
CASA	Chinese Association of South Africa
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CEPA	Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement
COVID	Corona Virus Disease
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party (Taiwan, Republic of China)
EEA	Employment Equity Act (South Africa)
HKGF	Hong Kong Golden Forum
KMT	*Kuomintang*, Chinese Nationalist Party
MPLA	People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola
NPCSC	Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (China)
OFS	Orange Free State
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROC	Republic of China
SABC	South African Born Chinese
SACP	South African Communist Party
SANROC	South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee
SAOCGA	South African Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association
SAR	Special Administrative Region (Hong Kong, China)
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SASA	South African Sports Association
SSC	State Security Council (South Africa)
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organization
VOC	Dutch United East India Company
YCCC	Yu Chi Chan Club
ZAR	South African Republic

Introduction

She is from Asia, and of the yellow race. Her skin is light yellow, her hair black and straight, and her face flat. She has a moderate amount of body hair.
She is from Europe, and of the white race. The colors of her skin, eyes, and hair are all very light. She is born with wavy hair. She has a high nose bridge, thin lips, and a relatively large amount of body hair.
She is from Africa, and of the black race. Her skin color is dark, her hair curly, her lips relatively thick. She has little body hair.

—— Chinese Middle School Geography Textbook (Figure 0.1)[1]

Growing up in a small town in Zhejiang, China in the early 2000s, I was required to memorize the above knowledge points about the racial division of the human species in my science class. As part of China's nine-year compulsory education, every teenager was required to study these knowledge points as facts and repeat them in standard tests. I still remember that the teacher told us that "China is in Asia, and all of us are of the yellow race". He said it with a natural aura of authority and a tinge of pride. None of the students asked any further questions and we all took the existence of different human races as something natural and straightforward as stated in the textbook. After all, most of us had not seen any foreigner in our town before and did not care to watch the news channel for international politics. The occasional Hollywood films we saw on TV reinforced this impression that people outside China were either white or black.

However, these knowledge points about the tripartite division of race soon became inadequate when I started college in the Ningbo campus of the University of Nottingham, where we had many international students from all over the world. Although we would obey the basic social etiquette by

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[1] The Pedagogical Institute of People's Education Press 人民教育出版社課程教材研究所, *Dili: Qinianji Shangce* 地理：七年級上冊 [Geography: Seventh Grade Part One] (Beijing: People's Education Press, 2011), 75. My translation. Ideally, I should cite the edition published by Zhejiang Education Press I used in the early 2000s here rather than this current edition (see Figure 0.1 below). However, it is very difficult to get hold of old Chinese textbooks that have been out of use after many rounds of educational reform. Nevertheless, these lines are the same as the ones I recited in my middle school. Considering the sensitivity surrounding its racializing usage (at least in the English language), in this Introduction wherever "yellow" is mentioned in the racial sense, I put it in quotation marks.

referring to everyone's national identification, some of us could not help but start wondering where our Indian, Qatari, Spanish and Panamanian friends fit in the racial division. None of my Chinese friends could tell which region these international students hailed from simply by observing those physical traits mentioned in the textbook, let alone identifying their race. Moreover, I was baffled when one of my Japanese classmates told me that he never thought himself as belonging to "the yellow race" and that the categorization was considered as demeaning by many Japanese people.

Indeed, real human contact and international exposure in my personal encounters not only proved the inadequacy and reductionism of the tripartite racial division I memorized from the textbook but also called into question the very ideological foundation of this division. During my one-year student exchange program at the University of Edinburgh in 2012, I was compelled to reflect more on the idea of "the yellow race" itself. When I mentioned in a class on intercultural communication that Chinese people were "yellow", my white British classmates were slightly taken aback and suggested that such a comment could be racist and offensive. "How can I be racist to myself?" I was confused and reached out to an Asian American classmate for clarification, but he confirmed that designating Asians by the color "yellow" was not a good idea and urged me to avoid saying such things in public. However, I did not wholeheartedly accept their suggestions on the matter, and the immediate mental reaction I had toward my Asian American classmate was "That is because you only speak English! If you can speak Chinese, you will know that it is totally fine to say that Chinese are yellow!" I was rather irritated by this ironic episode of race discussion in a class about intercultural communication because I felt misunderstood and misjudged. It was also at that moment that I developed a strong desire to find out why such disparity in the sociopolitical interpretations of "yellow" exists in English and Chinese. Ten years have passed, and the more I read about "yellow" as a racial color and its associated histories in the Anglophone world, the more understanding I have become toward my classmates' misunderstanding of me back then, or rather, toward the general sociopolitical sensitivity around the word in the West. It is not difficult to notice that whenever the word is used in English to refer to race

in public speeches, the speaker is usually condemning specific negative phenomena in interracial relations, such as "Yellow Peril" (white supremacists' racial animosity toward people of East and Southeast Asian descent), "Yellowface" (white actors playing Asian roles in films and TV dramas), and "Yellow Fever" (heterosexual white men's fetishized desire for East and Southeast Asian women).[2]

However, these personal experiences do not form a linear narrative of assimilationist growth. It is not my intention to dismiss the sociopolitical propriety of identifying with "the yellow race" in China as a kind of collective ignorance and promote the liberal multiculturalism of the West for its exclusive relegation of racial yellowness to the realms of the negative and the unspeakable. Rather, these experiences are connected episodes of a personal journey that has been both *transnational and situated*. They have made me realize that not only are race concepts far from grounded in established scientific facts, but their everyday discursive deployments are also *anything but universalist*. There is no single story of racialization, and the cultural meanings and sociopolitical implications of specific racialized terms keep shifting as one moves from one context to another. The approach of transnational and situated research sits at the core of this thesis, in which I seek to come to terms with the experiential and discursive encounters I have had with the idea of "the yellow race" through critical readings of cultural materials from a diverse range of sociohistorical contexts.

This Introduction establishes the conceptual and interdisciplinary foundations for the case studies that follow. In the next two segments, I discuss the racialization of "yellow" in relation to other colors and explain how the category of "Yellow Mongolians" came about in 19th century Europe. They are followed by a segment on the disciplinary divisions against which this thesis has been situated and organized. A Chapter Outline explaining the overall structure of the thesis and the comparative arrangements among different Sections can be found toward the end of this Introduction.

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[2] I am aware that the geo-cultural concept of "Asian" also has a long history of Western discursive constructions behind it and that its referentiality is far from stable (for example, different from the North American context, the label "Asian" is usually a shorthand for "South Asian" in the UK and South Africa), but as my focus is on those categorized as "yellow", "Asian" as employed in this thesis refers to people of East and Southeast Asian descent if not noted otherwise. Terms like "the West", "Western" and "non-Western" are used throughout this thesis for similar reasons of discursive expediency.

"Yellow" in Comparison

While "transnational and situated" may be applied to describe any racialized terms or identity labels, there is still something specific to "yellow" that sets its racializing usage apart from other colors, which warrants deeper comparative reflections.

In *Cry Freedom*, the 1987 biographical film about the South African anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko, there is a scene where Biko is questioned in court by a white judge regarding his pivotal role in the Black Consciousness Movement. The judge asks him "Why do you people call yourselves black? You look more brown than black", to which Biko replies, "Why do you call yourselves white? You look more pink than white."[3] Indeed, dividing the human species into different racial categories by skin color is perhaps the least empirical method. It tends to give rise to phenotypical racism rather than respect for physical differences among individuals. Upon closer examination, the Chinese textbook does not use "white" and "black" to describe skin color. While the existence of "the white race" and "the black race" is presented as a matter of fact, the skin color of the former is said to be "light (淺)" and that of the latter "dark (黝黑, literally 'dark and black')". Similarly, "white" and "black" now function more as tools of cultural recognition and political mobilization than phenotypical categories of empirical research in the West. Since the contemporary model of Western liberal multiculturalism is built on the acknowledgement of the white supremacist histories of settler colonial (e.g., Canada, Australia, the US etc.) and post-colonial societies (e.g., UK, France, etc.), it is easy to understand why anyone can use "white" as a racial color in their daily speech despite the academic consensus that all racial categories are socially constructed.[4] Since those constructed as "white" in the racist and

[3] Richard Attenborough, dr. *Cry Freedom* (London: Marble Arch Productions, 1987). A snippet containing the mentioned scene is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XaNcxKOD2_o (Accessed 12 June, 2021). The scene is based on what Biko himself recounted in an interview. See Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1978), 104.
[4] For a systemic philosophical analysis of white supremacy, its historical links with colonialism, and its global effects, see Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

imperialist foundations of these modern societies used to and, in many ways, continue to enjoy racial privileges conditioned by the overall sociopolitical structure, calling out this "whiteness" is generally regarded as an act of active self-reflection, when white people (but not the white supremacists) do so, and an act of anti-racist resistance, when non-white people, or "people of color", do so. As such, a certain racial binary of "white" versus "non-white" is retained at the epistemological level due to the continued governance of white supremacist structures in these societies, hence the rise of an entire discipline of Critical Whiteness Studies to highlight their negative effects.[5]

However, variations exist in this coalitional conjecture of non-white "people of color". While I could understand that "yellow" as a racial color in English is sensitive and potentially offensive due to the long history of racial animosity against people of East and Southeast Asian descent that has been channeled through this term (together with other racist slurs like "oriental", "chink", "gook" and so on), for a long time I wondered why "black" as a racial designation is permissible despite the even longer and much bloodier history of slavery, colonialism, and racism that underpins its initial construction. Indeed, "black (or Black with a capitalized B)" is generally used in affirmative ways in academia and mainstream liberal progressive discourses and thus not considered offensive in and of itself (that is, without other negative modifiers), and non-black people also tend to use it to refer to those of African descent in Western societies. Within African American Studies for example, the debate is usually not focused on how to abolish "black" as a racial color but whether to capitalize the term to emphasize African Americans' shared history and culture.[6] In contrast, the same cannot be said about other racial colors like "red" ("Native American" is always preferred), "brown" (religious and regional identifications like "Islamic", "Arab" or "South Asian" tend to be preferred), and "yellow" (specific

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[5] For a comprehensive summary of the development and mission of Critical Whiteness Studies, see Jennifer Beech, *White Out: A Guidebook for Teaching and Engaging with Critical Whiteness Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

[6] See Nancy Coleman, "Why We're Capitalizing Black," *The New York Times*, July 5, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/05/insider/capitalized-black.html (accessed June 12, 2021). Indeed, African American scholars tend to regard "Black" as an emancipatory replacement of "negro", in the same way that "Asian" is seen as the appropriate successor to "yellow" in the American context. But this does not explain why one racial color (black) does the replacing while the other (yellow) is to be replaced. Such comparisons indicate that there is nothing inherently offensive or emancipatory in the linguistic references to color themselves—these sociopolitical meanings have always been built from without.

national identifications like "Chinese", "Japanese" and "Korean" are used). Such observable preferences and the tacit sociopolitical rules behind them compel me to ask: What differentiates "yellow" from "white" and "black" that has made it problematic for people supposedly subsumed under this racial category to identify themselves as such in the multicultural West? What differentiates "yellow" from obsolete terms like "red" that has prevented it from being completely outdated and forgotten in contemporary Anglophone societies? What differentiates the usage of "yellow" as a racial (self-)identification in Sinophone contexts from its usage in Anglophone contexts that has produced the exact opposite sociopolitical force of propriety and even racial pride? These are pertinent questions underlying the research agendas of this thesis. In the Chinese textbook, the skin color of "the yellow race" is not just described with gradational adjectives like "light" and "dark" but assigned the specific nominal characterization of "light yellow (淡黃色)". This chromatic accuracy marks "the yellow race" as the only racial group whose name has a direct nominal link to the described skin color. Again, what is so special about "yellow" that warrants such presumptive conflation of race and skin color?
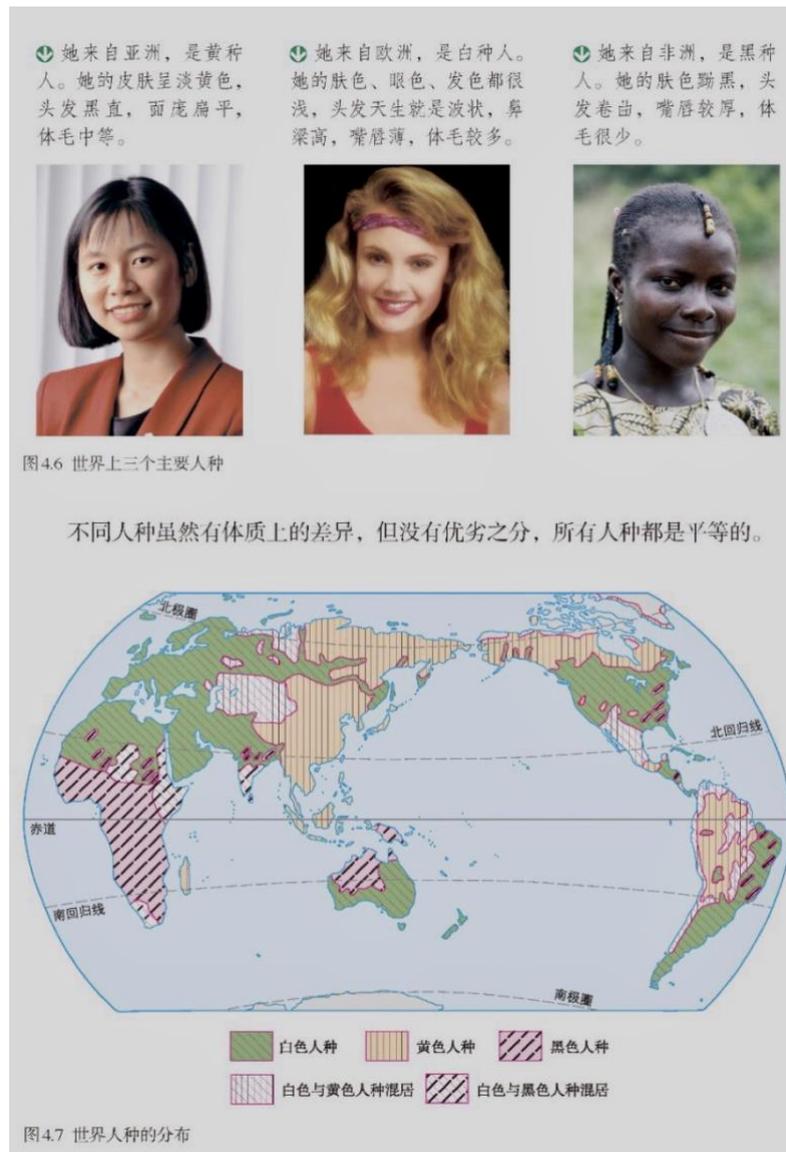
Figure 0.1 Introduction to race in the geography textbook published by People's Education Press (Beijing)

All these questions piqued my curiosity about whether the knowledge points I studied in the early 2000s have been revised in the current edition of textbooks used by Chinese teenagers. China's rapid economic rise in the last two decades and the internationalization of Chinese people's cultural life certainly require a more cosmopolitan and nuanced pedagogy concerning the conceptualization and categorization of race, or at least this is what intellectuals with global experiences would like to assume. However, it turns out that while the entire chapter on race has been removed from the latest edition of middle-school science textbooks published by Zhejiang Education Press (in use in the province from

2012), the tripartite racial division is still found in the geography textbook for Chinese children in seventh grade, which is published by People's Education Press (Beijing) and more widely used in China (not in Zhejiang which uses its own textbooks).

In this current edition by People's Education Press, three portrayal photos accompany the descriptions of racial characteristics. The nameless female figures in the photos serve as representatives of their respective racial groups, perpetuating a kind of anthropological male gaze, which the students unavoidably adopt in the process of acquiring this predesigned racial knowledge. A world map is also presented to show the geographical distribution of each racial group as well as their mixtures in different areas (Figure 0.1). The five categories of geographical race mapping include "the white race", "the yellow race", "the black race", "the white race mixing and cohabiting with the yellow race (白色與黃色人種混居)", and "the white race mixing and cohabiting with the black race (白色與黑色人種混居)". The word "*hunju* (混居)" emphasizes cohabitation more than mixing in the sense of interracial marriage and reproduction, and even if such mixing is implied, the tripartite division does not recognize such mixed populations as separate groups with their own racial identities. Moreover, the reflection of the tripartite racial division in this map seems to offer straightforward answers to the questions I had in college with regards to the racialization of the different international friends I encountered. For example, North Africa, North India, and the entire Arabian Peninsula are marked as white, while areas of "the white race mixing and cohabiting with the black race" cover the Horn of Africa, Central America, South India and parts of South Africa and Namibia. More interestingly, "the yellow race" extends far beyond its designated area of "Asia" in the descriptions of the tripartite racial division. Apart from East Asia and Southeast Asia, the Arctic regions of Siberia and North America, northwestern regions of South America, certain Native American enclaves in the US, and the island country of Madagascar are all marked as "yellow". The textbook does not provide any citational information about this racial map and the students are simply asked to memorize it so that they can answer which regions belong to which race in the short quizzes on the next page.

Notably, between the pictures there is a line stating that "Despite the physical differences of different races, no race is superior or inferior to another. All races are equal." Equal but different. That is the didactic message this line seeks to imbue in the students. However, without any explanation of where this tripartite division and the associated global racial mapping come from in the first place, the textbook fails to highlight the inherent ideologies of inequality embedded in such racial discourses throughout the histories of their invention, reception, and institutional application. Once we dig into these complex histories, it becomes clear that "equal but different" is nothing but self-contradictory: racial differences were invented in modern European history so that racial inequality could be institutionalized. Such historical contextualization is necessary in deconstructing the presumptive universalism of racial categories. Both their originations and continuations in European thinking are to be provincialized, and so should their appropriations in specific non-Western contexts like China. This is what I mean by "transnational and situated" understandings of race and racialization.

The Racial Interpellation of "Yellow"

Before I give a summative account of how the tripartite racial division came to be and how "yellow" has been racialized into its own category, I wish to highlight how the racial interpellation of "yellow" in the Chinese textbook functions in complex ways that set yellowness apart from established ideas about racialization in colonial and postcolonial contexts.

Identifying someone by forcibly involving them in existing social relations is an act of recognition that initiates the operation of an ideological system, or what Louis Althusser calls "ideological state apparatuses". According to Althusser,

> Ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals…or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects…by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace

everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!'[7] (original italics)

Like the police officer in Althusser's example, the Chinese geography teacher is a figure of authority. He or she acquires this authority not only through the institution of education that hires him or her but also from the very implementation of the pedagogical materials presented in the textbooks, which have been designed and distributed by the ideological state apparatuses beyond his or her control. By telling the Chinese students that they are "yellow" among other groups called "white" and "black", the teacher performs the process of racial interpellation via acts of authoritative naming rather than merely addressing. The students (as well as the teacher himself or herself) are thus "transformed" into "yellow" subjects sanctioned by the ideological state apparatuses, which are embodied by the national education system of China in this case. As Walter Benjamin points out, naming constitutes a system of "knowledge" in which the self can be "communicated through the recognition of others", which could be things or persons conceptually bound together by language.[8] The interpellation of yellowness is such a proto-sociopolitical move of naming. It simultaneously creates and reinforces racial knowledge through categorical thinking, from which social relations can be imagined. Some of these imaginations are immediately practiced, as in the sociality between the teacher and the students generated by their shared interpellation as "yellow", while some of these imaginations remain conjectural and await further realization or contestation, as in the students' possible interactions with real human beings categorized by the textbook as "white" or "black" later in their life.

Regarding racial interpellations, Frantz Fanon's account of being addressed as a "Negro" in *Black Skin, White Masks* is the most frequently cited example. As Fanon explains, the white man's utterance of this word replaces "the corporeal schema" with "a racial epidermal schema".[9] Namely, the Black person in this scenario is no longer a mere physical existence; "historicity" in the form of the "legends, stories, history" of the term "Negro" has been imposed upon him by the white man. In his own words:

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[7] Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, translated by Ben Brewster (London: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 174.

[8] Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings 1913-1926* (London: Harvard University Press, 1996), 70.

[9] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, translated by Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Books, 2008), 84.

> …it was no longer a question of being aware of my body in the third person but in a triple person…I was given not one but two, three places…I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave-ships…[10]

Fanon's reflections make it clear that addressing someone by race, or rather the act of racial naming, is not simply relational but places such constructed interracial relations into historical dynamics of colonialism. More importantly, as Rey Chow points out, "blackness" as "a racial epidermal schema" constitutes a "phenomenon of a compulsory self-recognition" in Fanon's scenario, because "Nonparticipation in the transindividual situation of racialization (or racializing interpellation) is in fact out of the question."[11] Once the racial interpellation of "Negro" is (per)formed, the Black person may pretend to not have heard it or choose to disengage with the white person who uttered it, but he or she cannot opt out of the overarching sociopolitical structure that positions him or her as such. Under this structure, the Black person's behaviors and achievements would always be conditioned or associated with his or her racialization. As Fanon says, "When people like me, they tell me it is in spite of my color. When they dislike me, they point out that it is not because of my color. Either way, I am locked into the infernal circle."[12] This situational inescapability of race also embodies W. E. B. du Bois's well-known theorization of "double-consciousness"— "this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity".[13]

As Martin Orkin and Alexa Alice Joubin state, "We are not aware of the category of 'race' until we are confronted with otherness, with alterity and with the gaze of others."[14] The racial interpellation of yellowness in the Chinese classroom, however, involves very different racial epidermal schemas

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[10] Ibid., 85.
[11] Rey Chow, *Not Like a Native Speaker: On Language as a Postcolonial Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 5-6.
[12] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 88.
[13] W. E. B. du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 8.
[14] Martin Orkin and Alexa Alice Joubin, *Race* (London: Routledge, 2019), 235.

and formations of double-consciousness compared to Fanon's scenario of black-white interaction. There is no white man calling people "yellow" in the Chinese classroom, and thus while the presence of "otherness" is registered through language, "the gaze of others" is technically absent in this categorical learning of race. Instead, both "white" and "black" are called upon in conceptual ways in order that the Chinese students themselves could identify as "yellow". The self-recognition involved in this scenario of racial interpellation is still compulsory, but the ideological state apparatuses operating it are not white but also "yellow", or configure the governing racial structure as such. The double-consciousness here is at least partially achieved by "looking at others through the eyes of one's self", and the students are not told that this way of looking has been appropriated from contexts beyond the specific confines of the contemporary Chinese state in the first place. However, as my personal journey demonstrates, this double-consciousness is not static but tends to get redoubled in encounters with those others who apparently operate with the same racialized language but with totally different historical baggage and sociopolitical sensitivities. In other words, the experiential and epistemological aspects of yellowness as a process of (self-)racialization determine that the formation of double-consciousness itself is not singular: what "yellow" implies in one context may be the opposite of what it implies in another, leading to instances of intercultural miscommunication that place the interpellated subject in complex matrices of racial ideologies. This transnational and situated politics of yellowness echoes Fanon's awareness about how his blackness shifted when he travelled from Martinique to Paris. While he could afford to conceptualize his blackness as "almost white" and be "satisfied with an intellectual understanding of these (racial) differences" in the former, he found that his blackness as a "Negro" in the latter denied him any "ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man".[15] Therefore, the "corporeal scheme" of "black" and "yellow" bodies may stay the same, but the "racial epidermal schemes" inevitably get pluralized and entangled when these bodies move from one racialized environment to another. The movement of the racialized body is transnational (or trans-local), but the

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[15] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 88.

racializing experience is always situated.

I say that the double-consciousness of yellowness in the Chinese classroom is only partially achieved by "looking at others through the eyes of one's self" because this "Self" possesses a history of racialization by the white Other that the "yellow" subject is not yet conscious about.[16] How exactly did "the yellow race" come to be is part of the *racial unconscious* that would only materialize when this double-consciousness is redoubled in encounters with the Other, which can be "white" or "Black" or other "yellows" who do not identify as such. Moreover, the transnational and situated nature of racialization does not mean that the origins of racial concepts cannot be located. Rather, locating them in the history of European colonialism and its global intellectual impact is necessary if such interactive constructions of yellowness are to be fully understood.

Becoming "Yellow" and Thereafter

How did the people living in the areas covered in yellow in the racial map presented by the Chinese textbook become "yellow"? Michael Keevak's seminal study, *Becoming Yellow* (2011), provides a detailed account of the development of European racial thinking about yellowness. His main arguments are summarized in the following paragraph:

> The idea that East Asian people were colored yellow cannot be traced back before the nineteenth century, and it does not come from any sort of eyewitness description or from Western readings of East Asian cultural symbols. We will see that it originates in a different realm, not in travel or missionary texts but in scientific discourse. For what occurred during the nineteenth century was that yellow had become a racial designation. East Asians did not, in other words, become yellow until they were lumped together as a yellow race, which beginning at the end of the eighteenth century would be called "Mongolian" … I would suggest that there was something dangerous, exotic, and threatening about Asia that "yellow" and "Mongolian" helped to reinforce, both of these terms becoming symbiotically linked to the cultural memory of a series of invasions from that part of the world: Attila the Hun, Genghis Khan, and Tamerlane, all of whom were now (by the nineteenth century) lumped together as "Mongolian" as well.[17]

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[16] The "S" and "O" have been capitalized here to note that these are collective subjectivities conditioned by the ideological state apparatuses.

[17] Michael Keevak, *Becoming Yellow: A Short History of Racial Thinking* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011), 2 and 4.

Keevak has examined many European travelogues and missionary texts written between the 13th and

the 18th centuries and found that a variety of colors were used to describe the peoples that the authors

encountered in East Asia, mainly in China and Japan.[18] A 1559 edition of 13th-century Venetian

explorer Marco Polo's collected writings shows that he described the leader of China and the people

of Japan as "white (Italian: *bianca*)", and 16th century Portuguese merchants who arrived in the

Southeast Asian port city of Malacca also referred to some of the Chinese and Japanese they

encountered as "white (Portuguese: *branco*) Christians".[19] Other terms used to indicate this whiteness

in these accounts include "*uomini bianchi/colore candidi* (Italian)", "*homes bramquos/gente branca*

(Portuguese)", "*blanca/blancos* (Spanish)", "*blank* (Dutch)", "*weiß* (German)" and "*albi* (Latin)".[20]

Keevak points out that their "whiteness" as conceptualized in these early modern European writings

was "a function of their affluence and their power and their apparent level of cultural sophistication",

and more importantly, this evaluative "whiteness" could be acquired through conversion to European

Christianity. This explains why during the same period (the 16th and the 17th centuries), many other

colors were used to describe those Chinese and Japanese who had not converted or was not willing to

convert to Christianity, such as "black (French: *noiraux*; Portuguese: *negros*; Dutch: *swart*)", "brown

(Spanish: *morenos*; Dutch: *bruyn*; Italian: *bruna*; German: *bräune*; French: *basanez*)", "olive (Italian:

olivastro, *ulivigno*; French: *olivâtre*), "dark green (Spanish: *verdinegro*)" and "yellow (German:

gelblichter; Latin: *flavus*, *subflavescunt*)".[21] As Keevak emphasizes, there was no linguistic and

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[18] As noted by Rotem Kowner and Walter Demel, Korea had very few contacts with foreigners (except those from China and Japan) before the late 19th century. Therefore, it did not feature as much as China and Japan in modern European travel writings, but the Korean was nevertheless subsumed under "the yellow race" without much contestation when the racial concept became prominent in mid-19th century. See Rotem Kowner and Walter Demel, "Modern East Asia and the Rise of Racial Thought: Possible Links, Unique Features and Unsettled Issues," in *Race and Racism in Modern East Asia: Western and Eastern Constructions*, eds. Rotem Kowner and Walter Demel (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 18. Kowner also conducted a similar study that confirms many of Keevak's observations but with a focus on Japan, see Rotem Kowner, *From White to Yellow: The Japanese in European Racial Thought, 1300-1735* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014).
[19] Keevak, *Becoming Yellow*, 24-25.
[20] Ibid., 28, 30 and 37.
[21] Ibid., 29, 32 and 34. While the main purpose of this short summary is to show that there was simply no European consensus over what color the Japanese and Chinese were during this period, Keevak notes that there were a lot of mixed translations of these travel writings from one European language to another, and the color terms oftentimes went through

cultural consensus in Europe with regards to the color of East Asians before the 19th century.

Walter Demel has identified the renowned German philosopher Immanuel Kant as "the first to have used an expression very near to "mongolische Rasse (Mongolian Race)", namely 'mungalische…Race'", which is found in his 1775 treatise *On the Different Races of Men* (*Von den verschiedenen Racen der Menschen*).[22] Kant proposed four major racial groups to conceptualize the world, including "the race of Whites (*die Race der Weißen*)", "the Negro race (*die Negerrace*)", "the Hunnic [Mongul or Kalmyk] race (*die Hunnische [Mungalische oder Kalmuckische] Race*), and "the Hindu or Hindustanic race (*die Hinduische oder Hindistanische Race*)".[23] Notably, the "*Mungalische*" very possibly refers to the nomadic peoples living in Mongolia rather than East Asians in general, because he later added that "The Hindustanic blood mixed with that of the ancient Scythians (in and around Tibet), plus more or less of the Hunnic, has perhaps generated the inhabitants of the farther peninsula of India as mixed races—the Tonkinese and the Chinese."[24] In other words, Chinese and East Asians in general have not been assigned a separate racial category in Kant's paradigm but considered to be a mixed race, and the only connection he made between Chinese and yellowness is found in a latter article, "Determination of the Term of a Human Race (*Bestimmung des Begriffs einer Menschenrace)*", published in 1785. Here he referred to "the yellow Indians (*der gelben Indianer*)", whose "Hindustanic blood" was said to be flowing in Chinese bodies as well. Notwithstanding this tenuous connection and the conjectural and unsystematic nature of Kant's paradigm, his racial thinking in these two texts prefigured the work of the most prominent proponent of "racial science" in Europe in the 19th century, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, who was German as well.

The 1795 edition of Blumenbach's seminal work written in Latin, *On the Natural Variety of*

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subtle linguistic changes in such processes. See Ibid., 30-37 for discussions on such changes.

[22] Walter Demel, "How the 'Mongoloid Race' Came into Being: Late Eighteenth-Century Constructions of East Asians in Europe," in *Race and Racism in Modern East Asia: Western and Eastern Constructions*, eds. Rotem Kowner and Walter Demel (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 62.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid. The German original is "Das hindistanische Blut, vermischt mit dem der alten Scyten (in und um Tibet) und mehr oder weniger von dem hunnischen, hat vielleicht die Bewohner der jenseitigen Halbinsel Indiens, die Tonquinesen und Schinesen, als eine ver mischte Race erzeugt." Demel notes that the English translation is from the version of Kant's essay collected in Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, ed., *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

Mankind (*De generis humani varietate nativa*), which was a significantly revised version of his Doctor of Medicine thesis at the University of Göttingen, laid the foundation for the development of racial taxonomy in the long 19th century. Blumenbach put forward a five-race scheme based on the measurements of a limited number of human skulls donated to the University of Göttingen by Georg von Asch, who was a foreign member of the Göttingen Academy of Sciences and served as first physician of the Russian army. [25] The five races were Caucasian (*Caucasiae*), Mongolian (*Mongolicae*), Ethiopian (*Aethiopicae*), American (*Americanae*), and Malaysian (*Malaicae*). Each group was assigned their respective color descriptions in Latin as well as in English, except Caucasian, which was only noted in Latin as "*albus color* (white color)": the Mongolians were "yellow, olive-tinge", the Ethiopians "tawny-black", the Americans "copper-color gall", and the Malaysians "tawny, gall". From the thesis version to the published version of this book, Blumenbach changed his conceptualization of "Mongolian" from an "intermediate" race between "Caucasian" and "Ethiopian" to one of the "racial opposite(s)" (the other being "American") of "Caucasian", whose white skin was perceived as "an absence of color".[26] As Keevak points out, while Blumenbach's integration of skin color designations to a systematic racial taxonomy based on physical characteristics marks him the "first unequivocal source for the idea of a yellow East Asia", his "most important and longest lasting contribution to the history of a yellow race" was the conflation of yellowness and the new independent racial category of "Mongolian".[27] The label "Mongolian" was adapted from the Mongols of the 13th century, and the racialization of yellowness hinging upon this new category helped reinforce "notions of a nomadic, powerful, barbarous, and invading race".[28]

Indeed, Blumenbach's paradigm initiated what later came to be known as the discipline of physical anthropology, which developed into many sub-disciplines in the 19th century, such as

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[25] For a detailed account of Asch's donations, see Demel, "How the 'Mongoloid Race' Came into Being," 79-80. Demel also notes that by 1793, Blumenbach had 72 objects (skulls) in his catalogue, but he "never seems to have had a skull from a Japanese or a Korean".

[26] Keevak, *Becoming Yellow*, 62 and 65.

[27] Ibid., 63-64.

[28] Ibid., 77.

ethnology, craniology, and phrenology. The tripartite racial division in the Chinese textbook is based on the French zoologist Georges Cuvier's simplification of Blumenbach's ideas in the 1820s. Cuvier posited only three main racial types, namely white/Caucasian, yellow/Mongolian (which now covered areas beyond East Asia), and black/Ethiopian. More importantly, he argued that "the three races were permanent, that they had developed in isolation, and that they could be placed in an even clearer hierarchy with Europeans at the top and black Africans, who were closest to the apes, at the bottom".[29] Following Cuvier's simplification, the idea of "yellow Mongolians" was further entrenched by writers of "scientific discourses" all over Europe as well as in the US, including English ethnologists James Cowles Prichard and Edward Burnett, German naturalists Ernst Haeckel and Lorenz Oken, Scottish publisher and geologist Robert Chambers, Irish anthropologist Augustus Henry Keane, American anatomist Samuel George Morton and many more.[30] Cuvier's tripartite division was characterized by a hierarchization of racial civilizations, and he put "yellow Mongolians" between "civilized Caucasians" and "barbaric Ethiopians" because "the civilizations of the Far East always remained stationary".[31]

While racial divisions of the human species were never Charles Darwin's major focus, the publication of his seminal work *On the Origin of Species* in 1859 excited many contemporary physical anthropologists, who continued to suggest that the "yellow Mongolians" were characterized by stagnation and arrested development. The idea of "childish Mongolians" culminated in the English physician John Langdon Down naming the disease of "idiots" he discovered in 1866 "Mongolism" (widely known today as Down Syndrome), because according to his observations, Caucasian patients with this disease not only had "typical Mongol" features like "flat and broad" faces, "obliquely placed" eyes, and skin with "a slight dirty yellowish tinge", but also behaved like "little Chinese mandarins"

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[29] Ibid., 71.
[30] Discussions on each of these figures can be found in Ibid., 72 and 81 and Rotem Kowner, "Between Contempt and Fear: Western Racial Constructions of East Asians since 1800," in *Race and Racism in Modern East Asia: Western and Eastern Constructions*, eds. Rotem Kowner and Walter Demel (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 88-90.
[31] Keevak, *Becoming Yellow*, 78.

and made "the same errors as does the Chinese who speaks pidgin English".[32] In the meantime, racial taxonomists influenced by Darwinism became more and more obsessed with inventing new ways of measuring human skulls and skin colors, with which they traced the spread of the "yellow Mongolians" beyond the geographical confines of East Asia. The map presented by the Chinese textbook is very similar to the one included in the 1885-1890 edition of the German encyclopedia, *Meyers Konversations-Lexikon*, which marked the "Mongoloid" areas in different shades of yellow according to where the ten sub-categories of this race resided, including "Polynesian (Oceania)", "Eskimo & Inuit (Arctic)", "(Native) American" and "Malayan" (Southeast Asia also covering east Madagascar).[33] Far from the ideology of "equal but different", such maps served as the discursive bases upon which scientific racism could be rigorously promoted in late 19th century Europe and America.

Moreover, the most significant change in 19th-century international race relations concerning the "yellow Mongolians" is that after China's defeat in the Opium Wars (1839-1842, 1856-1860), Chinese immigrants started moving to areas under white control to look for better economic opportunities. Their arrivals in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the Americas meant that "yellow Mongolians" were no longer just knowledge on paper debated by experts of "racial science" but became a concrete everyday reality that many ordinary people racialized as "white" had to deal with. In this context of increasing interracial contact, "the need to racialize had become stronger than ever".[34] Initiated by European philosophers like Johann Gottfried Herder at the beginning of the 19th century, the popularity of the so-called "national character" studies reached new heights in the West in the second half of the   century and effectively vulgarized scientific racism to facilitate the general public's comprehension of such "colored" immigrations as foreign "invasions". [35] British-born

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[32] Ibid., 114 and 120.
[33] Georg Lehner, "The 'Races' of East Asia in Nineteenth-Century European Encyclopedias," in *Race and Racism in Modern East Asia Vol. II: Interactions, Nationalism, Gender and Lineage*, eds. Rotem Kowner and Walter Demel (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 99-100.
[34] Keevak, *Becoming Yellow*, 125.
[35] For explanations on Herder's ideas about "national culture", see Royal J. Schmidt, "Cultural Nationalism in Herder," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 17, no. 3 (1956): 407.

Australian journalist Charles Pearson's 1893 book, *National Life and Character: A Forecast*, was the most influential work in this rising genre of alarmist xenophobic writing. It was an international sensation and received much praise by white politicians, including American president Theodore Roosevelt and the British Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone. Appropriating the racial taxonomists' hierarchical mappings of the world, Pearson conceived the "black and yellow belt" of the tropical and subtropical regions as the major hindrance to the further expansion and development of white civilization:

> The danger for Europe, and for the higher races everywhere, if the black and yellow belt encroaches upon the earth, will not be the risk that St. Petersburg or London may be made tributary to Pekin, but that the expansion of Englishmen and Russians and other like nations will be arrested, and the character of the people profoundly modified, as they have to adapt themselves to a stationary condition of society. Beyond this there is the more subtle danger that, while the lower races are raising themselves to the material level of the higher, the higher may be assimilating to the moral and mental depression of the lower.[36]

Pearson's fear of racial degeneration was shared by a group of white supremacist thinkers who espoused elitism and eugenics based on the idea that the most advanced "Aryan race" and their "Nordic blood" had been slowly diluted by industrial modernization and imperial expansion. For example, French aristocrat Arthur de Gobineau published *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (*Essay on the Inequality of Human Races*) in 1853, in which he also adopted the tripartite racial division of the world into "white, yellow and black" and argued that "all civilizations derive from the white race, that none can exist without its help, and that a society is great and brilliant only so far as it preserves the blood of the noble group that created it".[37] The "yellow" Chinese civilization, according to Gobineau, was no exception because it originated from an "Aryan colony" in north India, which later mixed with Malays.[38] Such interracial mixture among the three races was already an established fact for Gobineau, and even though he acknowledged that "it would be unjust to assert that every mixture is bad and

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[36] Charles H. Pearson, *National Life and Character: A Forecast* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1893), 96.
[37] Arthur Comte de Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races*, translated by Adrian Collins, M. A. (Burlington, IA: Ostara Publications, 2011), 209.
[38] Ibid., 210.

harmful", he nevertheless lamented that

> The white originally possessed the monopoly of beauty, intelligence, and strength. By its union with other varieties, hybrids were created, which were beautiful without strength, strong without intelligence, or if intelligent, both weak and ugly. Further, when the quantity of white blood was increased to an indefinite amount by successive infusions, and not by a single admixture, it no longer carried with it its natural advantages, and often merely increased the confusion already existing in the racial elements.[39]

Grounded in such fear of racial degeneration, Gobineau viewed China as "a deadly, soulless menace, a vision of what modern Europe was rushing toward, and an agent of impending disaster from outside" in his later writings.[40] Gobineau's ideas about white (more specifically "Aryan" and "Nordic") superiority were rigorously updated by American authors like Madison Grant (*The Passing of the Great Race*, 1916) and T. Lothrop Stoddard (*The Rising Tide of Color against White World Supremacy*, 1921) after the First World War, which they regarded as a seismic event accelerating the inevitable trend of white decline. The geopolitical anxiety about "the colored peril" was prominent in both works, especially with regards to "the question of Asiatic immigration", despite the fact that by the 1910s almost every major country in the Anglosphere had implemented Chinese Exclusion Acts against working-class immigrants from China or more broadly conceived anti-Asian laws restricting entries from Asia.[41] These racial thinkers were influential on leaders of the Nazi Party in Germany, who adopted their white supremacist ideologies in policy implementations, and the horrific crimes against humanity they committed are well recorded in world history.[42]

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[39] Ibid., 208.

[40] Gregory Blue, "Gobineau on China: Race Theory, the 'Yellow Peril', and the Critique of Modernity," *Journal of World History* 10, no. 1 (1999): 133.

[41] Well-known examples include the Chinese Immigration Act of 1881 in New Zealand, the Chinese Restriction Act of 1882 in the US, the White Australia Policy of 1901 in Australia, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1904 in the Cape Colony of South Africa (see Chapter 3 for more details on this one), and the Chinese Immigration Act of 1885 and 1923 in Canada. Notably, Britain was the only major white Anglophone country that never implemented any laws or acts specifically against Chinese or "yellow Mongolian" immigrants. Apart from the fact that the British Empire technically viewed all people in the colonies as citizens and thus had to keep a certain degree of institutional openness with regards to immigration, the major reason behind this lack of anti-Chinese legislation was that unlike those other places, Britain had neither natural resources like gold and diamond that would attract Asian merchants nor work opportunities like railway construction that would employ cheap Asian labor. However, the 1919 Aliens Restrict Act, which was passed to control immigration from continental Europe after the First World War, effectively curtailed Asian immigration as well. For details on historical Chinese immigration to the UK, see Barclay Price, *The Chinese in Britain: A History of Visitors and Settlers* (Gloucestershire, England: Amberley Publishing, 2019).

[42] For these Nazi connections, see Blue "Gobineau on China", 97 and Stefan Kühl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics,*

With this summative account of the history of white supremacist thinking behind the racial interpellation of "yellow", it is easy to understand why the use of the word in a racial sense is so sensitive in the West today. Not only is yellowness rooted in the racist ideology of *different-thus-unequal*, but it is also charged with xenophobic sentiments, which Western societies have yet to overcome in their treatment of people of East and Southeast Asian descent. The persistence of such xenophobic sentiments is part of the reason why "yellow" has not become totally obsolete like "red" and why it cannot be as easily appropriated as an affirmative identity marker as "Black".

Take the settler colonial case of the US as an example, both Native Americans and African Americans have histories of tremendous suffering in the white supremacist state's exploitation of their land and labor, resulting in countless deaths and indelible traumas. The American Indian movements and the Civil Rights movements in the 1960s fought hard for these groups' political recognition as an integral part of the nation. The series of Affirmative Action policies following these struggles gradually consolidated the social consensus that their "Americanness" is indisputable and that to recognize their "Americanness" is to reinforce the ideal of American democracy itself, which was of great strategic importance in the context of the Cold War.[43] Therefore, "red", which was a colonialist misnomer to begin with (a possible reference to the ointment some Native American tribes applied to their skin, as no natural human skin could be literally red), was quickly replaced by the more affirmative identity "Native American".[44] The adjective "Native" also serves as a constant reminder of the settler colonial nature of US society. Similarly, while "African American" has been adopted to emphasize the tremendous contribution made by people of African descent to the economic foundation of contemporary US empire, "Black" is retained as a uniting racial-cultural identity (e.g., in social justice movements like Black Lives Matter) so that people do not forget that anti-Black racism is still rampant in American society at both institutional and ideological levels and can mobilize around it.

American Racism, and German National Socialism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 61-63.

[43] Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 12-13.

[44] Keevak, *Becoming Yellow*, 1 and 44.

What about "yellow"? As Asian American lawyer Elbert Lin says, "The problem of yellowness lies in our perpetual foreignness."[45] "Yellow" was associated with this outsider status since cheap Asian labor was first introduced in white settler colonies like the US as an expedient solution to the capitalistic crises caused by the abolition of slavery. These Asian migrants were never meant to stay. For the Asian immigrants who entered these white supremacist states after the exclusion laws came into effect, they were either war refugees (arriving from countries the US fought in, such as Korea and Vietnam), who were always told to be grateful for American benevolence in accepting them, or privileged transnational immigrants exempted from the exclusion laws, such as political and business elites and international students.[46] Both groups lacked the socioeconomic motivation to challenge this perpetual foreignness, or what Claire Kim calls "the civic ostracism" against Asians in America.[47] Therefore, "yellow" as a racial interpellation will not be totally obsolete as long as this stereotype of perpetual foreignness still exists, neither will it be turned into a completely affirmative designation for the same reason. Across the Anglophone world, there have been occasional and sporadic efforts at appropriating "yellow" as an strategy of highlighting anti-Asian racism and building affirmative self-identification, but they are still confined to specific discursive environments like academia (usually restricted to narrow sub-fields like Critical Race Studies in the Humanities) or radical activism and fail to overturn the general sociopolitical sensitivity surrounding the word's racial use in everyday communication, hence my experience in the classroom at the University of Edinburgh.[48] Once the inherent xenophobia of the racial interpellation of "yellow" in Western societies is made clear, we can

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[45] Elbert Lin, "Yellow is Yellow," *Yale Law & Policy Review* 20 (2002): 531.

[46] This kind of preselection of elite immigrants gave rise to the model minority myth, which was constructed by mainstream US media in the aftermath of the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s to set Asian Americans and African Americans against each other. See Madeline Y. Hsu, *The Good Immigrants: How the Yellow Peril Became the Model Minority* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).

[47] Claire Kim, "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans," *Politics & Society* 27, no. 1: 107. Also see Iyko Day, *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism* (London: Duke University Press, 2016), 7.

[48] To give but one prominent example of the recent scholarly efforts to recast "yellow" as affirmative and theoretically generative, Anne Anlin Cheng's *Ornamentalism* (2019) looks at how the body of "the yellow woman" has always been imbued with aesthetic fetishes in American history and seeks to turn the Western construction of "the ornamentalist personhood" of "Asiatic femininity" into "the foundational for a yellow feminist theory". See Anne Anlin Cheng, *Ornamentalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), Preface and 19.

see the dilemma of the Asian communities in addressing it: if they abandon yellowness as a racialized identity altogether, they lack effective narratives of racial suffering that can bind different communities together, but if they assert yellowness too strongly, they risk confirming their perpetual foreignness, which may inadvertently lend white supremacists more rhetorical tools to undermine the legitimacy of their anti-racist struggles. "Yellow" people in the West, it seems, are trapped in this identitarian tango between xenophobia and racism.

As for "yellow" in the East, a transnational and situated approach to understanding its different receptions is key. Yellow, or *huang* (黃) in Chinese, is homophonic with the character for "emperor (*huang* 皇)". It was regarded as the imperial color in premodern China, and the dragon robes worn by Chinese emperors in most dynasties were embroidered with silk dyed in yellow. The Yellow River (黃河) and the Yellow Plateau (黃土高原) are still regarded as the original cradles of Chinese civilization, and the Yellow Calendar (黃曆) marks many auspicious days (黃道吉日) for Chinese people to hold celebratory events. Moreover, the Huang Emperor (also known as the Yellow Emperor 黃帝 since the same character 黃 is also a common Chinese surname) is regarded by the majority Han people of China as their mythical ancestral hero. When the idea of "the yellow race" spread from Europe to Qing China in late 19th century, many Han reformers quickly appropriated it to advocate their anti-Manchu politics (discussed in Chapter 1). Keevak thus describes China's positive reception of the Western racial interpellation of "yellow" as "a happy coincidence".[49] In contrast, the idea that Chinese belonged to a major racial category called "Mongolian" was not well received, and most Chinese people today will not know much about the close connections between yellowness and "Mongolian" if they have not studied the specific history of Western scientific racism related to these labels. This is because "Mongolian" is associated with the country of Mongolia, and in premodern China, the Mongols were also regarded as dangerous "barbarian" invaders that Chinese people had to defend

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[49] Keevak, *Becoming Yellow*, 7. Also see 129-131.

themselves against. This brief cultural history of the reception of racial yellowness in China helps to contextualize and provincialize my immediate mental reaction to my classmates' criticisms of me in Edinburgh. Like the sociopolitical sensitivity surrounding "yellow" in the West, the cultural propriety of identifying as "yellow" in China is also not universalist but transnational and situated.

What about the negative reaction of my Japanese classmate to being called "yellow" at Nottingham Ningbo? Keevak's remark with regards to Japanese reception of racial yellowness offers a straightforward explanation:

> Japanese commentators…disavowed both yellow and Mongolian, which were said to be descriptors of other Asians only, especially the Chinese. Many Japanese preferred to be considered closer to the powerful white race than the lowly yellow one, and indeed many in the West agreed. In both China and Japan, however, Western racial paradigms had become so pervasive that even those for whom "yellow" was a term of opprobrium begrudgingly admitted that their skin color was something other than white.[50]

These different reactions and receptions reiterate my central argument that there is indeed no single story of racialization. Yellowness and its manifestations in culture are best examined in case studies that take the comparative approach of transnational and situated research, so as to reach a more holistic understanding of racializing discourses in their pluralized and provincialized manifestations.

Disciplinary Entanglements

Limited by scope and by my linguistic abilities, this thesis focuses on the yellowness of China and its cultural manifestations in the Anglophone and Sinophone worlds. More specifically, I center on the trope of "Yellow Peril" and its comparative cultural politics in different locations, not only because it is still the most common phrase in English that retains the racial sense of "yellow" and reminds us of the history of white supremacist ideologies behind this racial interpellation, but also because it embodies the kind of West-centric negativity that I seek to provincialize by examining its

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[50] Ibid., 8.

mutations and reactions against it in cross-cultural contexts beyond Western identity politics.[51] On the one hand, the trope of "Yellow Peril" has kept its discursive relevance from the late 19th century to our contemporary age because it offers a racialist perspective on the shifting geopolitical tensions between the West and different East Asian countries, mainly Japan and China. The antagonistic sentiments accompanying these tensions have been given different names, such as "Japan-bashing", "Anti-Japanism", "Sinophobia", "China Threat", and more recently following the Atlanta Spa shooting incidents in 2021, "Asian Hate", but the relevant discussions almost always hark back to "Yellow Peril" as the historical root of such tensions and the explanatory precedent for their detrimental effects on interracial relations in the West. On the other hand, exactly because of its frequent evocation in these discussions of international geopolitical tensions and interracial relations in the West, "Yellow Peril" has largely been discursively confined to Western contexts or the binary framework of East versus West. This *discursive ossification* ignores how the trope and its associated racial ideologies have travelled and been appropriated in non-Western contexts, and thus risks erasing valuable social experiences and cultural expressions from intellectual scrutiny and public awareness. As the incident of intercultural miscommunication in my Edinburgh classroom and the different receptions of "yellow" in China and Japan have demonstrated, a West-centric paradigm of understanding "Yellow Peril" is epistemologically inadequate and may lead to new forms of sociopolitical and cultural tensions. The

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[51] For a systematic discussion on Japan as "Yellow Peril", see Narrelle Morris, *Japan-Bashing: Anti-Japanism since the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 2011). Notably, an important Anglophone region I do not cover in this thesis is Oceania, mainly the settler colonial societies of Australia and New Zealand. This is partly due to the fact that their Yellow Peril discourses against East and Southeast Asian immigrants have historically borrowed from or shared a lot of rhetorical similarities with those in the US and the UK, and also because there have already been a few systematic studies of them done by scholars from the region. See for example, David Walker and Agnieszka Sobocinska, eds., *Australia's Asia: From Yellow Peril to Asian Century* (Crawley, Western Australia: UWA Publishing, 2012) and Steven Eldred-Grigg and Zeng Dazheng, *White Ghosts, Yellow Peril: China and New Zealand 1790-1950* (Dunedin, New Zealand: Otago University Press, 2014). Although the discursive ossification of the "Yellow Peril" is still dominant in English-language scholarship and public imagination, studies on Sinophobia or anti-Asian racism in non-Western contexts are slowly emerging (though most of them take the approach of history, anthropology, or international relations rather than cultural studies). For Mongolia, see Franck Billé, *Sinophobia: Anxiety, Violence, and the Making of Mongolian Identity* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015). For Latin America, see Jason Oliver Chang, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico, 1880-1940* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017) and Ana Paulina Lee, *Mandarin Brazil: Race, Representation, and Memory* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018). For Russia, see Shiau-shyang Liou 劉蕭翔, *Eshuyuandong huanghuolun* 俄屬遠東黃禍論 [Yellow Perilism in the Russian Far East] (Taipei: Chengchi University Press, 2014). For Africa, see Yan Hairong 嚴海蓉 and Barry Sautman 沙伯力, *"Zhongguo zai feizhou": huayu yu xianshi* "中國在非洲"：話語與現實 ["China in Africa": Past and Future of the Yellow Race] (Beijing: SSAP, 2017).

heightened affect of negativity embedded in this West-centric understanding of "Yellow Peril" makes my call for a transnational and situated turn in the study of narratives of racialization particularly pertinent.

Unlike Keevak's book, which focuses on missionary texts and (pseudo-)scientific discourses produced by Europeans before the 20th century, most existing book-length studies on "Yellow Peril" choose to investigate this racist discourse from the vantage point of literature, or popular culture broadly conceived. Since the term "Yellow Peril" did not come about till 1895 (first in German then in English in 1900, see Chapter 1), most of these studies cover materials produced during the long 20th century. This thesis extends this literary/cultural studies approach to study "Yellow Peril" and its mutations and (re-)appropriations in a range of transnational and situated case studies beyond the Western context. The main period covered is also the 20th century, but there is a significant amount of discussion on cultural materials from the late 19th and the 21st centuries as well.

Indeed, a brief survey of the existing studies on "Yellow Peril" reveals that most of them are confined to Asian American Studies, a subfield located at the intersection of American Studies and Ethnic Studies in US academia. Like the histories of settler colonialism and slavery for Native American Studies and African American Studies, the history of racism behind the trope of "Yellow Peril" is of particular significance to Asian American Studies because it constitutes an archive of victimization through which people of East and Southeast Asian descent can secure their identity as an integral part of the American nation. Pressured by the "civic ostracism" of the perpetual foreigner stereotype, scholars in Asian American Studies often feel obliged to emphasize the racist history of "Yellow Peril" in order to claim Asian *Americanness*. A foundational monograph taking this approach is William F. Wu's *The Yellow Peril: Chinese-Americans in American Fiction, 1850-1940* (1982), which was based on his doctoral research at the University of Michigan conducted in the 1970s. As the title of his book shows, Wu treats all Chinese migrants in the US in the period he covers as "Chinese-Americans", including the sojourners and unnaturalized immigrants arriving before the

Chinese Restriction Act of 1882. The emphasis on this hyphenated identity in the scholarly works produced in the 1980s and 1990s was itself a historical byproduct of the movement to build the field of Asian American Studies, which started in the late 1960s and was for many decades lacking institutional support in American universities.[52] When Wu was writing his book in the 1970s, Asian American literature was only beginning to develop as more and more second and third generation Americans of Asian descent started to explore their identities in writing, and the publishing industry in the US was still reluctant to promote non-white writers like them. This meant that for a very long time, the objects of research for "Yellow Peril" studies were predominantly racist literature written by white American (and occasionally British and Australian) authors. For example, Robert G. Lee's *Orientals: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (1999), which is another foundational work in Asian American Studies, lists "the Yellow Peril" as one of the six images employed by white American writers to "portray the Oriental as an alien body and a threat to the American national family", the other five being "the pollutant, the coolie, the deviant, the model minority, and the gook".[53]

Later studies like Colleen Lye's *America's Asia* (2005) rework Lee's six images and stress that "…the yellow peril and model minority are best understood as two aspects of the same, long-running racial form, a form whose most salient feature… is the trope of economic efficiency."[54] Writing in the early 2000s, Lye also acknowledged that, replacing the representations of Asians in racist white literatures, "the cultural production of the Asian American became a feature of U.S. geostrategic necessity: postwar multiculturalism and the hegemony of a Pax Americana went hand in hand."[55] In recent years, studies have been conducted on how Asian American writers react to the "Yellow Peril" trope in their radical reformulations of interracial relations in different genres of fiction, such as Klara

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[52] On the history of Asian American Studies as an academic field, see Mark Chiang, *The Cultural Capital of Asian American Studies: Autonomy and Representation in the University* (New York: NYU Press, 2009).

[53] Robert G. Lee, *Orientals: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1999), 8.

[54] Colleen Lye, *America's Asia: Racial Form and American Literature, 1893-1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 5. This point is further elaborated in Day, *Alien Capital*, 3-6.

[55] Ibid., 11.

Szmańko's *Visions of Whiteness in Selected Works of Asian American Literature* (2015).[56] Moreover, as identity politics in the multicultural West are developing into an ever-increasing range of intersectional subjectivities, studies of the "Yellow Peril" trope in American cultural production have also been conducted from many other anti-hegemonic perspectives, such as Gina Marchetti's and David Eng's gendered lens in *Romance and the "Yellow Peril"* (1993) and *Racial Castration* (2001) respectively, and Mel Y. Chen's reinterpretation of "yellow" bodies in American cultural debates from the vantage points of Queer Studies and New Materialism in *Animacies* (2012).[57] More recently, the emergence of Transpacific Studies as a transnationally minded school of thought has called for understanding Asian American identities in the dynamic movements between Asia and America, effectively turning Asian American Studies into Asian/American Studies.[58] However, in all these studies, the US is still the nexus of interracial relations, and the ever-expanding archive of anti-Asian racism they open up does not transcend the centrality of the US as the locus of racialization and identity (de)construction.

To be clear, in no way is the brief survey above exhaustive in covering the numerous perspectives explored in Asian American Studies on the trope of "Yellow Peril", and it is not my intention to dismiss the valuable contributions that the field has made to the study of the negative racialization of "yellow" in modern world history. Without the efforts of Asian American scholars, the white supremacist force of "civic ostracism" on "yellow" peoples living in the West would have been much stronger than it is now. However, what I find dissatisfying is that exactly due to the systematic way in which minority

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[56] Klara Szmańko, *Visions of Whiteness in Selected Works of Asian American Literature* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2015). The scholarship on Asian American reactions to "Yellow Peril" is still lacking, and many of the criticisms Frank Chin made in his 1991 essay about Asian American writers' lack of resistance to racist tropes are still valid. See Frank Chin, "Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and the Fake," in *The Big Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature*, edited by Frank Chin et al. (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 1-93.

[57] Gina Marchetti, *Romance and the "Yellow Peril": Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1993), David Eng, *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), and Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (London: Duke University Press, 2012).

[58] For example, see Janet Hoskins and Viet Thanh Nguyen eds., *Transpacific Studies: Framing an Emerging Field* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014).

fields like Asian American Studies have been developed and institutionalized in US academia, it has become hard to see "Yellow Peril" as anything beyond the racist starting point of a long historical bumpy road of Asian localization in the US (or in the West in general). This is what I mean by the *discursive ossification* of the "Yellow Peril", which has a lot to do with the hegemonic position of US academia in the Anglophone world, especially when it comes to discussions of the global movements of Asians and their place in the multicultural societies of contemporary West. For example, John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats have edited a 384-page archive of "Yellow Peril" images and articles, accompanied by relevant academic commentaries. They summarize the ethos behind this archive of Asian victimization as "Yellow Perilism", which is said to be "a structured tradition of concepts and practices hardwired into the political culture of Western Enlightenment modernity itself".[59] Such assertive characterizations of the "Yellow Peril" carry essentialist tendencies that confine the interpretation of Yellow Perilist discourses to the sphere of domestic cultural politics within Western societies.

As Franck Billé points out, a monolithic West-centric concept of "Yellow Perilism", "while useful to weave together various strands of this racial discourse, ultimately offers only limited theoretical mileage". His criticism of such limits is straightforward:

> All too often, analyses of stereotypes about Asians have assumed that the speaker is both Western and white—and frequently male. But the West does not have a monopoly on Sinophobic and anti-Asian narratives...This means that stereotypes also show great variations, and are embedded differently in local cultures. This variance must be taken seriously as it shows the limitations of the West/Asian binary opposition that undergirds (Edward) Said's thesis.[60]

What Billé gestures at here is exactly the transnational and situated approach to studying racialization that this thesis advocates. His co-edited volume (with Sören Urbansky), *Yellow Perils: China Narratives in the Contemporary World* (2018), puts this approach into analytical practice via the

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[59] John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats, Dylan, eds., *Yellow Peril! An Archive of Anti-Asian Fear* (London: Verso, 2014), 357.
[60] Franck Billé, "Introduction," in *Yellow Perils: China Narratives in the Contemporary World*, eds. Franck Billé and Sören Urbansky (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2018), 11-12.

diversification of objects of research. Featuring a range of case studies by historians, sociologists, and Area Studies scholars, the volume showcases the vicissitudes of the Yellow Peril discourse in locations as different as Italy, Australia, South Africa, Nigeria, Russia, and China. I share with them this mission of diversification in the practice of transnational and situated study, and I agree that the method of selective case studies is the best way of doing it. However, as an individual effort, this thesis is necessarily much narrower in scope, and while sociological and historical studies are often cited as support for contextualization, the primary analytical approach I take is still literary and cultural studies. Moreover, I do not see as Billé does that the abstract nominal term "Yellow Perilism" shall be discarded altogether (he and Urbansky prefer the plural "Yellow Perils").[61] "Yellow Perilism" as a reference to the racist socio-cultural ethos of anti-Asian sentiments is useful as long as it is not taken for granted as a universalist phenomenon of singular origination. Therefore, wherever this term is used in this thesis, I emphasize the different contexts of its appearances, which are frequently modified by specific times and locations to emphasize the situatedness of racializing narratives, such as "fin de siècle European Yellow Perilism", "Wang Lixiong's Occidentalist Yellow Perilism", "the localist branch of Yellow Perilism in Hong Kong", etc.

Apart from Asian American Studies, the transnational and situated approach of this thesis also challenges the existing paradigms of Postcolonial Studies and Area Studies and explores ways in which studies of anti-Asian racism can break away from the epistemological *disciplining* of these politically inflected disciplines. As mentioned by Billé, Edward Said's theory of Orientalism is limited by its insistence on a binary West/Asian framework in interpreting narratives of colonialism and racism. Moreover, although Said does mention the "Yellow Peril" trope in *Orientalism* (1979), the "Asian" in

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[61] It also must be noted that though they have highlighted the term as the central ethos of their archive, Tchen and Yeats are not the first to use "Yellow Perilism" in this way. Many other scholars before them have already nominalized "Yellow Peril" to address the racial ethos of Western societies during different periods of their engagements with Asian immigrants. They include (not exhaustively) Stuart William Grief, *The Overseas Chinese in New Zealand* (Singapore: Asia Pacific Press, 1974), 63; David Palumbo-Liu, *Asian/American: Historical Crossings of a Racial Frontier* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 201; and Sylvia van Ziegert, *Global Spaces of Chinese Culture: Diasporic Chinese Communities in the United States and Germany* (London: Routledge, 2006), 29.

Said's discussions is predominantly focused on Islamic cultures in the Middle East (the so-called "West Asian"), and the colonial histories of East Asia are often missing in the general theoretical debates in Postcolonial Studies.[62] As Shu-mei Shih points out,

> It may be stating the obvious that even Postcolonial Studies can be critiqued as Eurocentric in its delimitation of the objects of its critique. It privileges European colonialisms over Asian colonialisms, for instance, as if the latter do not deserve to be criticized — criticism, after all, is a form of labor that is encoded with and confers value.[63]

Postcolonial Studies as it has developed in the departments of English and Modern Languages in Western academia is still conditioned by the limits of imperial language hegemonies, hence the further divisions of Anglophone, Francophone, Lusophone literatures and cultures etc. Topics like Japan's colonization of Korea and Taiwan, semi-colonial treaty ports in Republican China, and US military occupation of Okinawa are relegated to Area Studies, and yet even there critical reflections on colonialism and neo-colonialism are lacking.[64]

Different from the Eurocentric critique of (Western) colonialism in Postcolonial Studies, the postwar formation of Area Studies (first in the US, then spreading to other Western countries) deals with what Harry Harootunian calls "the lure of native knowledge", which "postcoloniality, wedded to the Saidian critique of a politically empowered knowledge, was faced with (as) its alternative, but …resisted".[65] It is certainly the case that the absorption and appropriation of native knowledge, or knowledge production outside the Western metropoles, in Postcolonial Studies are highly selective according to the (lack of) connections that different "areas" have with these former colonial masters. For example, South Asia, the Caribbean, Africa, and Latin America are also designated as "areas" in

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[62] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). Said makes one reference to "Yellow Peril" on page 301, where he lists the four principal dogmas of Orientalism in Western academia: "A fourth dogma is that the Orient is at bottom either something to be feared (the Yellow Peril, the Mongol hordes, the brown dominions) or to be controlled (by pacification, research, and development, outright occupation whenever possible)." For discussions of the limits of Orientalism and its binary logic, see François Pouillion and Jean-Claude Vatin, eds., *After Orientalism: Critical Perspectives on Western Agency and Eastern Re-appropriations* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

[63] Shu-mei Shih, "Racializing Area Studies, Defetishizing China," *positions* 27, no. 1 (2019): 42.

[64] For example, Tani Barlow has argued that the political discourses in China Studies in the US have a tradition of problematizing Chinese modernity by positing how "a healthy political culture might be achieved…where genuine colonial rule had predominated…" Tani Barlow, "Colonialism's Career in Postwar China Studies," *positions* 1, no. 1 (1993): 237.

[65] Harry Harootunian, "Postcoloniality's Unconscious/Area Studies' Desire," *Postcolonial Studies* 2, no. 2: 130.

the postwar reorganization of academic disciplines in the US (and later in the UK as well), and yet scholarly exchanges and intellectual cross-pollinations between these "areas" and Postcolonial Studies are much more common than, say, between East Asian Studies and Postcolonial Studies, especially when such exchanges and cross-pollinations center on theoretical debates hinged upon local reactions to European philosophies. However, even with such crossovers, the divide between Area Studies and Postcolonial Studies is still largely conditioned by the divide in academic methods of inquiry: "In Area Studies the epistemology and methodology of choice was generally functionalist social science, while in postcoloniality it has been the literary/semiotic disciplines (textuality)."[66] What's more, "the lure of native knowledge" in Area Studies is often racialized, in the sense that this "native knowledge" is rarely produced or articulated by the so-called "natives" themselves but still comes under the discursive control of the Area Studies scholars in Western academia, who monopolize the constructive agency of talking *about* and talking *over* these areas and natives, in a manner not dissimilar to the Orientalist whom Said has so thoroughly critiqued. In Shu-mei Shih's discussion of the differences between Asian Studies and Asian American Studies in the US, this racialization of native knowledge is said to evince the double-sided affect of love and hatred:

> If area experts have exhibited an overwhelming amount of racial love toward the natives in these areas, especially toward the gentler half whom they choose to marry, one can say that there has been a proportionate expression of racial hatred toward the proponents of ethnic studies. This is especially the case for Asianists who have expressed "extreme hostility," according to Naoki Sakai, to Asian American studies and its scholars, who are mostly Americans of Asian descent. The basic irony here is that while the majority of Asianists are European Americans, their native spouses are Asians on the way to becoming Asian Americans through the inevitable processes of acculturation and citizenship in America. The conundrum here involves how one set of Asian Americans, albeit the newly minted ones, is dearly loved while another set of Asian Americans—Asian Americanists— is viewed with hostility, and how we may understand such a racial logic.[67]

Although the racial tension Shih addresses here is to a degree particular to US academia and her discussion on scholars' personal life choices such as marriage is more polemic than grounded in any

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[66] Ibid., 131.
[67] Shih, "Racializing Area Studies," 38.

empirical analyses, her statements nevertheless highlight the awkward position occupied by studies of Asian racialization, such as "Yellow Peril" studies, in the current disciplinary formations in Western academia in general.

No matter whether it is Ethnic Studies (like Asian American Studies), Postcolonial Studies, or Area Studies, it seems that the study of Asian experiences of racialization and their manifestations in cultural products rarely escapes what Naoki Sakai calls "the regime of separation", or the division between "the *humanitas* and the *anthropos*".[68] Despite the now popular scholarly declaration of "breaking the binary between the West and the Rest" and the postmodern rush to deconstruct "the West" as a mystified entity of no empirical basis beyond discourse, the division between the *humanitas* and the *anthropos* still sustains as the very *modus operandi* of Western knowledge production disciplined by disciplinary divisions in academic institutions themselves. The institutional and discursive construct of "the West" embodies the *humanitas* by producing theoretical wisdom, which can be critically applied to studies on "the Rest", while "the Rest" embodies the *anthropos* by offering ethnically specific experiences, which must be sublimated by Western academia to produce recognizable knowledge as such, and knowledge from one area in the Rest rarely gets applied to another without the theoretical intermediation/intervention of the West. As Sakai puts it,

> Indeed, the West is particular in itself, yet it constitutes the general point of reference in relation to which others recognize themselves as particularities. Empirically it is a particularity, but it always engages in the universal validity of how particular objects are identified. In this respect, it is transcendental. The West is structured as a *doublet* with one side in the empirical and the other in the transcendental, striding over both the determinate and the indeterminate; it is fashioned after what that eighteenth-century neologism called the 'subject'. Unlike Asia, whose identity must depend upon its recognition, the West does not seem to need the other to recognize it…(Therefore) the Asians may well produce certain wisdom, but their wisdom could never transcend their ethnic particularity and thus reach the domain of theoretical universality.[69] (original emphasis)

My study of the different mutations of and reactions to the Yellow Peril discourse in this thesis does not pretend to solve this entrenched division between *humanitas* and *anthropos*, but I do hope to

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[68] Naoki Sakai, "The Regime of Separation and the Performativity of Area," *positions* 27, no. 1 (2019): 246.
[69] Naoki Sakai, "Theory and Asian Humanity: On the Question of *humanitas* and *anthropos*," *Postcolonial Studies* 13, no. 4 (2010): 450 and 452.

prove that it is possible to counter the restrictive force of this division when narratives of racialization are studied with the transnational and situated approach. My selected "areas" of investigation include England, South Africa, and China. The purposive appropriations and conspicuous absences of the Yellow Peril discourse in the cultural materials under examination provincialize the West as much as the Rest, while acknowledging the transnational flows of ideas, both racist and anti-racist, among them. Sakai has also envisioned such transnational studies as a counterforce against the division he highlights:

> Transnational Studies does not observe the regime of separation sanctioned by nationality, ethnicity, gender, social class or civilization. It is not a science for identity-seekers. It rather seeks to interrupt the practices of separation, but never allows itself to overlook the workings of *bordering*, of nationality, ethnicity, gender, social class and civilization in the relation of separation.[70] (original emphasis)

Therefore, "Yellow Peril" can be treated as a particular method of transnational studies in this thesis, for it anchors to multiple connected units of cultural analysis that gesture toward something universal (but not in the sense of the Western universalism of *humanitas*): there is no single story of racialization. It negotiates an interdisciplinary space for the study of racialization of Asians as well as Asian experiences of racialization expressed in culture. This space, if it must be attached to an existing discipline in Western academia, would be the intercultural space of Comparative Literature, which is methodologically driven rather than conditioned by divisions "sanctioned by nationality, ethnicity, gender, social class or civilization". By "methodologically driven", I do not mean the traditional style of comparison that assumes separate entities of analysis (again constituted through the aforementioned divisions) but transnational and situated case studies that demonstrate the very process of racialization itself as comparative in nature. As Shih says,

> If racialization is inherently comparative, a psychosocial and historical process, then we are working against the meaning of comparison as the arbitrary juxtaposition of two terms in difference and similarity, replacing it with comparison as the recognition and activation of relations that entail two or more terms. This second form of comparison brings submerged or displaced relationalities into view and reveals these relationalities as the starting point for a fuller

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[70] Naoki Sakai, "From Area Studies toward Transnational Studies," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 11, no. 2 (2010): 273.

understanding of racialization as a comparative process.[71]

In the context of this thesis, the comparative embodies an interdisciplinary space where seemingly disparate cultural phenomena, or indeed, "arbitrary juxtapositions", governed by colonial and post-colonial regimes of separation can be brought together for critical analyses. My study of "Yellow Peril" as processes of comparative racialization is thus an attempt to break away from the disciplining power of the disciplinary divides. It is against treating Yellow Perilism as solely a cultural archive for Asian minoritization in the West, and neither does it confine investigations of its mutations in non-Western contexts to the ethnic particularities of Area Studies. "Yellow Peril" as method here is pluralist but not universalist, situated but not isolated, at times deconstructionist but never nihilist, because it is driven by a strong ideological commitment to anti-racism at large.

Chapter Outline

This thesis is divided into three major Sections according to the different geopolitical locations and historical periods they cover, namely fin de siècle England, apartheid South Africa, and post-Mao China (or the Sinophone world inclusively conceived).

As mentioned before, the locations and periods are chosen based on a critical commitment to diversifying the objects of research in the practice of transnational and situated case studies, and each of them contributes to a more holistic understanding of "Yellow Peril" in different ways. First, fin de siècle England is where the Yellow Peril discourse in the Anglophone world first appeared and achieved unprecedented levels of popularity through the mass medium of pulp fiction. This popularity in turn warrants critical reflections on the relevance of "Yellow Peril" to the contemporary images of China and Chineseness in the development of literary modernism, especially modernist poetry and the polemical discourses associated with it. Second, South Africa during the apartheid era (1948-1994)

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[71] Shu-mei Shih, "Comparative Racialization: An Introduction," *PMLA* 123, no. 5 (2008): 1350.

offers a unique context for studies on interracial relations, as it was influenced by but located outside the geopolitical boundaries of the West. A cultural investigation of how "yellow" fitted and fared in this black majority but white supremacist environment contributes to a diasporic understanding of South African history beyond the binary of white versus black. Moreover, apartheid must be situated in the larger international context of the global Cold War, and the "Yellow Peril" experience of the Chinese South African communities in this era is in many ways related to China being viewed as a communist "Red Peril" by the white supremacist government. How non-white intellectuals from South Africa constructed their own literary images of China and Chineseness to resist such "Yellow Peril"/"Red Peril" discourses is also a major topic of analysis in this Section. Last but not least, "Yellow Peril", translated as *huanghuo* (黄祸), has a cultural history in China as well, which is almost as long as its discursive persistence in the West and yet often overlooked in English-language scholarship on the trope dominated by Asian American Studies. With the shifting cultural politics in the wider Sinophone world following China's implementation of the reform and opening-up policy, the racial interpellation of "yellow" has reemerged in different socio-cultural sectors in highly paradoxical ways. On the one hand, *huanghuo* has been discursively updated by dissident groups as a racialized form of political critique against the Chinese government or the Chinese nation defined in grand ethno-cultural terms, from both internalist perspectives that identify with the nation and externalist perspectives that disassociate from the nation. On the other hand, yellowness has been re-popularized by celebrities from Hong Kong and Taiwan in their pursuit of economic and cultural capital in the mainland Chinese market, and the wide influence of the patriotic songs they sing disrupts the neat division between Chinese center and Sinophone margins asserted by some scholars in Western academia.

Notably, my case studies feature specific locations in Europe, Africa, and Asia but deliberately circumvent the context of North America as a site of concentrated investigation of primary materials, since the US has already dominated the ways in which "Yellow Peril" is imagined in global popular culture as well as how it is critically examined in English-language scholarship. It is my hope that this

intentional non-relation with America can serve as an analytical caveat against the danger of discursive ossifications and universalist assumptions and projections, and, at the same time, a methodical reminder of the importance of transnational and situated research.

Section I contains two Chapters. Chapter 1 starts with a brief historical account of the phrase "Yellow Peril" as it emerged in fin de siècle Europe and spread across linguistic and national boundaries there in the early 20th century. I identify British writer M. P. Shiel's 1898 novel *The Yellow Danger* as the first "Yellow Peril" text in the Anglophone world to personalize the trope in a major antagonist. Shiel's portrayal of Dr. Yen How in this novel turned him into the prototype of "Yellow Peril" villains, and I pay particular attention to aspects of gender relations in the novel that would become traceable in later appropriations of fin de siècle Western Yellow Perilism in other contexts. The Chapter then offers a brief discussion on Sax Rohmer's famous invention, Dr. Fu Manchu, and examines the archetypical features that turned this character into such a successful racist enterprise with unprecedented levels of popularity across the Atlantic. I build a comparative perspective into this background Chapter by ending it with a section on late Qing reactions to contemporary Western Yellow Perilism. Foregrounding the nationalist identification with "yellow" in the writings of renowned Chinese reformers like Kang Youwei (康有為), Yan Fu (嚴復), and Liang Qichao (梁啟超), it stresses the fact that the ethos of Yellow Perilism was at its beginning already plural and witnessed radical shifts as it spread to different geopolitical locations and sociocultural environments.

Chapter 2 looks at the conspicuous absence of explicit Yellow Perilism in the development of literary modernism in 20th century England, with a particular focus on Ezra Pound's 1915 poem collection *Cathay*. Whether the poems in *Cathay* are translations of classical Chinese poetry or Pound's creative rewritings of the translations he acquired from Ernest Fenollosa has been intensely debated by scholars in English Studies, Modernist Studies, Chinese Studies, Translation Studies etc. Rather than intervening in such debates directly, I present two aspects of Pound's poetic construction of China that constitute what I call "the Yellow Perilist undercurrents" of his conjectures of modernism: the

temporal division between premodern and modern China, and the "ideogrammatic method" concerning the "nature" of the Chinese language. I point out that Pound practices a kind of "positive Orientalism" by fetishizing premodern Chinese culture as static and passive, which contrasts with his views on modern China as a geopolitical entity irredeemably contaminated by undesirable Western influence. Similarly, Pound's Imagist explanation of the Chinese language is also charged with the Orientalist desire for a pure Western Self that he deems forever lost to the corruptive forces of industrial modernity. Hence, the two Chapters in Section I form a set of comparative readings that illustrates the different forms and influences that Yellow Perilism may possess even in the same geo-cultural context.

Section II is also made up of two Chapters, which correspond with the two Chapters in Section I in their respective foci on popular forms of writing and literary genres regarded as serious and highbrow like poetry. Chapter 3 centers on the experiences of the Chinese South African communities during apartheid presented in two works of life writing, Darryl Accone's *All Under Heaven* (2004) and Ufrieda Ho's *Paper Sons and Daughters* (2011). Situating these experiences in the long history of Chinese migration and localization in South Africa dating back to at least the mid-19th century, it organizes them into three analytical categories: everyday encounters of institutional racism, preservation of Chineseness, and associations with other non-white groups. I argue that contrary to the political and psychological struggles of postcolonial trauma that often characterize post-apartheid South African literature, Chinese South African life writing exhibits a kind of pragmatism, with which the material and emotional effects of institutional and casual racism have been constantly negotiated. This pragmatism not only demonstrates the agency of the diasporic Chinese vis-à-vis the overarching white supremacist sociopolitical structure but also reveals the communities' complicity with the anti-black governmentality at the core of the racist governance of South African society for most of the 20th century. As such, I note that yellowness in the special context of apartheid was constructed in relation to multiple racial Others, including the oppressive "white", the disenfranchised "black", Japanese who were granted certain privileges as "Honorary Whites", as well as "the new Yellow Peril"

of recent immigrants from mainland China. Ultimately, these initial attempts at making a Chinese South African literary history also offer alternative lens of seeing "Africanity", which, like yellowness and Chineseness, is both transnational and situated and open to interpretations beyond straightforward racial, linguistic, and national identifications.

Chapter 4 echoes Chapter 2 in its examination of a different kind of "positive Orientalism" in Dennis Brutus's bilingual poem collection *China Poems*, published in the US in 1975 with Chinese translations by Ko Ching-po (高清波). Brutus was the only non-white South African poet who went to China during apartheid, when there were no official diplomatic relations between the two countries. His Orientalist appropriations of what he thought as traditional Chinese poetics was conditioned by his deep investment in international struggles against racism, and against the apartheid government in particular. However, this special poem collection has been ignored by scholars working on Brutus and at times outright dismissed as misplaced political naivety and embarrassing ideological blindness. Via a detailed historical contextualization of Brutus's visit to China as an international sports activist, I look at the ways in which the poems' stylistic characteristics have been influenced by Maoist ideas on literature as well as his reading of translations of Mao's own poetry. I argue that not only is *China Poems* a valuable resource for the study of cultural resistances to "Yellow Peril"/"Red Peril" discourses in non-Western contexts during the global Cold War, but it also showcases unique phenomena with regards to the politics of cultural appropriation and translation. I pay particular attention to Ko's rendering of Brutus's poems and discuss how he mixes different styles of Chinese characters and employs different translation strategies, including vocabulary sublimation and poetic expansion, that paradoxically compromise the "literary alliances" that Brutus sought to establish with China. Like Pound discussed in Chapter 2, Brutus romanticized China via the positive Orientalism of poetic appropriation, but unlike *Cathay*, *China Poems* was an active attempt to reverse contemporary Yellow Perilism with a strong sense of commitment to global anti-racism, which, despite the Orientalist elements exposed by transnational analyses, is still commendable today.

Section III contains three Chapters. Chapter 5 analyzes the dystopian novel *Yellow Peril* (黃禍, 1988) by Chinese dissident writer Wang Lixiong (王力雄). Using Xiaomei Chen's theories about the emergence of anti-official Occidentalism in post-Mao China, it highlights the thematic connections between Wang's novel and other popular discourses racializing China as "yellow" at the time, such as the documentary series *River Elegy* (河殤, 1988). By examining the interdiscursive strategies Wang employs in the novel to prioritize Chinese domestic politics over interracial relations outside China, I argue that Wang's novel constitutes an Occidentalist appropriation of fin de siècle Western Yellow Perilism. I also draw attention to the similarities between *Yellow Peril* and *The Yellow Danger* discussed in Chapter 1, especially with regards to their portrayals of the gendered aspects of interracial relations. The second half of this Chapter focuses on the trans-regional making and translational circulation of Wang's novel. First published anonymously outside China, *Yellow Peril* was read by diasporic Chinese communities in Canada before reaching wider Sinophone readerships in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and finally mainland China, where it is still officially banned but nevertheless acquired by many as a classical piece of underground popular literature. I discuss this multi-local and multi-directional production and movement of Wang's novel in relation to Shu-mei Shih's theory of the Sinophone and propose the term "Sinophone trouble" to highlight the need to challenge the ideological prioritization of anti-Sinocentrism and Cold War tendencies in Shih's formulation of the Sinophone. This Chapter then ends with a section on the English translation of *Yellow Peril*. It looks at the most noticeable paratextual changes from the Taiwanese edition to the English edition and suggests that Wang's Occidentalist themes have been re-Orientalized by the specific marketing strategies of the latter, revealing a subtler form of Yellow Perilism in the restrictive packaging of narratives articulated by the Chinese Other.

Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 depart from the previous Chapters by centering on audio-visual and textual-visual materials rather than strictly defined literary texts. They continue to develop the analytical valence of the concept of "Sinophone trouble" by analyzing the proliferation of racializing

discourses in Hong Kong and Taiwan in their economic and political engagements with mainland China in recent decades. Respectively, they ask two pertinent questions to further disrupt Shih's conflation of Sinophone with resistant marginality, namely "what if the Sinophone is racist?" and "what if the Sinophone is nationalist?"

Chapter 6 investigates the first question by examining the anti-locust discourse in Hong Kong, which formed an influential Yellow Perilist undercurrent in the recent sociopolitical struggles in the city, such as the Umbrella Movement of 2014 and the Anti-Extradition Movement of 2019. I look at how "locust (蝗蟲)" has been popularized as a derogatory racial slur against mainland Chinese people in Hong Kong, especially with the rise of social media. The specific cultural materials I analyze include anti-mainlander posters published in local newspapers, popular music videos from Youtube channels specifically designed for disseminating anti-China satire, and localist creation and remaking of iconic artworks and images to portray China as the authoritarian "Yellow Peril" against Hong Kong. While this Chapter is emphatically *not* a holistic assessment of the antiauthoritarian movements in the city *per se*, it does stress the difficulty of separating Sinophone marginality and anti-China racism on a sole theoretical level and the importance of case studies in unravelling the troubled entanglements between them.

Chapter 7 investigates the second question by examining the re-popularization of yellowness as a form of pan-Chinese self-identification in the patriotic songs and nationalist discourses produced by contemporary Chinese pop singers from *gangtai* (港台 Hong Kong and Taiwan). More specifically I focus on Hong Kong Canadian singer Nicholas Tse (謝霆鋒)'s hit song "People of the Yellow Race (黃種人)" (2005) and Taiwanese singer Jeremy Chang (張洪量)'s album *Guts of the Race* (有種, 1992) and non-fiction book *The Yellow Book* (黃書, 2013). The repetitive emphases on China as a "yellow" nation and all ethnic Chinese people as "the yellow race" in these widely consumed popular cultural products are not only conditioned by the shifting geo-cultural positions of *gangtai* in relation to the

huge market of mainland China after the implementation of the reform and opening-up policy but also linked to what I have mentioned in this Introduction with regards to the reception of "yellow" as a color of racial pride in modern Chinese history. *Gangtai*-pop is chosen as the primary object of analysis for this last chapter exactly because the genre's material and cultural entanglements with the mainland and the grand idea of China/Chineseness expose the troublesome theoretical applications of the Sinophone in contexts of heightened (self-)racialization. As such, I link many details of this *gangtai*/Sinophone nationalism to the historical precedents in the late Qing period discussed in Chapter 1, thereby bringing the consistent comparative method of the entire thesis full circle.

Indeed, as this Chapter outline suggests, the transnational and situated approach to studying narratives of racialization is practiced throughout this thesis with the generative power of comparisons in mind. Comparative analyses between Sections are found in the reflective codas I place at the end of each Section, and the organization of Chapters in different Sections also forms thematic parallels related to similar mutations of or reactions to the racist ethos of fin de siècle Western Yellow Perilism. The word "reactions" carries as much referential weight as "mutations" and "reinventions" in the title of this thesis, and it must be noted that these "reactions" are not always replicating or reflective of the perilist dimension of the Yellow Perilism under discussion. As discussed in the last Chapter in each Section (Chapter 2, 4, 7, as well as the last segment of Chapter 1), polemic, poetic, and popular reactions to different kinds of Yellow Perilism display as much creative agency as its appropriations for renewed negative usage. What's more, showing the different forms and aspects of positive Orientalism or racial nationalism embedded in these reactions is an integral part of my effort to counter the entrenched impressions of negativity associated with the trope of the "Yellow Peril" and the identitarian, often minoritizing, discourses surrounding it.

The diverse range of cultural materials I examine and compare in this thesis, including novels, memoirs, poems, book covers, artworks, social commentaries, documentaries, song lyrics, music videos, as well as literary theories and criticisms, serves the same purpose of multiplying the ways in

which the "Yellow Peril" can be imagined and engaged with. This multiplication of perspectives may not necessarily eliminate the imperious and exclusionary prejudice that different ideological state apparatuses have built into our socialization as ethno-national subjects, such as that found in the Chinese textbook or that I experienced ("Don't say yellow!") and expressed ("You speak only English!") in my Edinburgh classroom, but it is my hope that it can equip us with a critical awareness that is pragmatically oriented, so that when such prejudices arise, they can be handled with intercultural sensitivity.

Section I

Origins, Reactions and Absences:

The Yellow Peril in Fin de Siècle England and its Discontents

Chapter 1

Popularizing the Yellow Peril:

M. P. Shiel, Sax Rohmer, and Late Qing China

We tend to refer to the flooding of the Yellow River when we talk about the so-called "Yellow Peril" nowadays, but thirty years ago, it was different. At that time, the term meant that the yellow race was going to take over Europe. When some heroes heard about it, they recalled the white men's complimentary remarks about the "Sleeping Lion." They became smug for many years and were preparing to be Europe's master. However, the origin of the story of the "Yellow Peril" is different from what we imagine, as it was coined by the German Emperor Wilhelm II. He even made a painting depicting a warrior in Roman attire defending himself against an Oriental figure, but that figure was not Confucius, but Buddha, so the Chinese had really rejoiced too soon.

—— Lu Xun, "Yellow Peril" (黃禍)[1]

When Lu Xun (魯迅), the father of modern Chinese literature, published this cautionary article in *Shanghai News* (*Shenbao* 申報) in October, 1933, he was satirizing some Chinese nationalists' pipe dream of a yellow conquest of Europe. The article stresses semi-colonial China's weakness and desperate need for further reform. His satirical tone is most obvious in his calling these nationalists "heroes (英雄)". As a rebuttal against this nationalist naïveté, Lu Xun was referring to Buddhism as a national allegory for imperial Japan, which, ironically, imported Buddhism from China in the 5th and 6th centuries. By conflating Confucius with China and separating Buddhism from China (which was itself imported from India in the late Han dynasty, circa 150 CE), his own nationalist agenda is revealed, at least at the rhetorical level, by his cultural essentialism. In the paragraphs following the above quote,

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[1] Lu Xun 魯迅, "Huanghuo" 黃禍 [Yellow Peril], in *Luxun quanji diwuji* 魯迅全集第五集 [*The Complete Works of Lu Xun Volume 5*], ed. Zhang Jian 張健 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1981), 343. All direct quotations from Chinese-language sources in this thesis are my translation if not noted otherwise. Lu Xun was very perceptive in noticing the Chinese complacency about the image of the "Sleeping Lion (睡獅)," though he did not point out that contrary to the popular association between this image and Napoleon, the phrase was more likely an invention of the Chinese themselves to boost nationalism. See Jui-sung Yang 楊瑞松, *Bingfu, huanghuo yu shuishi: 'xifang' shiyezhong de zhongguo xingxiang yu jindai zhongguo guozu lunshu xiangxiang* 病夫、黃禍與睡獅：「西方」視野的中國形象與近代中國國族論述想像 [Sick Man, Yellow Peril and Sleeping Lion: Chinese Images from Western Perspective & the Discourses of Modern Chinese National Identity] (Taipei: National Chengchi University Press, 2010), 120-121.

he laments how Chinese children were treated badly by white police officers in the German treaty port of Qingdao and therefore, how unrealistic the "Yellow Peril Dream (黃禍的夢)" was.[2] Indeed, at that time, Lu Xun had long established himself as one of the most important writers of modern Chinese literature and was facing possible persecution by multiple factions within the Nationalist government, especially the Japanese collaborationists in Nanjing. As a result, he went into a ten-year period of hiding and lived near the foreign concessions in Shanghai for protection. In this context, it is not clear which of these forces proved to be more perilous for Lu Xun: the Nationalist government, Japan, or the Western imperial occupations in Shanghai. Therefore, both his cultural commentary and his personal experiences point to the multiple facets of the Yellow Peril discourse concerning China and the West. Not only was he, and by extension the Chinese intelligentsia he was engaging with, aware of the alarmist racialist origins of the Yellow Peril in Western imperial centers, but they were also clear about the reactionary responses it had induced from within China. For Lu Xun, the Yellow Peril was already a mutational discourse malleable for ideological appropriations, easily taken up by different people to serve different purposes.

However, the recent proliferation of scholarly discussions on the Yellow Peril discourse, both in English and in Chinese, rarely mentions this article by Lu Xun despite his prominence and its conspicuous title.[3] Moreover, most of them do not share Lu Xun's awareness of the multiplicity of the Yellow Peril discourse itself. As summarized in the Introduction, this is largely due to the Eurocentric limits of postcolonial reinvestigation as a theoretical method and Asian American Studies as a territorialized field with agendas in domestic (i.e., American) identity politics. To repeat what I have already mentioned in the Introduction, John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats have defined Yellow Perilism as "a structured tradition of concepts and practices hardwired into the political culture of

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[2] Lu, "Huang Huo," 343.

[3] The two prominent exceptions are Yang, *Bingfu, Huanghuo yu Shuishi*, 84 and James R. Pusey, *Lu Xun and Evolution* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), 103. Pusey's book only mentions this particular article in passing while Yang primarily engages with Chinese materials, and therefore there is still no complete translation of this important article into English.

Western Enlightenment modernity itself".[4] This definition has enabled them to uncover the racist ideologies and practices of the West in various imperial archives, but it may also have unintentionally foreclosed the comparative possibilities of situating the Yellow Peril discourse in different national, linguistic, and cultural contexts. To demonstrate the wider perspectives a comparative approach can bring about, the two chapters in this Section focus on the two contexts Lu Xun was addressing in his article, namely early 20th century Europe and China, and more importantly, their intersections and intertwinements with each other. More specifically, I focus on England from the fin de siècle to the interwar era, not only because the British Empire played a crucial role in mediating the European geopolitical sentiments and wider international relations that gave rise to the Yellow Peril discourse, but also because London served as a unique imperial locus in which writers of different backgrounds and traditions crossed paths and forged links.

In *China and the Victorian Imagination*, Ross Forman has also called for a comparative turn to study Victorian Britain and Qing China as "empires entwined".[5] Focusing on a range of writers active in the Victorian business of representing China and the Chinese for Anglophone readers across the British Empire, Forman seeks to show the inadequacy of "the traditional paradigms of colonizer and colonized" and the "centralized theory of imperialism and its literary production…"[6] In practice, rather than presenting the imperial dimensions of China, his contribution to this comparative turn mainly comes from the inclusion and analysis of locally produced and published expatriate writings by white Anglophone authors travelling or living in China, such as Julian Croskey, Walter Henry Medhurst and James Dalziel, whose first hand experiences in the country interacted with sensationalist discourses at home. On the one hand, largely due to the monolingual confinement of this postcolonial scholarship, the dynamic subjectivities and cultural agency of the Chinese intelligentsia have been

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[4] John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats, Dylan, eds., *Yellow Peril! An Archive of Anti-Asian Fear* (London: Verso, 2014), 357.

[5] Ross G. Forman, *China and the Victorian Imagination: Empires Entwined* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 4.

[6] Ibid., 5.

more or less left out of the discussion. On the other hand, bilingual scholars of Chinese literature working on the early 20th century tend to emphasize the mutual influence of English and Chinese Modernism in the domain of literary aesthetics and other high culture products, often eliding the political and popular discourses around the Yellow Peril. For example, Patricia Laurence's *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes*, the most detailed study of the connections between China's modernist literary societies and the Bloomsbury group in London, calls for "a global critical movement that shifts interest away from the polarization that demonizes the West". For her, the aesthetic exchanges of the English and Chinese modernists exemplify the "imaginative space outside history while people live in it…This space is literature, this space is art."[7]

Sharing Lawrence's sense of dissatisfaction with the polarizing tendencies of singular (post-)colonial frameworks, I am also cautious about replacing it with such binaries between history and literature, between politics and aesthetics. Therefore, crossing the boundaries between different national contexts and literary circles, this chapter brings together English pulp fiction and late Qing intellectual reactions to draw attention to the multi-directional spread of the Yellow Peril discourse. As will be shown, in this larger picture, Yellow Perilism, as an ideological product of the unstable international politics of the early 20th century, also exerted its discursive power on various real-life events that in turn affected the different ideological positions of these groups. While my primary focus in this chapter falls on fiction (and poetry for Chapter 2), it is worth noting that the historicist angle I am taking necessarily means that the presences and absences of Yellow Perilism in these texts cannot be separated from the wider debates on race, nation, and culture during that period.

Origins of a Racist Phrase: From "*Die Gelbe Gefahr*" to "The Yellow Peril"

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[7] Patricia Laurence, *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes: Bloomsbury, Modernism, and China* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 391-392.

As Lu Xun mentions, the term "the Yellow Peril (*die Gelbe Gefahr*)" was first used by the German Emperor Wilhelm II in 1895 to describe a lithograph he commissioned from the artist Hermann Knackfuss, entitled "Peoples of Europe, Guard Your Most Sacred Possessions (*Völker Europas wahret eure heiligsten Güter*)" (Figure 1.1). In this allegorical lithograph, the Archangel Michael occupies the center stage, his right hand holding a sharp sword of lightning. Leading seven female goddesses dressed like warriors, he gestures towards a sinister Buddha-like figure, which is shrouded in dark smoke and looms in the background at the right side of the lithograph. The Emperor's lithograph, reportedly inspired by a dream he had, is the visual evidence that the European anxieties about the Yellow Peril were from the beginning not only racial, but also religious and gendered. Indeed, the androcentric leadership the archangel (most likely symbolizing imperial Germany) has over the other female angels (other European powers) is obvious in the gender dichotomy created by this national anthropomorphism, and the shining cross that dominates the upper left side of the image alludes to the unifying power of Christianity against the darkness of the pagan Buddha from the East.

More importantly, Lu Xun was wrong about the Buddha's irrelevance for the Chinese. While the direct source of the Emperor's Yellow Perilist anxieties was Japan's colonial expansion in China after winning the Sino-Japanese war (also known in Europe as "The Yellow War"), the Triple Intervention against Japan's Treaty of Shimonoseki, made by Germany, France and Russia in 1895, was justified in highly racialized terms that bound the Japanese and the Chinese together in the antagonistic super-category of "yellow".[8] The Treaty of Shimonoseki demanded the cession of China's Liaodong Peninsula to Japan, but the Triple Intervention made by the three European powers forced Japan to give up its claim and started instead the European "scramble for China": Russia soon occupied the whole of Liaodong Peninsula, Germany controlled the nearby Shandong province, and France started to negotiate for more treaty ports.[9] The antagonistic race ideology behind this series of events is most

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[8] For references to "The Yellow War", see Michael Keevak, *Becoming Yellow: A Short History of Racial Thinking* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011), 7 and 126.

[9] For more details on these related historical events, see Robert Bickers, *The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832-1914* (London: Penguin Books, 2011), 326-333.

clearly revealed in a letter sent by Wilhelm II to his cousin, Tsar Nicholas II, after the intervention was successfully made:

> I thank you sincerely for the excellent way in which you initiated the combined action of Europe for its interest against Japan…I shall certainly do all in my power to keep Europe quiet, and also guard Russia's rear so that nobody shall hamper your action towards the Far East! For that is clearly the great task of the future for Russia to cultivate an Asian Continent and to defend Europe from the inroads of the Great Yellow race.[10]

The Russian sociologist Jacques Novicow would later reiterate this racial antagonism in his influential 1897 treatise in French, "The Yellow Peril (*Le Péril Jaune*)," in which he argued that the Japanese and Chinese ("*Asiatiques*") would pose "a grand danger to our race and…civilization."[11] As Michael Keevak points out, the invention of "the yellow peril" in 1895 was a significant moment of racialized consolidation of anti-East Asian sentiments in the West "not only because the phrase appeared in every imaginable category of both scholarly and popular writing, but also because for the first time it was able to cross European linguistic boundaries".[12]

Figure 1.1 *Peoples of Europe, Guard Your Most Sacred Possessions* by Hermann Knackfuss, 1895[13]

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[10] Neil Forbes Grant, ed., *The Kaiser's Letters to the Tsar* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1920), 10-11.
[11] Jacques Novicow, *Le Péril Jaune* (Paris: V. Giard et E. Brière, 1897), 3. My translation.
[12] Keevak, *Becoming Yellow*, 125.
[13] *Völker Europas, wahrt eure heiligsten Güter* (Peoples of Europe, Guard Your Holiest Assets), lithograph by Hermann Knackfuß (1848–1915), based on a draft by the German emperor, Wilhelm II (1859–41), [n.p.], 1895. Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin. /S. Ahlers. 229.

Despite the fact that the Union Jack features prominently in Wilhelm II's lithograph, it was not until 1900 that the term "Yellow Peril" first appeared in the English language. Following the intensification of the Boxer Rebellion in China, in which many Christian missionaries were killed and the Western powers' imperial enterprises threatened, a *Daily News* report of 21 July 1900 described the uprising as a "massacre," and the term "Yellow Peril" was explained as the "supposed danger that the Asiatic peoples would overwhelm the white or overrun the world".[14] In *Failure, Nationalism, and Literature*, Jing Tsu points out that fin de siècle Yellow Perilism in Europe was rooted in its historical memories of the invasions of Attila the Hun and Genghis Khan, and she proposes four main versions of the discourse, which refer to different agents of threat: the rise of modern Japan, "the enormity of China's population", "a composite of the two", and Russia as the real peril in Asia.[15] In the context of China and England's mutual perceptions, the second and third versions are the most important. Notably, what separates fin de siècle European Yellow Perilism from 19th century anti-Chinese sentiments in America is the different ways in which "the enormity of China's population" was felt and imagined. With Qing China caught up in a series of tumultuous events like the Taiping Rebellion and the Opium Wars, The American West Coast, especially California, witnessed at least three waves of Chinese immigration throughout the 19th century, and the number reached 300,000 in 1880, making up more than a tenth of the state's population.[16] This visible presence was viewed negatively by many white Americans, especially the working class, and the state eventually passed the infamous Chinese

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[14] There is no specific information on the identity of the author of this newspaper article. The quote is mentioned in Anne Witchard, *England's Yellow Peril: Sinophobia and the Great War* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), 32.

[15] Jing Tsu, *Failure, Nationalism, and Literature: The Making of Modern Chinese Identity, 1895-1937* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 78-79. For more details about the first and fourth interpretations of the Yellow Peril, the Japan-led model and the Russia-led model, see Luo Fuhui 羅福惠, *Huanghuolun: dongxiwenming de duili yu duihua* 黃禍論：東西文明的對立與對話 [The Yellow Peril Discourse: Confrontation and Dialogue between Eastern and Western Civilizations] (Taipei: Lixu, 2007), 81-108 and 347-388.

[16] L. E. Purcell, *Immigration* (Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press, 1995), 40. Anti-Chinese sentiments after the California Gold Rush (1848-1855) were so strong that when Bret Harte published the poem "The Heathen Chinee" to satirize contemporary racist attitudes in 1870, it was not read as satire and the title phrase was popularized as a racist slur against the Chinese in America. See David Scott, *China and the International System, 1840-1949* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2008), 61.

Restriction Act in 1882, making "Chinese" the only explicitly race-based distinction in American immigration history. In comparison, the British census recorded no more than 600 "Chinese resident aliens" in London in as late as 1911.[17] This contrast explains why anti-Chinese essays and invasion narratives written by Americans, such as G. B. Densmore's *The Chinese in California* (1880) and P. W. Donner's *Last Days of the Republic* (1880), were much more concerned about the economic competition generated by Chinese labor, while British anxieties over China's enormity and Japan's rise were shaped more by geopolitics. M. P. Shiel's *The Yellow Danger* (1898) is a case in point where the two different versions of the Yellow Peril, as compelled by the drastic shifts of geopolitical events, are allegorized into one.

The Remarkable "Chino-Japanese": Personification and *The Yellow Danger*

Although not the first attempt in Anglophone literature to popularize and personify the Yellow Peril, *The Yellow Danger* was the first to be widely read and discussed, and its antagonist Dr. Yen How became the prototype of the Yellow Peril supervillain for readers across the Atlantic and the British Empire.[18] The story was first serialized as "The Empress of the Earth: The Tale of the Yellow War" in the magazine *Short Stories*. As Anne Witchard has pointed out, Shiel's inspiration came from the European powers' colonial competition with one another in China following the Jiaozhou Incident.[19] The incident, following the Triple Intervention mentioned before, took place in 1897 when Germany

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[17] John Seed, "Limehouse Blues: Looking for Chinatown in the London Docks, 1900-40," *History Workshop Journal*, no. 62 (2006): 63.

[18] The first Anglophone work to feature a Yellow Peril villain in an invasion narrative is perhaps Phillip Reade's short story "Tom Edison Jr.'s Electric Sea Spider". Published in the five-cent novel series *The Nugget Library* in 1892 with very limited circulation, the story recounts the processes in which Edison Jr.'s technological inventions defeat the American-educated "Celestial pirate" Kiang Ho. See J. K. van Dover, *The Judge Dee Novels of R.H. van Gulik: The Case of the Chinese Detective and the American Reader* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc., 2015), 190.

[19] Witchard, *England's Yellow Peril*, 93. Shiel's own background is of significance to interpretating the racist ideologies in his fiction as well. He was born on the Caribbean Island of Montserrat, which is still a British Overseas Territory today, and educated in the British colony of Barbados. His father was an Irish merchant while his mother was "biracial and claimed Andalusian and African (slave) heritage". See the introductory page of M. P. Shiel, *Collected Works of M. P. Shiel* (Hastings, East Sussex: Delphi Classics, 2021).

used the deaths of several German missionaries as an excuse and seized the coastal area of Jiaozhou in Shandong province. Germany's increasing economic power in Europe and its colonial ambition in China inevitably triggered some fear in Britain as the Chinese treaty-port system established after the two Opium Wars was closely tied to British colonial and commercial interests in Asia. Shiel's story, as a weekly serialization of political fiction, not only capitalized on this fear but also pointed towards China as the culprit rather than the victim. In as early as the second chapter, Shiel has Yen How reveal to his Japanese collaborator Marquis Ito that China's territorial concessions to the European powers were all part of a grand strategy to pit these colonialist countries against one another, and in this way "China has it in her power to turn Europe into an exhausted waste…" (5)[20]

Indeed, in *The Yellow Danger*, Yen How was invented by Shiel as the ultimate embodiment of the Yellow Peril. Not dissimilar to the national anthropomorphism in the Kaiser's lithograph, Yen How is portrayed as a "Chino-Japanese": "He was the son of a Japanese father by a Chinese woman. He combined these antagonistic races in one man. Dr. Yen How was the East." (2) Moreover, having studied at the University of Heidelberg and lived in Britain and America for many years, he is "cosmopolitan" and "more familiar with the minutiae of Western civilization" than the Westerners (2-3).

This characterization effectively captures a multitude of paradoxes common in British colonial discourses. Firstly, the double hybridity of Yen How directly challenges the colonial policing of boundaries between the Self and the Other. In Homi Bhabha's theorization, a destabilizing force of subversion is created when the colonizer is mimicked by the colonized, because the "ambivalence" generated by such acts of mimicry exposes the constructed nature of colonial hierarchies. Yen How's familiarity with Western civilization makes him "a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite".[21] The success of British colonialism relied on the careful management of this difference to

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[20] M. P. Shiel, *The Yellow Danger* (Memphis, Tennessee: General Books, 2012). The first book form of the story was published by Grant Richards in 1898 in London. To reduce the number of citational footnotes, subsequent quotes from *The Yellow Danger* are from the 2012 edition and followed by page numbers in brackets.
[21] Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *Discipleship* 28, no.1 (1984): 126.

the advantage of the colonizer. For example, the creation of a native comprador class through British education was conditioned on this elite class's loyalty to the British Empire, which was secured by their "vested interest in colonial occupation" that gave them the positional superiority over the majority of the colonized subjects put under their direct management.[22] However, Yen How's racial identity and political allegiance disrupts such management: "His skin was more yellow than the yellow man's, and his brain was more white than the white man's." (4) That is to say, he uses his white education to construct a threatening force of yellow liberation and domination that would inevitably break away from the imperial status quo. While I am aware of Robert Young's critique of the positivistic tendencies in Bhabha's theories on hybridity and ambivalence and would acknowledge that such an emphasis on the disruptive or resistant nature of the hybrid colonial subject is often more of a historical hindsight in the act of postcolonial reading *per se*, I would also contend that Bhabha's point on the subversive potentials of colonial/racial ambivalence has found an unexpectedly fit application in the case of fin de siècle Yellow Peril writings in England, as the fear of geopolitical invasion and race war constitutes the key narrative tension in them, which is, ironically, due to the fact that countries like Japan and China have never been fully and formally colonized by any Western power.[23] Secondly, Yen How's hybrid racial identity as a Chino-Japanese leader that works with both China and Japan readily exposes the Other as the imagination of the Self. In reality, Meiji Japan at the end of the 19th century had been heavily influenced by political thinkers such as Fukuzawa Yukichi (福澤 諭吉). His idea of "Datsua nyūō (脱亞入歐 abandonment of Asia, and joining with Europe)" propelled the country's imperial ambition in East Asia, which led to the Sino-Japanese war in 1895 and Japan's annexation of Korea in 1910.[24] However, for Shiel, China and Japan's deteriorating relations in reality did not matter. For him, all international conflicts of the time boiled down to a racial competition— "the white man and the yellow man in their death-grip, contending for the earth…there are no others." (5) This imagined nature

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[22] Bill Ashcroft et al., *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 1998), 55.
[23] See Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 1990), 149.
[24] Stefan Tanaka, *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts into History* (London: University of California Press, 1993), 38.

of the Yellow Peril is a testament to Judith Butler's philosophical statement that "The Self/Other distinction is not primarily external…the Self is from the start radically implicated in the 'Other'."[25]

This mixture of the Self and the Other in the functioning of British colonial discourses means that comments on the Other would usually reflect in one way or another on the Self. Therefore, it is not surprising that Shiel's description of Yen How's first appearance in the story, despite its explicit racializing elements, is actually quite positive:

> He was a man of remarkable visage. When his hat was off, one saw that he was nearly bald, and that his expanse of brow was majestic. There was something brooding, meditative, in the meaning of his long eyes; and there was a brown, and dark, and specially dirty shade in the yellow tan of his skin…Nothing equaled his assiduity, his minuteness, his attention to detail…In the East he could have climbed at once to the very top of the tree—even in the West, had he chosen. (2)

This mixed portrayal contrasts with the demonized image of Yen How on the book cover of the 1898 edition (Figure 1.2). In that picture, a giant yellow man, flaunting his long pigtail and moustache, stretches his claw-like hands towards the earth. In this way, the Yellow Peril is visualized as a satanic apocalyptic force typical of fin de siècle invasion narratives in Britain.[26] As the story develops, Shiel's description of Yen How would take a drastic turn towards negative racial characterization as well—he is called "the rat" in Chapter 13, with his pigtail "representing the barbarism, the superstition, the repulsive soul of the East" (40). This dehumanizing association of the pigtailed Chinaman with rats is hardly arbitrary, as it clearly recalls many of the anti-Chinese campaigns and advertisements in California in the era of the Chinese Exclusion Act (Figure 1.3 for example).

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[25] Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," in *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*, ed. David H. Richter (Boston: Bedford, 1998), 1523.

[26] For a detailed study of the genres and characteristics of fin de siècle invasion narratives, see Ailise Bulfin, *Gothic Invasions: Imperialism and Fin-de-Siècle Popular Fiction 1890-1914* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2018).
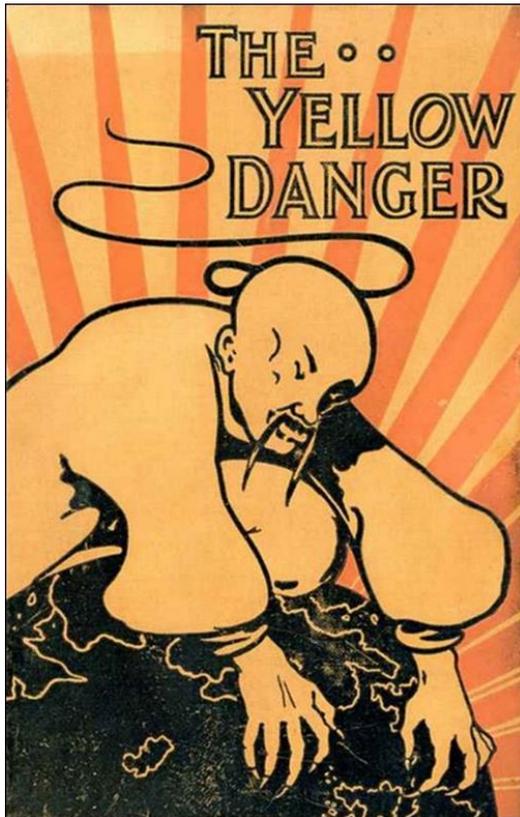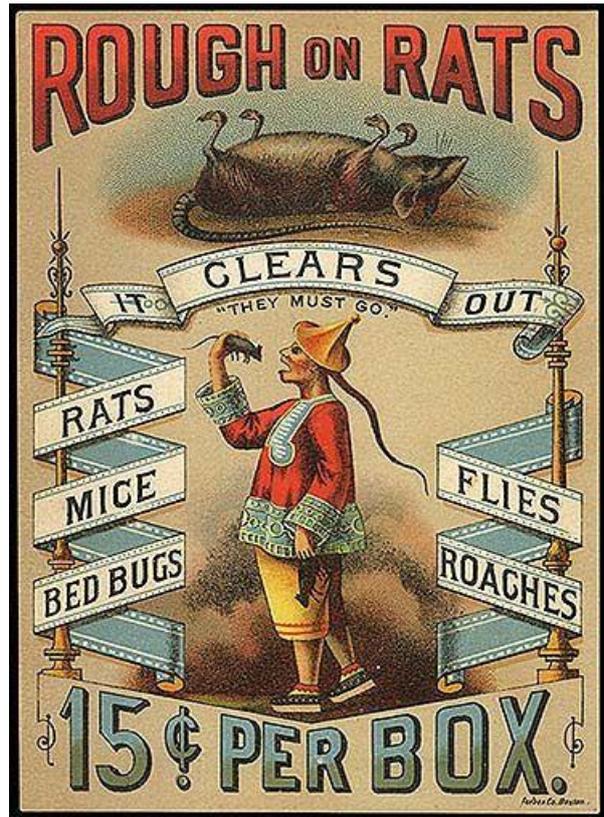
Figure 1.2 *The Yellow Danger*, 1895 edition   Figure 1.3 US advertisement "Rough on Rats", c. 1879-1890.[27]

This drastic turn of characterization is explained through what Shiel calls "the Chinese instinct of Vengeance", and he uses the figure of a racist white woman as his plot prop to sexualize and intensify the racial conflicts in the story (40). After meeting Ada Seward, a Fulham nursemaid, at a ball in London, Yen How falls in love with her and "for the first time in his life, began to suffer on account of a woman" (3). He then stalks and hijacks her on her way home from shopping, and like a "clownish and unpracticed lover," he asks Ada, "You will give poor Yen How one lillee kiss?" To this Ada responds, "Perhaps you are not aware whom it is you are talking to…I'll give you one lillee box of soap to wash you face, if you like!" Realizing that "it was hopeless on account of his race," Yen How nonetheless tries to woo Ada for a second time, for which he receives a direct racial insult— "Oh, don't be a stupid little goose of a Chinaman! Just fancy!"—and is subsequently beaten by her male

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[27] This image is from the Daniel K. E. Ching Collection, Chinese Historical Society of America, San Francisco, cited in Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (London: Duke University Press, 2012), 110.

companion (3). With this background story, Shiel then attributes Yen How's grand scheme of "doing an ill turn to all the other white women, and men, in the world" to his desire to "possess one white woman, ultimately, and after all" (4). Indeed, in Chapter 28, when he finally dispatches his invading "yellow hordes" to Europe, Yen How decrees that "None of the women of England must be killed! — till he gave the word." (88) Shiel further explains the extremity of Yen How's racial-sexual retaliation through a comparative discourse of Yellow Perilism and anti-Semitism: "The Chinese theory of vengeance is not, like the Hebrew, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; it is, two eyes for an eye, and thirty-two teeth for a tooth." (57)

This sexual tension behind the rise of the Yellow Peril points towards the nature of imperial competition as "a masculine affair".[28] As noted by scholars such as Ashis Nandy, Sikata Banerjee, and A. M. Roberts, "hegemonic masculinity", often articulated as "sexual relations with women," forms an inherent part of both imperialism and anti-imperialist nationalism in the literatures about British India.[29] Similarly, in *The Yellow Danger*, this "manly competition" is foregrounded through the love triangle of Yen How, Ada Seward, and the white English hero John Hardy. After rejecting Yen How, Ada had a brief romantic encounter with John, foreshadowing the rivalry between the two men in their fateful encounter with each other.[30] In addition, when Ada decides to sacrifice herself to Yen How "for her country" in Chapter 31, John saves her, confronts Yen How in her stead, and thus becomes an exemplar of "the manly mood of the race" (99 and 14). The series of events involving Ada demonstrates that fin de siècle British Yellow Perilism, as a particular branch of Western colonial discourse, is closely linked to the ideology of hegemonic masculinity that seeks to subjugate both white women and yellow men. The prevalence of this theme of racial-sexual love triangle was long-lasting

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[28] Sikata Banerjee, *Make Me a Man! Masculinity, Hinduism, and Nationalism in India* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2005), 8.

[29] Their analyses mainly focus on the masculinist discourses in Joseph Conrad, Rudyard Kipling, and various Indian nationalists' writings. See Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (Dehli: Oxford University Press, 2009), 55; A. M. Roberts, *Conrad and Masculinity* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 14; and Banerjee, *Make Me a Man!*, 8.

[30] Though John has never reciprocated Ada's love, Yen How's jealousy drives him to brand the English hero with Ada and his initials when he captures John in Chapter 18.

and found its most prominent manifestations in the bestsellers authored by Thomas Burke, especially *Limehouse Nights* (1916), which contains all kinds of cautionary tales about the dangerous liaisons between poor white girls and yellow men (Chapter 5 of this thesis returns to this racial-sexual triangulation by looking at how it has reappeared in post-Mao Chinese literature).[31]

Since the central tension of Shiel's story is built on this eminent race war between "white Europe" and "yellow Asia," his national allegory would indeed be incomplete without the figure of John Hardy as "the child of England" (104). John Hardy is a naval sub-lieutenant— "himself a modern Battleship," and he has "the typical blue eyes of the English tar," for "he is as essentially an English thing as the cliffs of Dover…No other land could have given birth to anything at all resembling him." (24) As Yen How's "yellow conquest" looms, John becomes the de facto leader of England, representing "the apex of a pyramid, the rest of which consists of centuries of the ocean-life and ocean-culture of a race" (83 and 25). In the antagonistic binary Shiel has set up, he "was as much as the West as Yen How was the East" (97).

However, the binary gradually breaks down as the story develops, and a kind of ambivalent hybridity, mirroring that of Yen How's Westernized Chino-Japanese identity, manifests in the (self-)characterization of John Hardy. When he replaces Ada in the mission to negotiate with Yen How, the Chinese and Japanese forces, joined by the "twenty-seven millions of Mongolian inhabitants" in Europe, have already occupied most of the continent, with Paris becoming "the New Pekin" (93-94).[32] In this last meeting between them, John Hardy condemns Yen How for his rampages in Europe, but he

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[31] It is worth noting that the most popular short story in this collection, entitled "The Chink and the Child", was adapted into a film called *Broken Blossom* by the famous American director D. W. Griffith in 1919, which set an influential cultural foundation for the desexualization of East Asian men in British and American media. In Anne Witchard's book-length study of Thomas Burke, she points out that Burke's stories are actually often sympathetic towards the doomed romances between white girls and yellow men, though almost all of them end up tragically due to the violent interventions of white men. More importantly, while this shows that Burke was to a degree critical against the toxic masculinity of British imperialism, he was mainly motivated by his own imperial nostalgia for a less regulated East End before the Drug Acts of the 1910s. Hence, it only presented a limited counter-discourse to the yellow peril. See Anne Witchard, *Thomas Burke's Dark Chinoiserie: Limehouse Nights and the Queer Spell of Chinatown* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), chapter 1 and 8.

[32] Rather than the diasporic East Asian communities in Europe, these "Mongolian inhabitants" refer to the peoples of "Hungary, Turkey, Lapland, Finland", which reveals   internal fractures of the Shiel's categorization of whiteness (and its implied political solidarity) (92).

also acknowledges that the two of them are not that different after all:

> 'What a damned reptile for God to make!'
> 'Abuse away. Your mind is not really first-class, after all. You are the slave of old, popular surface-ideas. A reptile is no worse than anything else, boy. If he is stronger than other things, he is better than them.'
> 'Ah well, if that were so, I should be glad too, Yen. There is not much to choose between us, now, in that way.'
> 'What, you are of the species, too, then?'
> 'Something of that sort, perhaps—if venom makes the reptile. It is your own fault. You have made me like yourself. By the Lord, I warn you, Yen How…it is a question of strength, not venom…" (102)

Here John admits that he and Yen are of the same species, because at this point, he has already come up with a grand scheme for "the extinction of the yellow man" (112). The cruelty of this genocidal scheme recalls Shiel's exaggerations about "the Chinese instinct of Vengeance" at the beginning of the story, and again exposes the imaginary and discursive nature of the Self versus the Other. Furthermore, the short sentence "you have made me like yourself" is especially indicative of the anxieties over imperialism's side effects of racial degeneration in fin de siècle Britain. As Witchard states, toward the beginning of the 20th century, "the new pseudo-science of eugenics" was gaining momentum and aimed for "race-regeneration" to be set up as a national imperative, and it was reasoned that "racial mixing with non-whites undermined the hierarchical structure of race that upheld the imperial rationale and could not be tolerated."[33] Since the publication of Thomas de Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* in 1821, more and more commentaries and fiction associated "Chinese manners and modes of life and scenery" with the physical and mental deterioration of English society.[34] The image of the opium den as an exotic underworld with contaminating effects can be found in many influential Victorian writings, such as Charles Dickens' *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870) and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), and its prevalence and popularity reached a climax after the publication of Thomas Burke's *Limehouse Nights* in 1916.[35]

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[33] Witchard, *England's Yellow Peril*, 1-2.
[34] Thomas de Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2009), 191. The book was first published in two instalments of the *London Magazine* in 1821.
[35] See Shanyn Fiske, "Orientalism Reconsidered: China and the Chinese in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Victorian

In English colonial literature, the disastrous effects of similar acts of "going native" culminated in the figure of Captain Kurtz in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in 1899. Viewed in this context, John Hardy's resemblances to Yen How in his cruel scheming are perhaps meant to be read as symptoms of his racial degeneration towards yellowness, which makes the English victory over "the yellow wave" a much more ambivalent and ironic event (108).

In the last two chapters of the book, John executes his scheme by sending a group of Chinese captives infected with cholera to Europe on the day of Yen How's "inauguration of the Yellow Gods at Paris", which leads to a breakout of "the new Black Death", killing "nearly a hundred million yellow men" (112). Shiel then brings an abrupt and highly self-congratulatory ending to the story: "…the Continent of Europe was British territory. This meant that all Asia and Africa were British too…England, no doubt, *will*, in truth, absorb the world…" (112-113, original italics) This exterminative solution to the Yellow Peril would influence and reappear in many later Anglophone writings, such as Jack London's short story 'The Unparalleled Invasion' (1910) and Percy Westerman's novel *When East Meets West* (1913).

However, Shiel is uneasy about the inglorious way in which this victory and world domination is achieved, as he not only labels John Hardy's scheme as a "crime" but also arranges him to die in a duel with another young white man before he can witness this victory (109). Indeed, even though John and Yen are set up as allegorical opposites, Shiel's portrayals of them are full of contradictions that might make them more similar to each other than different. For example, apart from performing the "hegemonic masculinity" necessitated by imperial struggles, the two male characters also share the condition of what Forman calls "imperfect masculinity".[36] While Yen How is emasculated by Ada's rejection, Shiel's description of John's appearance is from the beginning full of effeminate features: "He is small in stature, and slim. His face is said to be the gravest, saddest, prettiest girl-face in the

Studies," *Literary Compass* 8, no. 4 (2011): 214-226 for a detailed analysis of this image.
[36] Forman, *China and the Victorian Imagination*, 147.

land, and his disposition in private life is much more than usually mild, soft, and affectionate." (24)

He has asthma and sometimes falls ill before battles take place. One possible explanation for this

effeminacy and weakness is that Shiel was capitalizing on contemporary popular imagination of the

hardworking Chinese laborers as belonging to a "race of resilience" and sought to increase narrative

tension by setting up this contrast.[37] Interestingly and perhaps unsurprisingly, these shared conditions

of contradiction and hybridity culminate in the same final-meeting scene mentioned above, where the

Yellow Peril seems to drift towards a primordial homoerotic Yellow-White Bromance:

> Caught in a sort of fascination, in a feeble, flaccid species of mutual mesmerism, they could not leave each other. Intense hatred and intense love are, of course, inverse forms of the same thing, and their manifestation is the same—an instinct for contact. A stab, a kiss—these are resultant varieties of the instinct…And as all grand intensities are primal, elementary, and resemblant to the passions of childhood, so the talk of these great men was not altogether unlike the wrangle between two bitter, lingering schoolboys, sitting on a bench, with lumps in their throats—fastened together, unable to part. (102)

The Yellow Danger was Shiel's most successful work during his lifetime, and Yen How was the

prototypical personification of the Yellow Peril and a big influence on numerous later works. The

geopolitics of race war, the paradoxical masculinist fear/desire for racial miscegenation, and the

colonial ambivalence derived from cultural hybridity and international contact are all key elements

that constitute the discursive imagination about the Yellow Peril, and they would maintain their

haunting presences as the Yellow Peril discourse travels across time and space. Shiel himself kept

recycling these elements in many of his later, less popular works, such as *The Yellow Wave* (1905) and

The Dragon (1913, revised and republished as *The Yellow Peril* in 1929). However, even within this

Yellow Perilist trilogy, the racist discourse was already mutating according to political contingencies

of the time. While the storyline still centers on an incoming Asian invasion against England, *The Yellow*

Wave has as its hero not a white Englishman, but a pacifist Japanese named Yoshio, and it "lacks the

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[37] The "physical vitality" of the Chinese was commented upon in a range of influential books of the era, such as Walter Henry Medhurst's *The Foreigner in Far Cathay* (1872), Arthur Smith's *Chinese Characteristics* (1894), and John Macgowan's *Lights and Shadows of Chinese Life* (1909). In contrast, around the same time many Chinese nationalists portrayed their motherland as weak and promoted the discourse of "the Sickman of East Asia (東亞病夫)" to encourage reform. See Yang, *Bingfu, huanghuo yu shuishi*, 64-67 for more details.

same level of racial hatreds" expressed in *The Yellow Danger*.[38] Featuring Japan as the Yellow Peril

after its defeat of Russia in 1905, it might be reasonable to surmise that Shiel nonetheless had to tone

down his racism in this way because Britain was still part of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1902-1923)

against Russia at the time. In contrast, *The Dragon*, published shortly after the fall of the Qing Dynasty

in China, invents the characters Teddy and Li Ku Yu as reincarnations of John Hardy and Yen How

and instigates as much Yellow Perilism against China and the Chinese as *The Yellow Danger*.

As one of the key features of serialized fiction, this close attention to ongoing political events was

crucial for fin de siècle Yellow Peril stories. Norman Fairclough's concept of "interdiscursivity" can

be particularly useful for understanding how these stories negotiate texts and contexts to obtain

topicality and publicity. Different from explicit or "manifest intertextuality," interdiscursivity is

broader and more abstract. It refers to discursive situations where a different set of social or discursive

practices is subsumed and appropriated in certain ways by another discursive formation.[39] Employed

in the practice of novel writing, interdiscursivity disrupts the boundaries between history and

speculation, and between different genres. Fin de siècle speculative fiction, as a particular genre, was

closely tied to the industry of journalism. Indeed, as Witchard has noticed, the rise of the Yellow Press

(or Yellow Journalism) in the 1890s had its origin in the often racialized image of an American comic

character—"the Yellow Kid"— and provided many source materials for Yellow Peril novels (Figure

1.4 and 1.5).[40] Similarly, *The Yellow Danger* is often said to be a fictionalization of Charles Henry

Pearson's *National Life and Character: A Forecast* (1893), which, as briefly mentioned in the

Introduction, was an immensely popular book of political analysis that promoted the idea of race war.

Despite such fictionalization, Shiel inserts many real contemporary figures, such as the British official

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[38] Amy J. Ransom, "Yellow Perils: M. P. Shiel, Race, and the Far East Menace," in *Dis-Orienting Planets: Racial Representations of Asia in Science Fiction*, ed. Isiah Lavender (Jackson, Mississippi: University of Mississippi Press, 2017), 76.

[39] Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 122. This useful concept recurs in subsequent Sections of this thesis.

[40] Anne Witchard, "Purple Clouds and Yellow Shadows: Sickly Vapours and Perilous Hues at the Fin de Siècle," in *Lord of Strange Deaths: The Fiendish World of Sax Rohmer*, ed. Phil Baker and Antony Clayton (London: Strange Attractor Press, 2015), 49. Also see the Introduction of Sabine Doran, *The Culture of Yellow, or the Visual Politics of Late Modernity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

Robert Harte and the Chinese diplomat Li Hung Chang (*Li Hongzhang* 李鴻章), as side characters to

interact with John Hardy and Yen How. In addition, many of the military events in the story were

narrated in the form of an English captain's diaries (Chapter 21 to 22), and Shiel drew on the reportage

of his journalist friend, W. T. Stead, to keep his plot updated. All these are interdiscursive strategies

that effectively blur the boundaries between reality and fiction, so that when the Boxer Rebellion broke

out in China in 1900, the book gained a prophetic status and its imagination about invasions was

realized in a most ironic way: rather than being invaded by China, Britain quickly joined various

European countries and Japan to form the Eight-Nation Alliance and invaded China with its troops.
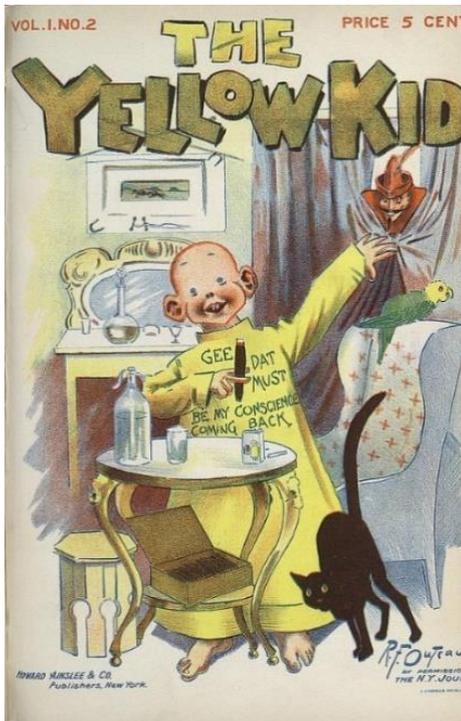

Figure 1.4 *The Yellow Kid*, vol.1 no.2, *New York World* 1895   Figure 1.5 "Li Hung Chang Visits Hogan's Alley."[41]
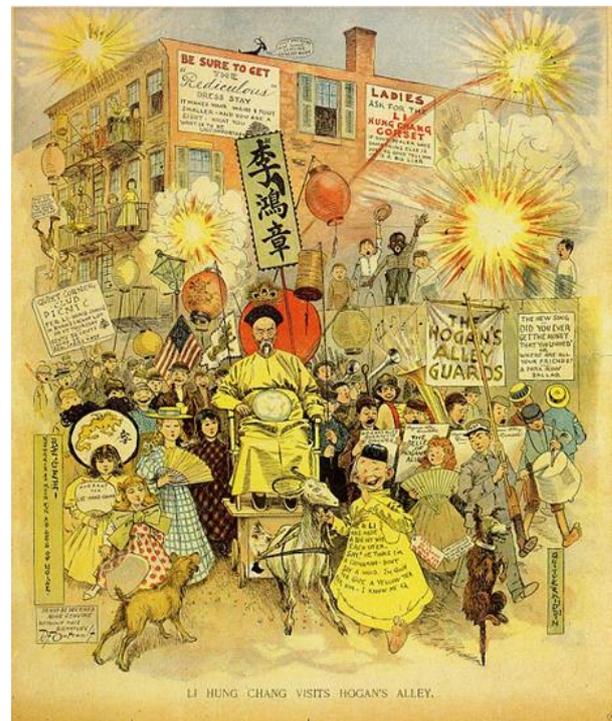
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[41] This drawing of the Yellow Kid welcoming Li Hung Chang in America was published in *New York World* on September 6, 1896, shortly after the Chinese diplomat arrived in America to negotiate trade and treatment of Chinese laborers. It is cited in Witchard, "Purple Clouds and Yellow Shadows", 53. Though the character's creator, R. F. Outcault, did not mention his racial identity explicitly, this particular drawing featuring the Yellow Kid and Li presents a racial caricature of the Chinese nonetheless. The words on the kid's shirt are written in capital letters: "ME & LI HAS MADE A BIG HIT WIT EACH OTHER. SAY! HE TINKS I'M A CHINAMAN—DON'T SAY A WORD. I'M GOING TER GIVE A YELLOW TEA FOR HIM—I KNOW MY Q." See Alison R. Marshall, *The Way of the Bachelor: Early Chinese Settlement in Manitoba* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), 77-78 for more details.

Apart from their repetitive elements, the lesser success of Shiel's later works was largely due to the fact that by the 1910s, a particular figure had come to dominate the Anglo-American imagination of the Yellow Peril—Sax Rohmer's Dr. Fu Manchu.

"The Yellow Peril Incarnate in One Man": Sax Rohmer's Racist Enterprise

Sax Rohmer is the pseudonym of Arthur Henry Sarsfield Ward. He was a journalist and the inspiration for his Chinese supervillain came from a report trip to London's Chinatown in Limehouse. He was sent there to track down a drug dealer called "Mr. King". He did not find any drug dealer but declared that "I have seen…Dr. Fu Manchu."[42] In other words, like Shiel's Yen How, the invention of Fu Manchu was an interdiscursive event based on certain aspects of the author's experiences in reality. Yet his creation of Fu Manchu may not have been as serendipitous as he claimed. When the character first appeared in a series of short stories in the magazine *The Storyteller* in 1912, the Xinhai Revolution in China had just toppled the Qing court, and Rohmer was aware that "conditions for launching a Chinese villain on the market were ideal." [43] Combining demonic animal physiognomy with a Westernized cultural hybridity, Rohmer's classic description of Fu Manchu in the first story of the series, "The Zayat Kiss", is also reminiscent of Yen How:

> Imagine a person, tall, lean and feline, high-shouldered, with a brow like Shakespeare and a face like Satan, a close-shaven skull, and long, magnetic eyes of the true cat-green. Invest him with all the cruel cunning of an entire Eastern race, accumulated in one giant intellect, with all the resources of science past and present, with all the resources, if you will, of a wealthy government—which, however, already has denied all knowledge of his existence. Imagine that awful being, and you have a mental picture of Dr. Fu Manchu, the yellow peril incarnate in one man.[44]

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[42] Cay Van Ash and Elizabeth Sax Rohmer, *Master of Villainy: A Biography of Sax Rohmer* (Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1972), 12.

[43] Ibid., 75.

[44] Sax Rohmer, *The Mystery of Dr. Fu-Manchu* (London: Titan Books, 2012), 25-26. Its first book form was published by Methuen in 1913 in the United Kingdom. For an extensive analysis of the entire paragraph, see Christopher Frayling, *The Yellow Peril: Dr. Fu Manchu & the Rise of Chinaphobia* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2014), 229-269.

Similar to Shiel's prototypical Yellow Perilist stories, Rohmer also relies on the white-yellow binary for narrative tension. Imitating "the Sherlock Holmes tradition", Rohmer incorporates the popular genre of detective fiction and has as Fu Manchu's opponents a pair of righteous white English men, Sir Nayland Smith and Dr. Petrie, who protect "the interests of the entire white race".[45] Themes and tropes of masculine race war, cultural hybridity, racial degeneration, even the kind of paradoxical homoeroticism mentioned above, are all present in the Fu Manchu stories.

No critical discussions on the Yellow Peril would be complete without mentioning Fu Manchu, but due to these similarities and the large repertoire of extant research on Fu Manchu, this chapter does not focus on close readings of the texts.[46] Instead, my focus here is on pointing out the distinctive characteristics of Rohmer's supervillain and his influence as the most representative Yellow Peril discourse in the West, so as to lay a clear foundation for my analyses of Yellow Perilism's mutations and afterlives in the rest of this thesis.

Firstly, the fundamental difference between Fu Manchu and earlier personifications of the Yellow Peril is his iconicity and endurance. Since his birth in 1912, the supervillain has featured as the main character in eighteen books, fourteen of which were written by Rohmer before his death in 1959, and the other four are authorized continuation novels by the American writer William Patrick Maynard and Rohmer's biographer Cay Van Ash. From the 1920s up to the 1980s, there were at least fourteen Fu Manchu films. TV, radio, and comic adaptations were also popular.[47] As such, Fu Manchu has always been a transatlantic phenomenon making big profits for Rohmer in the British and American markets. Most recently, from 2012 to 2016, the London publisher Titan Books republished the entire collection of Rohmer's original series, with new book cover designs, the racialist elements in which appear to be

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[45] Urmila Seshagiri, "Modernity's (Yellow) Perils: Dr. Fu-Manchu and English Race Paranoia," *Cultural Critique*, 2006, no. 62: 169. Rohmer, *The Mystery of Dr. Fu-Manchu*, 2012, 11.

[46] Thomas J. Cogan, "Western Images of Asia: Fu Manchu and the Yellow Peril," *Waseda Studies in Social Sciences* 3, no.2 (2002): 47-64 and David Scott, "Rohmer's 'Orient'—Pulp Orientalism?" *Oriental Archive 80*, no.1 (2012): 1-27 offer attentive close readings of the entire Fu Manchu series of Rohmer.

[47] For discussions on the Fu Manchu films, see Frayling, *The Yellow Peril*, 290-327 and Ruth Mayer, *Serial Fu Manchu: The Chinese Supervillain and the Spread of Yellow Peril Ideology* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014), 59-90.

anachronistic and even more exaggerated than the first editions (Figure 1.6 and 1.7). As Ruth Mayer observes, while most fin de siècle Yellow Perilist fiction, such as Shiel's trilogy, was serialized along with journalistic interests in the development of contemporary events, which would quickly dissipate as the political reality on the ground changed, Fu Manchu the figure himself is "serial" and the circulation of his image is itself a "global media event".[48] Unlike the easily forgotten prototype of Yen How, not only was Fu Manchu "the first Asian role of prominence in modern literature to have a large American (and English) readership", Rohmer's character has also taken on "an archetypal existence alongside such immortal creations as Dracula, Jekyll and Hyde, and Sherlock Holmes".[49] Indeed, Fu Manchu's iconicity perseveres into the 21st century as well when academics and cultural workers continue to use terms like "The Fu Manchu Syndrome" and "The Fu Manchu Complex" to describe and satirize anti-Chinese sentiments in contemporary Western societies.[50] Moreover, even when the character himself fades away from public memory, "the larger parameters of the Fu Manchu phantom" and the racialist thinking it signifies and instigates will always haunt the "yellow peril update" in contemporary Anglophone and Sinophone cultures (more discussions on such contemporary mutations in Section III).

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[48] Ibid., 33.

[49] William F. Wu, *The Yellow Peril: Chinese-Americans in American Fiction, 1850-1940* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1982), 164 and Baker and Clayton, eds. *Lord of Strange Deaths*, XVI.

[50] Doobo Shim, "From Yellow Peril through Model Minority to Renewed Yellow Peril," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 22, no.4 (1998): 389. "The Fu Manchu Complex" is the title of a satirical play written by the Chinese-British activist Daniel York in 2013.
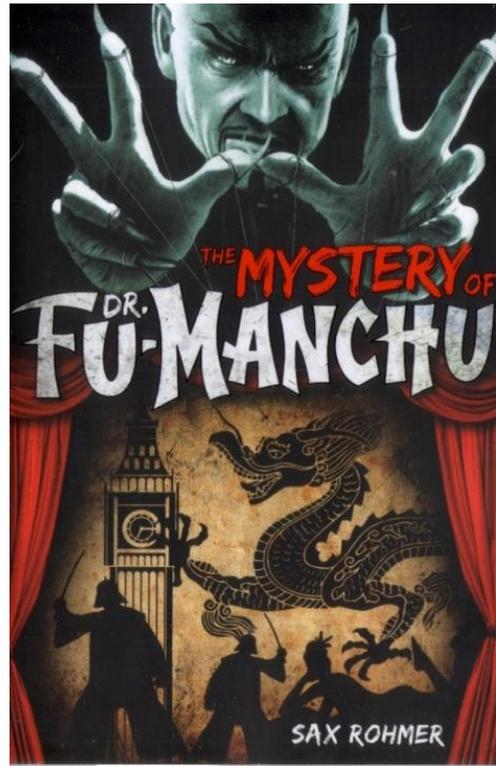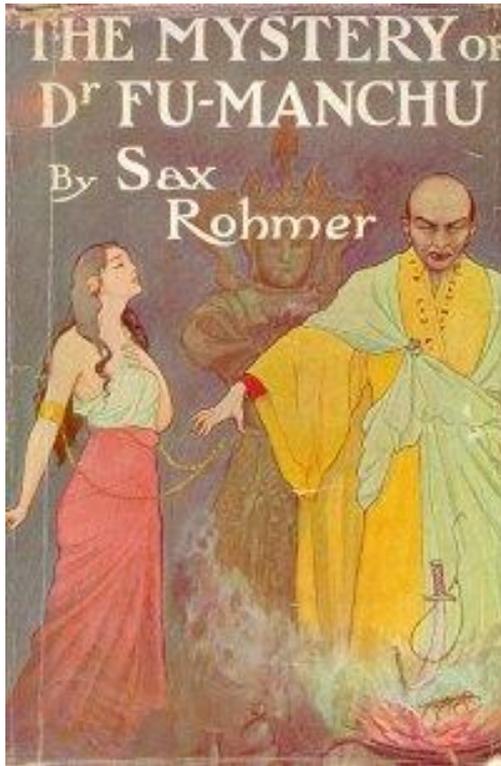
Figure 1.6 and 1.7 *The Mystery of Fu Manchu*, 1913 Methuen edition and 2012 Titan Books edition

Secondly, the Fu Manchu stories' transatlantic popularity served to synchronize and synthesize the different focuses of the British Yellow Peril discourse and its American counterpart. That is to say, they have not only retained the geopolitical concern of the British invasion narratives, but also used this concern to instigate fear against the domestic Yellow Peril—the tiny community of immigrants in London's Limehouse Chinatown. In the third book in the series, *The Si-Fan Mysteries* (1917), it is revealed that Fu Manchu has been working for a secret pan-Asianist society named "the Si-Fan" in Tibet, which is described as "the most ancient and potent organization in the world" that stretches "out into every corner of the Orient".[51] To execute the organization's plan to assassinate prominent Western imperialists, Fu Manchu has set up his lairs in "London's darkest slums"—he is literally the Other that is located in the Self.[52] As Urmila Seshagiri has pointed out, such irrefragable racial paranoia in

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[51] Sax Rohmer, *The Hand of Dr. Fu-Manchu* (London: Titan Books, 2012), 174 and 38. It was first published as *The Si-Fan Mysteries* by Methuen in 1913 in the United Kingdom. Titan Books' republished series uses the American versions of the book titles.

[52] Sax Rohmer, *The Return of Dr. Fu-Manchu* (London: Titan Books, 2012), 97. It was first published as *The Devil Doctor*

modern British detective fiction was not only driven by xenophobia, but also rooted in deep anxieties about the sense of unfamiliarity and disorientation brought by urbanization and industrial modernity itself. In other words, Fu Manchu is but a figurative embodiment of the increasing alienation of London and "the British Empire's vulnerability". [53] In the American context, Fu Manchu's centripetal deployment of Chinese immigrant communities all over the world in realizing his grand scheme of conquering the white race fed into a decades-long literary tradition of anti-Chinese sentiments in 19th century American literature and filled "a power vacuum that had existed in the tales of Chinese immigration and infiltration". [54] The stories were received by the white American readership as confirmations of the undeniable link between Chinese immigrants, their cultural deficiencies and China as a threatening geopolitical force led by a highly centralized organization.

Finally, this alienation is further magnified by the range of exotic beings and props Fu Manchu brings to London. In this regard, Yen How's Western education and "Chino-Japanese" identity pale in comparison to Fu Manchu's four PhD degrees from prominent Western universities, his dacoit assassins, his Japanese torture rituals, and his magical fungi and elixir. Apart from his "perfect English", he would also speak in tongues indecipherable for his English captives, "addressing a Chinaman in Chinese, a Hindu in Hindustanee, or an Egyptian in Arabic". [55] His secret hideouts are often full of England's favorite decorative exotica—"Oriental pottery, Egyptian statuettes, Indian armor, and other curios", and they are often located in some "squalid market street of the Orient", where undesirable whites, "Poles, Russians, Serbs, Roumanians, Jews of Hungary, and Italians of Whitechapel mingled in the throng."[56] Moreover, this heightened exoticism is often eroticized, and miscegenation is not discussed in terms of racial degeneration but rather romanticized, as long as it is the English men who

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by Methuen in 1916 in the United Kingdom.

[53] Seshagiri, "Modernity's (Yellow) Perils", 170.

[54] Wu, *The Yellow Peril*, 173. As Wu recounts in the third and fourth chapters of his book, the sporadic publications of literary portrayals of Chinese immigrants in the US from the mid-19th century exhibited a mixture of racist condescension, missionary sympathy, naturalist discrimination and xenophobia based on contemporary anthropological discourses and were not very impactful overall.

[55] Rohmer, *The Mystery*, 167 and *The Hand*, 205.

[56] Rohmer, *The Return*, 132, 89-90.

eventually win over Fu Manchu's Arab girl slaves and not the other way around.

Apart from the Fu Manchu series, Rohmer wrote many other Yellow Perilist novels that had very negative effects on the image of Chinatowns and the Chinese in Britain and beyond, such as *The Yellow Claw* (1915) and *Dope* (1919). One of them, *Yellow Shadows* (1925), typifies Western Yellow Perilism's interdiscursive feedback loop between fiction and reality. In this crime novel, Rohmer adapted the real story of Brilliant Chang, who was falsely accused of murder and deported to China due to the negative images of "the drug-peddling Chinks" the British public held in their mind after reading Rohmer's stories.[57] However, even a writer as popular as Rohmer could not be free from the Yellow Peril's mutational calling as political contingencies shifted again in international affairs. As China became an Eastern ally of the Allied forces in the Second World War, demonizing discourses against Japan gradually replaced anti-Chinese sentiments in British and American public media.[58] Accordingly, in the Fu Manchu novels written after the mid-1930s, Rohmer faced "the difficulty in an age of German and Japanese militarism of maintaining Fu Manchu's position as the greatest threat to the Western world" and arranged the Chinese supervillain to work with the English protagonists to fight against Fascism and communism.[59] Therefore, similar to Shiel's trilogy, the Yellow Peril discourse in Rohmer's works did not remain stable and was already malleable for the fulfillment of different political and ideological agendas.

Hierarchizing Races: Late Qing Reactions to the Yellow Peril

The mutational nature of the Yellow Peril discourse becomes even clearer when we look at how

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[57] Witchard, *England's Yellow Peril*, 82.

[58] Notably, the anti-Japanese images and writings were not simple repetitions of extant Yellow Peril stereotypes. To the contrary, to separate images of Japan from those of China, British and American political cartoons of the 1940s used animal tropes, such as monkeys and bats, to dehumanize Japan, and such tactical differentiations further point to the representational multiplicity and contextual nuances of the Yellow Peril. See Ariane Knüsel, *Framing China: Media Images and Political Debates in Britain, the USA and Switzerland, 1900-1950* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012), 183-188 for a detailed account of this shift.

[59] Michael Diamond, *'Lesser Breeds': Racial Attitudes in Popular British Culture, 1890-1940* (London: Anthem Press, 2006), 56.

intellectuals in late Qing China responded to it in public writings and fictional appropriations. By coincidence, when *The Yellow Danger* came out in 1898, the influential Qing government official Zhang Zhidong (張之洞) also published his famous treatise *Exhortation to Study* (勸學篇), in which he promoted a method of moderate reform, summarized in the phrase "Chinese learning for substance, Western learning for function (中學為體，西學為用)".[60] Zhang's nationalistic feelings towards Chinese traditions and pragmatic attitudes towards Western modernity inherited much of the spirit of the post-Opium-War Self-Strengthening Movement (洋務運動 1861-1895), and these ideas do have some uncanny resemblances to Shiel's characterization of Yen How as a man with "yellow skin" and "white brain". While it is highly unlikely that Shiel and Zhang heard about each other, such uncanny resemblances nonetheless point to the susceptibility of the Yellow Peril discourse to Chinese reactions and (re-)appropriations. This coincidence and the discursive susceptibility behind it were both conditioned by the grand geopolitical force of the fin de siècle, and the reactions differed from each other in that what figures in Shiel as a scary evocation of "what if" figures in Zhang as a formulation of pragmatic policies of reform. In this sense, all of the examples from late Qing China presented in this segment of the chapter pertain to the central argument of this thesis. Namely, Yellow Perilism, while inevitably pluralistic and malleable in different texts and contexts with direct or indirect relations with one another, can be seen, à la Ludwig Wittgenstein, as a constellation of "family resemblances" that share a range of "overlapping and crisscrossing" racialist concerns over the Chinese nation and people, albeit to distinct ideological and pragmatic purposes (also see Section III).[61]

Indeed, as Lu Xun pointed out, in late Qing China, there was a strong atmosphere of reform that used fin de siècle Yellow Perilism in the West as evidence for the yellow man's equal prowess to the white man. These cross-cultural citations eventually turned the discourse into a form of racial

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[60] K. C. Liu, "Moderate Reform and the Self-Strengthening Movement," in *Sources of East Asian Tradition: The Modern Period, Volume 2*, ed. William Theodore De Bary (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 637. The quote here is Liu's translation.

[61] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe et al. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 2009), 165-166.

nationalism, and all of the Chinese intellectuals participating in these discussions were male, perpetuating early 20th century Yellow Perilism's hypermasculine sentiments. Notably, most of these male intellectuals were also of the majority Han ethnicity so their appropriation of the Yellow Peril discourse often carried ethnocentric tendencies that situate the Han as the ultimate representative of the "yellow race", with or without subsuming the other ethnicities in this racial (self-)construction. According to Frank Dikötter, the trend started with Yu Fan (嚴復), who introduced much knowledge of Western racial taxonomy to China through his translations of Thomas Huxley, Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, and Herbert Spencer.[62] In a series of short essays published in *Zhibao* (直報) in 1894, he dismissed the "Middle Kingdom mentality" of imperial Chinese cosmology and argued that the world was divided into a hierarchy of four races, or *zhongzu* (種族)—"the yellow, the white, the brown and the black", occupying different geographical areas of the earth. Influenced by Huxley's ideas of "natural selection" and "survival of the fittest", Yan imagined that the "yellow race (黃種人)" was in a perpetual state of war with the other races.[63]

This alarmist discourse was repeated in 1896 by Liang Qichao (梁啟超), the most prominent reformer-scholar in the late Qing period, in his articles on *Current Affairs* (*Shiwubao* 時務報). Not only did he predict (quite accurately) that in ten years there would be conflicts between "the white and the yellow races", but he also emphasized the ability of the yellow to compete with the white. However, his racial pride was articulated through explicit racism against the other non-white races: "India did not flourish because of the limitations of her race. All the black, red, and brown races, by the microbes in their blood vessels and their cerebral angle, are inferior to the whites. Only the yellows are not very dissimilar to the whites."[64] The biological terms employed here demonstrate the strong influence of

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[62] Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, 2nd ed. (London: Hurst & Company, 2015), 41.

[63] Yan Fu 嚴復, *Yanfu ji diyi ce* 嚴復集第一冊 [The Collected Works of Yan Fu Volume 1], ed. Wang Shi 王栻 (Beijing: Zhonghuashuju, 1986), 10.

[64] Liang Qichao 梁啟超, *Liang qichao quanji diyi ce* 梁啟超全集第一冊 [The Complete Works of Liang Qichao Volume 1], ed. Zhang Pinxing 張品興 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1999), 100. Here I use Dikötter's translation, found in Dikötter,

19th century European pseudo-scientists of race such as Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, whose discriminatory conclusions on the "inferior Mongoloid" East Asians were conveniently ignored by Liang (see Introduction).[65] Unlike Yan Fu, Liang used racial divisions to update the Sinocentric worldview of imperial China. For him, the discriminatory category of the "Mongoloid" mainly referred to Mongolians, Manchus and Koreans, while only "the gigantic Han race" could be "the genuine yellows".[66] With this anti-Manchu and anti-imperial agenda, it is not surprising that Liang would actively evoke and embrace the Yellow Peril discourse in his 1903 poem, "Four Chapters of a Patriotic Song (愛國歌四章)":[67]

芸芸哉！吾种族。
黃帝之胄盡神明，浸昌浸熾遍大陸。
縱橫万里皆兄弟，一脈同胞古相屬。
君不見，地球万國戶口誰最多？
四百兆眾吾种族。
結我團体，振我精神，
二十世紀新世界，雄飛宇內疇与倫。
可愛哉！我國民。
可愛哉！我國民。
…
轟轟哉！我英雄。
漢唐鑿孔縣西域，歐亞搏陸地天通。
每談黃禍讋且栗，百年噩夢駭西戎。
君不見，
博望定遠芳蹤已千古，時哉后起我英雄。
結我團体，振我精神，
二十世紀新世界，雄飛宇內疇与倫。
可愛哉！我國民。
可愛哉！我國民。

(How prosperous is our race!

The Discourse of Race, 50.

[65] Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, *De Generis Humani Varietate Nativa*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: University of Göttingen, 1795), 119.

[66] Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race*, 53.

[67] Liang Qichao 梁啟超, *Liang Qichao quanji dijiu ce* 梁啟超全集第九冊 [The Complete Works of Liang Qichao Volume 9], ed. Zhang Pinxing 張品興 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1999), 5429. "Li (里)" is a traditional Chinese unit of distance; one li equals to 500 meters. I am presenting the songs bilingually here not only because the English translation (mine here) may not deliver the musical quality and terminological nuances of the Chinese originals but also because they foreshadow and form a poignant comparison with the contemporary popular songs discussed in Chapter 7.

> The armament of the Yellow Emperor was from the Gods,
> Bringing wealth and good fortune across the great continent.
> Within ten thousand li of land are all our brothers,
> Compatriots from the same lineage since ancient times.
> Don't you see:
> Among the numerous nations on earth, who has the largest population?
> The four hundred million of our race.
> Join us as one body,
> Excite our sprit,
> In this new world of the twentieth century,
> We shall fly high and proudly among fellow mankind of the universe.
> How lovely is the people of our nation!
> How lovely is the people of our nation!
> …
> How glorious is our hero!
> The Han and Tang Dynasties had administered towns in the far Western regions,
> Europe and Asia were thus connected.
> The Yellow Peril never fails to shock and frighten,
> As the nightmare of hundreds of years haunts the Western barbarians. Don't you see:
> In this broad view our glorious traces already date back to thousands of years,
> And from now on our hero will rise again.
> Join us as one body,
> Excite our sprit,
> In this new world of the twentieth century,
> We shall fly high and proudly among fellow mankind of the universe.
> How lovely is the people of our nation!
> How lovely is the people of our nation!)

Many of the vocabularies used by Liang in this poem, such as "people of our nation (國民)" and "compatriots (同胞)" became key concepts that facilitated China's transition to a modern nation state in the 1910s. Liang's imagination of the Yellow Emperor as a kind of "racial God" for the Han Chinese in this poem also attests to Michael Keevak's suggestion that the auspicious connotations the color yellow has in traditional Chinese culture have made it easier for Chinese intellectuals to co-opt the Yellow Peril discourse into nationalist propaganda (see Introduction).[68]

The year 1903 also witnessed the publication of a range of nationalistic writings that sought to militarize the Yellow Peril discourse for China. Both Chen Tianhua (陳天華) and Zou Rong (鄒容) advocated for "Yellow-White race war (黃白種戰)" and saw the Yellow Peril discourse as the

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[68] Keevak, *Becoming Yellow*, 129.

confirmation of the Chinese "racial power (種族勢力)".[69] The first personification of the Yellow Peril

in Chinese literature also appeared in 1903 in the popular novella *Free Marriage* (自由結婚) by Zhang

Zhaotong (張肇桐). Set in an imaginary country named "Patriotism (愛國)", it features a hero named

"Yellow Peril (黃禍)", who fights against the foreign government (an obvious allusion to the Manchus),

the foreign imperialists, and local traitors to defend his land.[70] This militaristic sentiment culminated

in the Qing diplomat Huang Zunxian (黃遵憲)'s poem "Song of the Victorious Troops (旋軍歌)",

which propagated an expansionist, almost colonialist, ideology:[71]

全球看我黃種黃，
張張張！
五洲大同一統大，於今日辛未可。
黑鬼紅番遭白墮，白也憂黃禍。
黃禍者誰亞洲我，
我我我！

(The whole earth is looking towards us, the yellow race.
Expand! Expand! Expand!
In great harmony the five continents unite in one—the time for that has not come.
The black ghosts and red barbarians fell under the whites.

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[69] Chen Tianhua 陳天華, "*Jingshi zhong*" 警世鐘 [A Bell to Warn the World], in *Chen Tianhua Ji* 陳天華集 [The Collected Works of Chen Tianhua] , ed. Liu Qingbo 劉晴波 (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1982), 81. Zou Rong 鄒容, "*Gemingjun*" 革命軍 [The Revolutionary Army], in *Wanqing geming wenxue* 晚清革命文學 [The Revolutionary Literature of Late Qing], ed. Zhang Yufa 張玉法(Taipei: Jingshi, 1981), 128. The original Chinese texts

[70] Zhang Zhaotong 張肇桐, "*Ziyou jiehun*" 自由結婚 [Free Marriage], in *Zhongguo jindai zhenxiban xiaoshuo diliu ce 中國近代珍稀版小說第六冊* [The Rare Novels of Modern China Volume 6], ed. Dong Wencheng 董文成 (Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 1997), 302. Another influential nationalistic personification of the Yellow Peril can be found in Tang Yisuo (湯頤瑣)'s novel *Yellow Embroidered Earth* (*Huangxiuqiu* 黃繡球), which was first serialized in the literary magazine *New Fiction* (*Xin xiaoshuo* 新小說) in 1905 and tells a remarkable story of the Yellow clan (*Huangshi* 黃氏)'s efforts to reform China towards a more gender-equal society under the feminist leadership of the eponymous protagonist. See Liu I-ting 劉怡廷, *Huangxiuqiu yanjiu* 黃繡球研究 [A Study of Huang Hsiu Chiu] (MA Thesis: Tunghai University, 1994).

[71] Huang Zunxian 黃遵憲, "*Xuanjunge*" 旋軍歌 [Song of the Victorious Troops], in Liang Qichao 梁啟超, *Yinbingshi shihua* 飲冰室詩話 [Notes on Poetry from the Ice-drinking Studio] (Taipei: Zhonghua shuju, 1957), 36. The poem was first published in Liang's newspaper *The New People* (*Xinmin congbao* 新民叢報) around 1903 in Japan, when Liang was exiled by the Qing government. Here I use Tsu's translation, found in Tsu, *Failure, Nationalism, and Literature*, 87. The fictionalization of this expansionist narrative later appeared in Biheguanzhuren (碧荷館主人)'s novel *New Era* (*Xinjiyuan* 新紀元) in 1908, which features a race war won by China. See Sun Lung-kee 孫隆基, "1908: Huanghuo de yinian—zhong, de, ying sanguo wenben de bijiao" 1908：黃禍論的一年—中，德，英三國文本的比較 [1908, A Year of Yellow Peril – A Comparative Study of Chinese, German, and English Texts], *Chengda lishi xuebao* 成大歷史學報 45 (2013): 47-86 for a comparative analysis of this novel together with European invasion fiction.

Now the whites fret of the yellow peril. What is the yellow peril?
It is we Asians. We! We! We!)

However, as these Chinese appropriations take full advantage of the colonial ambivalence of the Yellow Peril discourse in the West, they are often confronted by their own paradoxical ambivalence. Their internalization of European racial taxonomy and eugenics and preoccupation with competing with the whites for survival are indicative of an inferiority complex, which has as its historical background the extremely weakened state of China in the face of European colonialism and foreign invasions. Such historical circumstances propelled these Chinese nationalists to distance themselves from "the black ghosts and red barbarians" and to look up to only the whites for exemplars of racial excellence. As Jing Tsu states, "to escape from the fate of the weak…one clearly has already identified with the weak", and the ambivalent nature of the Chinese appropriations of the Yellow Peril discourse lies in the fact that such nationalism was "driven not by the love of the nation but by the recognition of its inadequacy".[72] Notably, this ambivalence would find its thematic continuations in the post-Mao self-critical literature discussed in Chapter 5.

There is no better example of this recognition of inadequacy than the writings of Liang's teacher Kang Youwei (康有為) and his colleague Tang Caichang (唐才常). Both of them promoted "racial communication (通種)", namely miscegenation, but for slightly different reasons. In his essay "About Racial Communication (*Tongzhonglun* 通種論)", Tang cites the examples of Japan, Hong Kong, and Singapore to argue that only by "racial communication" with the whites would China flourish again.[73] With a more utopian outlook, Kang proposes miscegenation as one of the most effective mechanisms for world unity, and in his scheme, only the yellow and white can "become one color, indistinguishable from each other; while the brown and black are far too different from the whites to make such

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[72] Tsu, *Failure, Nationalism, and Literature*, 65.

[73] Tang Caichang 唐才常, "Tongzhonglun" 通種論 [About Racial Communication], in *Tang Caichang ji* 唐才常集 [The Collected Works of Tang Caichang], ed. The Hunan Academy of Social Sciences (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 100. This article was first published in the newspaper *New Hunanese Study* (*Xiangxue xinbao* 湘學新報) in 1897.

improvement."[74] Apparently for Tang and Kang, miscegenation with the white race is desirable because they acknowledge the whites' top position in the world racial hierarchy. As Jing Tsu points out, most of these late Qing reformers were "remarkably silent on why the white race would desire such a union", and as the controversies and backlashes caused by Thomas Burke's stories of interracial romance show, many people in England were horrified by the mere imaginations of it.[75] However, around the same time when English popular fiction writers and Chinese reformers busied themselves with this biopolitics of interracial contact, a more abstract form of miscegenation was rapidly developing—the intercultural borrowings in the poetic realm of translation and modernism, in which the Yellow Peril's prominence in contemporary popular writings shifted into an equally conspicuous absence, lurking in the elusive background of a manifestly positive Orientalism. The next chapter explores the literary discourses around this positive Orientalism and uncovers the Yellow Perilist undercurrents that nevertheless cut across many of these discourses.

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[74] Kang Youwei 康有為, *Kang Youwei: Datongshu* 康有為：大同書 [Kang Youwei: The Great Commonwealth], ed. Yang Peichang 楊珮昌 (Beijing: China Pictorial Publishing House, 2010), 97. This book was first published in 1901.

[75] Tsu, *Failure, Nationalism, and Literature*, 44. See Witchard, *England's Yellow Peril*, 15-16 for examples of the English literati's "troubled" reactions to Burke's stories.

Chapter 2

The Yellow Peril's Conspicuous Absences:

Pound, Fenollosa, and the Chineseness of Modernism

In many of the late Qing responses to the Yellow Peril discourse in Europe, the practice and consumption of translation played a big role. Apart from Yan Fu's seminal translation of various evolution theorists in the late 1890s, it has also been recorded that Kang Youwei and Tang Caichang's racialist conjectures of utopian society were heavily influenced by the translation and serialization of the works of Edward Bellamy, Inoue Enryō (井上円了) and Okamoto Kansuke (岡本監輔) in Chinese literary journals.[1] Such mediating roles played by Japanese intellectuals and translators in China's absorption of Western anthropological studies are even more evident in Lu Xun's reading of Arthur Smith's (in)famous treatise *Chinese Characteristics*. It was part of the popular trend of "national character literature" in the West, exemplified by Charles Henry Pearson's 1893 book *National Life and Character: A Forecast*. Smith first published the original English version of the treatise as a series of essays in the Shanghai-based British expatriate newspaper *North-China Daily News* in 1889 while conducting his missionary work in rural North China. These essays were then collected and published as a book in New York in 1894, and each chapter focuses on a single characteristic of the Chinese analyzed and supported by Smith's generalized observations and anecdotes, including face, a disregard for time, a disregard for accuracy, a talent for misunderstanding, a talent for indirection, intellectual turbidity, an absence of nerves, an absence of public spirit, physical vitality, patience and perseverance, mutual responsibility and respect for law etc. Though it is clear that Smith's account of the Chinese was not all negative, following Lu Xun's reformist agenda in national self-critique and racial survival, which climaxed with the publication of his most famous short story "The True Story of Ah Q (阿 Q 正

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[1] Jing Tsu, *Failure, Nationalism, and Literature: The Making of Modern Chinese Identity, 1895-1937* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 45-50.

傳)" in 1921, most of the discussions on Smith's book in early 20th century China centered around the perceived drawbacks of the Chinese race. This ethos of self-critique was so strong that the Chinese translation of "national character"—*guominxing* (國民性)—had taken on much more negative connotations than the English original and was often used interchangeably or in association with the harsher phrase *liegenxing* (劣根性), which is literally made up of the characters for "inferior", "root" and "quality".[2]

However, Lu Xun did not learn of the book until he ran into Shibue Tamotsu (渋江保)'s 1896 Japanese translation, entitled *Shinajin kishitsu* (支那人氣質), in 1926 while studying in Tokyo, and since then he was known for advocating for a Chinese translation of the book. More interestingly, he insisted on keeping the derogatory term "*Shinajin* (支那人 Chinese)" in the Chinese title as a reminder and self-critique for China's weakened international status. The Japanese neologism "*Shina* (支那)" as a modern reference to China was a transliteration of the Western word "China" in the late 19th century to displace China's centrality, implied in the old name *Chūgoku* (中国 the Middle Kingdom), and was therefore taken as offensive and derogatory by the Chinese.[3] In fact, there was a translation of the Japanese text in classical Chinese published by *Zuoxinshe* (作新社) in Shanghai in 1903, the year after Lu Xun left for Japan, and in that Chinese translation the unnamed translator had already opted to keep the derogatory "*Shinajin*/*Zhinaren*" in the title *Zhinaren zhi qizhi* (支那人之氣質).[4] Moreover, even in the more nationalistic and militant literary reactions to the Yellow Peril discourse, this cautionary power borrowed from a translated Other is still utilized, albeit in very different ways.

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[2] See Arthur H. Smith, *Chinese Characteristics* (New York: Revell, 1894), Lydia H. Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture and Translated Modernity, China 1900-1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), chapter 2 and Tsu, *Failure, Nationalism, and Literature*, 125.

[3] See Stefan Tanaka, *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts into History* (London: University of California Press, 1993), 3-9 for a detailed account of this linguistic change in Japan, and Section III of this thesis for the modern and contemporary valences of the word in the Sinophone world.

[4] See Liu, *Translingual Practice*, 52-55 for a detailed description of the various translations of the text.

Zhang Zhaotong's (張肇桐) *Free Marriage* (1903), for example, has a frame narrative that introduces the book as a work of translation of an English story told by a Jewish man named "Vancouver", who recounts how his people lost their country in a short letter in English included in the "Chinese version" of the book. As noted by Jane Qian Liu, this strategy of pseudo-translation had bolstered the authenticity of the negative examples of racial failure and achieved its purpose of "motivating and warning" Zhang's compatriots, even though it was soon revealed that he wrote the entire novel in Chinese during his studies in Tokyo.[5]

Viewed in this context of intensified racial (self-)reflection via Japanese translations, the most influential event of Anglo-Chinese translation in the history of modern poetry—the publication of Ezra Pound's *Cathay* (1915) in London—stands out as anomalous, almost anachronistic in the decade of heightened Anglo-American Yellow Perilism. It is well known that Pound did not know any Chinese or Japanese when he was "translating" this collection of classical Chinese poetry, though he had already developed a strong fascination with ancient art from East Asia through the introduction of Lawrence Binyon, a fellow poet and a curator of Asian art at the British Museum. Pound's main source for this task of translation was the trilingual (Chinese, Romanized Japanese, English) notes of the American art historian Ernest Fenollosa, given to him by Fenollosa's widow Mary McNeil Fenollosa, in London in 1913. Because of the intricate multilingual circumstances Pound had to navigate through in his translation and the strong influence of his own poetic agendas (i.e. Imagism and Vorticism) in the selection, presentation, and omission of different elements in the 14 Chinese poems collected, most literary critics, including Wai-lim Yip, Hugh Kenner, Robert Kern, Xie Ming, and Ira Nadel, have more or less agreed that *Cathay* is a text of creative, rather than functionalist or derivative, nature, or as Eric Hayot puts it, "Pound's *Cathay* is not Chinese, and shines because it is brilliant, English poetry."[6]

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[5] Jane Qian Liu, *Transcultural Lyricism: Translation, Intertextuality, and the Rise of Emotion in Modern Chinese Love Fiction, 1899-1925* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 53.

[6] The existing research on Pound and China is certainly too rich to be cited or reviewed in any exhaustive way, but the ones I mention here have been the most influential in the ongoing discussions on Pound's creative translation and Orientalism. See Wai-lim Yip, *Ezra Pound's Cathay* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 164, Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), Robert Kern, *Orientalism, Modernism, and the American*

Notably, Hayot's statement is a reiteration of T.S. Eliot's praise for Pound in his introduction to the 1928 edition of Pound's *Selected Poems*: "As for *Cathay*, it must be pointed out that Pound is the inventor of Chinese poetry for our time…Chinese poetry, as we know it today, is something invented by Ezra Pound..."[7] However, Eliot's fondness of Pound did not translate into any affinity towards China as a country, or the Chinese as a people. If anything, Eliot kept a negative view of Asia, as demonstrated by his comment on the French poet Saint-John Perse's long poem "Anabase", which was inspired by the author's experiences working as a diplomat in China from 1916 to 1921 and translated into English by Eliot: "The sequence of images [in the poem] coincides and concentrates into one intense impression of barbaric civilization."[8]

China as "Cathay": Positive Orientalism and the Temporal Division

Most of the existing scholarship on Pound and China has either focused on the bilingual exegeses of his translation (as found in Yip and Xie's works) or contextualized this relationship in terms of the poet's biography and the development of modernism in England (as found in Kenner and Nadel's works). In the very few studies where the Yellow Peril is mentioned, it only serves as part of the sociohistorical background against which pioneering literati like Pound overcame the common racist prejudices and achieved intercultural innovations with "the freedom of not knowing Chinese".[9] Indeed, despite the contemporaneity of the Sinophobic sentiments instigated by Yellow Peril literature and

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Poem (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Ming Xie, *Ezra Pound and the Appropriation of Chinese Poetry: Cathay, Translation, and Imagism* (London: Routledge, 1999), Ira Nadel, *The Cambridge Introduction to Ezra Pound* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), and Eric Hayot, *Chinese Dreams: Pound, Brecht, Tel Quel* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2004), 6. Despite this mainstream academic consensus on Pound's translation as creative transformation, the opposite view that insists on categorizing him as a translator of Chinese still persists in some scholars' works, see Zhaoming Qian, *Orientalism and Modernism: The Legacy of China in Pound and Williams* (London: Duke University Press, 1995) and Ming Dong Gu, "Is Pound a Translator of Chinese Poetry?" *Translation Review* 75, no.1 (2008): 47-55 for example.

[7] Hayot, *Chinese Dreams*, 4-5.

[8] See T. S. Eliot, Preface for *Anabasis*, trans. T. S. Eliot (London: Faber & Faber, 1930), 8.

[9] The cases here refer to Witchard, *England's Yellow Peril*, 82, Steven Yao, *Foreign Accents: Chinese American Verse from Exclusion to Postethnicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 266, and Ira Nadel, *Cathay: Ezra Pound's Orient* (Hawthorn, Australia: Penguin Books, 2015), 38. The quoted phrase is from Nadel, *Cathay*, 61.

Pound's seemingly Sinophilic appropriations of Chinese poetry, most literary scholars, including the bilingual ones, have largely dealt with them separately: the postcolonial critics would treat the former as sociohistorical documents of Western racism, while modernist scholars use the latter as evidence for a more globalized origin of Western modernism. Therefore, it seems that the current state of scholarship concerning the Yellow Peril and Pound has only reinforced the great division among their objects of study, on which Shu-mei Shih has a poignant summary worth quoting at some length:

> Interestingly, Western modernism's two modes of using "China"—orientalizing it and appropriating its cultural material—roughly follow the genre division of narrative and poetry. Orientalism most commonly manifests itself in narrative containment of the Other, while formal appropriation manifests itself in poetic grafting. Narrative requires China as a setting and therefore involves Chinese characters and scenes, but poetry can simply lift fragments out of the Chinese context; in either case, "China" as a historical and cultural entity disappears. That is, narrative renderings of "China" displace the "real" China and instead project a land of the writer's imagination, while poetry's use of "China," as conditioned by its short, fragmentary form, allows for partial appropriations without giving "China" a tangible presence at all. Both uses of "China" absent China as a historical entity in their texts and turn it into an embodiment of cultural exotica.[10]

Admittedly, Shih does not propose how a mode of writing that does not "absent China as a historical entity" can be conceived and practiced, and a post-structural understanding of literature would readily argue for the impossibility of doing this. However, aware of the socially and historically constructed nature of literature, we can still differentiate and comment on the degrees to which particular narratives appropriate or even omit certain historical events and lived experiences for their own presupposed agendas. Just as the post-structural understanding of narrative construction does not necessarily negate the analytical power of the postcolonial critique of particular narrative formations and their sociopolitical effects, a pluralist and dynamic understanding of the Yellow Peril can lead to more contextualized analyses and criticisms without appealing to a universal standard against which a particular theme or genre should be approached. This is the essence of the transnational and situated approach to the study of racialization that this thesis advocates.

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[10] Shu-mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semi-colonial China, 1917-1937* (London: University of California Press, 2001), 9-10.

While acknowledging Zhaoming Qian's point that the modernists' attraction towards the Orient differs from the model of Orientalism canonized by Edward Said, I am convinced by Shih's juxtaposition of the positive and negative dimensions of this Orientalism and believe that they were derived from the same ideological logic of cultural appropriation, which prioritizes the agency of the West and excludes contemporary China from the realm of modernity.[11] Moreover, I would argue that Yellow Perilism, in its conspicuous absence in this context, is actually transformed into a sort of subconscious undercurrent, the subtle manifestations of which cut through Pound's paradigmatic usage of Chinese material in his works. To illustrate my argument, the two main sections of this chapter focus on two respective major aspects of Pound's presentation of Chinese material in *Cathay* and beyond: China as "Cathay", and the "nature" of the Chinese language.

As the first major aspect, Shih's point that "China" does not have a tangible presence in Western modernism certainly applies to *Cathay*. The title of the poem collection already shows Pound's strong preference for an imagined land of the past over the concrete polity of China of the 1910s, which just went through a hard-fought revolution and became a republic. Viewed comparatively, it is ironic that while reformist intellectuals like Lu Xun were importing derogatory neologisms like "Shina (*Zhina* 支那)" from Japan to replace the old Sinocentric designation of China as "the Middle Kingdom", his modernist counterpart in the West was preoccupied with (re-)constructing its previous reincarnations.

The word "Cathay" is the Anglicized rendering of "Catai (*Qidan* 契丹)", which was how the Khitan people of the Liao Kingdom in north China called themselves back in the 11th and 12th centuries. It was popularized in Europe by Marco Polo's travelogues, but soon went out of fashion after the Mongol conquest of China in the 13th century. Hence, Pound's usage of it conjures up a pre-Mongolian land of pure civilization and recalls the fact that the Mongol invasion of Europe is one of the prototypical examples of the Yellow Peril for the West. This idealized conjecture of a foreign land is also participates in the geographical imagination of imperial China, especially considering that

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[11] Qian, *Orientalism and Modernism*, 1-2.

"Cathay" as north China was often used in contrast to the "Mangi (*Manyi* 蠻夷, barbarian)" of south China in Marco Polo's time.[12] In this regard, it is perhaps more accurate to say that the absence, or the deliberate absenting, of Republican China, as performed by *Cathay*, manifests as geopolitical disregard, rather than the "historical and cultural" disregard mentioned by Shih (especially considering that there was yet to be an established modern Chinese literary culture for Pound to appropriate at this point). This distinction is crucial to the analysis of the connections between the Yellow Peril and Anglo-American modernism because "China" as a "historical and cultural" entity is often conceptualized too broadly to reveal the particular geopolitical realities modernists like Pound chose *not* to engage with.

More importantly, this geopolitical disregard is achieved through a strict temporal division—while the modernist fascination was directed towards "Old" China, and "Old" China only, its end product, "New" English poetry, belonged without doubt to the high culture domain of the avant-garde, the contemporary, the now of early 20th century Anglosphere. Moreover, *Cathay* only marked the beginning of Pound's life-long fascination with classical China. He started learning Chinese systematically in 1936 and inserted numerous Chinese characters and classical Chinese stories in his magnum opus *The Cantos* (1925-1970), and translated a range of classical Chinese texts, including *The Great Digest* (大學 1947), *The Unwobbling Pivot* (中庸 1947), *The Analects* (論語 1950), and *The Confucian Odes* (詩經 1954).[13] Pound's translingual and translational practices have generated numerous sophisticated studies on the multicultural valences of modernist poetics, but what interests me here is the predominance of this fascination with premodern Chineseness per se—why classical China? And more importantly, to what effect? For the first question, Eric Hayot has offered an insightful answer:

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[12] Stephen G. Haw, *Marco Polo's China: A Venetian in the Realm of Khubilai Khan* (London: Routledge, 2006), 171. It has to be noted that Pound first translated many of these classics from other European languages in the 1920s before he could translate them again from the original Chinese, see Demetres P. Tryphonopoulos and Stephen J. Adams (eds.), *The Ezra Pound Encyclopedia* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2005), 65-66.

[13] These dates mark when these translations were published. For details, see Zhaoming Qian (ed.), *Ezra Pound's Chinese Friends: Stories in Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 146-151.

The "China" at work in these texts is stabilized by association with classical China. Such stability is gained partially by a freedom from Western influence. For observers of China—both Chinese and Western—since the mid-nineteenth century the process of modernization/Westernization essentially undoes China's ontological untouchability by (allegedly) introducing economic, cultural, and technological change to a previously immovable society. In comparison to its classical version, contemporary China…is contaminated, shifting, and impure. The irony of all this is that classical China's mystical stability makes it an incredibly reproducible object. Classical China exists always as an object of knowledge rather than an object of experience. It is thus available for thought—transportable to new contexts—in a way that is not as readily present for notions of contemporary China, which can always be countered with the "facts".[14]

Indeed, the key attraction of China as "Cathay" for Pound and his fellow modernists was exactly the stabilized distance from "the experience of China" it offered them. As Pound confirmed in a 1968 interview, he had never been to China. Neither did he get a chance to go before he passed away in 1972, and this was despite the early family connections he had with China, which developed even before he published *Cathay*.[15]

What's more, Pound's disregard for contemporary geopolitical China manifests not only in his passive nonchalance enabled by this poetic distance but also in his active articulations of disapproval and disdain towards the country. In the essay "*Mang Tze*: The Ethics of Mencius", first published in *The Criterion* in July 1938, Pound remarks that

> It may quite well be that Confucius and Mencius are a hormone that could be more vitally effective in the West today than in a China busily engaged in livening up the business of the Acceptance Houses. Apropos of which I understand that a living Kung [a descendant of Confucius] has stated in private conversation that his Most Illustrious Ancestor is now more regarded here than in Pekin. Foreign loans for munitions do not enter the Analects.[16]

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[14] Hayot, *Chinese Dreams*, 178.

[15] In as early as 1913, Ezra Pound's father Homer Pound, was offered a job in Peking by Far-san T. Sung (*Song Faxiang* 宋發祥), the Inspector General of Mints in the newly established Republic of China, and Pound junior was also given job offers when Sung visited London in 1914, but the trip was never realized. See Nadel, *Cathay*, 15 and Qian, *Ezra Pound's Chinese Friends,* 1-2.

[16] Ezra Pound, *Selected Prose, 1909-1965* (New York: New Directions, 1974), 92. Pound's positive attitude towards a Confucian mode of government echoes Voltaire's praise for "the Philosophical King" in China in the 18th century, which, after the Opium War in 1842, was gradually replaced by the Yellow Perilist trope of "Oriental despotism". See Paul Bailey, "Voltaire and Confucius: French Attitudes towards China in the Early Twentieth Century", *History of European Ideas* 14, no.6 (1992): 817-837. The Confucian principles of rule are also linked to the mention of John Adams and Benito Mussolini in *The Cantos*. See Reed Way Dasenbrock, "Why the *Commedia* Is Not a Model for *The Cantos* and What Is," in *Ezra Pound's Cantos: A Casebook,* ed. Peter Makin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 88. for a detailed discussion on these transhistorical links.

As Hayot comments, "Pound's disdain for China's state of affairs…allow[s] him to imagine himself (and the West) as the true inheritor of China's ideas", and it is the same message that lies behind the canonical lines in Canto XIII— "The blossoms of the apricot blow from the east to the west, / And I have tried to keep them from falling."[17] Admittedly, there was not yet a fully formed modern Chinese literary tradition for Pound to appropriate at the time. However, for him, the "blossoms" had already fallen in the East due to its modernization under the imperial pressure from the West. This is where an undercurrent of Yellow Perilism in mutation can be located: the conspicuous absence of racialist discourses in Pound's poetry and essays is but one of the logical consequences of his discriminatory binary thinking on Cathay versus China. While classic fin de siècle Yellow Perilism of the Fu Manchu kind displays the imperial anxiety against the increasing presence of the Other in the modern metropolises of the West, the modernists' literary Sinophilia has embedded in it a subtler form of Yellow Perilism. In other words, despite its lack of explicit references to race or invasion, Pound's uses of Chinese literature nevertheless constitute a tacit cultural Orientalism which would recognize the value of the Other only when it is more accessible for the Western Self than for the Oriental Other.

The appropriative nature of Pound's manifestly positive Orientalism is all the more marked in the anti-war themes of many of the poems in *Cathay*, such as Rihaku's (i.e. Li Bai 李白) "Lament of the Frontier Guard (古風之十四)" and "Exile's Letter (憶舊遊寄譙郡元參軍)". While it would be reductive to read Li Bai's poems as mere expressions of some kind of pacifist personal politics, literary critics such as Guiyou Huang have pointed out that there is "a relationship between *Cathay*'s antiwar theme and World War I" as sorrow and departure constitute the main subjects of most of the poems selected. Like in all acts of appropriation, the point here is not about the possible interpretations of Li Bai's personal concerns, but rather about how Pound's *Cathay* functions as a selection process that

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[17] Hayot, *Chinese Dreams*, 42 and 46. This line was first presented to the reader as part of Pound's translation of Confucius, but scholars have not found any equivalent passages in *The Analects*. See John Cayley, "To Keep Them from Falling: On Some of the Translator's Responsibilities with Particular Reference to Chinese Poetry in English," *Renditions* 21, no.2 (1984): 331- 348.

alludes to a preconceived pacifist message in the context of contemporary international conflicts in Europe.[18] Scholars such as Steven Yao have pointed toward this pacifism to argue that Pound's *Cathay* was a critique of "the dominant constructions of Chinese racial and cultural identity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries".[19] I disagree with such views because, taking Pound's temporal division between Cathay and China into consideration, one can observe the same colonial logic underwriting the two forms of Yellow Perilism in their contemporaneity—the denial of the Other's coevality with the Self and the consistent confinement of the modern Chinese subject to the unworthy realm of "inscrutability". Notably, such denials of coevality are not specific to early 20th-century Western discourses about China and Chineseness but have long been practiced in the colonial encounters with many racial Others. As Neil Lazarus points out by citing Johannes Fabian's term "allochrony", a "temporal unevenness" sat at the core of "the engineered geopolitical unevenness of imperialism", which was exemplified by the disciplinary operation of modern anthropology:

> Allochrony denies 'coevality': the scandal of anthropology, Fabian has argued, is that through its methodology and disciplinary practice it presents other people, who are in fact contemporaries of the anthropologists who write about them, as though they are living in another time, specifically in the past. The anthropologist who writes about Africans or Pacific Islanders or Amerindians positions them as 'primitive': they live in the present but are actually of the past; the anthropologist's encounter with them is therefore an encounter not merely of different social and cultural orders but of different, and of course differently *valued*, temporalities. (original emphasis)[20]

It is thus not unfair to say that Pound the modernist poet approximates such a Eurocentric anthropological role in his total disregard for co-eval China and exclusive appropriations of Classical Chinese literature. As the following segment shows, the emphasis on this temporal division can also be found in Pound's interpretation of the "nature" of the Chinese language, which is the second major aspect of the Chineseness of his modernism.

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[18] Guiyou Huang, *Whitmanism, Imagism, and Modernism in China and America* (London: Associated University Presses, 1997), 126.
[19] Steven Yao, "A Rim with a View: Orientalism, Geography, and the Historiography of Modernism," in *Pacific Rim Modernisms*, ed. Mary Ann Gillies, Helen Sword, and Steven G. Yao (London: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 22.
[20] Neil Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 98.

Pound's "Ideogrammatic Method" and the "Nature" of the Chinese Language

It is well known that the modern literary movement of Imagism, as pioneered by Pound in the 1910s, was strongly influenced by his views on classical Chinese poetry as a model of poetic visuality. Despite the fact that all of the fourteen Chinese poems in *Cathay* follow relatively strict metric and rhyming schemes, especially the shorter ones written in the traditional format of *wujue* (五絕, quatrain made up of five characters/syllables per line), at "the heart of the Imagist imagination" is Pound's idea "of Chinese poetry as essentially a kind of *vers libre*, or free verse".[21] As such, the "Chinese poetry" here can only exist in Pound's creative translation, in which this so-called *vers libre* is exercised with the willful ignorance of the Romanized Japanese pronunciation guides in Fenollosa's notes. It must be noted that Pound's ignorance of the Japanese notes is selective, which means that he did go through most of them together with Fenollosa's word-by-word English translation of the Chinese characters. The traces of this selective strategy can be found in poems like "Separation on the River Kiang (黃鶴樓送孟浩然之廣陵)", where the Japanese transliteration of "故人 (*guren*)", *Kojin*, is directly used instead of "old acquaintance"(available in Fenollosa's translation). Despite his emphasis on poetic visuality, this deliberate circumvention of Fenollosa's translation is perhaps due to Pound's aim to create an alliterative sound effect in the first line, "Ko-jin goes west from Ko-kaku-ro (故人西辭黃鶴樓)", because Ko-kaku-ro (*Huanghelou* 黃鶴樓, literally Yellow Crane House) has no English translation in Fenollosa's notes. Moreover, the "River Kiang" in the title is a deliberate repetition for the sake of the K-sound alliteration and possible exotification, as "Kiang (江)" already means "river" in Chinese:

Separation on the River Kiang

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[21] Xie, *Ezra Pound*, 169.

> KO-JIN goes west from Ko-kaku-ro,
> The smoke-flowers are blurred over the river.
> His lone sail blots the far sky.
> And now I see only the river,
>   The long Kiang, reaching heaven.

Interestingly, this selective strategy has allowed Pound to create a musical quality in the simple English sentence, which the Chinese original does not possess (as "*guren*" does not rhyme with "*Huanghelou*" in any way), thereby demonstrating the oft-neglected acoustic dimension of his Imagism.[22] What the Chinese "free verse" freed Pound from was the "Victorian adherence to meters", and the Chinese language, which very much remained "inscrutable" to the poet in the 1910s, just happened to offer the best "foreign aid" to achieve this agenda.[23]

The offer came to Pound in 1913 in the same bundle of manuscripts that Mary Fenollosa gave him and presented itself in the form of an essay entitled "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry". As Haun Saussy puts it, this essay "pointed forward to everything in Pound's subsequent career".[24] The essay was edited and first published by Pound in 1919 with his sincerest praise that "[it is] a study of the fundamentals of all aesthetics" and "the first definite assertion of the applicability of scientific method to literary criticism".[25] This "scientific method" refers to the "ideogrammic method" Pound discovered, or invented, from reading Fenollosa's discussion on the visual qualities of the Chinese language. Pound's introduction and explanation of the method is as follows:

> In Europe, if you ask a man to define anything, his definition always moves away from the simple things that he knows perfectly well…Thus if you ask him what red is, he says it is a 'color.'
> If you ask him what a color is, he tells you it is a vibration or a refraction of light, or a division of the spectrum.
> The Chinese still use abbreviated pictures AS pictures, that is to say, Chinese ideogram does not try to be the picture of a sound, or to be a written sign recalling a sound, but it is still the picture of a thing…when the Chinaman wanted to make a picture of something more complicated, or of

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[22] See Ezra Pound, *Cathay*, edited by Zhaoming Qian (New York: New Directions, 2015), 50 and 109, and Gyung-Ryul Jang, "*Cathay* Reconsidered: Pound as Inventor of Chinese Poetry," *Paideuma* 14, no. 2-3 (1985): 358.

[23] Richard Andrews, *A Prosody of Free Verse: Explorations in Rhythm* (London: Routledge, 2017), 32.

[24] Haun Saussy, "Fenollosa Compounded: A Discrimination," in Ernest Fenollosa and Ezra Pound, *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*, edited by Haun Saussy, Jonathan Stalling and Lucas Klein (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 8.

[25] Ibid., 1.

a general idea, how did he go about it?

He is to define red. How can he do it in a picture that isn't painted in red paint? He puts (or his ancestor put) together the abbreviated pictures of

ROSE   CHERRY
IRON RUST   FLAMINGO

That, you see, is very much the kind of thing a biologist does…when he gets together a few hundred or thousand slides, and picks out what is necessary for his general statement. Something that fits the case, that applies in all of the cases.

The Chinese "word" or ideogram for red is based on something everyone KNOWS…

Fenollosa was telling how and why a language written in this way simply HAD TO STAY POETIC; simply couldn't help being and staying poetic in a way that a column of English type might very well not stay poetic.[26]

Pound's agenda in this explanation is not really about the Chinese language *per se*, but rather to contrast its associative and pictographic features grounded in reality with the abstract "phonocentrism" of the alphabetic languages of Europe. Because of such pictographic associations, Pound suggests that the Chinese language is inherently more "poetic" than the European languages. However, it is not difficult to observe that his logic here is a tautological loop: Chinese relates to the abundance of images, and linguistic association with images enriches the language's poetic potentiality, which is measured by the very presence of such images. Moreover, while he is known for inserting and dissecting a highly selective range of Chinese characters in *The Cantos*, Pound's ignorance about the Chinese language (at least before 1936) is blatantly revealed in how his examples fail to support his argument in this paragraph. Unlike the ones creatively deployed in *The Cantos*, such as "人 (*ren*, person)", "明 (*ming*, bright)" and "旦 (*dan*, sunrise)" etc., the character for the color red, "紅 (*hong*)", is made up of the semantic radical "糸 (*mi*, silk)" and the phonetic component "工 (*gong*, work)". It is thus of low pictographic quality, let alone any association with the four arbitrary words/images mentioned by Pound, especially "FLAMINGO", which is not a species native to China and rarely spotted in the wild even today.[27]

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[26] Ezra Pound. *ABC of Reading* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934), 19-22.

[27] There is another polysemous character "朱 (*zhu*)"for the color red, which is indeed more pictographic in its original composition (a dot added to the middle of "木 (*mu*, tree)"), but the shape had changed so much over time that any user of the language would not be able to see this composition without resorting to etymological studies. For a zoological study of flamingoes in China, see Ming Ma, "Greater Flamingo Phoenicopterus ruber and Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin Cercotrichas galactotes: Two New Species for China," *Forktail* 15, no.1 (1999): 105-106.

Indeed, this binary of the ideogrammatic East versus the phonetic West, or in Jacques Derrida's terms, the "logocentric" East versus the "phonocentric" West, is one of the most prolonged myths in comparative literary studies of the 20th century.[28] A wide variety of Chinese critics, including Rey Chow, Michelle Yeh and Zhang Longxi, have argued convincingly that "Chinese writing is not pictographic or ideographic, because the characters are linguistic signs of concepts and represent the sound and meaning of words rather than the pictographic representations of things themselves."[29] According to the linguist John de Francis, the overwhelming majority of Chinese characters are morpho-syllabic, which means, like "紅," they are constructed with semantic and phonetic parts, and more importantly, it is the latter that functions to convey meaning in everyday communication.[30]

Knowing that Pound's Imagist explanation of the Chinese language is not grounded in linguistic empiricism, one is justified to claim that his "ideogrammatic method" is an act of cultural appropriation compatible with Edward Said's definition of the Orientalist—"the Orientalist makes it his work to be always converting the Orient from something into something else: he does this for himself, for the sake of his culture..."[31] But what about Zhaoming Qian's argument that Orientalism for the modernists is not about "Western cultural superiority"? His interpretation implies that the "high culture" of modernism was separate from the "low culture" of Yellow Perilism, since what attracted the modernists toward the Orient "was really the affinities (the Self in the Other) rather than the differences (the Otherness in the Other)".[32] In a way, Qian's assessment is correct as both Pound and Fenollosa put

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[28] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). As noted by Saussy, apart from the morpho-syllabic (*xingsheng* 形聲) and the pictographic (*xiangxing* 象形) methods of character construction, there are at least four other dominant, but less discussed, methods in Xu Shen (許慎)'s Chinese Dictionary, *Shuowen jiezi* (說文解字), from the Han dynasty—indicatives (指事), meaning combinations (會意), appropriation (轉注), and homophones (假借). See Haun Saussy, *Great Walls of Discourse and Other Adventures in Cultural China* (London: Harvard University Press, 2001), 39 and 204.

[29] Zhang Longxi, Mighty Opposites: From Dichotomies to Differences in the Comparative Study of China (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 44; also see Michelle Yeh, "The Chinese Poem: The Visible and the Invisible in Chinese Poetry," *Manoa* 11, no. 2 (1999): 139, and Rey Chow, "Introduction: On Chineseness as a Theoretical Problem," in *Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies in the Age of Theory*, edited by Rey Chow (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 22.

[30] John de Francis, *The Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984), 125.

[31] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 67.

[32] Qian, *Orientalism and Modernism*, 2.

emphasis on what Chinese as a language can do where European languages cannot. However, my purpose here is not to evoke what Eric Hayot calls the "authenticity problem" and set the "historical and semantic records straight" through a postcolonial, or "authentic Chinese" critique of the modernist literary practices.[33] What I intend to point at is the ideological connections between Sinophilic modernism and Sinophobic Yellow Perilism, which have long been divided by genre and the politics of respectability around high and low cultures (as both sociohistorical fields and objects of study).

Similar to the bifurcation between Cathay and China in the modernist imagination, the so-called "affinities" between Self and Other in Pound and Fenollosa's modernist practices reveal their Yellow Perilist undercurrents when one pays attention to the same temporal division embedded in their descriptions of the Chinese language. In Fenollosa's essay, he proposes that Chinese as a written language is closer to the unconscious of "the primitive races", which is essential to the art of poetry because it makes it easier for the poet to access the "concrete truth" of nature:

> Metaphor, the revealer of **nature**, is the very substance of poetry…Art and poetry deal with the **concrete of nature**, not with rows of separate "particulars", for such rows do not exist. Poetry is finer than prose because it gives us more concrete truth in the same compass of words. Metaphor, its chief device, is at once the substance of **nature** and of language. Poetry only does consciously what **the primitive races** did unconsciously. The chief work of literary men in dealing with language, and of poets especially, lies in **feeling back** along **the ancient lines of advance**. The original metaphors stand as a kind of luminous background, giving color and vitality, forcing them closer to the concreteness of **natural processes**…
> I have alleged all this because it enables me to show clearly why I believe that the Chinese written language has not only absorbed the poetic substance of **nature** and built with it a second world of metaphor, but has, through its very pictorial visibility, been able to **retain** its original creative poetry with far more vigor and vividness than any phonetic tongue…It retains **the primitive sap**, it is not cut and dried like a walking-stick. We have been told that these people are cold, practical, mechanical, literal, and without a trace of imaginative genius. That is nonsense.[34] (emphasis mine)

My inclusion of the last sentences in the above quote, which are often conveniently omitted when critics quote this essay to accuse Fenollosa of Orientalism, is not to excuse him from such accusations. Rather, the explicit anti-racist message in that sentence exposes a certain degree of self-contradiction

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[33] Eric Hayot, "Vanishing Horizons: Problems in the Comparison of China and the West," in *A Companion to Comparative Literature*, edited by Ali Behdad and Dominic Richard David Thomas (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 101.
[34] Ernest Fenollosa and Ezra Pound, *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*, edited by Haun Saussy, Jonathan Stalling and Lucas Klein (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 54-55.

in Fenollosa's praise for the Chinese language, which is conceptualized as script rather than sound, and "Chinese people" in this case is a mere corollary because they are the native users of this language. For Fenollosa, poetry derives from nature, and the poet's task is to retain as much original creativity as possible from that source, the so-called "primitive sap". These seemingly positive descriptions of the "primitive" echo the romantic idea of the "noble savage" in European writings of the 18th and 19th centuries. For example, the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau were widely known for depicting such characters of "uncivilized men", which he portrayed as the symbols of the innate goodness of human beings not yet exposed to the corrupting influences of civilization. Notably, in such seemingly anti-racist conceptualization of the "noble" but nonetheless still "savage" Other, "civilization" is still the exclusive domain of the Europeans.[35] In fact, anti-racist liberal messages are what Fenollosa begins this essay with, and yet, under Pound's editorship, many of the more Anglocentric comments in the essay were cut out in the 1919 publication, including Fenollosa's statement that "Great Britain and…the United States…alone, of modern people, still bear aloft the torch of freedom, advance the banner of individual culture…"[36] As I am arguing here, their awareness about the detrimental effects of racism only makes their cultural Orientalism, or what I call the subconscious undercurrents of Yellow Perilism, more poignantly ironic.

Moreover, the biggest self-contradiction lies in the fact that such a temporal division asserted by Fenollosa's linguistic fetishism, which is in essence motivated by a form of atavistic desire or purist nostalgia of the Western Self, again fixed Chinese creativity in the stabilized, non-experiential zone of the past. Such nostalgia is the force that drives him to elaborate, in the pages following the above quote, on the various features of Chinese (and Sanskrit) grammar, which he thinks are "no longer traceable in the Aryan tongues".[37] As for Pound, his affirmative notes can be found beside the first paragraph

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[35] Ter Ellingson has also traced the discursive history of the idea of the "noble savage" in France to as early as the 17th century, which complicates the ways in which Rousseau fits into the intellectual genealogy. See Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (London: University of California Press, 2001), 80.

[36] Quoted in Yunte Huang, *Transpacific Displacement: Ethnography, Translation, and Intertextual Travel in Twentieth-Century American Literature* (London: University of California Press, 2002), 20.

[37] Fenollosa and Pound, *The Chinese Written Character*, 53. Though my focus here is on the ideology of temporal division

above, which state, "I would submit in all humility that this applies in the rendering of ancient texts. The poet, in dealing with his own time, must also see to it that language does not petrify on his hands."[38] A stylistic analysis of this statement again reveals the subtle self-contradictions in Pound's language ideology: despite the "humility" he intends to perform in front of Chinese, "I"—"the poet"—is still very much the sole agent of action, whereas "ancient texts", occupying the doubly passive syntactic position of object for both the subject "I" and the gerund "rendering", locate their value only in their transmission towards "his own time". The passivity is further strengthened by the fact that Fenollosa's essay was indeed serendipitous, rather than fundamentally inspirational, for Pound had already developed similar ideas on poetry writing before he acquired the manuscripts. For example, in his article "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste", first published in 1913, he proposes that "Don't use such an expression as 'dim lands of peace'. It dulls the image. It mixes an abstraction with the concrete. It comes from the writer's not realizing that the natural object is always the adequate symbol. Go in fear of abstractions…"[39]

Once the temporal division and linguistic fetishism in their discussion on language and poetry are made clear, it becomes ironic that Fenollosa and Pound's praise for the Chinese ideogram has often been seen as "the aesthetic response" to 19th century philosophies of language and history, especially those of Hegel.[40] On the surface, Hegel's comment on Chinese is indeed the opposite of what Fenollosa proposes in his essay:

> They have…besides a Spoken Language, a *Written Language*; which does not express, as our [*sic*] does, individual sounds—does not present the spoken words to the eye, but represents the ideas themselves by signs. This appears at first sight a great advantage, and has gained the suffrages of

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and the evolutionist hierarchy it creates, I would agree with Yunte Huang's explanation that unlike Pound, who had no direct access to the Japanese and Chinese languages but only his own anti-Symbolist agenda to rely on at this time, Fenollosa's overemphasis on the "pictorial visibility" of Chinese characters/*kanji* is perhaps due to his knowledge and reliance on the Japanese method of *wakun* (和訓), an alphabetic system for marking the sounds of *kanji*, which, in the eyes of Fenollosa, must have contrasted with, and therefore highlighted, the stability of Chinese characters. See Huang, *Transpacific Displacement*, 74-75.

[38] Fenollosa and Pound, *The Chinese Written Character*, 54.

[39] The essay first appeared in the magazine *Poetry* in 1913, and the quote here comes from Saussy, "Fenollosa Compounded,"9.

[40] Haun Saussy, "Impressions de Chine; or How to Translate from a Non-existent Original," in *Sinographies: Writing China*, edited by Eric Hayot, Haun Saussy, and Steven G. Yao (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 68.

many great men—among others, of Leibnitz. In reality, it is anything but such. For if we consider in the first place, the effect of such a mode of writing on the Spoken Language, we shall find this among the Chinese very imperfect, on account of that separation. For our Spoken Language is **matured** to distinctness chiefly through the necessity of finding signs for each single sound, which latter, by reading, we learn to express distinctly. The Chinese, to whom such a means of orthoepic development is wanting, do not **mature** the modifications of sounds in their language to distinct articulations **capable** of being represented by letters and syllables.[41] (emphasis mine)

Because Hegel privileges the sign over the image, and the abstract over the concrete, the "primitive sap" of Chinese is not perceived as the preservation of poetic creativity but rather "the obstacles which it presents to the advance of the sciences". He goes on to elaborate on these "obstacles", including the intonations and sheer number of Chinese characters, and relates them to the hindered development of printing technologies in China. According to Hegel, the Chinese discovered such technologies but "have made no advance in the application of these discoveries", which, combined with the despotic mode of imperial governance throughout the dynasties, have made "everything which belongs to Spirit—unconstrained morality, in practice and theory, Heart, inward Religion, Science and Art properly so-called—alien to it [the character of the Chinese people]".[42] However, what is of significance here is not the negative value Hegel assigns to Chinese as a written language, but the fact that he does so via a teleology of time and progress, which, just like Fenollosa and Pound after him, transfixes Chinese in the past and denies its coevality with European languages. Therefore, the three thinkers of the West were united in viewing Chinese as the pre-history of Europe's ongoing history, and their difference lies in the fact that where Fenollosa and Pound saw purity and preservation, Hegel saw backwardness and entrapment. As Saussy says, "Hegel's ideogram is the pitfall on the way to subjective spirit, and the unlucky Chinese are still its captives."[43]

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[41] G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Dover Publishing Inc., 1956), 135. The book, which comprises a series of lectures on world history delivered by Hegel at the University of Berlin in the 1820s, was first edited and published in German by Eduard Gans in 1837. Hegel's mention of Gottfried Leibniz here refers to the latter's proposal of an ideogramic universal academic language (based on the so-called "*Characteristica Universalis*") as inspired by Chinese characters. Notably, Fenollosa and Pound's affirmative fascination with Chinese "ideograms" was preceded by 17th century philosophers like Leibniz, and followed by postmodernists like Julia Krestiva and Jacques Derrida, with each school of thought appropriating this difference for their own ideological argument. See Saussy, *Great Walls of Discourse,* 97 and 153-169.

[42] Ibid., 138.

[43] Saussy, "Impressions de Chine,"67.

In summary, the two major aspects of Pound's modernist practices and opinions related to China, Cathay versus China and the "naturalness" of the Chinese ideogram versus the impurity of European languages, demonstrate a temporal division between classical and contemporary China, which complicates the seemingly positive Orientalism performed. The conspicuous absence of Yellow Perilism is not equivalent to the lack of "Western cultural superiority" in Qian's (mis)interpretation.[44] Instead, it points toward a particular kind of modernist cultural superiority via the Western appropriation of the imagined cultural superiority of classical China, which in effect disparages contemporary China as inferior. Western modernism here functions as the critique, not just reflection, of the contemporary industrial modernity of the Self. This Western Self has contaminated its contemporary Oriental Other through the spread of imperialism, and as a result, has drawn modernism and the premodern Oriental Other ever closer. In other words, the ideological foundation of this modernism is anti-modernity but not necessarily anti-imperialist. Its fetishization of an untouched premodern China does not even transfer to an explicit struggle against the spread of Western imperialism but approximates a kind of poetic imperialism, which disregards any mode of "Chineseness" that deviates from the imagined purity of "Cathay".

Indeed, Hegel would be delighted to learn that about a hundred years after his lectures on the philosophy of history in Berlin, many leading Chinese intellectuals, including Lu Xun, Chen Duxiu (陳獨秀) and Qian Xuantong (錢玄同), in the May Fourth Movement would propose and debate on the alphabetization of the Chinese language (or replacing it with *Esperanto*) as a revolutionary solution for modern China's cultural renaissance.[45] The irony is that while the more explicitly racist branch of

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[44] Qian, *Orientalism and Modernism*, 2.

[45] Though similar opinions were first uttered by a group of overseas Chinese students in France, led by Wu Zhihui (吳稚暉), the seminal text for the agenda of abolishing Chinese characters was an opinion letter from Qian Xuantong to Chen Duxiu, which was published with the title "China's Script Problem from Now On (中國今後之文字問題)" in the key magazine of the May Fourth Movement, *New Youth* (新青年) in 1918. In this piece, Qian argues that the Chinese written language is at the heart of all the evil practices of Confucianism and Taoism, which has to be eliminated for China's survival as a race and as a nation. Lu Xun further pushed this idea with a similar survivalist call in his 1934 article "Chinese Character and Latinization (漢字和拉丁化)". See Wang Hui, *The Politics of Imagining Asia* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011), 118, and Q. S. Tong, "Inventing China: The Use of Orientalist Views on the Chinese Language," *Intervention* 2, no.1 (2000): 6-20. Chapter 4 of this thesis has some discussion on how this alphabetization

Yellow Perilism had mutated into hyper-nationalist resonances in late Qing China (as discussed in Chapter 1), the Western modernist praise for the antiquity of Chinese culture was largely ignored by China's own modernizers and modernists alike. For example, in 1918, when Hu Shi (胡適) appropriated Pound's "Eight Don'ts" and proposed his "Eight No-isms (八不主義)" for Chinese writers in the modern era, his message was to distance modern literature from the restrictions of the Chinese Classics—the exact opposite of Pound and Fenollosa's ideas.[46] These ironies are exactly the reason why fin de siècle Yellow Peril fictions should be examined together with early twentieth century modernism. The different receptions of these seemingly opposite Western literary forces in China can upset the conventional understanding of Yellow Perilism as an ideology only located in Western racist discourse and (diasporic) Chinese resistance. The racialized threat of contemporary geopolitical China embodied by Yen How and Fu Manchu, together with their traits of hybridity, actually carries more agency as potential materials for mutations and appropriations in other contexts, than a stabilized ideal of Cathay that "further entrench[es] inherited notions of Chineseness".[47]

Section Coda: Yellow Peril as Method

To facilitate the analytical transition to Section II, I feel obliged to explain here why this Section is much shorter than the ones that follow. In lieu of an exhaustive literature review of conventional Yellow Peril narratives in the West, the two chapters in Section I have set up perform the necessary task of explaining this racist discourse's original development in England (and Euro-America at large) under a selective comparative framework. Since this thesis is more concerned with the mutations and appropriations of the Yellow Peril discourse and transnational manifestations of Yellow Perilism as a

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movement played out after Mao came to power.

[46] Shih, *The Lure of the Modern*, 10.

[47] R. John, Williams, "Modernist Scandals: Ezra Pound's Translations of 'the' Chinese Poem," in *Orient and Orientalisms in US-American Poetry and Poetics*, edited by Sabine Sielke and Christian Kloeckner (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2009), 160.

generalized anti-Chinese or anti-Asian ideological force, I have not relied on the originality of the primary texts themselves to establish the relevance of these two foundational chapters for my overall argument. Digging up more hitherto undiscussed Yellow Peril texts from the West to testify the ideology's prevalence would merely repeat and entrench the conventional postcolonial paradigm of constructing a racist historiography that is nevertheless Eurocentric. Instead, my focus in Section I has been on the prototypical, the archetypical and the classic, and how they can be viewed differently through the Yellow Peril as a comparative method rather than just a set of related cultural phenomena.

Fu Manchu and Pound are foundational figures for investigating Sino-British cultural relations of the early 20th century, and discussions on the late Qing intellectuals are just as unavoidable in laying the foundation for a thesis about the Yellow Peril. Separately, they have all been discussed thoroughly in different fields such as Asian American Studies, Chinese Studies, Modernist Studies, and studies of English poetry, hence the relatively little space I have allocated to introducing these figures or explaining their importance to the study of the Yellow Peril. However, by putting them together, I hope I have shown aspects of the Yellow Peril that otherwise would not have been so clearly seen due to these existing disciplinary divisions. They include the tension between masculine imperial competition and interracial homoeroticism, the entanglements between early modern Chinese nationalism and European racism and eugenics, and the undercurrents of cultural Orientalism beneath seemingly depoliticized modernist poetics. The senses of irony generated from many of these cross-cultural juxtapositions and comparisons are indicative of the fuller picture, which we can only see when the Yellow Peril discourse is freed from the singular narrative of racists versus racialized victims and the binary division of low culture versus high culture.

While Section I is the least original Section of this thesis in terms of the materials examined, it should be the most straightforward in demonstrating what Yellow Peril as a comparative method can do, exactly because the texts at hand are so familiar to those who would care about this topic in the first place. Functionally speaking, Fu Manchu and Pound feature in these chapters so that discussions

of lesser-known transnational reincarnations and appropriations of the Yellow Peril in later chapters can gesture back to them to form trans-historical comparisons, especially when the dialectics between negative and positive Orientalism is concerned. There is no disputing that the idea of "The Yellow Peril/*die Gelbe Gefahr/Le Péril Jaune*" originated in the West, but Yellow Perilism and its associated anti-Chinese sentiments have never been bound to this original context in its spread and development after the Kaiser's coinage in 1895. Neither would its cultural reifications be confined to the mode of identity politics dominated by minority resistance movements within Europe and America.

With the historical and methodological foundation provided by Section I, the rest of this thesis makes its original contribution by looking at the contexts of South Africa and East Asia. With an even wider range of textual and visual materials, I will discuss how different diasporic, local and international experiences and positionalities are implicated in the appropriations of the Yellow Peril in these non-Western contexts. Many of these appropriations and re-appropriations manifest in drastically different modes of racism, self-critique, nationalism or imagined international solidarity, and as such, they will echo many of the fin de siècle reactions to the Yellow Peril compared in these two chapters.

Section II

Yellow, White, Black or Red?

Negotiating Chineseness in Apartheid South Africa

Chapter 3

No to "*Geel Gevaar*", No to "Honorary Whites":

Narrating Experiences of Racialization in

Chinese South African Life Writing

> The world of apartheid seemed far away. We knew that the world was split between black and white. We Chinese were the small wedge that fitted somewhere in-between, but even this straited racial madness seemed to be the ordinary order of things. I did not know that we were considered second class citizens, or more accurately, that we were in no-man's-land for the apartheid government—too white to be black, but too black to be white.
>
> —— Ufrieda Ho, *Paper Sons and Daughters*[1]

The "straited racial madness" of apartheid, which was officially implemented through a series of segregationist laws by the ruling Nationalist Party in South Africa from 1948 to 1994, is still remembered as one of the most racist systems of social governance in the 20th century. The branding of South Africa as the "rainbow nation" in the post-apartheid era, ushered in by the internationally celebrated figure of Nelson Mandela, has been a consistent strategy employed by state officials and different media outlets to emphasize the country's historical rupture from apartheid and espouse a "new South African identity—liberated, expansive, mobile, inclusive."[2] However, as apartheid tends to be construed in a "white versus black" framework, the "rainbow" is similarly confined within the same binary racial imaginaries of diversity, which afford further categorizations to whiteness (mainly British and Afrikaans) and blackness (Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, etc.) while often omitting mentions of the various "others" that fall out of this binary but nevertheless make up significant parts of the country's unique history of international migration and interracial relations.[3] The Chinese South Africans are one of

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[1] Ufrieda Ho, *Paper Sons and Daughters: Growing up Chinese in South Africa* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2011), 111-112. The book was first published by Picador Africa in South Africa in 2011. Subsequent quotations from Ho's memoir will be from the more widely circulated American edition and followed by page numbers in brackets if not noted otherwise.

[2] Elleke Boehmer, *Nelson Mandela: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 133.

[3] The "black-white" binary of the rainbow nation is also reflected in the selectiveness of the 11 official languages of South

these smaller racialized communities neglected by the grand narratives of the nation. Indeed, contrary to the North American context, the identity marker "Asian" is generally reserved for people of South Asian descent in South Africa, since Indian South Africans constitute a relatively concentrated community (most reside in the port city of Durban) of more than a million people making up close to 3% of the overall population, and many such "Asian" South Africans, such as the politician Frene Ginwala and sportsman Hashim Amla, have become familiar names to most South Africans.[4] It was the link between the Cape Colony (and later the Union of South Africa) and the British Empire in the 19th and 20th centuries that brought South Asians to this part of the African continent, and the confined usage of "Asian" as "mainly South Asian" is also found in the UK today. In other words, even when "Asian" is added to the rainbow, Chinese and other South Africans of East Asian descent remain more or less excluded in such conjectures of national diversity and still tend to be regarded as outsiders or "perpetual foreigners".[5]

The political and sociocultural invisibility of the Chinese South Africans is admittedly attributable to the community's small size. In a paper published in 2020, Yoon Jung Park estimates that there are around 10,000 to 12,000 Chinese South Africans, and the number continues to dwindle as many have been moving overseas and relocating to other Anglophone countries such as Canada, Australia, and the US.[6] However, as the above quote from Ufrieda Ho's memoir about growing up Chinese in South Africa suggests, this small community occupies a specific liminal space in the fraught black-and-white

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Africa, which include English, Afrikaans and 9 indigenous African languages but exclude languages spoken by people of Asian descent like Hindi and Cantonese, which have long histories of localization in the country as well.

[4] For a comprehensive historical account of the Indian South African community, see Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed, *A History of the Present: A Biography of Indian South Africans, 1990-2019* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). The most famous Chinese South African person is perhaps Patrick Soon-Shiong (黃馨翔), a transplant surgeon and billionaire businessman, who is often praised in media as the richest man in Los Angles. However, as he received most of his medical training and his fortunate in the US, his image of success tends to be associated with the American dream rather than with his birth country. Therefore, in contrast to the mentioned Indian South African public figures, he is not well-known in South Africa outside of its local Chinese community.

[5] The "perpetual foreigner" is also an established trope of exclusion and non-belonging found in many accounts of the Asian American experience, see Mia Tuan, *Forever Foreigners or Honorary Whites? The Asian Ethnic Experience Today* (New York: Rutgers University Press, 1999).

[6] Yoon Jung Park, "Playing the China Card or Yellow Perils? China, 'the Chinese', and Race in South African Politics and Society," *Asian Ethnicity* 21, no. 4 (2020): 466.

racial politics of South Africa and provides a unique case for the study of experiences of racialization in the movements and settlements of the global Chinese diasporas of the 20th century. The lived experiences of Chinese South Africans, especially during apartheid, warrant the contextualization of the Yellow Peril beyond the antagonistic binary narratives of East versus West presented in Section I. In a society where one's skin color and racial classification determine most aspects of daily life, their yellowness/Chineseness have been constructed via a mixture of racist attacks, discriminatory policies, partial concessions, and constant (self-)differentiations from other non-European groups such as Japanese and blacks.[7] This mixture of racialized experiences cannot be accommodated within the conventional postcolonial paradigm, because while South Africa is a former British colony, the history of Chinese migration to the country fits neither the role of colonizer nor that of the colonized. This history is also very different from the Asian American case, which, as mentioned in the Introduction, has come to dominate contemporary thinking about the Yellow Peril in the Anglophone world. Not only was the Chinese American population much bigger than that of the Chinese South Africans, following the Civil Rights Movements in the 1960s, the status and recognition enjoyed by the Chinese Americans during the same period also far surpassed their South African counterparts, who had to acquiesce and keep a low profile in the face of the drastically divisive and oppressive management of the apartheid regime. For these reasons, stories about the Chinese South African experience are valuable primary sources for the overall agenda of this thesis, namely, the revision and remapping of Yellow Peril discourses and reactions towards such discourses in a comparative and transnational framework.

With this contextualization of the Yellow Peril in South Africa in mind, this Section investigates the presences and absences of racialized discourses about China and the Chinese in a range of literary

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[7] Throughout Section II, I have opted for "black" with a lower case "b" and "White" with an upper case "W" because these formats were used in the apartheid laws that sought to construct and define these racial categories. I am aware that this may still cause confusion and there are many contemporary academic debates around whether to capitalize the first letters of such words. However, since this Section does not focus on these debates per se, I choose to prioritize consistency and relative clarity by adopting their historical usages in the period I am addressing.

works. It includes two chapters focusing on two different genres of writing. This chapter foregrounds the diasporic voices from the Chinese South African community by focusing on their life writing, or autobiographical accounts of family and personal histories. Chapter 4 then links the experiences of the Chinese South Africans during apartheid to the broader historical context of Afro-Asian connections during the Cold War. It examines the mixed, or as he was classified by the apartheid regime, "Colored" South African poet Dennis Brutus's *China Poems* (1975), written during his 1973 visit to the People's Republic of China as an exiled anti-racist international sports activist. Rather than replicating the minoritizing paradigm of Asian American studies, the arrangement of the two chapters in this Section emphasizes the transnationality inherent in the travelling and localizing processes of the Yellow Peril discourse in China-South Africa contacts. As such, they also offer comparative paralleling with the two chapters in Section I, as this chapter focuses on narratives of racial identity construction while Chapter 4 presents another case of romanticizing China and Chineseness via poetry and the conspicuous absence of and contrast with the Yellow Peril discourses thereof.

The Primary Texts: Situating Chinese South African Life Writing

The two primary texts for this chapter are Darryl Accone's *All Under Heaven: The Story of a Chinese Family in South Africa* (2004) and Ufrieda Ho's *Paper Sons and Daughters: Growing Up Chinese in South Africa* (2011). The reason for this selection is straightforward—they are the only two widely accessible book-length accounts of the Chinese South African experience published in post-apartheid South Africa, and they have thus far been totally ignored by academia.[8] Both authors are

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[8] Lily Changfoot's diary is another personal narrative about being Chinese in South Africa, which was actually written during apartheid and published overseas. However, the number of printed copies was very small, and the text is not easily accessible outside of Canada. I have not managed to find it in the UK, the US and China, but considering its historical significance, I hope to research it in a separate study once international archival visits become easier after the COVID-19 pandemic. See Lily Changfoot, *A Many-Colored South Africa: The Diary of a Non-Person* (Ontario, Canada: Bonsecours, 1982). Taiwanese South Africans, who, as the following chapter segment demonstrates, came to South Africa much later than Chinese South Africans, have also produced several first-person accounts about growing up as an ethnically Chinese person in South Africa in the post-apartheid era. Examples include Emma Chen, *Emperor Can Wait: Memories and Recipes from Taiwan* (Johannesburg: Picador Africa, 2009) and Ming-Cheau Lin, *Yellow and Confused: Born in Taiwan, Raised in*

South African born Chinese (SABC), whose familial roots in the country extend across at least three generations, and their stories should be considered as the foundational texts to "Chinese South African literature" if such a category or ethnic canon is to be established. Both works fall under the genre of life writing and recount how the authors' ancestors came to work and live in South Africa and how different generations of Chinese South Africans dealt with racism and identity issues before, during, and after the official end of apartheid.

However, it must be emphasized here that even though this chapter reads these two texts primarily for their socio-historical value, life writing is not straightforward ethnographical data.[9] As David McCooey puts it, the genre is in fact beset by a set of "limits": "the limits between literary and factual writing; between narrative as a literary device and narrative as lived experience; and between autobiography and fiction."[10] Rather than designating negative attributes, these "limits" mark the genre's inherent fluidity and flexibility, as it disrupts the boundaries between the sociological and the literary, the personal and the historical, or between reality and fiction more generally. Such flexibility echoes Norman Fairclough's concept of interdiscursivity mentioned in Chapter 1. Indeed, similar to *The Yellow Danger* and the Fu Manchu books, Accone's and Ho's texts are also interspersed with summative accounts of a range of real historical incidents as well as explanations of different racist policies that shaped their families' lived experiences in South Africa. This blend of historical facts and personal narratives helps deliver "truth", which J. M. Coetzee views as the constructive result produced by the process of writing itself:

As you write—I am speaking of any kind of writing—you have a feel of whether you are getting

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South Africa, and Making Sense of It All (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2019). These writers focus on food, and their historical experiences and writing styles are very different from the two texts under discussion in this chapter and warrant a separate study.

[9] Historians tend to treat these texts as such, often quoting from them without any particular attention to the narratological, stylistic or fictional aspects of these writings. See, for example, Yoon Jung Park's citation of Accone in Yoon Jung Park, *A Matter of Honor: Being Chinese in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media Ltd, 2008), 16 and 101. There is also a short paper by Uchenna Vasser on Ho' text, arguing for a "literary approach to Afro-Sino relations", but it only offers a summary of the main incidents in the book while stylistic analysis is non-existent. See Uchenna P. Vasser, "A Literary Approach to Afro-Sino Relations: Ufrieda Ho's *Paper Sons and Daughters: Growing Up Chinese in South Africa* and Ken N. Kamoche's *Black Ghosts*," *Third World Quarterly* 40, no. 5 (2019): 999-1013.

[10] David McCooey, "The Limits of Life Writing," *Life Writing* 14, no. 3 (2017): 277.

closer to "it" or not… It is naïve to think that writing is a simple two-stage process: first you decide what you want to say, then you say it. On the contrary…you write because you do not know what you want to say. Writing reveals to you what you wanted to say in the first place. In fact, it sometimes constructs what you want or wanted to say. What it reveals (or asserts) may be quite different from what you thought (or half-thought) you wanted to say in the first place. That is the sense in which one can say that writing writes us…I don't see that "straight" autobiographical writing is any different *in kind* from what I have been describing. Truth is something that comes in the process of writing, or comes from the process of writing.[11] (original emphasis)

For the two primary texts under discussion, this constructive truthfulness is achieved at both personal and collective levels and contributes to the diverse constructions of a Chinese South African subjectivity.

Moreover, the flexibility and interdiscursivity of life writing are also indicated by the two texts' stylistic disparities and subtle positional differences as perceived in the Anglophone literary market. The subheading "Memoir/China & South Africa" appears in the upper left corner of the back cover of *Paper Sons and Daughters*, whereas the marking below the barcode for *All Under Heaven* categorizes the book as "fiction". The word "memoir" also appears on the cover of Ho's book (American edition), written in small font below the subtitle "Growing up Chinese in South Africa", which occupies more prominent position than that of Accone's book, "The Story of a Chinese Family in South Africa". The main title of the latter is also significantly bigger than that of the former (Figure 3.1 and 3.2). Indeed, the different ways these paratextual-visual elements are arranged on the covers convey the different degrees of fictionality with which the stories are told. In other words, the deployment of different genre modifiers and design strategies already influences the ways readers may approach the stories before they open the books, demonstrating the spectrum of fiction versus reality that life writing from the same specific ethnic community can explore as literary narratives.

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[11] J.M. Coetzee, *Doubling the Point* (London: Harvard University Press, 1992), 18.
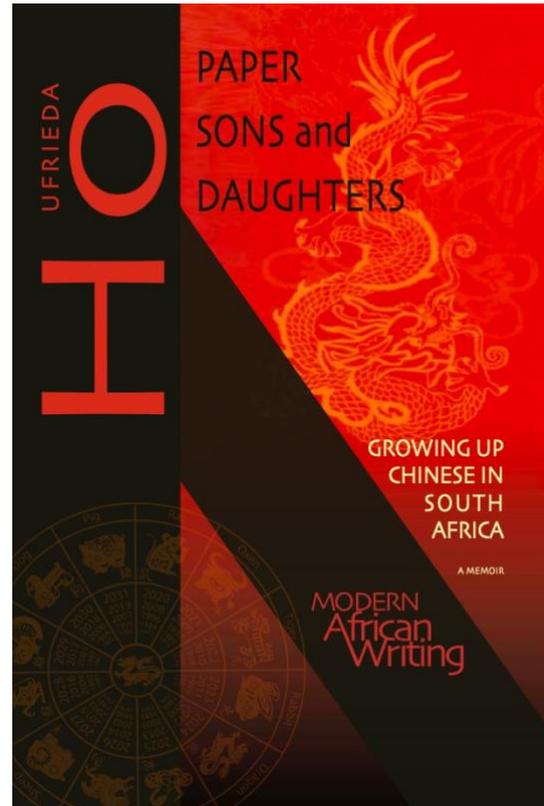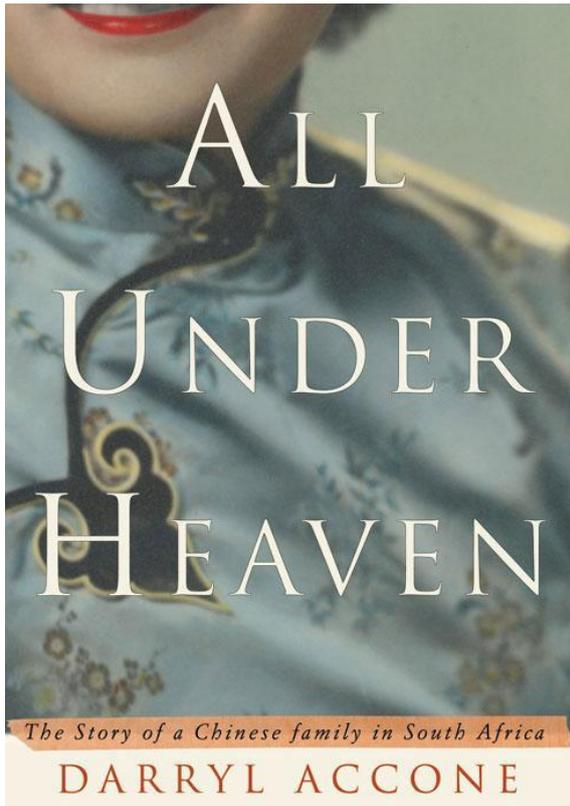
Figure 3.1 *All Under Heaven*, 2004 Cape Town edition

Figure 3.2 *Paper Sons and Daughters*, 2011 US edition

The different degrees of fictionality of the two works are also determined by their different narratological styles. Ho's life writing approximates "memoir" through her predominant usage of the first-person narrative. The author, the narrator, and the ubiquitous diegetic "I" are conflated throughout the book. While Ho does occasionally shift to third-person narration when telling some of her relatives' stories, these characters' encounters and thoughts are never presented directly to the readers without the author-narrator's relaying. In contrast, just as its subtitle offers enough semantic ambiguity to obscure the autobiographical aspect of the book, *All Under Heaven* is almost completely written from a third-person omniscient point of view. I say "almost" here because Accone does appear as a minor character (in the first person as himself) in the epilogue, and yet this "I" is absent in all of the stories until the reader reaches the very end of the book. More specifically, the book opens with a prologue in which a young Chinese South African boy Ah Nung visits the grave of a well-known early immigrant with his parents, and the four different sections following this prologue then offer a detailed chronology

of the boy's ancestors' lives, from his great-grandparents' to his parents' generation. All these ancestor characters are addressed in the third person, their dialogues with other characters in the stories are presented in a matter-of-fact way without any mediation, and Ah Nung does not appear again until his birth in the last chapter of the last section. The third-person narration, together with the detailed dialogues interspersed throughout the stories, thus encourages the reader to approach the book as fiction, since no autobiography could present dialogues in this way beyond those conducted, heard, and recorded by the author himself. For the same reason, the reader's perception of the stories as pure fiction is significantly challenged and changed when the epilogue reveals that "I am Fok Boon Nung: in other words, Ah Nung" as the author goes on to explain how he acquired his other name Darryl Accone, which appears on the book cover.[12] Notably, this revelation does not change the fact that the book approximates fiction rather than memoir in the spectrum of the reality/fiction of life writing; instead, it adds a further layer of genre ambiguity to the diverse ways in which Chinese South Africans' stories can be told.

With this paratextual and stylistic diversity in mind, we can nevertheless situate Chinese South African life writing in the intersection of multiple literary categories constructed by national, ethnic, and geo-cultural divisions. The most important among them are South African life writing and Chinese diasporic literature, and the texts by Ho and Accone can potentially unsettle many of the dominant discourses and impressions governing these literary fields.

Firstly, the narratives concerning Chinese South Africans' lived experiences in the 20th century are not presented via the familiar mode or functionality of "trauma and testimony" that has been adopted as a definitive framework for reading autobiographical writing published in post-apartheid South Africa.[13] In her reading of a diverse range of post-apartheid South African writing, Elleke Boehmer asserts that contemporary South African writers present "a country addicted to crisis" by

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[12] Darryl Accone, *All Under Heaven: The Story of a Chinese Family in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Phillip Publishers, 2004), 282. Subsequent quotations from Accone's book will be followed by page numbers in brackets if not noted otherwise.
[13] Paulina Grzeda, "Trauma and Testimony: Autobiographical Writing in Post-Apartheid South Africa," in *Postcolonial Traumas: Memory, Narrative, Resistance*, ed. Abigail Ward (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 65.

foregrounding "a traumatized subject prone to experiencing systemic disorders as repeated negative affect."[14] While the psychological impact of apartheid on the country's literary output after 1994 cannot be understated, such encompassing emphases on "trauma" and "crisis" pertain more to the political positions and experiences of white liberals and black South Africans and may not fit well with those of other minority groups. Chinese South African life writing offers a counterexample in this regard—while experiences of racism and unfair treatment are integral to their construction of a Chinese South African identity, the texts by Ho and Accone are not trapped by "repeated negative affect" to the extent of constantly reliving some unreconcilable trauma. My reading of these two South African texts is that the multi-generation stories they present are mostly descriptive and pragmatic in tone; they demonstrate how Chinese South Africans negotiated the changing sociopolitical climates of apartheid from before it began to after it was declared to have ended. In other words, rather than narrating racial and political trauma to testify against the apartheid regime, Chinese South African life writing is more interested in preserving familial memories and in this process constructing a collective ethnic identity to be recognized by the wider South African society and the world at large.

Secondly, though this has never been in any way precalculated by the authors themselves, the small-scale development of Chinese South African life writing, read in the context of global Chinese diasporic literature, can offset some of the creative tension and academic anxiety around issues of representation and literariness in the current discussion dominated by Asian American studies.

Since its institutionalization as a formal field of study in American universities in the 1970s, scholars of Asian American literature have been actively constructing an ethnic canon that goes back to the late 19th century. From Sui Sin Far (1865-1914) to Rebecca Kuang (1996-), the field is now supported by a diverse range of literary works that expand across more than 150 years of immigration, settlement, and localized creativity. It is this diversity and its continued intensification in the

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[14] Elleke Boehmer, "Permanent Risk: When Crisis Defines a Nation's Writing," in *Trauma, Memory, and Narrative in the Contemporary South African Novel*, eds. Ewald Mengel and Michela Borzaga (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012), 34.

contemporary era that have propelled scholars' struggle for Asian American literature to break away from the "paternalistic…method of categorizing minority discourse" in the country.[15] As Rey Chow points out, for a very long time, "minorities (in the US) are allowed the right to speak only on the implicit expectation that they will speak in the documentary mode, 'reflecting' the group from which they come."[16] Therefore, in order that Asian American writing should not be treated as "extended Chinatown tour(s) or as the rendered truths of a native informant", scholars in that particular field have been pushing for genre diversity when expanding the canon, with a strong desire to promote experimental writing and the avant-garde.[17]

This approach to challenging the mutual exclusivity between "minority" and "literariness" imposed by the (white) Orientalist gaze is perhaps justified in Asian American literature, since the long history, material base, and institutional resources behind the formation of this literary-academic field are now sufficient to support such pushes for diversity; but it nevertheless perpetuates the hierarchical value judgement against life writing or any creative writing addressing sociological realities or collective concerns of minority groups, the "non-literary" nature of which is taken for granted in the pursuit of the avant-garde, a genre still governed by mainstream white standards posing as universalistic. Moreover, such hierarchical thinking about genres, styles, and literariness becomes particularly problematic when scholars assume such struggles in Asian American literature as universal and applicable to all diasporic Chinese writing or take for granted that any individual writer belonging to such "Chinese" ethnic category would necessarily represent the collective pursuit of its members. For a small local community like Chinese South Africans, the efforts at articulating a minority consciousness via transnational history-tracing and literary inscriptions have only slowly begun in the

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[15] Rey Chow, "Introduction: On Chineseness as a Theoretical Problem," in *Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies in the Age of Theory*, ed. Rey Chow (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 16.

[16] Ibid. A similar tension has long existed in the studies of postcolonial literature in general, and as Elleke Boehmer points out, the solution is not to perpetuate the false binary between politics and aesthetics, but to realize that "a postcolonial poetics is something that postcolonial writers as well as readers and critics *make* as part of that interpretative practice—a practice that has both creative and exegetical elements." (original emphasis) See Elleke Boehmer, *Postcolonial Poetics: 21st-Century Critical Readings* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 5.

[17] Dorothy Wang, "Does Anglophone Chinese Diasporic Avant-garde Writing Exist?" *JASAL* 12, no. 2 (2012): 1.

contemporary age of the 21st century. Not only does this small community lack the material and institutional support for developing a canon driven by pre-set agendas of genre diversity, the censorship regime governing literary productions and the Chinese South Africans' survival strategy of keeping a low-profile during apartheid have also meant that the creative pursuit of highbrow literariness and freedom of expression is still a luxury inaccessible to most in the community.[18] Therefore, the texts by Ho and Accone are valuable not despite their being autobiographical, but because of the fact that without such initial steps towards building a collective history and identity, there will not be such a thing as "diasporic Chinese writing" in South Africa to begin with. As King-kok Cheung reminds us, reading diasporic Chinese life writing requires "(multi-)cultural literacy" and the "literariness" of the genre lies in the fact that "poetics and politics are thoroughly interwoven to illuminate a marginalized cultural tradition, articulate a distinctive ethnic sensibility, and foster social awareness."[19]

Acknowledging the intersectional and interdisciplinary space occupied by Chinese South African life writing, I read *All Under Heaven* and *Paper Sons and Daughters* primarily for their sociohistorical value, namely their (re-)construction of a unique minority identity through chronologizing family histories, without neglecting the stylistic aspects that enrich and complicate these texts' positions on the reality/fiction spectrum as literature. As both texts are full of personal encounters and historical details that expand across multiple generations, I do not intend to offer plot summaries and draw out key themes as one would when reading a standard novel. Rather, my reading of the two texts is selective according to the larger picture and central focus of the entire thesis, focusing on the characters'

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[18] For a detailed account of the apartheid censorship system, see Peter D. McDonald, *The Literature Police: Apartheid Censorship and Its Cultural Consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). While local Chinese newspapers, such as *Overseas Chinese Gazette* (僑聲報, 1931-2005), did feature occasional essayistic writing the community, I have not found any literary writing in English by Chinese South Africans published in the country before the end of apartheid. However, the community did have other creative means to engage with the local environment in a depoliticized way, such as the landscape photography of the Chinese Camera Club of South Africa (CCCSA) in the 1950s and 1960s. See Malcolm Corrigall, "Their Visible Cameras: The Landscape Photography of the Chinese Camera Club of South Africa," *African Arts* 48, no. 3 (2015): 48-57. There was also a short-lived Chinese Literature and Arts Society in Johannesburg in the 1950s, which organized literary activities and translated some important national laws into Chinese, but its membership remained no more than 50 people. See Melanie Yap and Dianne Leong Man, *Color, Confusion and Concessions: The History of the Chinese in South Africa* (Hong Kong: HKU Press, 1996), 329.

[19] King-kok Cheung, "Chinese and Chinese American Life-Writing," *Cambridge Journal of China Studies* 10, no. 2 (2015): 5.

experiences of racialization and their negotiations with the shifting racial formations of yellowness and Chineseness before and during apartheid. To achieve these goals, it is necessary to present a brief history of the Chinese in South Africa.

The Chinese in South Africa: A Brief History

The ethnic Chinese presence in southern Africa can be traced back to the very beginning of European colonization of the area. In the available official records, the first Chinese person who arrived in what was then the Dutch Cape Colony (*Kaapkolonie*) was a man named "Wancho". In 1660, he was brought over from Batavia, Dutch East Indies (present day Jakarta, Indonesia) as convict labor to do agricultural work for the Dutch United East India Company (VOC) when the colony was still regarded as a refreshment station for ships travelling from the Netherlands to Southeast Asia.[20] Most of these Chinese laborers were from the Fujian area in South China and migrated to Southeast Asia following the fall of the Ming Dynasty in 1644. As the *Kaapkolonie* gradually developed into a settler colony in the early 18th century, more Chinese, together with Javanese and Malay workers, were imported as convict or contractual laborers from the Dutch East Indies, but their number rarely exceeded a hundred at a time and most of them returned to Southeast Asia or China when their contracts ended.

This practice declined in the second half of the 18th century, and for those Chinese who remained in the Cape after they finished their contracts, they were regarded as "free blacks" and required to carry passes if they wished to leave town. Ironically, the term "free blacks" only refers to former slaves or convict laborers (of African or Asian descent) who "had won their liberation" and excludes the indigenous Khoisan people; it was arguably the first official racial label interpellated onto the Chinese in South Africa by the white establishment (VOC).[21] The number of such Chinese "free blacks" in the

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[20] Yap and Man, *Color, Confusion and Concession*, 6.
[21] Ibid., 7.

18th century was extremely small, and they did not form any concentrated community and are not in any way related to the more than 10,000 Chinese South Africans in the country today. However, it was rumored that some of these Chinese "free blacks" mixed with the indigenous Khoisan people, and there was evidence of white explorers' perception of such mixture as they occasionally used "Chinese" and "yellow" to describe the Khoisan in the 18th century. For example, one of the European chroniclers of the early Cape, C. P. Thunberg, described inhabitants near East London as "Chinese Hottentots…of somewhat lighter color, yellower than the others" and "little Chinese…with curling hair".[22] Whether such interracial mixture did take place remains unconfirmed, but such descriptions clearly show that yellowness and Chineseness were already conflated in the racial imaginations of the early white settlers in the Cape and such imaginations had implicated and impacted perceptions of other groups as well.

After a century-long migration hiatus, the ancestors of Chinese South Africans started arriving in the various states of South Africa from the 1870s, and this flow of free immigrants from China continued in small numbers until various legislations were introduced to curtail such movements in the first decade of the 20th century. Census data show that there was a total of 413 Chinese in South Africa in 1891, and the number increased to 2556 in 1904.[23] As Yoon Jung Park points out, there were multiple push and pull factors behind this first wave of free migration. Upon requests by American and British representatives, the Qing court issued the Emigration Convention of 1866 (《續訂招工章程條約》), which officially allowed Chinese to "leave the country legally in search of work".[24] Moreover, in the decades that preceded this convention, the two Opium Wars and the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864) had caused tremendous disruption in people's political and economic life, and Chinese in the south were among the hardest hit, hence the high incentive for them to work abroad. Most of those

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[22] C. P. Thunberg, *Travels at the Cape of Good Hope, 1772-1775* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1986), 246.
[23] Park, *A Matter of Honor*, 21.
[24] Ibid., 15. While this convention was used as the fixed rule for the engagement of Chinese labor for many years after it was issued, it was never officially ratified by the Chinese government due to disagreements over certain details with the British and French. According to Yap and Man, "only in 1893 did the Chinese government finally annul its 182-year-old ban on emigration…From 1899 Chinese diplomats, were, for the first time, instructed to help and protect Chinese emigrants." See Yap and Man, *Color, Confusion and Concession*, 30.

who migrated to South Africa were from Guangdong province, including the Cantonese from Canton (Guangzhou) and the Hakka from Moiyean (Meixian). In terms of the pull factors from the South African side, the discovery of diamonds in the 1860s and then of gold in the 1880s created this image of "new gold mountain" ("old gold mountain" being California and Australia), which was widely advertised by local Chinese agencies seeking to send immigrants overseas.

The political situation these immigrants encountered in late 19th century South Africa was very different from that faced by the convict laborers in the 17th and 18th centuries. The *Kaapkolonie* came under British control in 1806, and two independent Boer Republics, the South African Republic (ZAR, later Transvaal) and the Orange Free State (OFS), were established after many of the Dutch-speaking inhabitants of the Cape moved northeast in "the Great Trek" in the 1830s and 1840s. The OFS had the harshest laws against "Asiatics" in South African history, a geo-culturally inflected racial category that was mainly targeting South Asian migrants but also included the Chinese before they could appear anywhere near that territory. Citizenship was restricted to Whites only. From 1854, "Asiatics" were forbidden from owning property. In 1891, a law was passed, which stipulates that "No Arab, 'Chinaman', Coolie, or other Asiatic Colored person may settle in this State" and any such person (except the Cape Malays) shall leave the state within a year of the law coming into effect.[25] These exclusionary laws were enforced in the OFS even after it was absorbed into the Union of South Africa in 1910 and did not get revised till as late as 1986, making the state a literally forbidden land for the Chinese for more than a century. Similar laws were also implemented in the ZAR from 1855 to 1899, denying any path to citizenship for "Asiatics" while significantly restricting their residence and trade practices.[26] While Chinese immigrants residing in Natal and the Cape Colony, both governed by the British, enjoyed more rights in terms of property ownership and political participation, a series of laws, including the Immigration Restriction Act 1 of 1897 (Natal) and the Immigration Restriction Act of

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[25] Yap and Man, *Color, Confusion and Concession*, 73.
[26] Park, *A Matter of Honor*, 21.

1902 (Cape), effectively shut down further migration of "Asiatics" to these territories as well.[27] Despite their small numbers (or in the case of the OFS, none at all), local newspapers in all four territories published racist articles that warned against the "yellow invasion" of "filthy, dirty, terrible thieves", resulting in the predominantly negative impression Whites had of the Chinese.[28]

After the British won the Second Boer War in 1902, the two Boer Republics became the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal Colony. While the former kept most of its legislation against non-white immigrants, the latter faced a labor problem in its mining fields and imported a large number of Chinese workers from 1904 to 1910. According to Rachel K. Bright, "out of the 65,695 Chinese sent to South Africa, 97.3 percent were from Northern Chinese ports, and of these, about 93 percent were from the Chihli (Zhili) or Shandong provinces."[29] These workers were on very strict contracts. Except the ones that died on the job and a very small number that escaped to the rural areas and disappeared, almost all of them were repatriated back to China by the end of 1910. Contrary to certain myths and common assumptions in South African society, this group of Chinese workers is not related to the Chinese South African community today either, as they were confined to the mining towns and did not even speak the same languages as the Cantonese and Hakka migrants already in the country. However, assumptions about the mythical connection between these laborers and the Chinese South Africans have been perpetuated not only due to the general public's inability to distinguish different groups of Chinese immigrants but also because the importation of these northern Chinese into the Transvaal Colony was a highly controversial affair, which was heatedly debated by different stakeholders in the media. While some local English reporters worried that these Chinese workers would prevent Transvaal from becoming "truly British", the Afrikaners viewed their presence as a scheme deployed by their new British imperial masters to suppress Afrikaner economic development. Orientalist reports about the confined lifestyles of these Chinese workers abounded in local newspapers in different

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[27] Ibid., 22-23.
[28] Ibid., 22 and Yap and Man, *Color, Confusion and Concession*, 17.
[29] Rachel K. Bright, *Chinese Labor in South Africa, 1902-10: Race, Violence, and Global Spectacle* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 87.

languages, labeling them the "*Geel Geevar*" ("Yellow Peril" in Afrikaans) with "perverse homosexual behaviors" that (with no irony) threatened White women.[30] Needless to say, these alarmist reports also affected the lives of the Chinese migrants residing in the cities. Many local organizations and alliances were formed by the community to resist this negative impact. The most influential among them was the Cantonese Club (維益社), which collaborated with Mahatma Gandhi in his famous protest against the Asiatic Registration Act of 1906 in the Transvaal Colony.[31]

As a response to the labor importation scheme in the Transvaal Colony, the Cape Colony introduced the first specifically anti-Chinese legislature in South Africa, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1904. It banned Chinese from entering and residing in the Cape Colony and required the 1380 Chinese already present within its borders to carry special "Certificates of Exemption", which was scornfully referred to as "dog license" by the Chinese.[32] The effects of this act were then extended to the entire Union of South Africa (1910-1961) via the Immigrants Regulation Act, no.22 of 1913, which shut the door on any new Chinese immigration to South Africa and required "any who wished to travel temporarily to another province to apply for visiting permits".[33] The wives and children of legal residents were exempted from this act, and this became the only way for Chinese to come to South Africa before the 1970s. Hence, the practice of "paper sons and daughters", which was already widely used in the US and Australia following the Chinese exclusion laws there, became crucial in maintaining the existence of the Chinese South African community in the 20th century. Chinese migrants who came to South Africa before 1904 applied for their relatives and others who pretended to be their family members to enter the country, and Chinese born in South Africa before 1949 were regarded as British subjects and many maintained their nationality as Republic of China citizens as well. In the 1946 census, there were 4463 Chinese men and 1877 Chinese women in the Union of South Africa.[34]

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[30] Ibid., 103 and 122
[31] For a list of these organizations, see Li Anshan, *A History of Overseas Chinese in Africa to 1911* (New York: Diasporic Africa Press, 2012), 120.
[32] Yap and Man, *Color, Confusion and Concession*, 62.
[33] Ibid., 176.
[34] Park, *A Matter of Honor*, 23.

A year after the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948, the South African Citizenship Act of 1949 replaced the British Nationality Act and granted South African citizenship to Chinese born in South Africa during 1910-1948.[35] While this act had some unintended positive effect on the development of a more localized Chinese South African identity, the community soon had to face a series of apartheid laws that significantly restricted their political and economic rights.

Apartness, the literal meaning of the Afrikaans word *apartheid*, was enforced via the Group Areas Act 41 of 1950, the Immigrants Regulation Amendment Act 43 of 1953, the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act 55 of 1949, the Immorality Amendment Acts of 1951 and 1957, and the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act 49 of 1953, resulting in strict racial divisions in terms of where people could live, what kind of jobs they could do, what public facilities they may use, and whom they could marry, etc. Chinese was first designated as "Colored" by the Population Registration Act 30 of 1950, which was then further divided into seven subgroups, namely "Cape Colored, Malay, Griqua, Chinese, Indian, Other Asiatic, and Other Colored", by Proclamation 46 of 1959, affording Chinese South Africans their own racial designation.[36] This implied that Chinese South Africans would have to move to their own group areas, which was bound to have disastrous effects on their livelihood as most of them were small traders scattered in different parts of the major cities. Apart from the impracticality of uprooting these small Chinese communities into concentrated areas, the South African government was also pressured by local Chinese organization who complained tirelessly to make sure that proposals for Chinese group areas were never realized.[37] As a compromise, most Chinese South Africans were allowed to keep

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[35] This act is not paid particular attention in both Yap and Man's and Park's books, but the clauses can be read online at <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b5088.html> (accessed April 23, 2021). Its primary aim was not to grant such conditions of citizenship by birth to migrant communities but to establish a separate citizenship system for South Africa after the British Nationality Act was revised by the declining British Empire to separate "British subjects" from "British citizens" in 1948.

[36] Nancy L. Clark and William H. Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid* (London: Routledge, 2011 second edition), 13.

[37] The only fully established Chinese group area in South Africa during apartheid was the small town of Kabega, located some 12 km from the city center of Port Elizabeth (Gqeberha). Not without controversy, the Chinese in the city accepted the government's plan and moved to the area in 1961, mainly because they could send their children to the Chinese school there, which had been established with good reputation in the early 1950s. The designated concentration of Chinese in Kabega lasted till 1984. See Yap and Man, *Color, Confusion and Concession*, 339-342.

their businesses in the areas they had been operating provided that none of them resided in White areas, which meant that similar to the black servants and industry laborers working for white South African families and businesses, many of them had to commute every day for work. Moreover, Chinese were prohibited from purchasing property in White areas until a permit system was introduced by the Department of Community Development in 1971. However, a permit was only issued if the Chinese buyer could obtain approval from everyone who lived alongside and opposite the house they intended to purchase—a humiliating task Chinese South Africans had to perform till further relaxations of the law were introduced in 1985.[38] Chinese South Africans never had the right to vote until 1994.

However, the race classification systems that these apartheid laws sought to buttress were not always as straightforward and effective as the government assumed. All of the aforementioned laws issued in the 1950s used social acceptance as the key criterion to determine a person's race, and a small number of people from the "Colored" category appealed to be reclassified as "White" by arguing that they had been "generally accepted" as such. A Chinese man named David Song was the first to succeed in becoming "White" by making similar appeals in 1962.[39] This case is mentioned by the characters in *All Under Heaven* as part of its interdiscursive strategy to situate Accone's family histories in the wider racial politics of apartheid (more discussion in the next segment). It was also in 1962 that an amendment was made to the Population Registration Act to demarcate and protect the boundaries of South African whiteness: "applicants had to be White in appearance *as well as* be accepted as such." (original emphasis)[40] Rather than stopping racial reclassifications, this amendment had the reverse effect of forcing many individuals who had henceforth been included in the "White" category to renounce their whiteness and separate from their (usually mixed) families. The most well-known case is the story of Sandra Laing, who was reclassified as "Colored" due to her appearance despite the fact that both of her parents as well as their parents were all classified as "White".[41] According to Melanie

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[38] Ibid., 348.
[39] Ibid., 320.
[40] Ibid., 318.
[41] See Judith Stone, *When She Was White: The True Story of a Family Divided by Race* (New York: Miramx, 2004). Sandra

Yap and Dianne Leong Man, "Between 1974 and 1990 a total of 183 adults and minor children were classified into and out of the Chinese group."[42] Many of such reclassifications concerned white women who married Chinese men. As interracial intimacy and marriage were technically forbidden by the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act and the Immorality Amendment Acts, these women had to be reclassified as Chinese and forfeit their rights to reside in White areas. Such was the "straited racial madness" of apartheid mentioned in the beginning quote from Ufrienda Ho that as Yoon Jung Park puts it, "In a strange twist of gendered race laws, South Africa legally managed to construct the world's only white, blonde, blue-eyed 'Chinese' women."[43] This racial madness only stopped after the Population Registration Act Repeal Act 114 of 1991 was implemented, which stipulated that race shall no longer be indicated on South Africans' birth, marriage and death certificates.

The shaky ground on which the legal, political and social construction of race relations stood in apartheid South Africa was also exposed through the regime's differential dealings with the different "yellow" states of East Asia. South Africa's withdrawal from the Commonwealth in 1961 resulted in a significant decrease in trade with countries such as Britain and Canada, and market opportunities were taken up by Japan, a country that was rapidly industrializing in the years post-American occupation. The number of ethnic Japanese people living in South Africa prior to 1961 was negligible (around 50), but the growing importance of trade with Japan brought many Japanese business visitors to South Africa.[44] The government then confirmed that the Japanese shall be classified as "White" for the purposes of the Group Areas Act, while all other laws still regarded them as "Colored", causing great confusion for the South African public. Local newspapers dubbed the Japanese "honorary Whites", "a condescending contradiction which at once stated that they were privileged yet were not really Whites"; some compared this phenomenon to when Nazi Germany recognized the Japanese as

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Laing's story has also been made into a feature film entitled *Skin* in 2008.
[42] Yap and Man, *Color, Confusion and Concession*, 318.
[43] Park, *A Matter of Honor*, 34.
[44] Yap and Man, *Color, Confusion and Concession*, 376.

"honorary Aryans" in 1935.[45] The Japanese exemption from certain apartheid laws and rules was a painful reminder for Chinese South Africans—despite their having been in the country for almost a century, the community was treated as inferior not only to Whites but also to the people of a nation that China and South Africa fought against as allies during the Second World War. This pain was acutely felt when local newspapers sensationalized occasional incidents of embarrassment involving the Japanese, such as Japanese being refused access to transports and amenities because people mistook them for Chinese.[46]

A similar but more complicated situation developed after South Africa started to strengthen its economic ties with Taiwan in the 1970s. Officially the Republic of China (ROC), Taiwan was still under the authoritarian rule of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) but already lost its seat in the UN after the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758 was passed in 1971 to recognize the People's Republic on the Chinese mainland (PRC) as the only legitimate representative of China. They were international pariahs in the 1970s and 1980s, and this shared status motivated the two states to collaborate more closely on the economic front. Special economic packages were introduced by the South African government to attract Taiwanese industrialists to settle near the various "Bantustans"— African "homelands" designed to contain black ethnic groups (Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act of 1970)— to help develop the country's textile industry and later electronics manufacturing.

These Taiwanese were largely exempted from apartheid laws and perceived as "Honorary Whites" as well, but these strengthened diplomatic and economic ties with Taiwan had the paradoxical effect of distancing Chinese South Africans from the ROC, leading to the further localization of a unique

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[45] Ibid., 377. Notably, this was not the first time Japanese were granted privileges denied to Chinese in South Africa. While the Union of South Africa had only 5 Japanese long-term residents in the 1920s and 1930s, they were specifically excluded from the category of "Asiatics" in the implementation of the Liquor Act, No. 30 of 1928, which banned "Asiatics, Africans, and other Coloreds" from consuming alcohol in pubs, restaurants and public spaces. In response to local Chinese organizations' petition against this act, the Commissioner of Police offered an explicitly discriminatory explanation for why Chinese could not be exempted like the Japanese: "the Japanese…are today a recognized world power…and are both from an educational and mode of living point of view superior to the Chinese." See Ibid., 190 and Li Anshan 李安山, *Feizhou Huaqiao Huaren Shi* 非洲華僑華人史 [A History of Chinese Overseas in Africa] (Beijing: Chinese Overseas Publishing House, 2000), 402-405.

[46] Ibid., 378.

Chinese South African identity. For many first-generation Chinese migrants who had no means of

naturalizing as South African citizens either before or after 1948, they still relied on the ROC consulate

in Johannesburg for social and educational resources and logistical assistance. For example, before the

mid-1970s, Chinese South Africans had to obtain a reference letter from the ROC consul-general to

testify their good social standing before they could purchase train tickets. [47] The arrival of the

Taiwanese industrialists and the close relation between the two states gradually improved the status of

Chinese South Africans, permits for them to obtain white privileges were more easily obtained, and

they began to be socially perceived as "Honorary Whites" as well.[48] As one study estimates, by the

late 1970s, 90 percent of Chinese in Johannesburg had moved to White areas.[49] However, when ROC

officials expressed support for some South African politicians' proposal to recognize all ethnic Chinese

in the country as "White" in the 1980s, local Chinese South African organizations protested, arguing

that "the community wanted *full rights*, but not as *Whites*" (original emphasis).[50] Chinese South

Africans also disliked how "Chinese" was given a representative slot in the President's Council after

the visit of the Taiwan premier Sun Yun-suan (孫運璿) in 1980, because they already sensed how the

council's conspicuous exclusion of the majority black population in the country would be detrimental

to their future when the already-slowly-disintegrating apartheid ended.[51] Hence, starting from the

1980s, Chinese South Africans significantly reduced their ties with the ROC consulate and used their

own national organization, the Chinese Association of South Africa (CASA, 1981-), to further their

interests as South Africans.

Many Taiwanese acquired permanent residency in South Africa after the Abolition of Influx

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[47] Park, *A Matter of Honor*, 68.

[48] Ibid., 32. It must be noted that "Honorary White" was never an official category used by the government in reference to any East Asian group, and there has always been tension between people's social perception of the Chinese as such after the 1980s (partly because of the general public's inability to distinguish Chinese, Taiwanese and Japanese) and the community's consistent denial of the label. See Ho, *Paper Sons and Daughters*, 184 for mentions of this tension.

[49] P. Harrison, K. Moyo and Y. Yang, "Strategy and Tactics: Chinese Immigrants and Diasporic Spaces in Johannesburg, South Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 38, no. 4 (2012): 907.

[50] Yap and Man, *Color, Confusion and Concession*, 416.

[51] Ibid., 410.

Control Act 68 of 1986, and the official ties between the two states continued until 1998 when South Africa established official diplomatic relations with the PRC. According to Yoon Jung Park, the Taiwanese South African community today is about 6,000-strong, and since both Taiwan and South Africa allow double nationality, most of them still have ROC citizenship.[52] Since the early 1990s, new waves of Chinese migrants have been coming to South Africa from the PRC, and their number has steadily increased to around 300,000 to 500,000 in the last two decades. Most of these economic migrants are small traders involved in retailing, and the overwhelming majority of them are temporary visa holders since the PRC does not allow double nationality.[53]

Notwithstanding the fact that they still constitute less than 1% of the South African population, the arrival of these new PRC migrants revived tropes of the Yellow Peril in the country, which have only intensified over the years as China grows rapidly into a political and economic superpower.[54] The negative press on the corrupt ties between the ruling African National Congress (ANC) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Chinese wildlife trafficking in South Africa have impacted the much smaller Chinese South African community as well. In fact, the Chinese South Africans, the Taiwanese South Africans, and the PRC migrants do not closely associate with one another: Chinese South Africans are referred to as *laoqiao* (老侨, old Overseas Chinese) by the Taiwanese and PRC migrants, who find communication with these *laoqiao* difficult because most of them do not even speak Mandarin (many SABCs cannot even speak Cantonese). Such phenomena are dubbed as the "Three Chinas in South Africa" by Darryl Accone.[55] However, people are usually unaware of the migration histories of the different ethnic Chinese communities in South Africa and tend to lump them together, especially when negative stereotypes and Yellow Perilist sentiments are concerned. For

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[52] Park, "Playing the China Card", 470.

[53] Ibid., 466.

[54] Romain Dittgen and Ross Anthony, "Yellow, Red and Black: Fantasies about China and 'the Chinese' in Contemporary South Africa," in *Yellow Perils: China Narratives in the Contemporary World*, eds. Franck Billé and Sören Urbansky (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2018), 109.

[55] Darryl Accone, "'Ghost People': Localizing the Chinese Self in an African Context," *Asian Studies Review* 30, no. 3 (2006): 266.

example, in 2008, when the Pretoria High Court decided that Chinese South Africans fall within the definition of "black people" contained in the Employment Equity Act (EEA) 55 of 1998 and the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (BBEEA) 53 of 2003, an alarming backlash was unleashed in South African media as some mistakenly thought that the order would include all the PRC migrants as well. The racial-political notion of "black" espoused by these two acts are reparative, referring to "previously disadvantaged" persons who had been residing in South Africa on a long-term basis before 1994, and the inclusion of the *laoqiao* in them was the result of a nine-year-long campaign by Chinese South Africans to have their suffering under the apartheid government recognized.[56]

To summarize, from the 1660s to the 2000s, ethnic Chinese people in South Africa have been variously labelled as "free blacks", "Asiatics", "Colored", "Colored-Chinese", "Honorary Whites" (not an official legal category), and "black". No other ethnic group in the country gained as many racialized labels as the Chinese. Though not the focus of this chapter, analytical discussions of the histories behind these shifting labels would certainly contribute to the deconstruction of "ethnic Chinese" as such, making it a much less straightforward and obvious category than often assumed (see the chapters in Section III for more discussion on such deconstructions in the Sinophone world). Neither is it my intention to assert the *laoqiao*'s monopoly on the identity "Chinese South African", as this category is bound to be enriched by the new waves of migrants from China as well as their offspring born and raised in a more open and globalized South Africa. However, this chapter uses the term to exclusively refer to the 10,000-people-strong *laoqiao* community—those Cantonese and Hakka people who arrived in South Africa before the 1970s and their children—because the two primary texts address their unique experiences of racialization, which tie in well with my overall argument about the transnational contextualization of the Yellow Peril discourse. With particular attention to how the historical, the personal and the literary are intertwined in Chinese South African

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[56] Yvonne Erasmus and Yoon Jung Park, "Racial Classification, Redress and Citizenship: The Case of the Chinese South Africans," *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, no. 68 (2008): 101.

life writing, the following segment of this chapter teases out three major aspects of identity construction in the two authors' narrations of their families' specific experiences of racialization.

Negotiating Yellowness: Three Aspects of Identity Construction

As mentioned before, the complex family histories in the two texts make the conventional reading method of synopses plus thematic discussions rather difficult and ineffective. Therefore, in lieu of detailed summaries of all the major life events the characters go through in the books, I provide the following family-tree charts to show different characters' relationships with the authors and with one another (Figure 3.3 and 3.4). Key chronological information related to characters' births, deaths, marriages, and arrivals in South Africa has been extracted and added to the charts, which, I hope, shall make it easier to imagine how their personal experiences have been intertwined with the histories of Chinese in South Africa. With the assistance of the two charts, the three sub-sections below focus on three different major aspects of identity construction for Chinese South Africans in Ho's and Accone's writing. They are everyday experiences of institutional racism, preservation of Chineseness, and associations with other non-white groups. As my analyses of selected narrative snippets will show, yellowness, as an accumulation of racialized experiences in the constant making and mixing of imposed and volitional identities, does not manifest as outbursts of traumatic memories or strong (post-)colonial desires for socio-political power in these texts. Rather, pragmatism and negotiation are the key strategies adopted by these Chinese South African families to mitigate the material and emotional effects of racism, and in so doing this yellowness, or Chineseness, is sometimes embraced in relation to other ethnic groups in chauvinistic and exploitative ways as well.
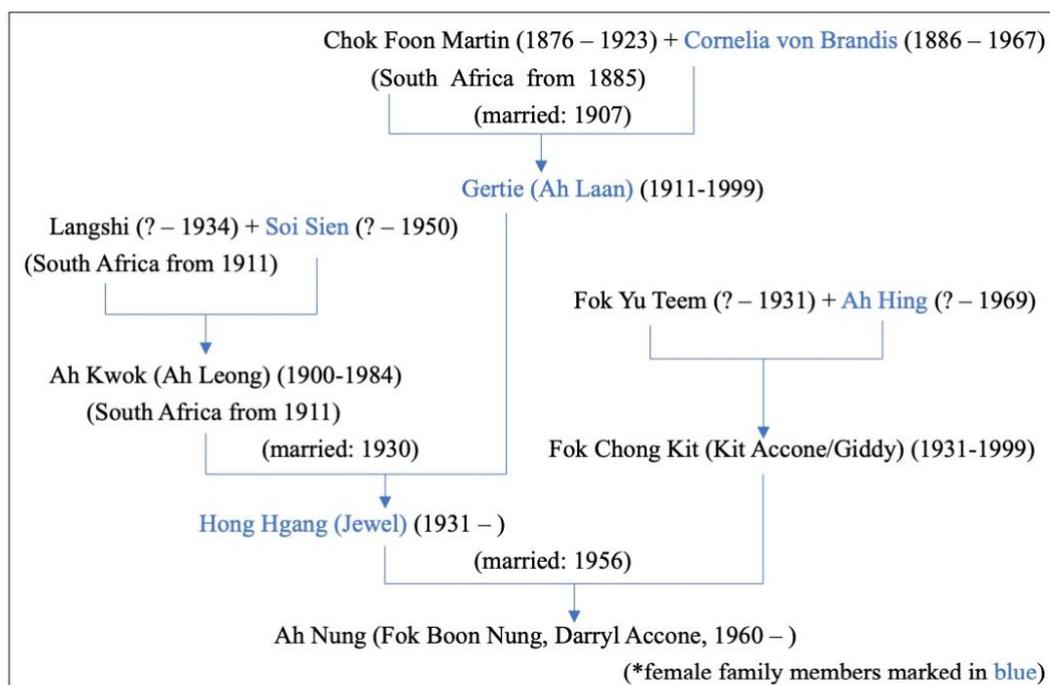
Chok Foon Martin (1876 – 1923) + Cornelia von Brandis (1886 – 1967)
(South Africa from 1885)
(married: 1907)

Gertie (Ah Laan) (1911-1999)

Langshi (? – 1934) + Soi Sien (? – 1950)
(South Africa from 1911)

Fok Yu Teem (? – 1931) + Ah Hing (? – 1969)

Ah Kwok (Ah Leong) (1900-1984)
(South Africa from 1911)
(married: 1930)

Fok Chong Kit (Kit Accone/Giddy) (1931-1999)

Hong Hgang (Jewel) (1931 –)
(married: 1956)

Ah Nung (Fok Boon Nung, Darryl Accone, 1960 –)

(*female family members marked in blue)

Figure 3.3 Darryl Accone's Family Tree as presented in *All Under Heaven*[57]

Fok Yat Gou (Leon Hing Low) + Low Wan Yuk
(South Africa from 1940s)   (South Africa from 1960s)
(married: 1930s)

Ho Sing Kee (born 1930s) + Fok Jouw Yee (Low Yee Wan/Ah Yee/Yvonne) (born 1940s)
(South Africa from 1950s)   (South Africa from 1960s)

(married: late 1960s)

Ufrieda Ho (born 1970s)
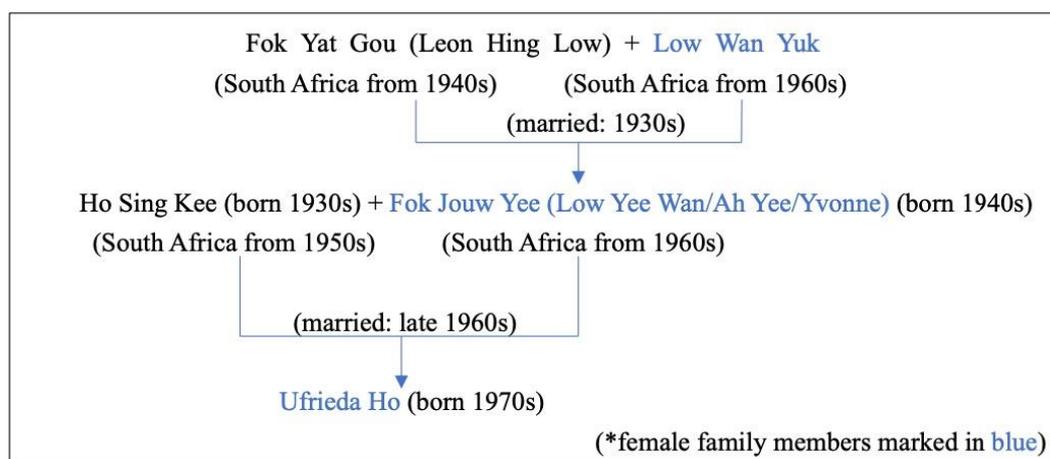
(*female family members marked in blue)

Figure 3.4 Ufrieda Ho's Family Tree as presented in *Paper Sons and Daughters*[58]

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[57] The book title "All Under Heaven" is a direct translation of the ancient Chinese concept of "*tianxia* (天下)", referring to imperial China's political sovereignty in relation to the whole metaphysical realm of mortals, rather than the modern European concept of the nation state. While Accone's book does not explore this term in any detail, it nevertheless functions well for his family's stories as they can be traced back to the late Qing dynasty, a time in which the Chinese migrants in South Africa did not see themselves as primarily attached to any political regimes in China. For more discussions on contemporary usage of "*tianxia*", see Ban Wang, ed., *Chinese Visions of World Order: Tianxia, Culture, and World Politics* (London: Duke University Press, 2017).

[58] Unlike Accone's book, Ho's book does not contain information about the exact years in which her family members were born. I tried to acquire this information directly from her, but in our email correspondences, she told me that the reason why she did not put down exact years and dates in the book was because such information usually got lost in the process of adopting/becoming "paper sons and daughters", especially for those coming to South Africa after 1948 like her parents.

1. Everyday Experiences of Institutional Racism

20th century Johannesburg was the main location where the stories took place in both texts. The institutional racism the families experienced in the city was prevalent—almost every aspect of daily life was regulated by racial segregation. The segregationist ideologies continued from the ZAR period to the apartheid period and were not confined to government policies and rhetorics but actively reinforced by people as well. Discrepancies did exist among the different provinces after the Union of South Africa was formed, and yet anyone who caused disruptions in the maintenance of the harmonious optics of racial segregation could suffer from severe verbal and even physical attacks.

For example, the word "yellow" first appeared in Accone's book as a racial slur directed against his maternal grandmother Gertie's family, when they were travelling on the train from Johannesburg to Durban in 1923. Gertie's mother, Cornelia, was white and described as "from the same Prussian stock as Carl von Brandis, the Transvaal's first Commissioner of Mines", while her father Martin was a Cantonese merchant educated in Mauritius before coming to settle in Johannesburg in 1885 (81). His presence in what was then the ZAR was an anomaly—his French education in Mauritius enabled him to pass the European language tests set up by the Boer government to fend off Asian immigrants. However, the presence of his mixed family in the non-white section of the train caused much abomination in the minds of the people around them, particularly the ticket inspector, Alberts van Wyk. He could not fathom why Cornelia was sitting with "yellow people" and his thought process is presented in free indirect discourse by Accone as:

> …most of all he hated these people in the Non-European first-class carriage, stuck there between the last Europeans Only first-class carriage and the first Non-Europeans Only second-class

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In other words, unless the person clearly remembered his or her "real" date of birth prior to coming to South Africa, the age and birthday information provided by the foster family or put down by the authorities just became, as Ufrieda puts it to me, a kind of "lived error". Therefore, the very obscurity of the family's birth information in this chart is part of the formation of their Chinese South African identity, so rather than replacing it with accurate years and dates, I have decided to keep it as it is presented in the book itself.

carriage. Only a while back he had even had these two Chinese children travelling on their own—in a first-class carriage! He had made sure they knew how to behave, and he had checked to see if they had travel permits allowing them to pass from the borders of the Transvaal through the Orange Free State and to that homeland of the *rooinekke*, the damned English, the province of Natal. Now there were more of these yellow people, surrounding this unfortunate White woman. He would soon sort matters out. (79) (original italics)

After Cornelia declined Alberts' polite invitation to move, Martin presented his papers to Alberts and informed him about their relationship. Alberts' hostile reaction to them is then presented as a direct quote: "*Jussus* but you people breed like flies. All from one family. No wonder this country is going to the dogs with all these yellow children, getting ready to grow up and take the White man's jobs." (81) The mixture of free indirect discourse and direct dialogue quotation here exemplifies Accone's omniscient narratological style, drastically exceeding limits of the autobiographical. Although Accone is likely to have heard about his great-grandparents' experience here from his grandmother Gertie, who was present as a child in this scene, the details presented by the book's third-person narration effectively blur the boundaries between real historical experience and its fictional retelling. This approach dramatizes the characters' suffering from Yellow Perilism and offers further nuances in the interpretation of particular expressions of racism—Alberts' dislike of "the *rooinekke*" (a derogatory Afrikaans word for the English) and his disdain for "yellow people" are juxtaposed to demonstrate the severity of the kind of Boer nationalism affecting Chinese in the Transvaal even before apartheid began.

Accone also uses his third-person omniscient narration to emphasize the exceptional difficulties Martin and Cornelia went through in order to get married. Her father's instant response to their plan to get married is directly quoted in the text as well— "Black magic! Chinaman's wizardry! Can you not tell, child, what that evil dog has done to you?"—and Cornelia was soon cut off from her family (113). The year was 1907 but interracial relationships between whites and non-whites in the Transvaal Colony was still governed by a ZAR-era law, Law 3 of 1897, which made it a criminal offence for a "Colored" person to marry a "European woman", so the couple had to travel (sitting in different

carriages) to Kimberley in the Cape Colony to get their marriage registered.[59] After they returned to Johannesburg, they faced much "hatred from the white community" and had to hire a lawyer to make a case for them, arguing that marriages performed in other parts of South Africa should be recognized in the Transvaal (116).

The omniscient presentation of dialogues also maximizes the sense of irony in the changing attitudes that Cornelia had towards the yellowness of her family. In contrast to the racist encounter on the train in 1923, the second time "yellow" was used as a racial marker for the Martin family was when Cornelia tried to distance the rest of her children from Gertie, because Gertie again married a Chinese man. After Martin died on their trip to China in 1923, Cornelia brought up their seven children by herself in South Africa. As a single mother of "Colored" children in a racist society, her survival strategy was to hide the mixedness of her children and help them pass as Whites whenever possible. Gertie's marriage to Ah Leong, Darryl's grandfather and another Cantonese immigrant, had put Cornelia's family in a precarious position. Just before apartheid officially began, Cornelia told Gertie how Gertie's brother Phillip lost his job due to his race and explained why the two families could not be seen in public together:

> …he (Phillip) had been appointed foreman in the furniture factory, only to be dismissed a week later when some of his fellow workers reported him to the boss as Eurasian. Phillip was seething, though he had long ago given up his boyhood promise to Gertie that he would make sure that 'no one calls us *yellow* and play all lordly and grand as a white.' Cornelia had said to Gertie, 'You see, this is why we can't be seen together in the street. People talk. They say the boys aren't white. We can't afford such things to happen, not after all the hard work we've all put in. (205) (my emphasis)

Accone's omniscient point of view allows access to the psychology of different characters, so that readers feel more acutely the impact institutionalized racism has had on the family and the difficulty of navigating and balancing one's pragmatic needs and sense of belonging in a racist society.

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[59] As mentioned in the history segment, the Cape Colony/Province had always afforded more rights to non-whites compared to the two territories of the former Boer republics. The Immorality Act of 1927 was passed in the Cape to forbid sexual intercourse between Europeans and Africans, but no clear laws existed to regulate relationships between Whites and "Coloreds" until apartheid began. See Pierrel van den Berghe, "Miscegenation in South Africa," *Cahiers d'études africaines* 1, no. 4 (1960):71.

Indeed, Yellow Perilism is akin to a kind of occupational hazard that Chinese South Africans had to face across the different generations in *All Under Heaven*. Keeping her distance from Cornelia and the "White" side of her family, Gertie and Ah Leong made a living by running a grocery store in the White residential area of Perth Road. Casual racist remarks were frequently uttered by their customers, and the children would sing the "Ching Chong Chinaman" and "Chongo Mo Le" songs when passing (180). When the narrative reaches the part where apartheid was about to be officially implemented, Accone relays a specific episode of his grandparents' experience of racism in their work life. The morning after the Nationalist Party won the (White) election, a regular customer called Mrs. Botha walked in their shop and told Gertie, "Now we are in charge. We will put all those *kaffirs* and *coolies*, those *klonkies* and *Chinkies* in their place. This is our country now!" (207) (original italics)[60] Her declaration of putting "those *Chinkies* in their place" in a Chinese shop was full of irony, and yet all Gertie could do was to wish her good morning. Again, Accone's third-person narration/(re-)construction of this racist encounter adds a dramatic flavor to the scene and brings forth his grandparents' suffering in a straightforward manner. Therefore, it is understandable that Chinese South Africans involved in small trade always wanted their children to leave the family business and get professional jobs, but searching for such jobs was an equally painful process for Darryl's parents' generation. His mother Jewel, despite having a BA degree from the University of the Witwatersrand, was constantly turned down because "her prospective employers had not been expecting a Chinese face." (212)[61]

Compared to Darryl's multi-racial family, Ufrieda's family history in South Africa is shorter and less complicated, but the institutional racism they encountered during apartheid was no less prevalent. Both of her parents were born in China and they came to South Africa via family connections after

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[60] "Kaffir" is an ethnic slur used to refer to black Africans in South Africa. "Klonkie" or "Klong" is a derogatory Afrikaans word for a young black or "colored" person.

[61] While education remained largely segregated in South Africa in most of the 20th century, certain "open" universities including Wits and the University of Cape Town admitted non-white students based on the principle of "academic non-segregation and social segregation"; Chinese students started to be admitted to these universities in very small numbers in the early 1940s. See Yap and Man, *Color, Confusion and Concession*, 308.

apartheid began. They met in Johannesburg, and during his courtship, her father had to look for

"suburbs that a guy could take his gal out for a Sunday afternoon and not be harassed by the white

cops" (83). Growing up in the 1970s and 1980s, Ufrieda experienced differential treatment in many

public institutions such as hospitals and universities, and most of these incidents are delivered to

readers by the author/narrator "I" throughout the book. While her parents opted to stay in a "grey area"

where Chinese people's presence was largely ignored, her uncle's family had to ask every neighbour

to approve of their residence in a White area—an "exercise in humiliation" that Chinese South Africans

must go through if they wished to enjoy these concessional privileges the apartheid government

granted to them after 1971 (115). Although many Chinese South Africans took up these privileges and

worked hard to achieve some upward mobility by becoming professionals, their experience in the

workspace continued to be shaped by different kinds of racial discrimination and humiliation:

> Even those who became professionals, who got the same degrees and qualifications through quota systems, were forced to take lower positions than their white colleagues. But instead of uproar, protest or joining a union, they simply carried on working harder and becoming even more loyal to their companies, even when their employers checked first with white staff if it was okay for the single Chinese employee to use the same toilet. (177)

This strategy of "working hard and laying low" was widely adopted by Chinese South Africans

in their negotiation with the racist governance of the apartheid state. Even though institutional racism

permeated their everyday experience, their pragmatic and depoliticized approach to securing more

socioeconomic benefits may be taken as a form of collaborationist opportunism, especially from the

perspective of other non-white groups. Ufrieda writes of the lack of political engagement in the

Chinese community as another kind of pragmatic sacrifice:

> The Chinese had no political home in the underground, in the struggle of the black townships. But they also had no connection to the white government. The Chinese may not have liked being treated like second-class citizens but they could not associate with this nationalist thinking either. They did not see enfranchisement and freedom as a right but as something that would require more negotiation and sacrifice. It was sacrifice, especially, as was national conscription. Growing up I did not encounter one Chinese South African mother who recognised a cause that justified her son fighting for the *volk* (Afrikaans nation or people). (185)

The dilemma of in-betweenness created by Chinese South Africans' pragmatic approach to institutional racism is similar to the Asian American positionality as the so-called "model minority", a term frequently used by mainstream American media to exaggerate the material success of certain groups of Asian Americans in order to deny the existence of systematic racism in society and drive a wedge between Asian Americans and other minorities.[62] As much as their legitimacy to narrate racial trauma in the post-apartheid era has been compromised by this depoliticized pragmaticism they practiced during apartheid, Chinese South Africans have always tried hard to disassociate themselves from terms like "model minority" and "Honorary Whites". However, as Ho writes, their "racial limbo" continues with much irony in post-apartheid South Africa, where the SABCs (born before 1994) now find themselves to be "legally black" (in terms of the EEA and BBEEA schemes) but constantly called "banana" or "bamboo" by their friends and colleagues, black or white: "you look yellow on the outside, but your insides are white." (189 and 222) This mixture of phenotypical "yellowness" and cultural "whiteness", and the perceived lack of traumatic victimization thereof, certainly do not help with Chinese South Africans' integration into an exclusionary national imaginary post-apartheid, in which "blackness increasingly becomes the principal defining characteristic of South Africanness."[63]

Achille Mbembe has lamented that "the idea of an Africanity that is not black is simply unthinkable", but Chinese South African life writing provides a challenging answer to his question of "Whence the impossibility of conceiving, for example, the existence of Africans of European, Arab, or Asian origin—or that Africans might have multiple ancestries?"[64] Texts like *All Under Heaven* and *Paper Sons and Daughters* are valuable examples of the long history of intersections between "African" and "Asian". They remind us that rather than an impossibility of conceiving such intersectional multiplicity of identities, we need to reflect harder on what has prevented the wider recognition and

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[62] Rosalind S. Chou and Joe R. Feagin, *The Myth of the Model Minority: Asian Americans Facing Racism* (London: Routledge, 2010), 11.
[63] Yoon Jung Park, "Black, Yellow, (Honorary) White or Just Plain South African? Chinese South Africans, Identity and Affirmative Action," *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, no. 77 (2011): 107.
[64] Achille Mbembe, "African Modes of Self-Writing," *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 256.

acknowledgement of these conceptions and cultural constructions in the first place. "Africanity", like yellowness, has always been constructed and shaped by different historical forces in different local environments, and it is imperative that we do not limit them to a single mode of interpretation that mistakes the contextual as the universal.

2. Preservation of Chineseness

As the family tree charts show, many characters possess more than one name, and the change of names was due to either the practice of "paper sons and daughters" or immigration officers' confusion over their Chinese names. For most of the 20th century, registering as "paper sons and daughters" was the only way new Chinese migrants could come to South Africa, and it was crucial that their fabricated relationship to their "foster" families seemed as authentic as possible. For example, Ufrieda's maternal grandfather changed his surname from "Fok" to "Low" as it was her grandmother's family, the Low family, that helped him get in the country in the 1940s; her grandfather always considered his reliance on help from his wife's family as humiliating for a Chinese man (56). Similarly, Darryl's maternal grandfather not only changed his name but had to stay separated from his own father after they arrived in Johannesburg just to avoid suspicion (106). Immigration officers who were confused about the different order in which first name and last name appear in Chinese or simply misheard the pronunciations would also take the liberty of changing migrants' names on paper, which was how surnames like "Martin" and "Accone" came about (91, 283). Such losses of personal identities were simply another necessary sacrifice Chinese migrants had to make in order to start a new life in a foreign country.

However, as much as names and personal identities may change on paper, Chinese in South Africa have tried very hard to actively preserve their culture, especially through education and marriage. In the two texts, this preservation of Chineseness manifests not only through the collective distancing

from official whiteness but also in the community's own chauvinistic policing of racial boundaries.

Firstly, Chineseness and yellowness are intertwined in the minds of many of the characters, and their desire to preserve this entangled racial identity in South Africa affected how they view those "yellow people" who wanted or were allowed to be White. For example, the David Song case was discussed by Ah Leong and Gertie, which constitutes an interdiscursive insertion of public history in the narration of personal experience. Reading the story in the newspaper, Ah Leong relayed it to Gertie with much disdain for Song, who was taken as a race traitor for the Chinese community:

> 'Jesus, Bug,' shouted Ah Leong, 'there is a story here called "CHINESE IS OFFICIALLY DECLARED WHITE".' Brandishing a copy of the afternoon paper, he strode over to the counter, slammed down the paper and explained.
> 'David Song, born in Canton, living in Durban, has had himself declared White. His lawyers seem to have found a loophole in the Government's definition of White and exploited that. The report says Song proved, through witnesses and other testimony, that he was, I quote, generally accepted as White. What's wrong with the man? Why would he want to be White? The Europeans should be so lucky as to be Chinese!'
> 'Calm down, Bug, you're ranting,' said Gertie, but it was no use; Ah Leong was incensed by the whole affair…
> …
> As for Song, his new status brought bizarre problems. It was pointed out that he and his Chinese wife were now living illegally, in terms of the Immorality Act, Mixed Marriages Act and Group Areas Act. His family was threatened with eviction. Hard-line Chinese who believed that Song had sold out the community felt little sympathy for someone who had deliberately 'elevated' his status, and they drew satisfaction from this singular instance of White not being right.

In this mixture of dialogue and historical description, "Chinese" is a volitional identity based on both anti-racist resistance and ethnic pride. Notably, when Ah Leong said "The Europeans should be so lucky as to be Chinese", it was not merely a reaction against white oppression but an affirmation of the inherent desirability, or even superiority, of "Chinese" as a racial and cultural identity. Similar attitudes of indignation and disdain were directed towards Japanese proximity to whiteness. In the last chapter of *All Under Heaven*, Darryl writes how his parents distanced themselves from a friendly Japanese couple because of family memories about the Sino-Japanese War and the status of Japanese as "Honorary Whites" (268-269). In her own interdiscursive blend of life writing and ethnic historiography, Ufrieda directly quotes from Yap and Man's book, *Color, Confusion and Concessions:*

The History of the Chinese in South Africa, to emphasize that Chinese should be differentiated from Japanese when it comes to their positions in South Africa (115).

Secondly, the pride of Chineseness/yellowness is maintained through a strong preference for intra-racial marriage. In *Paper Sons and Daughters*, Ufrieda's father opposed her idea of inviting a white boy for her matric dance: "My dad said that white men were not a good choice for Chinese girls. He said they did not understand or have respect for the traditions and customs." (123) He then told Ufrieda a story about a Chinese woman being abused by her white husband to further deter her from associating too closely with white men. It is not specified in the text when this conversation took place. However, since matric dances are usually performed in the last year of high school, it was likely to be the late 1980s after both the Immorality Act and the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act had been repealed (in 1985). Clearly, the policy changes had little impact on how the Chinese community construed their own social relations. Earlier in the story, Ufrieda also mentions how her parents encouraged her to socialize with other Chinese children since she was young, so that she "would marry within the race" (104).

This racial imperative to keep the family "pure Chinese" is much more prominent in *All Under Heaven*. Almost all the mixed-race marriages in the book faced strong opposition from the Chinese side of the family as much as from the White side. While Cornelia wanted her children to pass as White and thus disapproved of Gertie's marriage to Ah Leong, Ah Leong's father Langshi was also bothered by "the mixed parentage of the Martin family" and "took to reminding his son of the importance of being pure Chinese" (168). Gertie and Ah Leong's daughter, Jewel, was also strongly disliked by her mother-in-law Ah Hing, who wrote a letter of complaint to her brother in China, asking for his help in dissuading her son from marrying Jewel:

> 'A terrible calamity has befallen my youngest, Fok Chong Kit. He seems to have fallen under the spell of a thoroughly unsuitable young girl from Kum Saan (Cantonese for "gold mountain", a common reference to South Africa), a girl whose lineage, parentage and roots make her unworthy of such attention. The girl has a German grandmother! If it were not impolite to do so, I would say that her not being pure Chinese makes her an ox-head…' (226)

It is unlikely that Darryl the author had ever saw this letter, which should be written in Chinese and sent to China before he was born, but his omniscient mode of life writing again affords him the creative purchase to conjure up its content and tone, so as to deliver the dramatic effects of Ah Hing's racial prejudice against his mother Jewel.

When Jewel was young, she was also "ridiculed and mentally tortured by fellow pupils" in Johannesburg's Chinese school and could make few friends because of her Eurasian background (200). Darryl presents the following interaction between Jewel and her father to demonstrate the irony of Chinese chauvinism and the difficult position Chinese South Africans of mixed descent found themselves—between such overwhelming Sinocentric chauvinism and the wider society's systemic privileging of whiteness:

> School carried on. Jewel did her work but would answer only in English. Neither her father's wrath nor her mother's pleading ever made her speak Chinese at school. She learnt but kept silent. It became clear to Jewel also that to be white meant that one was always right. Once, not realizing that Ah Leong was nearby, she shouted, "I want to be white." It was a cry from her soul to be free to go to any school, any film, to live anywhere. Ah Leong was furious. He grabbed Jewel by the ear and admonished her: 'You are Chinese. Nothing, nothing can ever change that. You are Chinese and be proud that you belong to the most civilized and cultured race on earth. Never, never wish to be anyone else again. They are the barbarians. You are *T'ong yan*. Remember.' (201)

The Cantonese term "*T'ong yan* (唐人)", literally people of the Tang dynasty, is used as a proud marker of ethnic identity among the *laoqiao*. Instead of modern political regimes like the ROC or the PRC, the term signifies the *laoqiao*'s fundamental attachments to historical racialization of Chineseness that is based on civilizational superiority over all other ethnic groups, including Whites. As Yoon Jung Park says, "The combination of the Chinese superiority myth perpetuating a 'pure blood' essentialist view of Chineseness, anti-miscegenation laws, and the mores of the times ensured that mixed-race relationships and mixed-race children…were relegated to the shameful and often hidden part of their history in South Africa…"[65] Darryl's life writing can thus be regarded as a creative excavation of such

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[65] Park, *A Matter of Honor*, 100.

hidden personal histories, and in so doing he offers subtle criticisms against these essentialist notions of yellowness/Chineseness espoused by the Chinese South African community itself. In other words, Chinese South African life writing is both inward looking and outward looking in demonstrating that the racial boundaries of yellowness/Chineseness have not only been policed by the white supremacist policies of the state and racist abuses from Whites but actively defined and defended by the Chinese community in an ethnocentric manner as well.

3. Associations with Other Non-white Groups

Since the primary goal of apartheid was to separate Whites from non-whites, there were less restrictions on different non-white groups' interactions with one another. In *All Under Heaven*, Darryl's family would visit the racially mixed suburbs of Johannesburg, and his depictions of the multiracial socialization there demonstrate Chinese South Africans' generally positive relations with other non-white groups, especially in the 1950s and 1960s before concessional White privileges were bestowed upon them via the permit systems. For example, Darryl relays Jewel's observation during her trip to Sophiatown in the early 1950s:

> Lenny Lee was one of the great jazz trumpeters in Sophiatown—even before Stompie Manana…he was very strongly Chinese but he had broken away from the Buddhist-cum-Chinese cultural hold, so he mixed freely with Hugh Masekela who was a young *snotkop* (South African slang for cocky young person) …and there was another Chinese, Ah Loon, who had all black women…and so did his young brother Yap. They had two beautiful sisters…they lived with black people; they intermingled with so-called Coloreds and Indians in Sophiatown. Then there was the Yung family, also Chinese…they wore the best American clothes, they spoke *Tsotsitaal* (a mixed vernacular spoken in the townships), they mixed with the people. Sophiatown was that kind of melting pot: it brought all cultures, all people together. (216-217)

Although this legendary mixed cultural hub was soon destroyed by the apartheid government's forced evictions in 1955, Darryl's parents could still go to other similar mixed townships in the 1960s for shopping and sightseeing. The penultimate chapter of the book describes their visits to the Asiatic Bazaar in the township of Marabastad, where they met some legendary Chinese businessmen, who

were popular with the black customers because they "could deal in their mother tongues…Zulu, Sotho, Ndebele and Tswana" (254).

Another example of the positive interactions between Chinese and other people of color is the Accone family's friendship with their landlords, a South Asian family called the Noors. Mr. Noor was rejected from the hospital when he tried to visit the newborn Ah Nung, and Darryl presents his sarcastic complaint about this incident and about the absurdity of apartheid in general in his own words:

> 'I'm the wrong color to visit a wrinkly pink newborn baby that the authorities would classify Non-European and the Nat newspapers would say is one of the Yellow Peril. But then when I obey the rules and sit in the Non-European section of the general hospital, waiting to visit my sick old uncle, a nurse comes over and tells me, "You should be sitting in the Europeans Only side, not with the *kaffirs* and *coolies*." She's been fooled by that Ismaili complexion: what a curse to be fair! I tell her that I am, in fact, a *coolie*. What a country!'

The nurse's racial misrecognition of Mr. Noor as European based on his fair skin exposes the constructed and arbitrary nature of apartheid racial categories. Describing it as a "curse" rather than a desirable asset, Mr. Noor's mentions of the "*coolie*" and the "Yellow Peril" function as mockeries of the white supremacist state and declarations of cross-people-of-color solidarity at the same time.

However, social relations between Chinese South Africans and other people of color, especially black people, were not always rooted in interracial mixing and anti-racist solidarity but had exploitative dimensions of their own in the two texts. Both Darryl's grandmother Ah Hing and Ufrieda's father Ho Sing Kee were involved in the underground gambling activity of *fahfee* (字花), and they would hire black helpmates to assist with their interactions with gamblers in the black townships (Accone 193). *Fahfee* is a number-guessing game that has been operated by Chinese immigrants in South Africa since at least the early 20th century. It is still popular among certain groups of low-income gamblers in the poor outskirts of the cities today and has been racialized as "betting with the Chinaman" in South African culture (Ho 126).[66] Ufrieda's father was a "*ju fah goung* (主花倌)", the collector of bets called

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[66] *Fahfee* in South Africa has its own genealogy of rules and designs and is very different from how it is played in Canton today. For a detailed study of the historical and contemporary development of *fahfee* in South Africa, see Stephen Louw, "Chinese Immigrants and Underground Lotteries in South Africa: Negotiating Spaces at the Cusp of a Racial-Capitalist

by the name of "ma-china" by black South Africans, and the illicit activity was the reason why the Ho family could afford to live in a White area during apartheid (1). While it was a precarious job that operated in the periphery of South African society, the "Chinaman" as the racialized distributor of bets made decisions about the winning numbers and controlled the profit scheme of the game at the expense of their black customers/gamblers. Although both were excluded from "the tight inner circle" of "white wealth" under apartheid, the yellow-black connections built through *fahfee* did not come about due to any idealistic political alliance; rather, Chinese South Africans and black South Africans were brought together by the game because they were motivated by the random economic returns of gambling. Chinese South Africans like Ufrieda's family generally viewed the activity as "a last resort" not only because of the risk of being arrested by the police but also because they were aware of the exploitative nature of the game and how it had negative influence on the image of the Chinese in South Africa (155).

Moreover, when Ufrieda was young, the Ho family had a live-in black maid called Sophie, and Chapter 14 of the *Paper Sons and Daughters* is made up of her childhood memories of Sophie and her reflections on how this "third parent" of hers was treated unfairly in the family (170). For the Ho children, Sophie was their "stand-in mom", and she brought unique intercultural vibes into the Chinese family by telling them about interesting customs of her people, the Zulus, and their tales of the water spirit called Tokoloshe. Writing in the present tense, Ufrieda reflects on how her childhood communication with Sophie has enriched her South African identity:

> These days I still like to ask people what a tokoloshe looks like. I smile when, if they are South African, they do not say 'a what?' or 'huh?' but launch into a description as if they had seen the creature the night before as it bounced from the darkness across their bedrooms. (173)

However, such fond memories of interracial care did not change the fact that Sophie's position as "the black maid" in the family was defined by a form of racialized subalternity that was materially

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Order," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 45, no. 1 (2019): 49-68.

reinforced by the very architecture of the middle-class White household (in this case a Chinese household with concessional White privileges). As Ufrieda recalls, "Sophie's room was in the basement beneath the kitchen", which "had one small window and seemed to me always to be in pitch darkness, probably because there was no electricity in her room." (169) Sophie also had to use "the outside toilet" as under apartheid no black servant was allowed to use their masters' (usually White) toilet. Calling it "the ceramic bowl of national shame", Ufrieda remembers that "There are no sparkling tiles, no extras of a mirror to adjust a stray strand of hair, hand lotions in pump-action bottles to indulge freshly washed hands or two-ply toilet paper." (173) Moreover, the specific Chinese rules regarding politeness were never obeyed in the Ho family's interactions with Sophie:

> In Chinese culture you do not address people who are older than you, strangers included, by their first names. You show deference by tagging on an honorific. Even Yolanda and Kelvin, my own brother and sister, I call names that translate as 'my family sister' and 'my family brother'; I do not use their names. But Sophie, this stand-in parent, was never afforded this respect. (170)

If *fahfee* was created and maintained through the Chinese and black South Africans' shared position of being excluded from "white wealth", the exploitative relations some Chinese families living in White areas had with their live-in black maids germinated from the same regime of racial capitalism that sustained the very core of apartheid. Chinese South Africans were indeed complicit with the white supremacist system in this regard, which, as Ufrieda laments, tends to be forgotten in the post-apartheid era dominated by competing narratives of trauma and victimization:

> I get sad when I hear Chinese South Africans speak about their pain and humiliations at being treated like second-class citizens…
> But their memories of racial injury were fuzzy when it came to their domestic workers or gardeners sometimes. Food that was past its expiry date was good enough for the 'girl'. There were still separate enamel plates and cutlery differentiated with a crude scrape of a sharp knife. This was for the woman who knew the exact amount of milk to pour into the madam's tea, how to coax their grumpy children to sleep and what underwear they kept in their drawers. (173-174)

This is exactly why life writing like *All Under Heaven* and *Paper Sons and Daughters* is important— not only does it secure "a usable identity…attached to group affiliation" for the small community of Chinese South Africans, but it also helps uncover its internal diversity and showcase the complexity

of its interactions with other ethnic groups, so that a fuller picture of apartheid South Africa can be imagined from different ethnic positions and their lived experiences.[67]

The Perils of Being Yellow and the New Yellow Peril

The history of Chinese in South Africa complicates the assumed Western origin of the idea of the Yellow Peril. Since their arrival as economic migrants in the late 19th century, the Chinese South African community has always struggled to fit in, and their racial identity kept changing in the official discourses of the (post-)colonial society. While perceptions of Chinese as the Yellow Peril in South Africa were initiated by European colonial interests and manipulated to pit them against other oppressed and marginalized groups, particularly the poor White working class and the disenfranchised black population, this negative racial affect soon localized and developed into multiple sociopolitical sentiments that may take the form of Chinese superiority complex on one occasion but manifest as imperatives for cross-racial solidarity on another. Chinese South African literature as a category is yet to be constructed but as the discussions above show, texts like *All Under Heaven* and *Paper Sons and Daughters* contain a rich repertoire of lived experiences from which a unique identity may emerge. Such life writing already displays divergent narratological techniques and stylistic features and pave the way for future works that will surely enrich this genre with more creative explorations on the spectrum of reality versus fictionality.

Unlike the racist and modernist discourses in fin de siècle England discussed in Section I, which reduce yellowness/Chineseness to objects of either disdain or fetish, the life writing presented in this chapter highlights the agency of the diasporic Chinese to respond to such racism and negotiate for their own interpretations and practices of yellowness. My analyses have shown that most of these

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[67] Sidonie Smith, "Autobiographical Inscription and the Identity Assemblage," in *Inscribed Identities: Life Writing as Self-Realization*, ed. Joan Ramon Resina (London: Routledge, 2019), 81.

negotiations were not motivated by any *a priori* political demands or ideals but channeled through the pragmatic desire to secure the best socioeconomic conditions for themselves. In these processes, Chinese South Africans have not been averse to mixing with other people of color oppressed by the apartheid regime, and yet they are often not reflective enough when it comes to their own complicity with the anti-black governmentality at the core of the racist organization of South African society for most of the 20th century.

Chinese South Africans' racial positionality remains unstable even after apartheid was declared to have officially ended. White South Africans still hold much of the economic power they had under apartheid, and the majority of the black population remain poor and subservient to global capitalistic exploitation. Chinese South Africans are still viewed with curiosity, suspicion and paradoxical feelings by the general public, as they can be legally black, culturally white, and perpetually foreign in their yellowness as the same time.

Moreover, their yellowness also faces challenges from the new "Yellow Peril"—the large number of new PRC migrants in South Africa. Indeed, if the cultural meaning of "apartheid" can be extended beyond its common usage for official political periodization, "apartheid South Africa" as it appears in my title of this Section—"Negotiating Chinesness in Apartheid South Africa"—lives on in Chinese South Africans' own Yellow Perilist desire to be separated from the Chinese newcomers, lest their hard-earned reputation as "the good Chinese" be damaged. Ufrieda's own writing is not free from this Yellow Perilist sentiment either. After relaying to the reader a community member's comment on the "*daai lok jays* (大陆仔, a derogatory term for mainland Chinese in Cantonese, more on such Cantonese-mainland antagonist in Chapter 6)" as "uncouth and uncultured", Ufrieda puts down her own alarmist sentiments against them without intending any sense of irony: "They are part of the fiery breath of the mighty Chinese dragon and they are scorching the African soil as they like." (218-219)

It thus seems that even the Chinese South Africans are not immune from the neo-Cold War mentality that is becoming dominant in the age of the rise of China. How this tension may play out in

the literary culture of South Africa is worth watching when more discursive engagement between the *laoqiao* and the new Chinese South Africans, especially the new generation of SABCs, take place in the future. For the purposes of this thesis, it is interesting to look at how the racial politics of apartheid affected non-white South African perceptions of the state of China and its associated forms of cultural Chineseness during the old Cold War of the 1970s. As emphasized in the Introduction, one of the key intellectual pursuits of this thesis is to study the Yellow Peril, in terms of both its presences and absences, in transnational contexts beyond the minoritizing and the diasporic within nation states. After all, the diasporic has always been transnational to start with. In *All Under Heaven*, Ah Hing's brother in China responded to her racist complaint about Jewel's mixed background, and his advice was rooted in the internationalist socialist vision of anti-imperialism of Mao: "In the China that Chairman Mao is making there is no room for such insularity. We must all pull together in the same direction, for the sake of China and the Chinese. All men are brothers, and for my part I would add that all women are sisters." (227) The next chapter examines a specific episode concerning the romanticization of such a vision, focusing on the anti-apartheid South African poet Dennis Brutus and his visit to Mao's China.

Chapter 4

"Mao Freed China":

Dennis Brutus's Chinese Vision and Leftist Orientalism in the Cold War

No task
is impossible:
Mao freed China.

世上没有任何做不成的事
毛主席解放了中国

(It was pointed out to me that Mao
would give the credit to the
Chinese people.)

—— Dennis Brutus, *China Poems*[1]

I wanted to go to Peking, but I never thought the opportunity would ever come, and I had given up travel. But Peking was a very pleasant experience, and it means in fact that there's no place left in the world that I want to go to.

—— Dennis Brutus, "Notes on My Life"[2]

Dennis Brutus (1924-2009) was a South African poet and political activist best known for his campaigns to have South Africa banned from the Olympic Games during apartheid. Born in what was then the British Crown Colony of Southern Rhodesia (present day Zimbabwe), he was of German, Dutch, English, black African, and according to him, "perhaps even Hottentot (indigenous Khoisan)

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[1] Dennis Brutus, *China Poems* (with translations by Ko Ching Po) (Austin, Texas: African and Afro-American Studies & Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin, 1975), 29. Subsequent quotations from *China Poems* will be followed by page numbers in brackets. Unlike the consistent use of traditional Chinese in all the other chapters of this thesis, Chinese quotations from this bilingual booklet are reproduced in this chapter in the mixture of traditional, simplified, and variant characters employed by the translator. More discussion on the significance of this mixture in the segment on Ko's translation below. The Chinese names for the poem titles or proper nouns mentioned in this chapter are consistently presented in simplified characters as the context under discussion is the People's Republic of China after language reform.
[2] Bernth Lindfors, ed., *The Dennis Brutus Tapes: Essays at Autobiography* (Suffolk, UK: James Currey, 2011), 138.

or Malay" ancestry.[3] Both of his parents were citizens of the Union of South Africa and categorized as "Colored" by the government, and after 1948, the family was officially designated as "Other Colored" by the apartheid laws. Brutus moved back to South Africa when he was a child and later obtained his BA degree from the University of Fort Hare, the most prominent black higher education institution in the country pre-apartheid, in 1946. Before university he was already attending reading groups focusing on biographies of Leon Trotsky and Mao Zedong and developed strong leftist thinking that inspired his subsequent struggles against the racist policies of the apartheid government.[4] Hence, Brutus's ideological connection to Mao was already formed in the early 1940s before "Mao freed China", namely the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. The poem presented above was inspired by his "pleasant experience" in the capital Peking (Beijing) during his first and only visit to China in 1973, and it clearly shows that his leftist aspirations regarding the country had only intensified during the intervening decades of apartheid and global Cold War.

The poem was published in a collection entitled *China Poems* in 1975 by the African and Afro-American Studies and Research Center of the University of Texas at Austin, where Brutus was teaching as a Visiting Professor of English and Ethnic Studies.[5] By that time Brutus had already been in exile for almost a decade. He was given an exit permit by the South African government in 1966, allowing him to leave the country "but to return only to go to prison if I (he) did return".[6] He left the country with a British passport (issued by the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland) and lived in the UK for five years before settling in the US in 1971.[7] Although he was never officially affiliated with either the ANC (African National Congress) or the PAC (Pan Africanist Congress) before he left South Africa, he was "part of the ANC underground" and an influential anti-racist campaigner in the realm of sports

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[3] While he was not sure about the exact ethnic backgrounds of his mother's family, Brutus said that "Certainly on the maternal side she was descended from slaves…" See Ibid., 34.
[4] Lee Sustar and Aisha Karim, eds., *Poetry & Protest: A Dennis Brutus Reader* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2006), 29.
[5] Lindfors, ed., *The Dennis Brutus Tapes*, 9.
[6] Ibid., 18.
[7] Ibid., 80.

activism in the 1950s and 1960s.[8] Brutus co-founded the South African Sports Association (SASA) in 1959 to oppose the prohibition of mixed-race competitions imposed by the South African Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association (SAOCGA) and campaign for the rights of non-white athletes to represent the country in the Olympic Games. He intensified his campaign against racial segregation in sports by co-founding the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC). The organization made a significant contribution to the banning of South Africa from the Olympics in 1964, which continued to 1992, just before apartheid was about to officially end. His work in sports activism led to an eighteen-month imprisonment on Robben Island (from January 1963 to June 1964), where he was once put in the cell next to Mandela's. As he recalls in *The Dennis Brutus Tapes*, also imprisoned on the island were members of the YCCC (Yu Chi Chan Club 游击战俱乐部), a Mao-inspired group engaged in guerilla activities against the apartheid state.[9] Though he does not elaborate on what kind of interactions he had with this group, in a way, Mao continued to cast his influence on Brutus even when he was confined to the famous prison island for non-whites.

As an antiestablishment South African poet, Brutus's poetry is inevitably intertwined with his political and activist work. All of his books were published outside South Africa, and before the end of apartheid, he was a banned writer there. As he says, "…it was illegal for me to publish anything. Any editor who published me would go to prison…And anybody who quoted from me would go to prison as well. These were all crimes. Even citing the poetry in a review essay."[10] Among his poem collections, the best known are *Sirens, Knuckles and Boots* (Nigeria, 1963), which came out while he was in prison, and *Letters to Martha and Other Poems from a South African Prison* (London, 1968), which he started writing on Robben Island. Compared to them or even his later works, *China Poems* seems to have been totally forgotten by readers and scholars.[11] This could be attributed to three factors.

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[8] Brutus could not join the ANC in the 1940s and 1950s because the party only accepted "African" members, excluding "Colored" South Africans like him. Sustar and Karim, ed., *Poetry & Protest*, 35.

[9] Lindfors, ed., *The Dennis Brutus Tapes*, 100.

[10] Sustar and Karim, ed., *Poetry & Protest*, 155.

[11] *China Poems* in its original stand-alone booklet form was only printed once. Several poems were reprinted in a 1978 collection, but they did not get much attention from readers and scholars either. Subsequent Dennis Brutus Readers have

First, as a booklet published by a research institute affiliated to an American university, it had limited distribution and was not accessible in South Africa at all at the time of its publication. Second, its thematic focus on China's landscape and political achievement diverged from what was familiar to his readers, namely his highly sardonic and critical poetics against apartheid South Africa and Western imperialism. The change of style from elaborate imageries to minimalist descriptions and exclamative remarks could also be difficult to accept for his old readers, especially considering how some of the poems in the collection verge on the propagandic and the sloganeering, such as the one presented at the beginning. Third, the overwhelmingly positive tone of *China Poems* can seem naïve and even delusional when read with historical hindsight in the post-Mao post-apartheid era, hence commentators' reluctance to attach it to the overall image of Brutus as a respectable international activist. In other words, it is possible that scholars have shunned *China Poems* because of the worry that drawing too much attention to it would somehow damage his literary and political reputation.

This chapter directly addresses this worry and examines *China Poems* as a South African literary work conditioned by both its author's ideological priorities and the specific historical environment in which China-South Africa relations were situated. I argue *against* positivistic readings of the poems supported by historical hindsight and *a posteriori* political judgment. Instead, they should be regarded as what they were—aesthetic expressions of Brutus's politics and feelings about politics as an exiled "Colored" South African, which need to be critically appraised in the context of their making, rather than that of the contemporary reader or commentator. In contrast with the Chinese South African life writing discussed in Chapter 3, *China Poems* constituted a rare and valuable cultural phenomenon that showcases what would happen when political ideals, rather than pragmatic socioeconomic concerns, come to determine one's understanding of Chineseness, not as a racialized identity imposed from without but as an adaptable cultural concept projected onto the Other.

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also largely ignored the poems from it. See Dennis Brutus, *Stubborn Hope, New Poems and Selections from China Poems and Strains* (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1978).

The structural position of this chapter in Section II is similar to that of Chapter 2 in Section I, as both seek to highlight the conspicuous absence of Yellow Perilism in poetic works produced in political climates where racialized geo-political antagonism dominated the popular imagination of China and Chineseness. In the case of apartheid South Africa, not only were the Chinese the internal yellow Other subsumed under the "Colored" category and thus relegated to legal, political and social inferiority (as discussed in Chapter 3), the PRC was officially an enemy state, a nation of "Red Peril", during the Cold War, and anyone who was suspected to have political connections to it could face persecution under the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950.[12] Therefore, apart from the shifting racial categories of "yellow (or 'Colored')", "black" and "(Honorary) White" discussed in Chapter 3, Chineseness in apartheid South Africa was also conceptualized as "red", a political force deemed dangerous and evil by the ruling party but inspiring and admirable by many of those opposing it, including Brutus. *China Poems* was not only inspired by Brutus's physical and ideological connections to the PRC but also engages in imagining Chineseness through both form and theme, thereby embodying a kind of "Chinese South African literature" of its own.

For Brutus, the PRC represented the opposite of the Yellow Peril. Or rather, it was the "Red Hope" for Brutus exactly because it was the Yellow/Red Peril for the apartheid government and the western capitalistic bloc at large during the Cold War. However, similar to how Ezra Pound and his modernist poetics hid their Orientalist disdain for contemporary China in the self-serving appropriation of classical Chinese literature, Brutus's unembellished praise for Mao's China in *China Poems* also has its Orientalist dimension, a different kind of "positive Orientalism" (to borrow from Chapter 2) characterized by his leftist ideological and sentiments. The following three segments of this chapter analyze this leftist Orientalism by focusing on three different aspects of *China Poems* as a literary work—the historical contexts of its composition and publication, the poems' stylistic characteristics

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[12] Wessel Visser, "The Production of Literature on the 'Red Peril' and 'Total Onslaught' in Twentieth-century South Africa," *Historia: Amptelike Orgaan* 49, no. 2 (2004): 105.

and ideological variances in comparison with Brutus's other poems and poetry by Mao Zedong, and the (ir)relevance of the Chinese translations of the poems presented in the collection.

Reversing the Yellow Peril with Leftist Orientalism: A Contextualization

China Poems is only 36 pages long and contains 28 or 16 poems depending on whether one takes some of them as connected or separate, since most of them do not have titles. Each page contains one poem accompanied by its Chinese translation, both printed in calligraphical styles that appear to be hand-written, and some poems are presented with additional notes about their subjects or occasions of composition. Most poems contain only three lines, and the longest one does not exceed seven lines. Four different first-person narratives explaining the background of the poems appear on page 5, 13, 23 and 35 respectively, informally breaking up the collection into four parts. The two paragraphs on page 5 precede the poems and frame them in relation to Brutus's China visit, thus worth quoting in full:

> While the guest of the People's Republic of China in Summer 1973, I wrote some verse which I presented on my departure to my hosts as a mark of my appreciation, affection and esteem. These are some of the poems, taken from my notes. I hope they indicate my admiration for the Chinese people and their great leader, Mao Tse-tung and that they will help promote friendship between the people of China and all the peoples of the world.
> Many things are memorable about my China visit: the friendliness and generosity, the poised confident children, the barefoot doctors and commune leaders; the old ivory carver working overtime so that there would be more money for liberation struggles; the Chinese anxiety about nuclear attacks and greater anxiety "whether they were doing enough to prevent the emergence of an elite"; the absence of traffic-jams, of pollution and commercial advertising; the even more striking absence of poor or ill-fed people; Chou En-lai (and many others) saying: "China is not free unless the world is free" and directly to me, at a reception: "We support you in your struggle for freedom in South Africa and" (slowly and with an emphasis which I reported subsequently to Oliver Tambo, Acting President-General of the African National Congress of South Africa) "we will be glad to give you all the help you ask for." (5)

It is this overt political framing and its overwhelmingly positive tone that have made *China Poems* stand out in Brutus's oeuvre, and readers and scholars may also regard the collection as too naive to be remembered for this reason. Despite its being more or less ignored in academic research, I have managed to find one (and only one) article with a specific focus on this collection— "An Innocent in

China—*China Poems*" written by Kenneth A. Phillips, published in the 1995 edited volume *Critical Perspectives on Dennis Brutus*. As the only scholar who has paid attention to the collection, Phillips's evaluation is nevertheless rather dismissive: "This work is clearly occasional verse and perhaps should not be considered too seriously."[13] Where he does attempt to read the poems more closely, his interpretations are quite representative of the kind of *a posteriori* political judgement I mentioned earlier. Though the article was published in the year after apartheid's official end, there is surprisingly no mention of this significant historical moment at all. Instead, the main focus is on the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and how Brutus failed to engage with "the daily realities" of this "period of great suffering and division":

> …most of these (the poems) are overt political statements in praise of the Chinese Communist Party's success. In retrospect it seems strange that a writer apparently so politically astute should have been blind to or have chosen to ignore the political reality in China at that time…In 1973 the People's Republic of China was staggering toward the end of the "cultural revolution". The years from 1966 to about 1976, sometimes seen as the ten lost years in Chinese contemporary history, marked a period of great suffering and division in the country, division which shattered the dream of unity which accompanied Liberation in 1949. A decade and a half after the end of the "cultural revolution" both Chinese and foreigners have many sources of evidence of the devastating effect this period had on China and its people…Yet, at no point in *China Poems* does Mr. Brutus, who could hardly have been unaware of some of the excesses even in 1973, write about the daily realities faced by many Chinese…one cannot read this verse today without being influenced by such retrospection, and the result of this influence is to make the verse appear a nostalgic, even naïve, expression of a dream, which, if ever was anything more than a dream, had been destroyed before 1973.[14]

Phillips's reading of Brutus is teeming with the affect of disappointment and even anger, and similar to the *modus operandi* of Orientalism, it reveals more about his own political judgment about the Chinese Cultural Revolution in 1995 than Brutus's experience and feeling about China in 1973. By the same logic, *China Poems* are more about Brutus's "dream" of Chineseness than Chinese "realities" as such. In other words, Brutus's political poetics shall be analyzed based on an acknowledgment of the significance of this "dream", rather than the assumption that it was the poet's primary task to

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[13] Kenneth A. Phillips, "An Innocent in China—*China Poems*," in *Critical Perspectives on Dennis Brutus*, eds. Craig W. McLuckie and Patrick J. Colbert (Colorado Springs: Three Continents Press, 1995), 113.
[14] Ibid., 114-115.

investigate and report "realities" just because he was known to be "politically astute". The poems only appear "nostalgic" and "naïve" to Phillips because he is reading them retrospectively, whereas for Brutus in 1973 they could not be anything but grounded and immediate, especially in relation to his own political pursuits at the time, which were not located in China in any material or institutional way.

Moreover, there are clearly double standards in Phillips's assertion that Brutus "could hardly have been unaware of some of the excesses even in 1973" while his own negative evaluation of the period, which he clearly takes as objective and universal, is based on "sources of evidence" from "Chinese and foreigners" gathered "a decade and a half after" its end. Whether Brutus had the capacity to find out these "devastating" "excesses" and "suffering" is one thing, whether he had the motive or ideological interest to investigate these so-called Chinese "realities" is another, and it is the latter question that should matter more when it comes to reading *China Poems* in context.

In the two opening paragraphs quoted above, Brutus does offer snippets of his personal experience in China, and they are admittedly selective and subjective; after all, nowhere does he assert that his descriptions here should be taken as an objective evaluation of the Chinese nation as a whole. While it was very likely that he was guided around by the Chinese authorities and put on a pre-arranged itinerary, as per Chinese regulations on foreign visitors at the time, "the poised confident children, the barefoot doctors and commune leaders" he met were real human beings rather than fabricated illusions, and the carver's hope to contribute to "liberation struggles" and the Chinese "anxiety...to prevent the emergence of an elite" were also real expressions he heard no matter how delusional these may sound in retrospect.[15] Similarly, "the absence of traffic-jams, of pollution and commercial advertising" was indeed a Chinese reality in 1973, while the "striking absence of poor or ill-fed people" was at least a

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[15] For the regulations and arrangements with regards to foreign visitors during the Cultural Revolution, see Julia Lovell, "The Uses of Foreigners in Mao-Era China: 'Techniques of Hospitality' and International Image-Building in the People's Republic, 1949-1976," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 25 (2015): 135-158. While Brutus did not describe the particular circumstances of his short visit to China and how much freedom he had to move around, it would be highly unlikely for a foreigner who did not speak Chinese to move around freely on his own without some form of official guidance during this period. Such circumstantial restrictions further contrast with the cultural freedom he perceived and practiced with his poetry during the visit, which is the focus here.

partial reality that Brutus was able or willing to see only from a restricted viewpoint. His admiration for Mao is straightforward, while his quotation of Chou is clearly grounded in his concern for the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. The conversation he had with Chou persisted in his later activist career. For example, in a 1975 article published in *The Gar*, Brutus continues to cite Chou in his proposal for "armed struggle" and "socialist reconstruction" in Southern African countries.[16]

It is worth clarifying that I am not trying to repeat here the kind of "reality" versus "dream" critique insisted on by Phillips. Rather, my point is that the very process of Brutus dreaming about China, namely the ideological functionality of the kind of Chineseness he could construct and use, was at least partially grounded in his lived experiences in China, no matter how temporary and restricted they were. Like all kinds of lived experiences, they are subject to the narrator's ideological interpretation and discursive (re-)construction, which can be conditioned by his or her political agenda. In this regard, if Brutus did have an agenda for *China Poems*, it was channelled through a cosmopolitan imaginary rather than one confined to nation states. According to him, it was the "friendship between the people of China and all the peoples of the world" that he sought to promote via this collection, and South Africa was perforce included but not specifically mentioned in this cosmopolitan leftist vision. This is in line with what he says in an autobiographical narrative recorded on tape in 1970: "I am a citizen of the world…I couldn't be kept in my place. And this meant that one transcended a local patriotism."[17]

Instead of retrospective reading, this cosmopolitan leftist vision should be understood in the intersecting historical contexts of Brutus's visit to China, and I emphasize "contexts" in the plural here because it took place at a time when specific challenges were faced by both China and South Africa in navigating their changing positions in the global Cold War. Brutus mentions on page 23 of *China Poems* that "I (He) was invited to China to represent the South African Table Tennis Board, of which

[16] Sustar and Karim, ed., *Poetry & Protest*, 228-229.
[17] Lindfors, ed., *The Dennis Brutus Tapes*, 155.

I (he) was Vice-President, and the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee, of which I am (he is) President, at a Friendship Tournament." (23) Based on this information, his participation in this tournament should be viewed in at least three historical backgrounds. First, Brutus had been in exile for almost 7 years at that point but his work for these organizations continued overseas. After he left South Africa in 1966, SANROC became an organization in exile as well and operated from London and the US. The South African Table Tennis Board was established in 1948 to advocate against racial segregation in the game as practiced by the South African Table Tennis Union.[18] It was affiliated with the International Table Tennis Federation and African Table Tennis Federation but excluded and antagonized by the national sports organization based in South Africa. Brutus's identity as an exiled leader of these anti-racist anti-establishment organizations was the main reason behind the PRC's invitation to him. As already mentioned in Chapter 3, the PRC did not establish official diplomatic ties with South Africa till 1998 and was consistent in opposing the South African establishment during apartheid. Therefore, South Africa-PRC ties in this period had to be built via anti-establishment figures like Brutus.

Second, the PRC, like South Africa, was also not participating in the Olympic Games, but for very different reasons. The PRC was not recognized as the legitimate representative of "China" by many countries in the first two decades of its existence, and it cut all ties with the International Olympic Committee in 1958 due to the Committee's continued recognition of the ROC/Taiwan and did not participate till 1984 (but its membership was resumed earlier in 1979). After the Sino-Soviet Split in the 1960s, the PRC sought to "win friends by, among other activities, engaging in sports competition with Third World countries".[19] The Asian-African Table Tennis Friendship Invitational Tournament was hosted in China in 1971 for this purpose, and it soon expanded to include Latin American countries

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[18] For a study of Brutus's running of these organizations in exile, see Matthew P. Llewllyn and Toby C. Rider, "Dennis Brutus and the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee in Exile, 1966–1970," *South African Historical Journal* 72, no. 2 (2020): 246-271.

[19] Wang Guanhua, "'Friendship First': China's Sports Diplomacy during the Cold War," *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 12, no. 3/4 (2003): 134.

and thus the one in 1973 Brutus participated in was officially called "Asian-African-Latin American Table Tennis Friendship Invitational Tournament (AALATTFIT 亚非拉乒乓球友好邀请赛)". This Third-World approach was the PRC's primary strategy to mitigate its international isolation in this period, and sports exchanges were a significant "political tool" for the country to explore ways forward as the Cold War reached a different stage. Dubbed "ping pong diplomacy", the friendship tournaments were successful in improving the PRC's official relations with Third World countries, especially the newly decolonized states in Africa and Latin America, and paved the way for the thaw in its relationship with the US as well.[20] Many commemorative cultural artefacts, such as stamps, posters and postcards, were issued in the PRC from 1971 to 1973 to celebrate the AALATTFIT, and most of them foreground interracial friendship and building Third World solidarity via sports as the main message (Figure 4. 1 and 4.2). Such a message was exactly the opposite of what was practiced in South Africa, as the apartheid government consistently kept "undesirable" (meaning non-white) foreign players from competing in the country.[21] The PRC's international sports agenda thus conflated with the core mission of SANROC and was very attractive to anti-racist activists like Brutus.

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[20] Ibid., 135.
[21] Richard Lapchick, "South Africa: Sport and Apartheid Politics," *Source: The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, no. 445 (1979): 156.

Figure 4.1 and 4.2 Commemorative postcards for the AAATFIT issued in China in 1973[22]

Third, the late 1960s and early 1970s witnessed the intensification of apartheid policies and domestic political control in South Africa, and it was also facing increasing international isolation in the era of African decolonization movements. Domestically, the Criminal Procedure Amendment Act No. 96 of 1965 was passed, which allowed detention without trial for 180 days on a renewable basis.[23] In 1966, the year Brutus left the country, B. J. Vorster became prime minister following the assassination of his predecessor Hendrik Verwoerd. Vorster's staunch adherence to apartheid led to the establishment of State Security Council (SSC) in 1972 and a ban on student leader Stephen Biko in 1973. Separate from these authoritarianist developments in the government, a far-right neo-Nazi organization called Afrikaner Resistance Movement (AWB) also came into being in 1973 and advocated for secessionist Afrikaner nationalism based on white supremacist, anti-black and anti-communist ideologies. On the international front, 1966 was also the year in which the United Nations made the declaration that apartheid was "a crime against humanity" and the UN General Assembly

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[22] The postcard images are sourced from < http://www.wjfno1.com/html/report/1265324-1.htm> (accessed September 22, 2021)

[23] Brutus mentions in a 1974 recorded tape that this so-called "180-day law" was one of the reasons why he decides to leave the country at that particular time. See Lindfors, ed., *The Dennis Brutus Tapes*, 155.

officially supported the isolation of South Africa starting from 1970. Pro-independence forces led by the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) were also gathering momentum in what was then South West Africa (present day Namibia), which South Africa had been administering against the UN's orders. Moreover, one year before the publication of *China Poems*, the military coup known as the 1974 Carnation Revolution in Portugal led to the immanent independences of South Africa's biggest neighbors, Mozambique and Angola.[24] For exiled activists like Brutus, the increasing international pressure on the South African government was an opportunity that must be seized, and friendly exchanges with socialist countries were welcomed on the basis of their shared stance of opposing apartheid.

In *China Poems*, such friendly exchanges are indeed represented in very straightforward ways, which could be easily taken as the revelation of "the triumph of political ideology over language and poetic style".[25] Exemplifying this straightforwardness are the following two poems:

Banquet at the Great Hall of the People

Good food,
good wine,
good friendship. (12)

Peasants, workers,
they are the strength
of the land. (20)

Phillips characterizes these poems as "the glare of direct statement", which is devoid of any poetic quality to speak of.[26] I would argue in the next segment that while these two poems may be extreme examples of it, there is still an aesthetic strategy of descriptive minimalism at work, constituting a kind stylistic consistency that links them to other poems in the collection. However, before that, I wish to make it clear that my arguments against Phillips's retrospective reading are not to, as it were, reverse

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[24] See Nancy L. Clark and William H. Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid* (London: Routledge, 2011 second edition), xv for a list of key events concerning South Africa in the 1970s.
[25] Phillips, "An Innocent in China", 117.
[26] Ibid., 118.

the verdict and salvage Brutus's poetry from aesthetic or political criticisms. Rather, my emphasis on reading the poems in context is to understand why China became the opposite of the Yellow Peril for Brutus and how this knowledge changes the way we see his constructions of China and Chineseness in this particular collection. The China in *China Poems* is a mirror, and to quote another poem from it,

> The mirror serves:
> the viewer
> sets the angle. (34)

Brutus's reversal of the negative Othering of the Yellow Peril discourse in his straightforward poetics reifies a kind of leftist Orientalism, which shifts the racial towards the cultural. In Edward Said's classic analysis, the Orient functions exactly like a mirror for the Orientalist: "the Orientalist makes it his work to be always converting the Orient from something into something else: he does this for himself, for the sake of his culture..."[27] This quote has already appeared in Chapter 2 of this thesis in the discussion on Ezra Pound's "positive Orientalism", but here it involves further complications that warrant new reflections. While "China" still serves as the mirror here, this mirror is an idealized nation state of contemporary relevance rather than an imagined cultural repertoire of classical literature frozen in the past. That is to say, Brutus the Orientalist "viewer" still constructs images of Chineseness for his own use, but the "angle" he sets is conditioned by his leftist pursuits of anti-racist solidarity and international socialism, and both the affect and positionality of him doing so are drastically different from those of Pound. On the one hand, Pound's "positive Orientalism" operates on the fundamentally negative affect of disdain for contemporary China, which he perceived as already contaminated by undesirable Western modernity, while Brutus's leftist Orientalism operates with an overwhelmingly (and some may say blindingly) positive affect towards contemporary China, which is also conceptualized as free from Western imperialistic and capitalistic forces in *China Poems*. On the other hand, Pound as an Anglo-American poet was still caught in the East-West dyad of classical Orientalism

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[27] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 67.

in his conjectures of traditional Chinese poetics, whereas Brutus as a "Colored" South African activist in exile challenges this conventional understanding of Orientalism in dyadic/binary terms like East and West, the colonized and the colonizer.

My use of the term "leftist Orientalism" thus highlights the fact that Orientalist cultural practices can and have happened between different groups of "the colonized" as well, and contrary to the negative invention and appropriation of the Other in conventional understandings of Orientalism, leftist Orientalism usually manifests as romanticizing constructions of the non-Western Other in pursuit of the shared struggle of anti-racism, anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism. The "peasants and workers" in Brutus's poem are indeed more symbolic than real, but it is this assumed obtainability and desirability of the real in the paradigmatic critique of Orientalism that needs to be reconsidered when it comes to leftist Orientalism. Unlike the colonialist production of knowledge in the 19th century, neither Brutus's cultural work nor his political advocacy had any direct material effects on the lives of the Chinese people, and his overwhelming positive affect towards them and their nation was sincere expressions of good wishes at best and detached performances of misdirected hope at worst.

Nor was Brutus's leftist Orientalism an isolated case in African and pan-African thinking during the Cold War. W. E. B du Bois, the influential African American socialist, visited the PRC in 1959 and 1963 and published comments in the *Peking Review* (the only English-language publication in the PRC then) that hold China in high esteem and call for stronger ties between China and Africa.[28] Mamadou Gologo, a Marxist Malian government minister and poet, travelled in China in the early 1960s and published a book-length report in Beijing entitled "China: A Great People, A Great Destiny" in 1965.[29] Viriato da Cruz, the nationalist Angolan poet who served as the secretary general of the People's

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[28] Du Bois, W. E. B. "China and Africa." *Peking Review*, March 3 (1959): 11-13. Bill Mullen employs term "Afro-Orientalism" to discuss the historical mutations of these mutual imaginations but here I use "leftist Orientalism" to highlight the ideological foundation at work in Brutus, not his geo-cultural background, which may not be totally subsumed under the prefix "afro-". Similarly, not all "afro-Orientalists" are leftist-leaning. See Bill V. Mullen, *Afro-Orientalism* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

[29] Mamadou Gologo, *China: A Great People, A Great Destiny* (Peking: New World Press, 1965). This book was simultaneously released in French and English by the same publisher. Gologo wrote it in French and the press has not provided any information in the English edition about the identity of the translator.

Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) between 1962 and 1964, lived in exile in the PRC

from 1966 and died there in 1973. He was hired by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as a consultant

for the Afro-Asian Writers' Bureau and was known for citing Mao's poems when delivering public

speeches.[30] Brutus's homage to Mao also prefigures the Culture and Resistance conference held in

Gaborone, Bostwana in 1982 as well as the People's Culture Movement in South Africa in the 1980s,

as "Maoist phraseology" was adopted by their participants to promote local traditions of oral literature

and the construction of "black collective consciousness and art".[31] Compared to these figures, Brutus's

one-time short visit to China may seem superficial and ephemeral, and yet it was exactly the

publication of *China Poems* that made him stand out, especially the juxtaposition or conflation of

politics and poetics therein. No other African visitor attempted to reconcile appropriations of (an

imagined) classical form and contemporary political theme in poetry like Brutus did, and these poems

are thus valuable materials for examining the discrepancies between ideological ideals for literary

production and the techniques involved in the actual making of it, and how they compare to Brutus's

own poetic styles when he writes about other subjects and locations.

"Chinese Vision": A Minimalist Style in Comparison

Brutus's leftist Orientalism towards China is inseparable from its stylistic dimension, which I call

descriptive minimalism. The reification of this descriptive minimalism in *China Poems* does

sometimes appear as if it is as straightforward and didactic as his political statements, but it cannot be

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[30] Jodie Yuzhou Sun, "Viriato da Cruz and His Chinese Exile: A Biographical Approach," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 46, no. 5 (2020): 855.

[31] Peter D. McDonald, *The Literature Police: Apartheid Censorship and Its Cultural Consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 203. The appeal of Maoism during the global Cold War was not confined to Africa, and different forms of leftist Orientalism were practiced in Western and Asian intellectual circles as well. The most influential among them was Jean-Paul Sartre and a group of French intellectuals associated with the magazine *Tel Quel*, including François Wahl, Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva, who visited China in 1974. See Eric Hayot, *Chinese Dreams: Pound, Brecht,* Tel Quel (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2004) for a study on the (dis)continuities of their postmodernist Orientalism in relation to the modernist Orientalism of Pound, and see Julia Lovell, *Maoism: A Global History* (London: Vintage, 2019) for Maoism's influence in Asia and Latin America.

dismissively reduced to propaganda or sloganeering. The descriptive minimalism in this collection was the culmination of multiple threads of poetic experimentation, including Brutus's own desire to communicate with his readers more effectively after his imprisonment on Robben Island, his appreciation of Mao's ideas on the functionality of literature, and his compartmentalized (mis-)appropriation of Mao's poetry of "revolutionary Romanticism" written in the classical Chinese tradition.

1. Stylistic Change after Robben Island

In a 1970 interview at the University of Texas Austin, Brutus confessed that his primary thinking about poetry had changed drastically after his imprisonment:

> I spent a period in prison for my opposition to apartheid and racism. But you may not know that much of it was in fact spent in solitary confinement. And this meant that you were in very great danger of going insane, and I came very close to it…So you said to yourself, "Well, I'll spend an hour thinking about literature and another hour thinking about movies," and you stayed away from things like your family and so on – you didn't dare think of them.
> The first thing I decided about my future poetry was that there must be no ornament, absolutely none. And the second thing I decided was you oughtn't to write for poets; you oughtn't even to write for people who read poetry, not even students. You ought to write for the ordinary person: for the man who drives a bus, or the man who carries the baggage at the airport, and the woman who cleans the ashtrays in the restaurant. If you can write poetry which makes sense to those people, then there is some justification for writing poetry. Otherwise you have no business writing.[32]

While "no ornament, absolutely none" is obviously an exaggeration for the purpose of emphasis, it is understandable that after experiencing direct political persecution in the harshest conditions, he chose to prioritize effective communication of ideas of resistance and liberation over conformity to literary standards and explorations of aesthetic complexity. This change can be seen in the following selected stanzas from two different political poems, the first written during his imprisonment on Robben Island and the second written retrospectively in exile:

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[32] Lindfors, ed., *The Dennis Brutus Tapes*, 161-162.

In the grayness of isolated time
which shafts down into the echoing mind,
wraiths appear, and whispers of horrors
that people the labyrinth of self.

Coprophilism; necrophilism; fellatio;
penis-amputation;
and in this gibbering society
hooting for recognition as one's other selves
suicide, self-damnation, walks
if not a companionable ghost
then a familiar familiar
a doppelgänger
not to be shaken off.

—— Selected from "Letters to Martha" 1968[33]

Remember Sharpeville
bullet-in-the-back day
Because it epitomized oppression
and the nature of society
more clearly than anything else;
it was the classic event

Nowhere is racial dominance
more clearly defined
nowhere the will to oppress
more clearly demonstrated

what the world whispers
apartheid with snarling guns
the blood lust after
South Africa spills in the dust

Remember Sharpeville
Remember bullet-in-the-back day
And remember the unquenchable will for freedom
Remember the dead
and be glad.

—— Selected from "Sharpeville" 1973[34]

As Simon Lewis points out, "Letters to Martha" is a "letter-poem" that foregrounds Brutus's imposed

"status of prisoner" and marks "a strong consciousness of the public sphere". The overall poetic

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[33] Sustar and Karim, ed., *Poetry & Protest*, 107. Note that 1968 was the year of publication rather than that of composition.
[34] Ibid., 96.

narrative is full of descriptions of life in prison and links the harsh conditions to the "political and legal structures that have sentenced him to imprisonment" in the first place.[35] However, some of these descriptions are delivered through highly individualistic reflections on the self, or "selves" that verge on the schizophrenic. In the selected stanzas above, Brutus's solitary confinement produces paradoxical psychological effects of what may be called involuntary narcissism beyond the singular coherent self, a kind of compulsory navel-gazing leading to the realization that the self is fundamentally conditioned on all the abstract nominalization of the "-ism(s)" and "-tion(s)" that mark the negative, the dangerous, and the oppressive in the "gibbering society" of apartheid South Africa, of which Robben Island was but a microcosm. The evocation of "the familiar" as a kind of unshakable apparition in the last four lines presented above also echoes T. S. Eliot's mention of "familiar compound ghost" in *Four Quartets*, showcasing Brutus's familiarity with the aesthetics of modernism in 20th century Western literature.[36]

Contrary to the syntactical and psychological complexity of the stanzas from "Letters to Martha", "Sharpeville" is much more straightforward and pertains to a kind of moral-political command. It is a retrospective call for remembering the infamous Sharpeville Massacre of 1960, in which police fired on a crowd of black South Africans and killed 69 people in the eponymous township.[37] The poem puts into practice Brutus's determination to reduce ornament and address the people by creating an imperative rhythmic force throughout. Images of "bullets", "guns" and "blood" are directly juxtaposed with the sociohistorical conditions of "racial dominance", "oppress(ion)" and "apartheid" to highlight the necessity of remembrance and celebrate "the unquenchable will for freedom" of the South African (and all oppressed) people. The repetition of the "remember" imperative and the consecutive thematizations of the comparative quantifier "more" and the absolute negative noun "nowhere" create a heightened sense of urgency, which greatly enhances the emotional efficacy of the poem as a literary

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[35] Simon Lewis, "Island Life: Dennis Brutus's Prison Experience and the Poetics of 'Letters to Martha'," *Research in African Literatures* 51, no. 2 (2020): 121.
[36] T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (London: Harcourt Books, 1971), 61 (kindle display).
[37] Clark and Worger, *South Africa*, 62.

conduit for political messages.

Such straightforward political criticism and moral condemnation can also be found in poems about Western countries that Brutus wrote in exile in the 1970s while/after residing in those countries:

In London it is dark:
night settles on the city
while the West-End hurls
its garish pyrotechnics
into the ten o'clock sky.
in Westminster, that place of shame,
spawner of slavery's system,
hoarse-throated still with lust
for Africa's rape,
they plot fresh perfidy,
emerge, smiling,
dripping their festering lies…

—— Selected from "Crossing the Atlantic" 1975[38]

The home of the brave
and the land of the free
to massacre:

the land of liberty
and freedom of choice
of subjection for others:

the land of plenty
and quality education
for people of quality:

Amerika the beautiful
cesspool.

—— An Untitled Poem Written in 1973[39]

In the first poem, there is obviously a contrastive tension between the superficial "garish pyrotechnics" of London at night and the many-sided "darkness" of (neo-)imperial Britain—physical, historical, political, hypocritical. This tension is taken to another level in the second poem. The first stanza takes the two most famous lines from the US national anthem and subverts its self-glorification by attaching a further attributive verb to the last noun phrase. This addition drastically changes the meaning and

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[38] Sustar and Karim, ed., *Poetry & Protest*, 263. Note that 1979 was the year of publication for this poem.
[39] Ibid., 375.

affect of the first two lines from positive to negative and foregrounds the harm of US imperialism with only one word, "massacre". This simple method of contrastive subversion is repeated in the other three stanzas as well, culminating in the oxymoronic attachment of "cesspool" to "beautiful". What these examples clearly demonstrate is that syntactical simplicity, thematic clarity and the economical use of words can work together to deliver Brutus's political ideas effectively and efficiently. Indeed, the political-ideological and the poetic-stylistic cannot be discussed separately in Brutus's post-imprisonment poetry; neither does the former negate or cancel out the latter in his attempts to reduce ornament and address people more directly.

With this stylistic shift confirmed, the key question thus becomes: if Brutus was already practicing a more straightforward poetics for the purpose of expressing his politics before 1973, why should we interpret *China Poems* any differently just because these poems take this approach to the more extreme style of descriptive minimalism, categorized by brevity and different degrees of suggestiveness? Is it a matter of degree? Then where lies the boundary between "the literary" and "the propagandic", as Phillips has labelled it? One consistent critical stance I have taken throughout this thesis is that such categorizing boundaries, if not to be completely deconstructed, shall at least be put on a flexible spectrum of re-examination that blurs their dividing lines, and my take on *China Poems* is no different. It is a collection that combines the literary and the propagandic, both of which connote positive political value for Brutus. Moreover, among the poems, there is enough stylistic and thematic diversity to contest the categorization of the entire work as "propaganda clichés".[40] Take the following poems for example:

> The old imperial standard
> is the shape of the pillars
> of the new stadium in Shanghai. (28)
>
> The barges clamorous on the river.
> the men, in pairs, rhythmically leaning on their poles:
> storied city of crime, plunder and intrigue—

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[40] Phillips, "An Innocent in China", 117.

now the people reconstruct.

(Recited at a Banquet, Shanghai Mansions
—on the Headquarters of the Japanese
Army of Occupation.) (30)

The lust of the eyes
is a cobra, hooded;
in prison the serpent drowses.
(Friendship Hotel, Peking) (32)

Chinese vision:
branches
seen against the sky. (27)

The first two poems are similar in their key message: the positive images of "new" socialist China have replaced the negative images of the "old imperial" China and the weak early modern China that was bullied by Japanese imperialism. The "Orient" in his leftist Orientalism is here constructed by simple descriptions of architecture and transportation, without direct revelation of political themes. In contrast, the latter two poems, with even fewer words, emanate a high degree of thematic suggestiveness and emotional uncertainty that leaves much more space for the reader to impose their own understandings. They embody Brutus's original conception of *China Poems* as "efforts at stimulating in English the kind of lucid compression found in certain Oriental forms of verse", which is obviously a rather Orientalist view of poetry written in Asian languages. He specifies this view in an explanatory paragraph on the penultimate page of the collection:[41]

> Even before my trip I had begun to work towards more economic verse. My exposure to *haikus* and their even tighter Chinese ancestors, the *chueh chu*, impelled me further. The trick is to say little (the nearer to nothing, the better) and to suggest much—as much as possible. The weight of meaning hovers around the words (which should be as flat as possible) or is brought by the reader/hearer. Non-emotive, near-neutral sounds should generate unlimited resonances in the mind; the delight is in the tight-rope balance between nothing and everything possible; between saying very little and implying a great deal. (35)

Clearly many of the poems in the collection, such as the ones ending with "Mao saved China"

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[41] Lindfors, ed., *The Dennis Brutus Tapes*, 10. In a tape recording of 1974, Brutus also referred to his emulation as "a kind of Chinese mode", see Ibid., 194.

and "good friendship" quoted before, contradict this emphasis on "say(ing) little" and being "non-emotive" with their congratulatory statements, and it is not my intention to dispute this fact. However, neither do I agree with Phillips's generalizing assessment that "readers…find very little comparison between this verse (*China Poems*) and the traditional poetry upon which it claims to be based."[42] Brutus's understanding of how *haiku* and *chueh chu* (*jueju* 绝句) work is admittedly limited. A specific form of classical Chinese poetry, *jueju* usually consists of four lines of five or seven characters, and different pairings of the lines have to follow strict rules in how each character's pronunciation corresponds to one another in the *pingze* (平仄) division, a technical differentiation between level and oblique tones. Obviously, Brutus has not tried to replicate the strict rhythmic schemes required by these poetic forms anywhere in *China Poems*.

Although it would certainly be an overstatement to say that Brutus fully adopted the core literary techniques of *jueju* simply by using enjambment,   through emulous cross-linguistic representations of this "Oriental verse", Brutus is nonetheless able to grasp some superficial literary characteristics of *jueju,* including appearances of conciseness, qualities of suggestiveness and effects of multiple resonances. As Haun Saussy points out, *jueju* embodies a "paradoxical aesthetic of synecdoche and definitiveness"; literally translated as "cut-off lines", *jueju* is a series of "comments of arrested movement or thought".[43] The third and fourth poems presented above approximate this paradoxical aesthetic. On the one hand, they do capture a specific moment of reflection or line of thinking stimulated by Brutus's specific experiences in China. On the other hand, the subjects of this reflection and thinking are obscure enough to engender multiple interpretations. Both poems cast their discursive focus on the optic but the pensive aura they create are very different. The poem on the lustful "eyes" is much more self-indulgent, and its evocation of "prison" directly harks back to Brutus's days on Robben Island and the poetry he wrote there. This is very unusual and even shocking in the context of

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[42] Phillips, "An Innocent in China", 114.
[43] Haun Saussy, "Jueju," *New Literary History* 50, no. 3 (2019): 454.

China Poems, especially as he notes that this poem was written in the Friendship Hotel in Peking, where he had been cordially invited to stay by the CCP. In the socialist reconstruction of new China, "lust", and associated sexual symbols like the "cobra" and "serpent", were not supposed to be indulged even in the form of literary expression. However, not only does Brutus indulge in it in this poem, but the minimalist form also entices the reader to wonder: is he referring to his own lustful eyes? Or was he seduced by some Chinese woman with lustful eyes, whom he may have met in the hotel? Did being alone in the hotel remind him of his solitary confinement on Robben Island and the sense of sexual frustration he felt then? Is it possible that he was attempting to suggest something insidious that he detected in Mao's China? What this series of questions shows is that, just as how he imagined *jueju* would work, this poem does generate "unlimited resonances in the mind" of the reader. The "Chinese vision" poem does something similar: a physical gesture of looking upwards is described and a general idea about visual clarity is implied, and one may interpret it as a compliment for the Chinese political vision, but one does not have to. Does the sky refer to Mao as was conventional during the Chinese Cultural Revolution? Is "branches" a pun that simultaneously refers to the Chinese people and the different bureaucratic branches of the CCP that serve the people? Is this conjecture about "Chinese vision" a deliberate effort to counter racist stereotypes and Yellow Perilist caricatures in the West portraying the Chinese as narrow-minded people with "slanty eyes"?[44] While the reader holds the interpretative power for all these questions or hypotheses (also due to the lack of any more detailed circumstantial evidence on Brutus's China visit), the positive aura generated by the poem in relation to Brutus's conceptualization of China and Chineseness is both palpable and appreciable.

Therefore, my reading of *China Poems* in relation to other political poems in Brutus's oeuvre confirms that rather than an embarrassing aberration in the development of his literary and activist career, the collection epitomizes the stylistic shift he wanted to explore as a poet *engagé*. While it is

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[44] Helen Ngo, *The Habits of Racism: A Phenomenology of Racism and Racialized Embodiment* (London: Lexington Books, 2017), 14.

easy to single out the most adulatory poems and dismiss the collection as propagandic or delusional (especially with the benefit of historical hindsight), such selective readings ignore the collection's internal diversity and how different poems with different degrees of ideological ambiguity relate to one another.

2. Brutus's (Mis-)Appropriation of Mao's "Revolutionary Romanticism"

As the "lust" poem shows, the sporadic appearances of an individualistic "doppelgänger" from Brutus's navel-gazing days on Robben Island still haunt *China Poems* (more examples below), which may seem inappropriate and incompatible with his political admiration for Mao and the CCP. After all, Brutus himself admits in a 1974 tape recording that before his exile, he once declined to become a member of the South African Communist Party (SACP). As he puts it,

> …my individualism…led me often to be in conflict with the strict Communist Party line in South Africa and critical of it – and which was one of the reasons why I declined to become a member of the Party – all this must give dissatisfaction to those who are members of the Party and who have been consistently critical of me for my "individualism," just as I imagine some of them are now critical of me because of my enthusiastic comments on the Chinese political direction as a result of my visit to Peking, Canton, Shanghai, and other parts of China.[45]

Upon reading how Brutus juxtaposes his individualism and his enthusiasm for China here, one is bound to wonder that if this individualism was perceived by him as incompatible with the SACP, then how did he reconcile it with his enthusiasm for China under the rule of the CCP? Viewed from historical hindsight, did the CCP not condemn individualistic thinking as selfish and bourgeois and completely censor it in literature during the Cultural Revolution? Should Brutus be criticized here for holding blatant double standards and naïve illusions about China?

Once again, I would argue that this juxtaposition should not be read with historical hindsight only but needs to be contextualized in relation to how Brutus understood Chineseness in both political and

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[45] Lindfors, ed., *The Dennis Brutus Tapes*, 173.

literary terms in the early 1970s. In this subsection, I point out that there are seemingly contradictory and incompatible elements in Mao's own literary ideologies and poetic practices, which complicate how individualism was understood in China from the 1940s to the 1970s. Not only does Mao acknowledge them, but he also tried to solve them via his proposal of "revolutionary Romanticism", a literary style that combines the socialist revolutionary ideal and a heightened sense of collective heroism. I would also show that after reading Mao's poetry, what Brutus did with *China Poems* was in fact a compartmentalized usage of what he perceived as Mao's "Oriental verse". Brutus takes apart Mao's "revolutionary Romanticism" and employs different elements of it in individual poems according to his own understandings and sentiments. Such strategies of poetic (mis-)appropriation are also key constituents of Brutus's leftist Orientalism.

In the middle of *China Poems*, Brutus mentions that he had read a collection of Mao's poems before visiting China:

> Shortly before going to China I was fortunate to discover Mao Tse-tung's poetry in the Willis Barnstone translation. Mao is a great poet—but in the classical tradition, so that he disparages his own work (Mao: "they are in the old style and might encourage a wrong trend and exercise a bad influence…Besides they are not much as poetry, and there is nothing outstanding about them.") and urges younger poets not to follow his example. I was invited to speak to the English majors at Peking University and, in speaking of commitment in African writing, was able to relate this to Mao's work. Barnstone calls him "A major poet, an original master." (13)

The particular translation Brutus read was published in 1972, and Barnstone's collaborator Ko Ching-po later became the Chinese translator of *China Poems*, a co-creator of the bilingual booklet (more on Ko's translation in the next segment). It contains 35 poems by Mao, written between 1925 to 1963. Although 20 of them were composed before 1949, Mao did not publish them till the late 1950s and early 1960s after being encouraged by some of his poet friends such as Liu Yazi (柳亚子) and Zang Kejia (臧克家). Brutus's quote from Mao in the paragraph above is taken from Barnstone's introduction to his translation, which quotes from a letter Mao sent to Zang in 1957 in response to the latter's invitation for him to publish his poems. In such letters as well as public speeches, Mao was

consistent in asserting his humility about his poems and always caveated their publications by saying "of course our poetry should be written mainly in the modern form…(and) it would not be advisable to encourage young people to do this…"[46] Was Brutus then defying Mao's wish when he related African writing to Mao's work in front of the young students at Peking University? While Brutus must have spoken highly of Mao's work and taken his influence positively, his own practice does not contradict Mao's caveat. After all, the poems in *China Poems* are all written in modern vernacular English, which are then translated into modern vernacular Chinese by Ko. Like Pound, what Brutus does with this collection is experimenting with modern English verse by approximating the stylistics and appropriating the sentiments in Mao's classical Chinese poetry.

Compared to the approximation of style achieved via the consistent employment of descriptive minimalism (as analyzed in the subsection above), Brutus's appropriation of Mao's sentiments has more variations in *China Poems*. These variations in turn indicate discrepant understandings and selective applications of Mao's ideologies with regards to the functionality of art and literature in socialist China.

Two months after the publication of *China Poems*, Brutus participated in a symposium on contemporary black South African literature held at the University of Texas at Austin. His co-panelists included renowned writers from different African countries, including Keorapetse Kgositsile, Chinua Achebe and Ali Mazrui. In his speech, Brutus offered strong criticisms against liberal White South African writers like Alan Paton and Athol Fugard for their "accomplice of the system".[47] He opposed Fugard's "function within" approach to apartheid and condemned his appearances on Western television programs and pleas for his plays to be performed to "White Only" audiences in South Africa.[48] As mentioned before, for Brutus, especially after his imprisonment on Robben Island, effective communication with ordinary people, especially the non-white population oppressed by the

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[46] Mao quoted in Willis Barnstone, "Introduction," in Mao Tse-tung, *The Poems of Mao Tse-tung*, translated by Willis Barnstone and Ko Ching-po (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1972), 18.

[47] Lindfors, ed., *The Dennis Brutus Tapes*, 182.

[48] Ibid.

apartheid system, should be the primary function and goal of literature. Therefore, he viewed these White South African writers as collaborationist and elitist, and followed his criticisms against them with a citation of Mao:

> There is the notion that the origins of literature, of all literature – its direction, its purpose, everything – flow out of a love of humanity. Well, this will not do. For if humanity is the reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* or the *New York Review of Books*, we are really writing for just a segment of humanity, a narrow and privileged segment, an elite. We are excluding from our concern and from our responsibility the mass of the people. Mao Tse-tung had an interesting thing to say about writers and artists in his lectures on art and literature at the Yenan Forum. He says that the writer or the artist tends to play the hero; he thinks he's important, he thinks he's somebody special, but he must understand that the more he plays the hero and the special person, the more the people will not accept him. The writer distances himself from them in the process of making himself a special person, because special persons remain only a segment, an elitist segment, of the society. What I am saying may seem a kind of reversal, a turning upside down of a whole series of widely accepted values within a particular culture. If that is so, let me assure you that that is precisely what I intend.[49]

As his speech shows, Brutus agrees with Mao and opposes elitism and heroism in literature in the sense that the writer should avoid any superiority complex and base their creative activities on the everyday lives of the masses instead. In Mao's Yan'an Talks (noted as "Yenan Forum" above) in 1942, he stressed that "Rich deposits of literature and art actually exist in popular life itself: they are things in their natural forms, crude but also extremely lively, rich, and fundamental; they make all processed forms of literature pale in comparison."[50] Two short poems in *China Poems* show how Brutus heeds Mao's advice here and depicts the "natural forms" of popular life in China with his style of descriptive minimalism:

> Miles of corn:
> it is simple:
> life is simple. (21)

> Earthworks covered with moss,
> an empty goldfish bowl,
> a piglet, a melon.
> (A People's Commune.) (25)

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[49] Ibid., 185.

[50] Bonnie S. McDougall, *Mao Zedong's "Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art": A Translation of the 1943 Text with Commentary* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies at The University of Michigan, 1980), 69.

However, while neither elitist attitudes nor heightened heroism (if the "Mao saved China" poem can be discounted as such, since it is not about the poet himself) are found in *China Poems*, a different kind of individualism is retained. Contrary to the holier-than-thou sentiments of heroic superiority, whenever the first-person pronouns ("I" and "we") appear in *China Poems*, this diegetic individual tends to be in the mood of self-pity and self-doubt, emanating a controlled amount of lugubriousness in a semi-meditative manner:[51]

> Do all old men feel thus?
> youth thrusting truculently,
> young men, young women
> aswirl in sensual vitality
> advancing tidally;
> we shrivel at the center
> curl and wither with brittle edges. (31)
>
> I have commuted between the world's capitals;
> travel is no longer an achievement;
> I must begin to do meaningful things. (33)
>
> Not in my hands
> is the clay
> of my life. (36)

All three untitled poems convey a sense of unfulfillment, but they lament different aspects of the poet's life. The first poem centers on the contrast between "wither(ing)" old men and "vital" young people. In terms of language, it is no longer minimalist, nor does it simply describe objects or scenes of life. Instead, the range of adjectives and adverbs, together with the abstract noun-phrase "sensual vitality", is reminiscent of the poems Brutus wrote before or during his days on Robben Island, which are much more elaborate in style and contemplative in content. Watching these energetic young people, not only does the poet-narrator show no desire for heroic leadership, but he is also feeling a sense of inevitable decay and renewal on behalf of a collective "we", which may be variously interpreted as old revolutionaries who fought for and established the country, or left-behind loyalists of a begone era

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[51] Another poem containing "we" is discussed below in comparison with Mao's poems due to their shared subject.

replaced by a new age, or perhaps more accurately, international observers of China who admire the socialist achievement of the nation that they cannot imagine happening in their own. The second poem shifts the focus from the temporal to the spatial, and yet the sense of inevitable change is reiterated here by the phrase "no longer". There is still an urge to do more, to turn sentiments into actions. The last poem, also the shortest, in turn acknowledges the uncertain outcomes of such actions, and utilizes the metaphor of clay to foreground the limited agency of the individual himself. Therefore, what these poems demonstrate is that Brutus understands Mao's literary ideologies in accordance with his own poetic practices. The individualistic element of Brutus often employs in his previous works has been preserved in *China Poems* in a humbled manner, conditioned on controlled doses of negativity and lamentation rather than mindless exultation and self-glorification.

Brutus's appropriation of Maoist poetics is indeed selective, as he has never really adapted to the style and ideology of "revolutionary Romanticism" Mao later proposed. In the Yan'an Talks, Mao argued against cultural elitism but supported a utilitarian treatment of "cultural workers" and what he called "specialists", including those skilled in traditional Chinese literature, as long as they contribute to "the party's revolutionary work as a whole".[52] In 1958, Mao sought to sublimate this approach by instituting the slogan "Revolutionary Romanticism Combined with Revolutionary Realism (革命浪漫主义和革命现实主义相结合)". As the CCP prepared to rapidly industrialize China via the "Great Leap Forward" campaigns, "revolutionary Romanticism" meant that literary works should not stop at depicting popular life and relaying people's lived experiences but must strive to transform their readers for the positive, to tirelessly work for the nation's utopian future. This "Romanticism" with the capital "R" is drastically different from the romanticism of 19th century Europe. It is not a romanticism "marked by subjective whims, fantasy, love, or imaginary freedom", neither does it permit writers to indulge in some kind of escapist appreciation of natural beauty. Instead, Mao saw in literature "a power to envision and to create alternative narratives and to project different images of the world, provoking

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[52] McDougall, *Mao Zedong's "Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art"*, 75.

the audience to identify with those visions and to participate in their realization".[53] This discourse of "revolutionary Romanticism" also directed Mao's readers to concentrate on the positive spirit of his poems, rather than their classical forms. Moreover, it served as the justification for the continued presence of heroic elements in Mao's own poetry, though this heroism mostly refers to different collectives of Chinese people rather than Mao himself in his post-1949 poems. Based on the principle that "a [revolutionary] political position [should serve] as a precondition of a poet's artistic explorations," a creative leeway is allowed in order that the poems deliver their revolutionary affects effectively.[54] As Mao himself puts it, "The content [of poetry] should be the dialectics between Realism and Romanticism. One will not be able to compose poetry if one is too realistic".[55] For example, one of the two *jueju* poems in Barnstone's translated collection, which Brutus must have read in order to grasp an idea about the genre, is a tribute to militia women:

Militia Women (七绝·为女民兵题照)[56]

Early rays of sun illuminate the parade grounds
and these handsome girls heroic in the wind,
        with rifles five feet long.
Daughters of China with a marvelous will,
you prefer hardy uniforms to colorful silk.

February 1961[57]

This kind of heroic spirit and revolutionary positivity is even more robustly expressed in Mao's earlier poems. For example, he wrote one of his most famous poems during the Long March, an

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[53] Ban Wang, "Revolutionary Realism and Revolutionary Romanticism: *Song of Youth*," in *The Columbia Companion to Modern Chinese Literature*, ed. Kirk A. Denton (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 239. Some scholars have also pointed out that Mao's poetry inherits a didactic functionality from the classical Chinese poetic tradition of *feng* (风) and fits with the larger Confucian tradition of "poetic education (*shijiao* 诗教)". See Xiaofei Tian, "1958: Mao Zedong Publishes *Nineteen Poems* and Launches the New Folksong Movement," in *A New Literary History of Modern China*, ed. David Der-wei Wang (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 629.
[54] Haosheng Yang, *A Modernity Set to a Pre-Modern Tune: Classical-Style Poetry of Modern Chinese Writers* (London: Brill, 2016), 169.
[55] Mao quoted in Ibid.
[56] Instead of presenting Mao's poems bilingually, I have provided the Chinese titles of Mao's poems quoted in this segment of the Chapter, because the translation of these poems is not the focus here. The Chinese titles should suffice if the reader wishes to find the Chinese originals.
[57] Mao Tse-tung, *The Poems of Mao Tse-tung*, translated by Willis Barnstone and Ko Ching-po (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1972), 99.

arduous journey across the inland provinces of China undertaken by the Red Army after the Nationalist Party launched the encirclement attacks on Mao's soviet base in Jiangxi. It was a period when the CCP came closest to being exterminated but Mao enchants his reader by celebrating heroic collective achievements. Note how Mao's use of the collective first pronouns differ from Brutus's:

> The Long March (七律·长征)
>
> The Red Army is not afraid of hardship on the march,
>   the long march.
> Ten thousand waters and a thousand mountains are nothing.
> The Five Sierras meander like small waves,
> the summits of Wumeng pour on the plain like balls
>   of clay.
> Cliffs under clouds are warm and washed below by the River
>   Gold Sand.
> Iron chains are cold, reaching over the Tatu River.
> The far snows of Minshan only make us happy
> and when the army pushes through, we all laugh.
>
> October 1935[58]

The natural landscapes and their daunting elemental forces are depicted as a foil for the army's bravery and morale. The style of revolutionary Romanticism gives Mao the affordances to exaggerate hardship on the march in an uplifting manner. In comparison, the one poem about Chinese soldiers in Brutus's *China Poems*, while still portraying them positively and praising their strength, is much more ambivalent about their temperament with regards to nature:

> Pa-ta-ling Hills: The Long Wall
>
> (The Chinese, I was told, do not
> speak of "The Great Wall".) (16)
>
> At the Long Wall:
> a soldier
> holding a flower. (17)
>
> It is to preserve
> beauty
> that we destroy (18)

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[58] Ibid., 65.

> Seeing the peaks
> they had to conquer
> lost in the mists
> their spirits must have quailed:
> but a sense of intimacy
> between humankind and earth
> kept them strong. (19)

Whether read as four short poems or a longer poem, one cannot fail to notice traces of old European romanticism in these lines. The naturalistic references, such as "flower", "peaks" and "mists", are parts of a transcendental "beauty" to be preserved. They are at least as important as the soldiers in (re-)constructing "the intimacy between humankind and earth". The soldiers here are not really heroes of conquests but merely a small segment of "humankind", and the verb "quail" is translated into "*jusang* (沮喪)" by Ko, which further downplays their agency. The word literally means "despondent" and signifies a much more negative mood than the English word, gesturing towards a sense of vulnerability and humility that is to be had on the humans' side, a "tenderness" that Brutus himself identifies with throughout his poetic career.[59] Therefore, similar to the other poems involving the first-person pronouns discussed before, this poem shows Brutus's consistent selective (mis-)appropriation of Mao's literary ideologies: he implements Mao's call for artistic humility but deviates from the heightened sense of celebration and collective pride found in the Chinese leader's poetic style of revolutionary Romanticism.

In relation to these analyses as well as the questions put forward at the beginning of this subsection, does the critique of leftist Orientalism apply to such selective (mis-)appropriation and divergence in sentiments between Brutus and Mao? The answer is affirmative since Brutus invents a "Chinese mode" of economical verse based on the desire to reach the masses, an ideal he shared with Mao, while retaining his contemplative individualism, which he saw as incompatible with SACP and perhaps communism at large. If Brutus were Chinese, he probably would not want to join the CCP or follow

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[59] Lindfors, ed., *The Dennis Brutus Tapes*, 200.

official guidelines during the Cultural Revolution, but since he was not and did not live in China, to what extent he should adhere to Mao's doctrines on literary activities was never a real concern for Brutus. This in a way resembles the typical detachment the Orientalist has vis-à-vis what happens on the ground in the Orient—he can disinvest from that reality anytime.

However, if, as discussed before, the positional relation between South Africa (especially the non-white population) and China was fundamentally different from that of European metropolises and their (former) colonies, the relationship between Brutus and Mao was even further away from one categorized by the dialectics of dominance and subordination. Despite their shared commitment to socialist struggles, the two poets' circumstances, especially the socio-political environments they were navigating, could not be more different. Mao was the leader of the CCP and later the supreme leader of the PRC, while Brutus was a civil activist in exile, and for most of his life, his country was ruled by white supremacists that actively persecuted non-white political figures like him. Brutus's campaigns, domestic or international, paled in comparison with the tremendous institutional power Mao held in China. From such comparative perspectives, Brutus's leftist Orientalism as demonstrated in a collection like *China Poems* warrants more descriptive analyses than ideological criticism, more investigations of "how it works and manifests and why" than repeating the assumption that cultural (mis-)appropriation is always something harmful.

Indeed, considering his circumstances, it would be orientalist for critics to impose on Brutus obligations to any reality other than his own, and it should be up to him to decide the ways he addresses in literature the political circumstances he was most attached to. Brutus's leftist Orientalism vis-à-vis China and Chineseness has never been based on the colonial desire to conquer. He does not address Chinese reality beyond his style of descriptive minimalism but neither does he seek to dominate it through discursive hegemony. His use of what he takes as "Oriental verse" and from Maoist thinking has always been superficial and yet imaginative, selective and yet targeted, detached to China the polity *per se* and yet highly committed to realities of racial oppression and capitalistic exploitation in

apartheid South Africa and the world at large. He was not critical of contemporary China like Pound.

Neither could he celebrate revolutionary achievements like Mao did. Indeed, when the two men

returned to their birthplaces in old age, their poetic sentiments could not be more different:

> We were brave and sacrifice was easy
> and we asked the sun, the moon, to alter the sky.
> Now I see a thousand waves of beans and rice
>   and am happy.
> In the evening haze heroes are coming home.
>   —— Selected from "Return to Shaoshan (七律·到韶山)" 1959[60]

> returning I sense deep discontent,
> mealie fields rippling restlessly
> stirred by half-concealed angers:
> patient African children, staring
> with thrusting innocent eyes
> how much longer must you hunger
> how long before your nights are rent not
> by cries: how long to wait for peace?
>   —— Selected from "Zimbabwe" 2004[61]

To use the metaphor contained in *China Poems* again, China was a "mirror", and Brutus "the viewer

[that] sets the angle". As the poem above shows, this angle has never divagated from his deep concern

for Africa and people of color living under oppression across the globe.

Neither Authentic nor Relevant? On Ko's Creative Translation

As far as Brutus's reversal of Yellow Perilism is concerned, this chapter could have ended here

with a summative conclusion, and yet it would be remiss and Anglocentric of me not to pay attention

to the fact that *China Poems* is a bilingual booklet and as such, Ko's Chinese translations are an integral

part of it. Ko Ching-po (高清波) was Professor of Comparative Literature at Indiana University in the

1970s and he collaborated with Barnstone to produce the 1972 edition of Mao's poetry in translation,

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[60] Mao, *The Poems of Mao Tse-tung*, 95.
[61] Sustar and Karim, ed., *Poetry & Protest*, 384. This poem was published in 2005.

the one that Brutus read before he visited China. It is thus understandable that after returning to the US, Brutus would seek him out to translate the short poems he wrote in China. But why did Brutus want *China Poems* to be published bilingually in the first place? After all, as a publication of a US university, it had very limited circulation (if at all) in China during the Cold War and remains little known there today.[62] Was it a gesture of friendship and good wish for mutual understanding on Brutus's part? Or was it a well-intended attempt to add a layer of authenticity to the "Chinese mode" of poetry Brutus was exploring? Or more cynically, was it an Orientalist strategy to boost the "Chinese" appearance of the collection so that it could attract more readers in the West (which was the main readership since Brutus was totally banned in South Africa)? The simple design of the booklet's cover seems to contain all these possible interpretations. There are the overlapping contours of China and Africa to convey friendship and collaboration, the title of the collection written in calligraphical Chinese and English to suggest linguistic and cultural authenticity, and bamboo and orchid patterns presented in traditional Chinese ink painting style to signify a generalized Oriental aesthetics (Figure 4. 3). Although *China Poems* is the only Dennis Brutus collection published bilingually, he has offered no explanation about this bilingualism in his recorded tapes and interviews. Judgement about this bilingualism shall thus only be made by reading the poems themselves.

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[62] A search on the book on China's major internet search engine Baidu yields no information on it. However, the website of the National Library of China does show that there are around 30 libraries in China that have a copy of *China Poems* today, though it is not clear when or how these books ended up there. The book remains unavailable even in the online bookshops in China and thus it is safe to say that its influence there is extremely limited, especially compared to similar Western works such as Pound's *Cathay*.
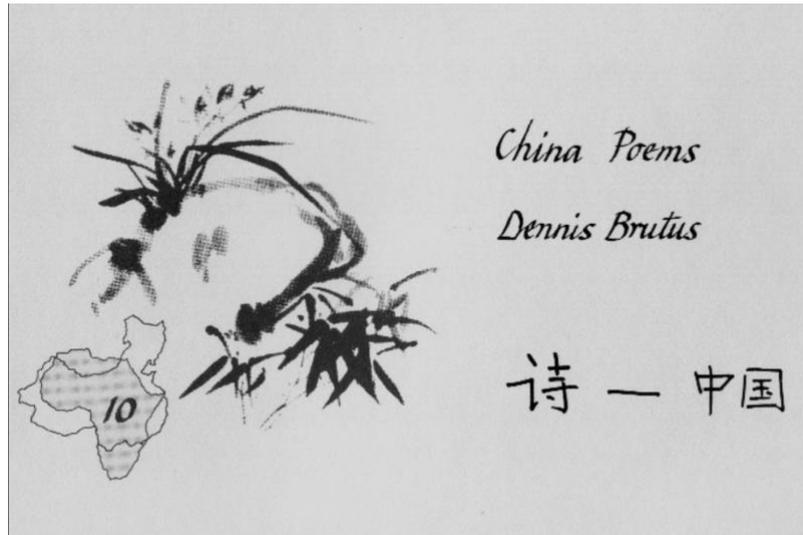
Figure 4.3 The cover design of *China Poems*[63]

In addition, surprisingly little information can be found about Ko beyond these two poem collections he translated. Therefore, instead of the contextual and comparative analyses of the previous chapter segments, in this supplementary segment I focus on close readings of Ko's translations in *China Poems* and comment on how Ko's creative word choices influence the interpretation of the collection as a bilingual work. Examining how Brutus's poems have been translated back into Chinese also help reflect on the creative transcultural implications of his leftist Orientalism.

As the only critic who has discussed *China Poems* in relation to Chinese politics and history, Phillips nevertheless pays no attention to the Chinese translations in the booklet. Are the Chinese translations simply irrelevant since Ko translates them into modern vernacular Chinese and could not replicate the kind of "Oriental" flavor targeted at Brutus's Anglophone readers? Do they thus expose this "Oriental" flavor as inauthentic? Or do they only become relevant if the form or quality of the translations somehow prove that Brutus failed to make his poems resonate with Chinese readers? I would argue that such questions are themselves irrelevant to how the translations work as Chinese poems to be read against the English poems or on their own. Authenticity is not where the relevance

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[63] The number 10 on the cover marks this booklet as the tenth publication sponsored by the African and Afro-American Research Institute at University of Texas at Austin.

of Ko's translations is located. Instead, reading the translations and noting Ko's strategies and mistakes can further disrupt assumed ideas about the inherent negativity of Orientalism as well as the boundaries between cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation, highlighting the historical conditions and creative energy involved.

For contemporary Chinese readers, the first thing they notice about Ko's translations must be his eccentric use of Chinese characters. While the dominant version used is simplified Chinese, there are occasional appearances of traditional Chinese characters, rare variant characters, and characters that have been written with the wrong radicals or components. This mixture of different types of Chinese characters indicates that the Chinese translations must have been handwritten by Ko before they were moved as finished poems of their own and typeset to be printed in every *China Poems* booklet. It was unlikely that Ko mixed the characters on purpose. Why the characters turned out this way has as much to do with the predetermined purpose of these translations as Ko's unfamiliarity with the simplified Chinese characters in his attempt to fulfil this purpose.

Since the poems were inspired by Brutus's pleasant experiences in China, the cordial messages he sought to deliver through them are best presented in simplified Chinese, which came into use in the 1950s in the PRC as a significant cultural policy of the CCP in its campaign to improve the national literacy rate. The Chinese Character Simplification Scheme of 1956 was the foundational document of this campaign. Although the CCP originally planned to follow Stalin's advice to abolish Chinese characters and replace them with a new alphabetic writing system (a continuation of the alphabetization movement mentioned at the end of Chapter 2), the 1955 Bandung Conference and the emphasis on anti-imperialism, decolonization and national self-preservation following that had affected the CCP's attitude to language reform.[64] Instead of pushing for alphabetization, the CCP continued to encourage character simplification in the 1960s, and many more simplified Chinese

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[64] Yurou Zhong, *Chinese Grammatology: Script Revolution and Chinese Literary Modernity, 1916-1958* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 7. Zhong also discusses this in more detail in Chapter 5.

characters were invented by the people themselves and collected by official bureaus including the Education Department and the Department of Culture. These unsystematic collections then developed into the Second Chinese Character Simplification Scheme of 1977, which remained controversial and was only partially implemented until its abolition in 1986. There were many reasons behind the unpopularity of the second scheme, including its lack of systematic methodologies of simplification, different habits of simplification in different provinces and villages that led to linguistic chaos, and the fact that some overseas Chinese communities such as those in Singapore and Malaysia had already adapted themselves to the first scheme.[65] What is important to note here is that in the 1960s and 1970s, people in the PRC did use a mixture of characters from the 1956 scheme and undeveloped collections of the 1977 scheme, and this had obviously affected Ko as well.

There is little information on Ko beyond the fact that he was born in mainland China and living and working in the US in the 1970s, but it is certain that he received his Chinese education prior to the 1956 scheme, or more likely, prior to the establishment of the PRC. During the Cold War, most Chinese intellectuals living in the West were affiliated with the Republic of China (ROC) government in Taiwan and used to writing traditional Chinese characters. Therefore, for Ko to translate Brutus's poems into simplified Chinese, he had to learn it first. The easiest way to do this in the early 1970s was copying from the limited number of printed materials from the PRC he could get hold of, and these materials may have used a mixture of characters promulgated in the two schemes as well. In terms of traditional Chinese characters, the following have slipped into *China Poems*, most likely without Ko realizing: 莊 (simplified: 庄) (6), 銀 (simplified: 银) (24)，視 (simplified: 视) (27), 桿 (simplified: 杆) (28), 陰 (simplified: 阴) (30)，進 (simplified: 进) (31), 慾 (simplified: 欲) (32) and 並 (simplified: 并) (36). Either Ko did not register the simplified versions in his head when he was translating, or he just wrote down some of them out of force of habit. For example, all other characters

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[65] For a historical account of the rise and fall of the second scheme, see John S. Rohsenow, "The Second Chinese Character Simplification Scheme," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, no. 59 (1986): 73-85.

with the radical "钅 (indicating material made of metal)", such as "铺 (pave)"(25) and "镜 (mirror)"(34), are written in the simplified form, while "銀 (silver)" is the only one that appears in the traditional style.

Ko's unfamiliarity with the simplified characters is also the reason why there are variants and mistakes in the handwriting. For example, 檐 is written as 簷 (10), 游 as 遊 (11), 柳 as 栁 (14), and 事 as 亊 (29). Notably, the most important word in the most political poem in the collection, namely the one directly praising Mao presented at the very beginning of this chapter, contains a variant character that stands out blatantly. "Freed" is translated into "解放了", which means "liberated" and captures the political emphasis accurately, but the character "觧" is an uncommon variant form of the standard "解" (both in traditional and simplified Chinese). It may be argued that while Ko put down this variant because he mistakenly thought that there should be a difference in how it is written in traditional and simplified Chinese, the insertion of this rare variant character in effect deconstructs the political charge of the poem in a subtle way. For the contemporary Chinese reader who has fully adapted to the standardized simplified characters, it serves as a contradicting reminder against the message of the poem that "no task is impossible (especially for Mao)". For one, Mao did not see the implementation of the second scheme in 1977 and could not complete the task of finalizing the writing system in the PRC during his lifetime. It was also impossible for Mao to control how Chinese characters were used outside the PRC, as Ko's mixture shows. Some characters from the second scheme, all of which are now considered oversimplified and outdated, appear in *China Poems*, including 坊 (1956/current version: 场) (6) and 辺 (1956/current version: 边) (7). Several erroneous characters are also found in Ko's translations, or to put it differently, Ko invented these characters based on his own assumptions about how the PRC simplification system worked. For example, "线" is written as "纟" plus "戋" (traditional: 線/綫) (7, the same for "残" on page 31), "肴" as "饣" plus "肴" (traditional: 餚) (12), "抓" as "扌" plus "瓜" (traditional: 抓) (22), "干" as "卓"

plus "仑" (traditional: 幹) (33), the "一" in "与" is written as "艹" (traditional: 與) (19), and an extra simplified radical "门" is added to the standard version "开" (traditional: 開) (33). Notably, notwithstanding the fact that these characters do not exist (hence my inability to directly type them here), they do not really hinder Chinese readers' comprehension of the poems because there are enough visual resemblances between the shapes of these characters and those of the standard versions for Chinese readers to quickly recognize the intended words, which they can infer from the semantic contexts of the sentences anyway.

Would Brutus be angry if he found out that so many linguistic aberrancies and mistakes are present in his thin bilingual booklet dedicated to China and the Chinese people? While Ko's mixture of Chinese characters would have been tolerated in in 1970s PRC, where such confused usages and popular inventions were rampant among the unofficial publications and people's everyday writings, it is easy for the contemporary bilingual or Chinese reader to forget the context of Ko's translation and condemn the orthographic presentation of the Chinese poems as inauthentic and outlandish. It is also easy to regard it as part and parcel of the overall (leftist) Orientalism of *China Poems*, thereby dismissing the collection as a non-Chinese poet's inauthentic appropriation of Chinese culture made worse by a non-PRC Chinese translator's unprofessional reconstruction of that appropriation. Figuratively speaking, a purist criticism of the lack of linguistic standardization and unification in the Chinese used by Ko may condemn him as the translational "Yellow Peril" taking a toll on the "Red Hope" Brutus wanted to construct in its stead. However, this ideologically charged right-or-wrong approach is but one way to read Ko's translations, and its conclusions are not very productive with regards to how the booklet's leftist Orientalism is to be understood beyond the form and content of Brutus's poems.

I would argue that Ko's translational aberrancies contribute to the uniqueness of *China Poems* in the history of Anglophone-Sinophone comparative literature exactly because the mixtures and mistakes reveal a historical tension between what the poet intended and what the translator (could)

produce(d), between the circumstances of poetic creativity and those of translational creativity, both of which were conditioned by the linguistic and cultural divisions created by the Cold War. To put it plainly, Brutus wrote the poems in English in China but could only organize and get them translated and published outside China. His Anglophone appropriation/appreciation of Chinese culture remained Orientalist in the sense that it did not enable him to differentiate the Chineseness embodied and championed by the socialist state and the Chineseness possessed by someone like Ko, about whom Brutus perhaps knew little more than the fact that he helped translate Mao into English. Although it is usually the case that authors rely on translators because they are not able to read, let alone judge the quality of, their own works rendered in the target languages, the translational tension between Brutus and Ko is particularly heightened because Brutus's poems are themselves appropriated simulations of Chineseness and therefore possess certain built-in translational qualities about them. Instead of helping Brutus materialize the "Chinese mode" of poetics he desires, Ko's translations expose the constructed nature of this mode, and, in consequence, all poetic modes based on such generalized ideas of nation, ethnicity and culture. In the anti-essentialist spirit of this exposure, rather than obligated to produce some kind of Chinese authenticity for Brutus, Ko is free to experiment and explore the construction of Chinese language and poetics in his own circumstances. While these experiments were mostly unintended, what they have left behind is not mere evidence for empiricist and postcolonial critique, but valuable traces of a translational subjectivity molded by the Chinese diasporic condition during the Cold War.

In her book *Sound and Script in Chinese Diaspora*, Jing Tsu uses the term "literary governance" to analyze cultural situations where "there is an open or veiled, imposed or voluntary coordination between linguistic antagonisms and the idea of the 'native speaker'."[66] By examining the diverse usages of and debates on the standardization of Chinese characters and their pronunciations in different Chinese-speaking societies in the 20th century, Tsu points out that the making of "national literature"

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[66] Jing Tsu, *Sound and Script in the Chinese Diaspora* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 2.

is "a source of strife", in which "linguistic nativity", a conceptual product of both "outward institutionalization" and "naturalized passions" that manifests as historical and subjective traces of "social (re-)birth rather than the tangible product of literary governance".[67] Tsu's focus on the internal heterogeneity of the Chinese language, as exposed by the long history of script conventions and reforms in different Sinophone societies, challenges Shu-mei Shih's ideas about the Sinophone as a theoretical framework. While Shih's theorization of Sinophone as cultural practices "on the margins of China and Chineseness" insists on a quasi-postcolonial critique against Chinese cultural hegemony, especially that of the PRC (more reflections on the problematics of Shih's Sinophone theory in Section III), Tsu's focus on the diverse ways ethnic Chinese writers residing and publishing outside the PRC have struggled against and capitalized on "the idea of China" as "an obverse capital in diasporic circulation" does the opposite of Shih's binary thinking.[68] Tsu argues that there is a "polycentric network of precarious literary alliances, limited resources, and shifting linguistic loyalties" in the multilingual Chinese diasporic communities in Southeast Asia and the West.[69]

Tsu's reflection on the Sinophone is extremely fitting for the current discussion on Ko's translation of Brutus. First, the "literary alliances" Brutus sought to establish with the PRC via the bilingual presentation of *China Poems* were indeed precarious as they lacked any sustainable material or institutional support beyond his Orientalist idea about a generalizable vague "China". Second, Ko chose to capitalize on his ethnic and cultural connections to "the idea of China" by the role of translator but had "limited resources" to carry himself to the desired outcome of PRC "Chineseness" as embodied by the simplified characters. Last but not least, nothing demonstrates Ko's "shifting linguistic loyalties" better than the mixture of traditional, simplified, variant, and non-existent characters in *China Poems*. The "literary governance" of the PRC language reforms could not reach someone like Ko, whose

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[67] Ibid., 3.

[68] Ibid., 105 and Shu-mei Shih,"Against Diaspora: the Sinophone as Places of Cultural Production," in *Sinophone Studies: A Critical Reader*, eds. Shu-mei Shih, Chien-hsin Tsai and Brian Bernards (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 25.

[69] Tsu, *Sound and Script*, 13.

"linguistic nativity" was indeed conditioned by a marginality vis-à-vis the socialist nation, and yet his translational Sinophone practice was not to pit this marginality against some kind of imagined Sinocentrism of the PRC but a performative attempt to capitalize on an Anglophone poet's Orientalist pursuit of a "Chinese mode" of poetics with a predominantly Anglophone readership in mind.

Whether characterized as unprofessional translation flaws or accidental evidence of global Chinese cultural discordances exacerbated by the Cold War, Ko's Sinophone creativity challenges the assumption that linguistic nativity is a readily exploitable birth right rather than a racialized cultural asset that requires constant negotiation in order to be reified in actual textual practices such as translation. Moreover, the intercultural politics of this creative Sinophone translation is not located in Shih's *a priori* desire to provincialize or resist the PRC, but somewhere between an inadvertent defiance against hegemonic formulations of standard Chinese culture and an incidental magnification of the Anglophone source text's Orientalist nuances across the blurred boundaries between cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation. It is worth emphasizing here that, these locations, effects, and nuances are not intended by either the poet or the translator but read by me as such. In the context of this thesis, this reading marks *China Poems* as a cultural product of China-Africa communication that is much more complex than the binaries of pro-China or anti-China, Sinocentrism or anti-Sinocentrism, presence of Yellow Perilism or its absence, etc.

With this contextualization and affirmation of Ko's Sinophone creativity, I note two main translational strategies he has employed throughout *China Poems* as well as one major incidence of mistranslation. The first strategy is vocabulary sublimation. Ko often translates Brutus's words, especially adjectives, which usually only describe physical states of being or concrete actions, into Chinese words that are much more abstract and evaluative in nature. Apart from the previously mentioned example of "quailed" to "*jusang*/despondent", two words in the following poem are also translated with this vocabulary sublimation:

On the roofs

of the ruined palaces of Emperors
imperial lions snarl
at the empty air

(In the Forbidden City)

没落皇宫的簷顶上
御狮对着寂静空气咆哮 (10)

[phonetic and word-to-word rendering of this translation:]

moluo   *huanggong de*   *yanding shang*
[downfallen]   [emperor's palace]   [roofs]   [on]
yushi   *duizhe jijing kongqi paoxiao*
[imperial lion] [toward] [silent]   [air]   [snarl]

"Ruined" is translated as "*moluo* (没落)" and "empty" as "*jijing* (寂静)". "*Moluo*" is more often rendered in English as "downfallen" or "declined" and usually describes conceptual nouns such as "family" and "dynasty" rather than objects, whereas "*jijing*" literally means "silence", a description of acoustic rather than spatial conditions. While "ruined" refers to the decrepitude of the physical architecture of the palace and implies the bygone era of imperial China now replaced by the socialist republic, "*moluo*" loses the physical dimension and makes explicit the historicist theme of the poem. Similarly, the change from "empty" to "silent" performs a kind of translational synaesthesia. The Chinese word for "air" already contains the character for "empty". Similarly, the expression "empty air" contains a deliberate oxymoron that suggests dimensions beyond the spatial: how could the air be anything but "empty"? Replacing "empty" with "silent" is thus a sensible strategy to avoid morphological repetition and make the implied meaning explicit. "Silent" forms a stronger contrast with "snarl", and this emphasis on sound implies the presence of a sentient being who listens (the diegetic poet and the reader) and possibly relays the silence via the visual text (the poet-narrator).

This strategy of vocabulary sublimation can work in the opposite direction too, namely translating abstract words into concrete actions or nouns of objective and metaphoric qualities. For example, for the solider poem(s) mentioned before, the word "destroy" in the sentence "It is to preserve beauty that we destroy" is translated as "*jiandi* (歼敌)", literally "annihilate the enemy", even though it is not clear

in the English text that such an enemy exists (18). The keyword in another one-sentence poem is also rendered with more specificity: "strength" in "Peasants, works, they are the strength of the land" is translated into "*dongliang* (栋梁)"—the two characters literally mean "pillars" and "ridges/beams" (of houses) respectively (20). The word is a metaphoric noun that most frequently appears in the phrase "*guojiadongliang* (国家栋梁)", the backbone of the nation, and refers to the talented workforce who make the most important contribution to running the nation state. Most notably, vocabulary sublimation also brings more specificities and nuances to Brutus's straightforward expressions in the poem about the banquet at the Great Hall of the People. While a more faithful translation would definitely be more terse, crude and colloquial, such as "好菜，好酒，好朋友" (literal translation), Ko renders the repetitive "good" into three different adjectives:

Good food,
good wine,
good friendship.

佳饣肴[70]
醇酒
美好的友谊 (12)

[phonetic and word-to-word rendering of this translation:]

jia　　　　　*yao*
[great/superb]　　[cuisine/delicacies]
chun　　　　　　*jiu*
[fragrant/mellow/ripe]　[wine]
meihaode　　*youyi*
[beautiful]　　[friendship]

By bringing specificity, abstraction and metaphor into his translation, Ko's strategy of vocabulary

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[70] Note that "饣肴" is one character rather than two. It is one of those erroneous characters "invented" by Ko in his assumptions about the rules of simplification in the PRC so I cannot type it out as a single character. Ko's thinking process behind his creation of this particular character is observable in the character itself: because the traditional form of the character consists of the food radical "食" and the phonetic component "肴", he must have thought that to produce its simplified form he only had to change "食" to "饣", which is usually how characters with this particular radical are simplified, but "肴" happens to be an exception.

sublimation not only sacrifices the faithful principle in Yan Fu (严复)'s widely adopted principles of translation (信达雅, *xin*-faithfulness, *da*-expressiveness, *ya*-elegance) but also violates the stylistic principle of descriptive minimalism that Brutus places at the very core of *China Poems*.[71]

Why did Ko do this? I would suggest that his Sinophone condition again played a significant role in how he decided on specific translation strategies. As a diasporic subject unaffiliated with the socialist state, he was sensitive to the tension between what Brutus sought to accomplish in the English poems and how the Chinese poems might be received by Chinese readers outside the PRC like himself. If the English poems already appear too direct and propagandic for hindsight critics like Phillips, a strictly faithful rendering of them into Chinese would have induced even more intense reactions from readers in the Chinese diaspora during the Cold War. As the examples demonstrate, there was undeniable tension between the political and the aesthetic in the translation process, and Ko opted to mitigate the former for the sake of highlighting the latter, so that the Chinese poems could appear less like sloganeering and more like what Brutus imagined—a modern vernacular kind of *jueju* tinted with a socialist spirit.

The second strategy Ko employs to achieve this mitigation and aestheticization is poetic expansion, which also disregards the poetic form and runs counter to Brutus's style of descriptive minimalism to an even higher degree. For example, several words (underlined) have been added in the Chinese translation of the following poem, and the full stop at the end is also replaced by a question mark:

The Chinese carver
building a new world;
chips of ivory in his hair.

(At an art-carving factory.)

看那中国象牙雕刻家

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[71] Weixiao Wei, *An Overview of Chinese Translation Studies at the Beginning of the 21st Century* (London: Routledge, 2020), 107.

孜孜不倦地建设一个新天地
头上是他銀白的发丝
抑是象牙的碎片？(24)

[my translation of the Chinese translation:][72]

Look at that Chinese ivory sculptor
tirelessly building a new world
on the head is his silvery hair
or chips of ivory?

In his book, *The Poetry of Translation*, Matthew Reynolds observes that there is a common criticism against translation that "too often, translation translates an interpretation rather than attempting to do justice to the source's multiplicity."[73] What Ko's translation above does is the exact opposite: he interprets the multiplicity of the source text and uses poetic expansion to foreground this particular interpretation, and the English poem's formal simplicity is sacrificed in this process. The polysemy of the word "ivory" leaves space for the Anglophone reader to establish for themselves the possible synecdochic links between the material being carved (its color and artistry) and the carver's hair (his laboring spirit). However, this space of uncertainty is left out of the Chinese translation as Ko renders "ivory" into "*xiangya* (象牙 ivory the substance)" twice and "*yinbai* (silver, related to ivory the color)" once, and the question mark is added to directly present the interpretative process activated by this polysemy. The adverb "tirelessly" is added to sublimate the polysemous interpretations of the described scene to an overt homage to the Chinese artist's labor, which further strengthens the socialist flavor of the word it modifies, "*jianshe* (建设 build/construct)". What this particular case of poetic expansion shows is that Brutus's descriptive minimalism infuses the multiplicity of meaning and the simplicity of form with a specific linguistic adeptness that is hard to replicate in translation. Ko's choice to sacrifice the latter and bring forward the former is still a prioritization of one particular

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[72] The translations I provide for the Chinese translations in this subsection prioritize faithfulness, completeness and clarity over syntax and poetics, for the sake of the academic discussions that follow. The goal is to clearly show where the expansion has occurred.

[73] Matthew Reynolds, *The Poetry of Translation: From Chaucer & Petrarch to Homer & Logue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 23.

interpretation over others, but it is in line with his overall commitment to the aestheticization of the poems (on top of delivering Brutus's political messages to the Chinese reader).

In another example of this poetic expansion, Ko's idiomatic additions (underlined) not only bring forward the poem's emphasis on realness but also create a classical aura not found in the source text:

China:
landscape, but not with figures;
people.

中国：好一幅山水画
画中有的不是<u>假山伪人</u>
<u>是有血有肉</u>的真人物. (26)

[my translation of the Chinese translation:]

China: what a landscape painting
in the painting there are no artificial mountains and fake figurines
but real characters made of blood and flesh.

The first two English words in the source text is put together and rendered into an exclamation in the Chinese translation, making explicit the poet's praise for China. The pair of idiomatic phrases "*jia shan wei ren* (artificial mountains and fake figurines)" and "*you xue you rou* (made of blood and flesh)" forms a contrastive parallelism expanded from the antonymic tension between "figures" and "people" in the source text. The character "伪 (*wei*)" often appears in the word "*xuwei* (虚伪 hypocritical)" and adds a layer of social commentary to the Chinese translation. Furthermore, this poetic expansion has effectively shifted the focus of the poem from its political message to a more abstract concern for aesthetic realness. Brutus's seven-word poem combines a critique against Orientalism with an affirmation for the democratic spirit of socialism. The former is captured in the comma between "landscape" and "but", while the latter is distilled into the ideologically charged word "people". Brutus is aware that Chinese landscape paintings are one of the popular objects of fetish for Orientalists, a kind of Chinoiserie that lacks humanistic communication with real people, so he emphasizes with the conjunction here that the natural and social landscape he experienced in China was not merely a

detached obsession with the country's past but based on friendship with the people and appreciation for the democratic achievement of the socialist state (as he perceived). The word "people" in this poem is the same "people" in "People's Republic of China". It refers to liberated subjects of a socialist state and carries an anti-colonial spirit against Orientalist forces that (used to) reduce them to mere "figures". However, this significant emphasis on socialist progress is not captured in Ko's translation. He translates "people" not as "*renmin* (人民)", the equivalent term in Chinese with almost all the corresponding political connotations (as it appears in the Chinese name of the PRC as well), but as "*renwu* (人物)", a term usually used to refer to "characters" in a book or legendary "figures" in history. The humanistic emphasis of the poem is shifted to the added idiom "made of blood and flesh" instead, which nevertheless does not cancel out the figurative nature of the word "*renwu*". As a result, the poetic expansion in this poem builds up the aesthetic and downplays the political, and the Chinese reader, equipped with the knowledge that the original poems have been written by a foreigner who visited China for the first time, would still sense a degree of Orientalism by reading the Chinese translation. For the Chinese reader, that China is a place with real people is nothing to be surprised by or exclaimed about. If Brutus's poem places its thematic focus on realness and authenticity beyond Orientalism, Ko's translation, while not necessarily challenging Brutus's positive Orientalism, exposes the constructed nature of this authenticity and foregrounds the fact that Brutus was still writing as an outsider looking in.

The tension between Orientalism and anti-Orientalism in Ko's translation strategies has certain conceptual resonances with what Lucas Klein calls "good interlingual translation"— a translation that "brings out the translatedness of the source text". Klein understands this "translatedness" in the broad sense that "even the most original and heartfelt poetic expression is a translation of feeling into a work of linguistic art", which includes "cultural translation" that involves "inspiration from other languages".[74] While Klein talks about interlingual translation in mostly positive ways and notes the

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[74] Lucas Klein, "Mediation Is Our Authenticity: *Dagong* Poetry and the *Shijing* in Translation," in *Chinese Poetry and*

skills required to bring out and reify the "translatedness" of texts that are multicultural in nature, I would argue that if the "translatedness" of the source text is based on cultural appropriation from literatures of the target language, interlingual translation will inevitably foreground this "translatedness" in paradoxical ways that often appear awkward at first glance.

The major incidence of mistranslation in *China Poems* provides an illustrative example of this awkwardness:

Poplar

1.
A tall slender poplar
with sun-dappled leaves:
a comparison
is a general, tender compliment.

2.
His poplar's beauty
was cut down;
sad felicity.

(In his tribute to his first wife, who was
beheaded by a warlord because she
refused to divorce him, Mao refers to
his wife in the poem as a poplar.)

白杨

高大而纤细的白杨
带着金光闪闪的柳絮：
以杨喻人
是一种柔雅，慷慨的赞美.

他那白杨般的佳丽
被杀了
忧伤的快乐 (14-15)

[my translation of the Chinese translation:]

Tall and slender poplar
with golden shiny catkins:

to refer to a person using poplar as a metaphor
is a tender, generous compliment.

That poplar beauty of his
was killed
sad happiness

This poem must have been inspired by Brutus's reading of Mao's poem about his first wife, Yang Kaihui (杨开慧), collected in Barnstone and Ko's 1972 translation.[75] Entitled "The Gods (蝶恋花·答李淑一)", Mao wrote it in 1957 as a response to a letter sent by Mao's friend Li Shuyi, whose husband Liu Zhixun (柳直荀) was killed in 1932 not by warlords but by the 1930s Great Purge Movement within the CCP. In fact, Yang was not killed by a warlord either. In 1930, she was caught by the governor of Hunan Province, General He Jian (何键) of the Nationalist Party, who ordered her execution after she refused to quit the CCP and sever all ties with Mao. Where Brutus got the misinformation about the warlord is unclear.[76] It is likely that Brutus simply misremembered the details of Mao's poem when he composed his own poems. In the first line of his poem, "I lost my proud poplar and you your willow (我失骄杨君失柳)", Mao uses "poplar (杨)" and "willow (柳)" to refer to Yang and Liu because their surnames are exactly the same characters as the names of the trees.[77] The rest of Mao's poem does not extend these homophonic connections to overt metaphoric usages, but Brutus adopts and expands on the metaphoric interpretation in his poem, perhaps because it is hard for him to replicate the homophonic connections in English. Notably, while the information about the homophones is given in Barnstone's endnotes, Brutus does not give this information in the brief notes he attaches to the poems, which are not translated into Chinese by Ko.

Since Ko is consistent in not translating any of the notes Brutus puts next to his poems, he chooses

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[75] Strictly speaking, Yang was Mao's second wife. Before they married in 1920, Mao was in an arranged marriage with a woman called Luo Yixiu (罗一秀), who died of dysentery in 1910, when Mao was not yet 17. Therefore, it is often assumed that Mao regarded Yang as his first wife since the couple married as adults out of love.

[76] Although Barnstone's endnotes about the poem also contain the misinformation that Liu was "killed in the battle of Hunghu (Honghu) in Hupeh (Hubei) in September 1933", the information about He Jian and Yang Kaihui is correct. See Mao, *The Poems of Mao Tse-tung*, 132.

[77] Ibid., 88-89.

to integrate the relevant information into the Chinese translation itself. He translates "a comparison" as "*yi yang yu ren* (以杨喻人)", literally "to refer to a person using poplar as a metaphor", so that the reader is made aware that the poplar in the poems is more than a naturalistic image. Chinese readers who are familiar with Mao's poems and stories would detect the historical references in Brutus's poem after reading the line "被杀了(was killed)", with which Ko has replaced "was cut down" (a more faithful rendering of which would be "被砍倒了"). Unlike the euphemistical ambiguity of "cut down", "killed" is already quite awkward in its abrupt and crude reference to homicide. This awkwardness reaches its apex in Ko's mistranslation of the final line. By "sad felicity", Brutus laments how Mao's metaphorical use of the poplar image is at once precise and mournful, hence sorrowful and saddening. For the Anglophone reader, what Brutus means by these two words is clear. He means that Mao's poetic act of "*yi yang yu ren*" heightens the affect of sorrow and commemoration, with which Brutus has resonated in empathy and admiration. In other words, "felicity" here refers to the ability to find appropriate expressions for one's thoughts rather than "happiness". Despite the word's polysemy, Anglophone readers are unlikely to interpret it as "happiness" due to the obvious oxymoron it would form with "sad". However, the oxymoronic is exactly how Ko has translated this final line. This incidence of mistranslation, whether deliberate or not, does bring out the "translatedness" of both the English and the Chinese poems. On the one hand, the Chinese translation's oxymoronic awkwardness exposes its own translatedness and makes the Chinese reader wonder who exactly is "happy" about what. On the other hand, this confusion may motivate them to check Mao's poem about Yang for themselves, which in turn exposes the English poem's translatedness as well, namely the translatedness of processes of intertextual and interlingual inspiration. The point here is not to simply dismiss this mistranslation as, again, Ko's lack of professionalism or linguistic savvy, or to salvage him from such criticism by putting forward the slim possibility that he deliberately mistranslated the words into a discordant oxymoron in order to subvert Brutus's compliment for Mao. Rather, this particular example illustrates how the force of cultural appropriation, as a kind of intercultural commentary between

different poetic worlds, multiplies and mutates in different forms in the process of interlingual translation, which is in essence a form of poetic creation with its own merits and limits.

Ultimately, Ko's translation strategies, like the unique orthographic presentation of his translations, reveal the partial agency held by both the poet and the translator in the creative activities of translation. Matthew Reynolds points out that "All poem-translations…take shape according to some distinguishable metaphor or metaphors, whether knowingly or not."[78] He also observes that metaphors "that define an act of translation emerge out of the text that is being translated" and calls such texts "poem(s) of translation".[79] If partial agency is at the heart of the translational aspects of *China Poems* as a bilingual poetry collection, the poem at the very end of it embodies this metaphorical essence, making it an exemplary "poem of translation":

> Not in my hands
> is the clay
> of my life
>
> 生命里可塑的泥土
> 並不盡在我掌握之中 (36)

In the same way that the mirror poem offers a meta-comment on the dynamics of cultural appropriation/appreciation in the collection, this poem can be regarded as a meta-poem about the translational making of *China Poems*. The "distinguishable metaphor" here is the clay, which represents the force of creativity. By ending the collection with this poem, Brutus is admitting his limits as a poet. As my readings have shown, not only was he unable to control the historical and cultural conditions under which he was writing and publishing the poems, how these poems have been translated and interpreted are also out of his control. Instead of the assumed positive value of authenticity and accuracy, the relevance of Ko's translation is exactly located in such creative limits, both of Brutus and his own. Brutus's agenda to reverse the Yellow Peril and praise the Red Hope is

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[78] Reynolds, *The Poetry of Translation*, 6.
[79] Ibid., 7.

delivered by the collection through slippages of Orientalism and mistranslation, but it is in these slippages that its multi-source creative energy is operating and flourishing.

Section Coda: Minor Resistances against Yellow Perilism

Dennis Brutus's *China Poems* is a valuable literary work not only because it is the only China-themed work produced by a non-white South African writer during apartheid but also because it brings "red", the ideological dimension of how China and Chineseness were perceived during the Cold War, into the global triangulation of white-yellow-black racial identity politics. As the capitalistic bloc emerged triumphant from the Cold War and subsequently declared "the end of history" with the rapid globalization of capital that followed, these snippets of literary history constructed around imaginations of anti-imperial, anti-racist, socialist international solidarity tend to be forgotten, or in Brutus's case, dismissed as embarrassing propaganda by critics equipped with historical hindsight.[80] This chapter counters such dismissals by showing this particular collection's unique context of making, style of writing, and strategies of translation. It forms a kind of inter-analytical comparison with Chapter 2, as both discuss the conspicuous absence of Yellow Perilism and its explicit racial discourses in contexts where institutional and cultural racism was particularly rampant, as shown by the chapters that immediately precede them. However, the comparison yields many more points of divergence beneath this superficial similarity and shows how positive Orientalism could work very differently in different historical and political contexts. Compared to Pound's assertion about the superiority of classical China to modern China, Burtus's praise for red China performs a more nuanced Orientalism of leftist orientation. Lacking the imperial positionality of the West, this leftist Orientalism is less rigid and determinative than propaganda and more organic and appreciative than cultural appropriation of old Chinoiserie fashion.

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[80] The popular phrase comes from Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

In the context of Section II, the discussions on *China Poems* in this chapter complement the reflections on the periodization of apartheid put forward at the end of Chapter 3. They demonstrate that apartheid not only operates beyond the official timeframe of 1948-1994 but has always extended its cultural politics beyond the national context of South Africa, or the geographical confines of the Atlantic sphere (Europe, Africa, and the Americas), to which South African literatures tend to be attached. The lack of official diplomatic relations between South Africa and the PRC did not eliminate all routes of cultural interaction between the two countries, though these routes usually circumvented the legal and political control of the apartheid state to a great extent. The Chineseness of *China Poems*, as well as its publication and translation in America, puts into practice Brutus's idea that "the one thing Africanness need not assert is exclusivity".[81] Chineseness, Africanness, or even Americanness, as cultural conceptions about particular localities and peoples, have all been mutually transformative in the bilingual making of this particular poem collection. Brutus partially translated Mao into his poems when he wrote them in China, which then got partially translated into Chinese by Ko in America. The partial agency of all the creative actors involved is the result of both structural historical forces, including how one was racialized (yellow, black, "Colored" etc.) and how a country was governed by a particular ideology (white supremacist, red socialist etc.), and personal efforts at negotiating with these structures.

The South Africa Section of this thesis epitomizes its central idea that the Yellow Peril discourse and the cultural reactions it has induced should be examined with the transnational and situated approach, namely, in transnational contexts and comparative case studies beyond the East-West binary. Whether it is an autobiographical account of intergenerational experiences of racism and interracial encounters or a poetic appropriation of Mao's *jueju*, the texts in this Section have so far been neglected in all the major academic disciplines because their minor positions of sociopolitical articulation disrupt the categorizing forces behind ideas of area (China Studies, South Africa Studies etc.), ethnicity

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[81] Lindfors, ed., *The Dennis Brutus Tapes*, 203-204.

(Chinese Studies, Black Studies etc), language (Anglophone Studies, Sinophone Studies etc.) and ideology (Postcolonial Studies, Marxist Studies etc.). As such they demonstrate the continued relevance of Comparative Literature as a method-driven discipline, even when the analytical focus is on something as politically and ideologically charged as racism (as mentioned in the Introduction). Indeed, these texts are so minor that they would not have existed if not written after apartheid or somewhere else other than South Africa, and their resistant approaches to the Yellow Peril are the main reason behind such temporal or spatial restrictions. The next Section continues my comparative investigation of how the Yellow Peril manifests across national and regional boundaries and shows how literary and visual materials banned in China itself appropriate this racist discourse to venture their own internalizing and externalizing critique.

Section III

Dissidents, Locusts and Patriotic Songs:

Constructing Yellowness in the Post-Mao Sinophone World

Chapter 5:

Occidentalism in Motion:

Wang Lixiong's *Yellow Peril* (1988) as Sinophone Trouble

The Governor of California thought he was witnessing the end of the world. He had driven almost four hundred miles down the coast from Sacramento and it was like a nightmare voyage through hell. The golden sand usually crowded with tourists was covered with bloated corpses of drowned Chinese…

…in the Governor's mind the term Yellow Peril had always conjured up a picture of soldiers of the yellow races mounted on small Mongolian horses, shooting arrows from the saddle. He understood now why the artist had presented the Yellow Peril as a Buddha. That was exactly the impression the refugees gave, yielding as water, but [no] more easy to subdue and destroy than the armored horsemen of Genghis Khan.

—— Wang Lixiong, *Yellow Peril* (黃禍)[1]

Without the bibliographical information following the long dash, the quote above might be taken

for an excerpt from some late nineteenth century American pulp fiction associated with the prevalent

Sinophobia in California and the series of controversial Chinese Exclusion Acts at the time. Or at least

it is unlikely that they would have guessed its Chinese origin if they have never heard of its author

Wang Lixiong (王力雄) in the first place: the excerpt is taken from his 1991 novel *Yellow Peril*,

translated by Anton Platero into English as *China Tidal Wave* in 2008.[2]

This unusual literary phenomenon of a contemporary Chinese writer evoking the long-disavowed

racist and Orientalist images of the Yellow Peril in his novel may well be intensified by the fact that in

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[1] Wang Lixiong, *China Tidal Wave*, translated by Anton Platero (Kent: Global Oriental, 2008), 460 and 465. While Platero's translation remains the only English version, the novel has been published in Chinese in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and overseas Chinese communities for many times with different versions. Platero's version is closer to the 2008 revised version published in Taiwan in terms of chapter divisions and content, see Wang Lixiong 王力雄, *Huang Huo* 黃禍 [Yellow Peril] (Taipei: Locus Publishing, 2008). Here I am using the original Chinese name of the novel to demonstrate the thematic resonances between this opening quotation and that of Lu Xun in Chapter 1, thereby highlighting the historical (dis)continuities of the Yellow Peril discourse that form the central argument of this thesis. The difference between the novel's names in Sinophone and Anglophone editions and contexts will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

[2] Following the convention set by chapters in the previous Sections, subsequent quotations from *China Tidal Wave* will be from this 2008 English edition (if not noted otherwise) and followed by page numbers in brackets. Since in this chapter I am mainly concerned with the plot arrangements of *China Tidal Wave* rather than the literary analysis of the translating process per se, relevant quotes in Chinese from the Taiwanese edition are used sparingly and appear mainly in the footnotes.

the paragraph that immediately precedes the second quote, Wang appears to be patiently explaining the Western origin of the very phrase "Yellow Peril" to his Chinese readers: "it [the cultural origin of the idea of "the Yellow Peril"] was a blown-up copy of a print dating from 1895 based on a drawing by the German Emperor Wilhelm II", in which "a phlegmatic and Buddha-like figure, representing the Yellow races" is posing a threat to a group of white ladies led by the Archangel Michael, "representing the European powers" (465). As discussed in some detail in Chapter 1, the Kaiser's alarmist drawing formed the foundation of fin de siècle anti-Asian sentiment in the West, and yet Wang evokes this historical image in his speculative novel to depict the macabre scene of Chinese corpses and refugees washing up on America's west coast after a series of world-wide nuclear conflicts, which, as the plot of the novel further reveals, is but one of the many dystopian consequences of China's collapse closely linked to the Tiananmen Incident in 1989.

The title of Wang's novel also echoes Lu Xun's article presented at the beginning of Chapter 1, but not without evoking a sense of trans-historical irony. While Lu Xun, writing in the early 1930s, was worried about his fellow Chinese intellectuals' unrealistic and supercilious "Yellow Peril Dream" boasting about China's national strength, Wang's novel, written in the post-Mao era of socioeconomic reform, conjures up a "Yellow Peril Dream" that is quite the opposite of the kind of blind confidence Lu Xun was criticizing.[3]

Indeed, Wang's vision for the future of China post-Tiananmen is so pessimistic and calamitous that it might be more appropriately called "the Yellow Peril nightmare", the textual materialization of which often elides any differentiation from stereotypical Yellow Peril literature of the West. For example, following the "yellow flood of people poured into North America" mentioned in the above quote, the novel recounts the subsequent human crises in its future-past speculative tone:

> Then 'Lice Extermination Squads' began to appear all over the West Coast…They proclaimed that 'the Chinese have destroyed their own country and have no right to exist. Now they want to live like parasites in other countries. They must be wiped out like lice. That is what we are going to do, since the US army don't.'…The Governor of California was black and well knew what racial

[3] Lu, "Huang Huo," 343.

discrimination is like. Yet most of those in the squads were black, Hispanics, Cubans and Filipinos. They seemed to hate the Chinese refugees and regard them as the dregs of humanity. There were even many American Chinese who were hostile towards their unfortunate countrymen. (463-464)

Such graphic depictions abound in *Yellow Peril*/*China Tidal Wave*, and more importantly, they indicate that not only is Wang Lixiong very aware of the complex forms of racism targeting different non-white groups in American history, but he is also not afraid to appropriate and exaggerate them to carve out a description of China and the Chinese in their most devastated shape. Born in 1953, Wang is known as a dissident writer in China and has over the years built an anti-authoritarian reputation overseas especially for his writings on Xinjiang and Tibet. Despite his pro-democracy politics, even when examined in the Western context of multiculturalism and diversity today, Wang's novel can still seem politically incorrect, if not outright (self-)racist. However, it is exactly the bracketed, and thus semantically ambiguous and complicated, "self" of this "(self-)racism" that makes the novel such an indicative case study for the Yellow Peril as a mutational and adaptive discourse, at the level of both textual content and paratextual adaptation.

Starting with an extensive analysis of Wang Lixiong's novel, Section III seeks to further complicate the postcolonial understanding of the Yellow Peril by emphasizing the distinctions among the diverse range of subjective targets and political purposes lying beneath the proliferation of certain Yellow Perilist tropes in post-Mao China. As with the arrangement in the previous Sections, the chapters in this Section present textual and visual materials from both high culture (the so-called serious literature or high art) and low culture (online satire and popular music) to bring into dialogue cultural domains that have often been separated due to rigid institutional or ideological divisions. Crossing these boundaries enables us to see a larger picture of the Yellow Peril discourse in flux and thus contributes to a more holistic understanding of the associated racist tropes as dynamic processes of appropriation and adaptation.

As the processes of publication and routes of circulation of Wang's novel would show, contemporary Yellow Perilist sentiments expressed in the Chinese language extend far beyond the PRC

(People's Republic of China) and are often mediated by other Sinophone regions such as Hong Kong and Taiwan, thus complicating the current theoretical debate over what constitutes the Sinophone as such. Extending the focus on the post-Mao context in mainland China to the wider Chinese-language cultural sphere with porous borders and multi-directional circulation of ideas, the next two chapters then further argue against a binary understanding of "the Chinese center" versus "the Sinophone margins" by examining the Yellow Perilist trope of the locust that has originated in Hong Kong in recent years as well as the re-popularization of Yellowness as a racial marker in C-pop, with particular attention to celebrity images, multilingual lyrics and music videos. In the complex multi-directional cultural flows between mainland China and other Sinophone regions, and between the wider Sinophone world and the Anglophone literary market dominated by Western centers, a seemingly stable racist discourse like the Yellow Peril is in fact always already plural and inconsistent. As will become clear, in the analyses of such mobile cultural phenomena, what is important is not the political correctness or incorrectness of a certain Yellow Perilist trope *per se*, but where and when it is invented and for whom and why it is performed.

Anti-official Occidentalism and the Yellowness of China

As discussed in Chapter 1, Chinese reactions to the idea of the Yellow Peril emerged just a few years after the discourse rose to prominence in fin de siècle Europe. Most of the reactions that directly engaged with the racialist usage of yellowness had opted to treat Western Yellow Perilism as a sign of Chinese strength, as empirical evidence to boost Chinese nationalism.[4] As Sun Yat-sen commented in

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[4] It is important to keep in mind that while this celebratory reaction is shared by late Qing and early Republican texts that refer to the idea of "the yellow race" explicitly, there had always been skeptical voices like Lu Xun and his fellow reformers, who opted to emphasize the weaknesses and deficiencies of the Chinese nation and people using other racialized terms such as *Zhinaren* and "the sick man of Asia". However, the fact that these reformist writers did not engage with the idea of yellowness, or at least not to the extent of an apparent advocacy for the Yellow Peril à la Wang Lixiong, is indicative of the dominance of the positive interpretation of yellowness at the time.

1904, the so-called "Yellow Peril Theory" was but a "yellow blessing (黃福)" in disguise.[5] Comparing

this celebratory optimism with Wang Lixiong's drastic pessimism, there seems to be more than a

historical schism between the intellectual ethos of the late Qing era and that of the post-Mao period.

What has changed in the specific circumstances under which Chinese reactions to the Yellow Peril

discourse can be uttered?

As mentioned in Chapter 4, racialist thinking with regards to yellowness in general was largely

discouraged and gave way to international class struggle during Mao's rule in China (1949-1976).

Examining a range of public speeches and newspaper articles in China during the 20th century, Sören

Urbansky observes that this absence of explicit racialist discourse has continued in the post-Mao era,

with the only exception of official propaganda, which occasionally attacks the liberal West's "China

Threat Theory (*zhongguo weixielun* 中國威脅論)" as a deracialized form of the old Yellow Peril

discourse.[6] He concludes that "the bygone Yellow Peril discourse…now became a motif completely

gutted of its historical racial and moral context, and was used in relation to political and ideological

adversaries in world politics…"[7]

However, such observations on the de-racialization of the Yellow Peril in contemporary world

politics are limited by Urbansky's narrow focus on official newspapers and statements and cannot hold

if we extend our conception of "world politics" to the more creative and divergent domains of

unofficial discourses. To complement Urbansky's top-down approach with more attention to bottom-

up engagements, fiction, popular music, and online visual cultures can offer valuable insights to reveal

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[5] Sun Yat-sen (Sun Zhongshan) 孫中山, "Zhongguo wenti de zhen jiejue" 中國問題的真解決 [The True Solution of the Chinese Question], in *Sun Zhongshan xuanji diyijuan* 孫中山選集第一卷 [*The Selected Works of Sun Yat-sen Volume 1*] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1956), 62.

[6] In many ways, some of these attacks are not completely groundless as the similarities between the old Yellow Peril discourse and the China Threat Theory in the post-Cold War context of Western democracy versus Chinese authoritarianism have been noted by many scholars. See Pan Chengxin, *Knowledge, Desire and Power in Global Politics: Western Representations of China's Rise* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2012) and Daniel Vukovich, *China and Orientalism: Western Knowledge Production and the P.R.C.* (London: Routledge, 2012) for examples. Chapter 6 will also touch upon this.

[7] Sören Urbansky, "Fears Abroad, Propaganda at Home: Reflections on the Yellow Peril Discourse in China," in *Yellow Perils: China Narratives in the Contemporary World*, eds. Franck Billé and Sören Urbansky (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2018), 263.

the continued, and more-than-subtle, racialist (re-)workings of the Yellow Peril discourse in post-Mao China.

For this purpose, the literary critic Xiaomei Chen's emphasis on the distinction between official discourses and unofficial counter-discourses in post-Mao China proves very useful. In her seminal study, *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China*, she defines Occidentalism as "a discursive practice that, by constructing the Western Other, has allowed the Orient to participate actively and with indigenous creativity in the process of self-appropriation, even after being appropriated and constructed by Western Others".[8] As such, any Chinese discursive response that actively engages with the Orientalist ideological construct of Yellow Perilism, broadly conceived, is a practice of Occidentalism. More importantly, Chen stresses that the Occidentalism in post-Mao Chinese culture is necessarily multifold, and she further introduces the distinction between *official* and *anti-official* Occidentalisms:

> Chinese Occidentalism is primarily a discourse that has been evoked by various and competing groups within Chinese society for a variety of different ends, largely, though not exclusively, within domestic Chinese politics. As such, it has been both a discourse of oppression and a discourse of liberation…Chinese Occidentalism, especially as it is reflected in the political and literary expressions of the post-Mao period...might be regarded as two related, and in many instances, co-existing and even overlapping discursive practices…In the first, which I term *official Occidentalism*, the Chinese government uses the essentialization of the West as a means for…nationalism…But Chinese Occidentalism is by no means confined to this official use. Alongside of it we can readily find examples of what we might term *anti-official Occidentalism*, since its purveyors are not the established government or party apparatus but the opponents of those institutions, especially among various groups of the intelligentsia with diverse and, more often than not, contradictory interests. (original emphasis)[9]

In other words, to speak of a singular post-Mao intellectual zeitgeist is not only difficult but also inevitably reductive. The contrast between the absence of the mention of the Yellow Peril in official propaganda and its conspicuous reincarnations in Wang's novel (as an exemplification of anti-official Occidentalism) points to the specific cultural environment of post-Mao China and its shifting political

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[8] Xiaomei Chen, *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 2.
[9] Ibid., 3 and 5.

contingencies, especially in the 1980s when the "Culture Fever (*wenhuare* 文化熱)" for Western literatures and philosophies was gradually building up momentum, only to reach the disastrous anti-climax of the Tiananmen Incident.[10]

Written between 1988 and 1991, Wang's *Yellow Peril* was deeply influenced by the intense political atmosphere relating to the Tiananmen protests. Since Deng Xiaoping implemented the Economic Reform and Opening policy (改革開放) in the late 1970s, the PRC had been undergoing rapid change both at the economic front and in terms of sociocultural climate. A large number of workers were facing serious job security issues as the increasing emphasis on a market-driven economy forced them to leave their old assigned posts in the socialist labor system. In the meantime, the younger generation of intellectuals and university students also became more and more dissatisfied with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s monopoly of political power and ventured to imagine more liberal and decentralized political systems. On the 4th of June in 1989, these two groups joined forces to protest at Tiananmen Square in central Beijing and demand more economic and political reforms from the CCP, but in the end they suffered a violent crackdown by the police and many leaders and participants in the protests were arrested, persecuted, or exiled in the following months.

Although the Tiananmen Incident (also known as the June Fourth Incident) has always been a politically sensitive, and often censored, topic in the PRC and remains contentious in Chinese Studies in and outside the country, literary scholars and historians tend to agree that the cultural force of a certain reformist nationalism not dissimilar to that of the May Fourth Movement in Lu Xun's time played a significant role in the making and escalation of the event.[11] Viewed through the theoretical lenses of Xiaomei Chen, this reformist nationalism can be said to have operated in the form of anti-

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[10] See Howard Y. F. Choy, *Remapping the Past: Fictions of History in Deng's China, 1979 -1997* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 1-17 for a detailed introduction to the literary culture of the 1980s.

[11] As the legacies of the Tiananmen Incident still affect contemporary Chinese politics and international relations, academic studies on the intricate social relations, policies and events in connection to the crackdown can differ a lot from one another depending on ideological positions and methodological preferences. Although the Tiananmen Incident lies at the heart of Wang Lixiong's novel, it is beyond the scope of this cultural case study to investigate the political history of the incident per se. For a relatively descriptive account of the incident, see Dingxin Zhao, *The Power of Tiananmen: State-Society Relations and the 1989 Beijing Student Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

official Occidentalism, as it brought social groups with diverse economic and cultural interests (mainly the intellectual elite and the working class) together by casting an Orientalist gaze upon the Chinese Self vis-à-vis an imagined advanced West.

One of the seminal cultural embodiments of this anti-official Occidentalism is the TV documentary series *River Elegy* (*Heshang* 河殤) directed by Su Xiaokang (蘇曉康), which aired on China's Central Television channel in 1988 before the authorities quickly banned it. The documentary deploys numerous Orientalist clichés to criticize the backwardness of Chinese culture in relation to the West, including "Oriental despotism" versus "Western Enlightenment", "the Asiatic mode of production" versus Western industrialization, and most importantly, China's lethargic "Yellow Culture (黃色文化)" versus the advancement of the "Blue Ocean Civilization (藍色海洋文明)" of the West. It is regarded as one of the cultural triggers for the protests in 1989 and remains more or less inaccessible in China today.[12]

Rob Gilfford offers a poignant summary of *River Elegy* with an emphasis on its usage of color for the construction of a self-critical narrative mixing national, racial, and cultural designations for the Chinese:

> The writers of *River Elegy* criticized everything about China's "yellowness", from the mythical Yellow Emperor of antiquity to the barren yellow earth of the Loess Plateau. Yellowness symbolized the backwardness of the country and its culture, especially its political culture. This they contrasted with "blueness," symbolized by the clear ocean water, flowing from the West and bringing the much-needed science and democracy of the Ocean People to China. The film ended with the hope that the Yellow River would eventually flow out, mix with the blue ocean, and be transformed.[13]

Interdiscursive Techniques and the Prioritization of Domestic Politics

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[12] An amalgamated version is available on YouTube < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39j4ViRxcS8> (accessed August 19, 2018) and online discussions and unofficial distributions of the documentary do still exist in China. There have been several text versions of *River Elegy* published in Chinese outside of the PRC, mainly in Taiwan, which is indicative of the complex publication and circulation routes of the so-called Sinophone to be discussed in the next two chapters. See Su Xiaokang and Wang Luxiang, *Deathsong of the River: A Reader's Guide to the Chinese TV Series Heshang*, translated by Richard W. Bodman and Pin P. Wan (Ithaca: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1991) for the English version.

[13] Rob Gifford, *China Road: A Journey into the Future of a Rising Power* (New York: Random House, 2007), 166.

If *River Elegy* still regards China's "Yellow Culture" as a passive object to "be transformed" by the West, Wang's *Yellow Peril* pushes this anti-official Occidentalism even further by depicting what might happen otherwise—a world-wide catastrophe of Yellow Peril following nuclear wars and epidemics. In 13 chapters that span more than 500 pages, Wang's novel is presented in sporadic episodes that constantly shift around a range of time and place modelled on *realpolitik*. These diverse geopolitical settings are introduced at the beginning of each chapter and serve as section divisions within these long chapters. For example, Chapter 1 starts with "Beijing: Tiananmen Square—Tokyo—The Yellow River…" and the book ends with the last chapter's "In the Pacific Ocean—The Pushkin Moon Station—…The Wilderness" (1 and 479). Similar to M. P. Shiel's *The Yellow Danger* and other fin de siècle Yellow Peril literature discussed in Chapter 1, such quasi-realistic set-ups add to the interventionist politics of speculative fiction by blurring the boundaries between fiction and reality. Indeed, Wang Lixiong starts the story in "the semi-darkness of the street" near Tiananmen Square and introduces the protagonist Shi Ge (石戈) as he witnesses "a blood-curdling spectacle" more dreadful than "the massacre of June Fourth in 1989" (1). The spectacle refers to the aftermath of another violent protest following the CCP's decision to "reverse the verdict" on the Tiananmen Incident. During this period, the novel recounts, different reformist groups have come into being to oppose the Party's authoritarian rule, including "the Democracy Front" led by exiled Tiananmen protestors, a mob movement organization called "the People's Front", a group of environmentalists led by Ouyang Zhonghua (歐陽中華) and his girlfriend Chen Pan (陳盼), and the protagonist Shi Ge, who advocates for the so-called "Successive Multi-level Election System (*Dijin minzhu* 遞進民主)" (1). As the story unfolds, the chaos in Chinese domestic politics escalates rapidly and soon the president is assassinated and a civil war between the conservative North and the liberal South breaks out, leading to military actions against Taiwan and America. Following a series of humanitarian crises, Shi Ge becomes the new leader of a disintegrated China and implements his plan to spread Chinese refugees around the world so that his political thought will live on in a post-apocalyptic world destroyed by nuclear

weapons, climate change and epidemic disasters.

The series of events presented in this short synopsis may make the novel sound extremely exaggerated and unbelievable even though readers are supposed to follow the plot with its fictive nature in mind. Indeed, for the genre of political speculative fiction in general, the balance between fictionality and allusions to reality is a delicate task that determines whether the writer can deliver his or her political messages effectively. As Wang Lixiong comments in the afterword to his 2017 novel *The Ceremony* (*Dadian* 大典), "Political speculative fiction should start with social reality, just like realist novels, and then move towards the future via logical deduction, in order that the reader will not treat it as fantasy but walk towards the future reality from the reality today."[14] He then adds, "*Yellow Peril*, I believe till this day, is still the future that will most likely come true."[15] Considering the importance of this balance, we are propelled to ask: what kind of literary techniques and textual strategies does Wang employ to convince his readers about this future reality? More importantly, as an Occidentalist appropriation of classic Western Yellow Peril literature, what are the similarities and differences embedded in these techniques and strategies?

Norman Fairclough's theories on intertextuality can again provide useful frameworks for this comparative analysis. Much like *The Yellow Danger* and the Fu Manchu stories discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis, the technique of "interdiscursivity" is frequently used to create a realistic atmosphere around the series of political crises in the novel. It often functions as Wang's "logical deduction" when real historical figures and events (the discursive formation of history) are mentioned as the foundation on which disastrous actions (the discursive formation of speculation) take place. For example, the war between mainland China and Taiwan is one of the most decisive moments in Wang's story: in Chapter 7 and 8, after China's North and South split, Taiwan joins forces with the liberal South and seizes many

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[14] Wang Lixiong 王力雄, *Dalian* 大典 [The Ceremony] (Taipei: Locus Publishing, 2017), 295. My translation of: "我希望政治幻想小說應該起步於社會現實，如同現實主義小說，然後按邏輯推演一步步走向未來，讓讀者不是當做幻想，而如從今日現實走入未來現實."
[15] Ibid., 301. My translation of: "《黃禍》至今仍是我認為最可能成真的前景."

nuclear bases on the mainland, but in the chaos of war the Taiwanese army loses control over these nuclear weapons and accidentally lands some of them outside of China, resulting in a global nuclear war. While constructing this narrative, Wang has some of his characters discuss the late Taiwanese president Chiang Ching-kuo and his father Chiang Kai-shek's scheme of "recovering the Mainland" in the 1970s, which effectively evokes the reader's memory of the Taiwan Strait crises as historical precedents of the hostility between Taiwan and the mainland. This use of history lends a quality of logical hindsight to Wang's speculation, and this temporal intersection differs from classic Yellow Peril literature as the latter was usually serialized in newspapers with comments on ongoing political events, such as the mention of the British official Robert Harte and the Chinese diplomat Li Hung Chang in *The Yellow Danger*. Moreover, just as in *The Yellow Danger*, interdiscursivity is most prominent in Wang's insertion of numerous genres of non-fiction writing to push his plot forward. For instance, Chapter 7 has an entire section under the heading "The Situation in China, Extract from THE TIMES editorial", which recounts the disintegration of the PRC in an objective tone:

> Since the recent declaration by the Nanjing and Chengdu Area Commanders of their rupture with the Beijing regime, other regions have come out in rebellion. Lhasa was the first to revolt, and a delegation of twenty leading monks has set out for India to bring back the Dalai Lama to head an independent Tibet. The Tibetan population in neighboring provinces have expressed their support. Xinjiang immediately announced the creation of the Eastern Turkestan Republic to which the huge southern part of the province has pledged allegiance. The Kazakhs in northern Xinjiang are actively discussing independence… (282)

Other examples include "Statement of the Government of the People's Republic of China" in chapter 8, "the diary of the UN Secretary-General" in chapter 9, and "Extract from *Libération*", "Chinese State Security Ministry Report (Top Secret)" and "A report received by the US Central Intelligence Agency" in chapter 10. These insertions of journalistic articles, official propaganda, and secret files not only present a diverse range of perspectives to add to the global scale and documentary intensity of the story, they also enable the reader to enter different discursive zones that crisscross real geopolitical time-spaces and their textual reappearances.

    To use Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the "chronotope", which refers to "the intrinsic

connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature", we can observe that the unofficial Occidentalism of a text like *Yellow Peril* is achieved through at least three interdiscursive dimensions that affect or form the reading experience in simultaneity. [16] First, retellings of the real political past constantly appear in the narration of a possible political future, in which the conceptualization of geographical spaces stays more or less the same but is characterized by a temporal division that insists on the linear development of time towards the negative (namely wars, destructions, and disasters). Second, retellings of the ongoing political present invented by this future narrative constantly appear in objective textual re-renderings of this present as the past (such as in the aforementioned extracts from newspapers), thus reinforcing the sense of certainty regarding this possible future. Third, the ideological formation of Occidentalism as materialized in the invention and insertion of these different chronotopes is always already interdiscursive, since its very functioning depends on the appropriation of an earlier Orientalist tradition from another geopolitical context (i.e., fin de siècle Yellow Perilism of the West) that has little relation to the real political present of the Self (post-Mao China). As a result of this complex network of intersecting chronotopes, Occidentalist political speculations like *Yellow Peril* can resemble their Orientalist counterparts at the textual level but nonetheless come to be fundamentally different in terms of their ideological and political agendas.

Apart from the interdiscursivity of genres, this difference is most obvious in the frequent mention and explanation of Shi Ge's "Successive Multi-level Election System" in the novel as it forms what Fairclough calls "manifest intertextuality" with Wang Lixiong's own political writings. Before the publication of *Yellow Peril* in 1988, he had already started contemplating China's political reform and came up with the idea of "Successive Multi-level Election System" as a gradualist alternative to communist dictatorship and Western liberal democracy for China. A series of publications ensued and most of them remain unavailable in the PRC, including *Dissolving Power* (溶解權力 1998), *Progress*

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[16] Mikhail Bakhtin. "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination*, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 84.

Election (遞進民主 2006, note how the original Chinese title is exactly the same as the original Chinese phrase for "Multi-level Election System"), and *Integrating Power and the People* (權民一體論 2016).[17] In fact, the longer version of *Yellow Peril*, published as a trilogy in Taiwan in 1996, contains many passages of argumentative treatise that reiterates Wang's political designs.[18] With regards to this intertextuality between his fiction and non-fiction, Wang has offered the following explanation in the preface to his 2013 novel *Reincarnation* (轉世), which was serialized online as the more optimistic companion piece of *Yellow Peril* and illustrates how a better future will come to China if this "Successive Multi-level Election System" can be implemented:

> Many commentaries on *Yellow Peril* regard the sections of political treatise as its defects and think they affect the pleasure of reading, so many readers skip those parts upon encountering them. But this is exactly what my writing is—not for literature, but quite the opposite, namely using literature to express my ideals. I am very clear that I am not a literature person, and I do not have this pursuit either. I actually think pure literature in this era is a kind of luxury. The reason why I write novels is to attract more people to read them; it is a means rather than an end. Therefore, political commentaries will not be absent in my writings. They cannot be absent.[19]

The key phrase here is "using literature to express my ideals (文以載道)", which is a centuries-old philosophical idiom common in classical Chinese literature. It expresses the didactic idea that literature and culture should be used as tools to promote "Tao (*Dao*)", or "the Way". Despite the Taoist tradition of upholding "the Way" as the abstract workings of the universe, the neo-Confucianists in the Song Dynasty opted to interpret it in a narrower political sense, pertaining to the better governance of

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[17] All of them are published in Taipei by Locus Publishing.

[18] The trilogy was published anonymously and has three different sub-titles for the three volumes: "Breakout of the Civil War on the Mainland (大陸內戰爆發)", "Life or Death for Taiwan (台灣生死存亡)", and "Yellow Peril Counterattacks the World (黃禍反撲世界)". See Baomi 保密 (anonymous), *Huang Huo* 黃禍 [Yellow Peril] (Taipei: Storm & Stress Publishing, 1996).

[19] *Reincarnation* was serialized online from 2013 to 2014 but remains incomplete and has yet to be published in print as of 2019. The preface is available at <http://newsabeta.blogspot.com/2013/05/blog-post_304.html> (accessed October 27, 2018). My translation of: "當年不少評論認為《黃禍》的敗筆是其中的政論影響閱讀快感，很多讀者遇到那些內容會躍過不看。不過這正是我的寫作——我並非為了文學，相反就是為了文以載道。我完全清楚自己不是一個文學家，而且也沒有這個追求。倒是我認為純文學在這個時代是一種奢侈。之所以我寫小說，為的只是能吸引更多人看，當做手段，而非目的，因此政論在我的小說裡不會沒有，也不能沒有。"

society to achieve the "totality for the cultivation of an individual life or individual mind".[20] Wang Lixiong's usage of the term is closer to the late Qing intellectuals' appropriation of neo-Confucian ideology, such as Liang Qichao's 1902 story *The Future of New China* (新中國未來記), which is often regarded as one of the earliest science fiction writings in Chinese and advocates democratic reforms by depicting a utopian future. Indeed, Wang's political agenda is so strong and obvious that critics sometimes argue that the protagonist Shi Ge is but a fictional stand-in for himself. In addition, readers can detect traces of Wang's own activist biography in other characters as well, such as the environmentalist leader Ouyang Zhonghua, for Wang Lixiong was once arrested by the Chinese government for his organization of the NGO "Friends of Nature (自然之友)".[21]

These interdiscursive and manifest strategies of intertextuality in *Yellow Peril* illustrate how unofficial Occidentalism in the context of post-Mao China works with, rather than against, populist Orientalist traditions of the West in the process of prioritizing domestic politics over an international, postcolonial, subversion. In other words, works like *Yellow Peril* are intra-national dialogues that might be misinterpreted as racist due to their intertextual similarities and connections to Orientalist writings. While the self-affirming nationalism of official Occidentalism evokes historical memories of China's sufferings at the hands of Western imperial powers, *Yellow Peril*'s more bottom-up and self-critical preoccupation with China's national and cultural well-being seeks to counter that official Occidentalism by affirming the Western criticisms, or even racist discriminations, against China. Moreover, the temporal division between ancient China and contemporary China discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis reappears in more complex entanglements in these competing forces of Occidentalism. While official Occidentalism tends to emphasize the difference between the strong independent PRC

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[20] Chung-ying Cheng, *New Dimensions of Confucian and Neo-Confucian Philosophy* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), 48.
[21] Rémi Quesnel, "Wang Lixiong, an Atypical Intellectual," *China Perspectives* 50 (November–December 2003): 3. Also see Chaohua Wang, "Dreamers and Nightmares: Political Novels by Wang Lixiong and Chan Koonchung," *China Perspectives* 101, no. 1 (2015): 25-27 for a detailed analysis of his characters in relation to Wang's own politics and biography.

today and the weak semi-colonized Republican China of the early 20th century (especially in the discourse of "the Century of Humiliation (百年國恥)", the unofficial Occidentalism of works like *River Elegy* and *Yellow Peril* construct a fatalistic narrative of historical continuation, which points towards some kind of stagnant cultural essence of yellowness that has always plagued and weakened the nation and the people. For example, *Yellow Peril*'s last chapter features a macabre scene at Shennongjia Nature Reserve in Hubei Province, a place widely held as the legendary origin of the Chinese people: in "the primal chaos when earth was first separated from heaven", the environmentalist Chen Pan is being gang-raped by a group of cannibalistic Chinese (524). Here Wang Lixiong takes Lu Xun's well-known metaphorical critique of traditional Chinese culture as cannibalism to the literal level and arranges for self-annihilation of the Chinese to happen in the place where they supposedly originated. Wang's conflation of ancient and contemporary China forms a contrast with the deliberate division championed by Western modernists discussed in Chapter 2 but nevertheless confirms Eric Hayot's point that "classical China exists always as an object of knowledge rather than an object of experience", which makes it "incredibly reproducible" according to different discursive and ideological needs.[22] Such relations of Orientalist and Occidentalist discourses in post-Mao China result in what William Callahan calls "the pessoptimist dynamic of identity politics"—a combination of pessimism and optimism that forms a system of discursive competition and negotiation that is always in motion.[23]

The Return of "Imperfect Masculinity"

The mutation of the Yellow Peril discourse in this complex system makes it imperative to revise the singular postcolonial view of the Yellow Peril. Wang's Occidentalist appropriation of the Western

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[22] Hayot, *Chinese Dreams*, 178.
[23] William A. Callahan, *China, The Pessoptimist Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 125.

Yellow Peril discourse can seem self-racist at times, but this self-racism can be further nuanced by his rather ambiguous portrait of "imperfect masculinity" in *Yellow Peril*.[24]

Reminiscent of the masculinist logic of colonialism versus anti-colonial nationalism in *The Yellow Danger* (allegorized in the Yen How-Ada Seward-John Hardy racial love triangle) discussed in Chapter 1, one of the most crucial junctures of plot development in *Yellow Peril* is also given a background of "racial castration".[25] At the end of chapter 10, a surviving Chinese submarine manned by commander Ding Da-hai (丁大海) launches nuclear attacks on the US, making the latter believe it is from Russia and declare war on Moscow. In the ending section of the chapter, Wang tells the reader about Ding's past to explain why he has made this drastic decision despite receiving no clear instructions from the Chinese government. Ding used to be a student in the US but the unpleasant experiences he had there have made him "hate the US to the depths of his soul" (341).[26] This hatred has its origin in a traumatic incident of gendered racism, which demonstrates Wang's awareness of the complex mechanisms and detrimental effects of Western Orientalism/racism as well as his ambiguous reaction against it. After arriving in the US, Ding feels alienated by American culture as he was "the only Chinese in the Academy", until he encountered a girl called Betsy who suddenly came to his room and had sex with him. The rest of the story is worth recounting in full detail:

> But Betsy did not come again. In the library she pretended not to see him. He felt like a lost soul. But that did not prevent him from defeating five of his American class-mates, one after another, in the class submarine war-game. One of them was a big man two meters tall—a racist, with a freckled face and blond hair like frost. Within three minutes, Ding Da-hai got him with three torpedoes. Afterwards during recreation, the big man strode over to the window where Ding was staring out blankly and said 'How come your dick is not as hot-stuff as your torpedoes?' Then, seeing his look of perplexity, said viciously, 'Betsy took a bet with some of us, to test whether the Chinese tin soldier has a dick. She said that in bed you were just a bottle of fizzy water…take off the top and bang! There's no more fizzy water left!'

> Apart from a surge of mad fury rising in his blood, Ding Da-hai had no memory of what happened afterwards. The other student was boxing champion in the Academy, but he never had a chance. His face was like a soft pumpkin by the time Ding Da-hai could be restrained by several of the

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[24] Forman, *China and the Victorian Imagination*, 147.

[25] David Eng, *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 2.

[26] The Chinese original reads: "他恨美國，恨到刻骨銘心." (271)

other students.

> In court later, witnesses testified that Ding had been roaring like a wild animal, and had a diabolical expression on his face. They said that he hit his opponent as if he wanted to kill him. Ding Da-hai accepted the judgement impassively. The court was too small in comparison with his hatred. (342-343)

Although this background story is not really a racialized love triangle, the hypermasculine competition here has clear resemblances to that in the classic Yellow Peril narrative. Examining a range of Asian American literature, David Eng points out, in a racialized society dominated by whiteness, "Asian American male subjectivity" is formed in relation to the socio-cultural force of "racial castration" that "refuses to see at the site of the Asian male body a penis that is there to see".[27] Inflected by theories of psychoanalysis, Eng's statement may sound drastic and totalizing at times but it certainly applies to Ding Da-hai's experience in the US, which traumatizes him and leads him to quasi-terroristic revenge. If we read the nuclear warhead he shoots to America as a phallic symbol of angry ejaculation and psychological compensation, Ding's Occidentalist hatred is indeed an extreme example of what Ashis Nandy calls "hypermasculine nationalism", which he finds common in male Indian intellectuals' nationalist discourses against British colonialism.[28] In other words, between white American society's "racial castration" and the push for "hypermasculine nationalism" as a Chinese commander in war, the characterization of Ding via his background stories in the US may be read as an ironic caricature, as well as double critique, of the toxic masculinity embedded in both American imperialism and Chinese nationalism.

Moreover, Ding's Occidentalist hatred is an exaggerated form of the official Occidentalism in post-Mao China that Wang seeks to critique: it shares with the CCP's propaganda a strong sense of national humiliation but transforms this obsession with racial victimhood further into violent revenge, a step so far that the Chinese government, always insistent on "the peaceful rise of China", would be unlikely to endorse in such explicit ways. More importantly, the complex intersection of negative

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy*, 55.

gender and racial experiences in Ding's story shows that Wang's appropriation of the classic Yellow Peril discourse is not affirmative in a totalizing way but rather selective and performative in nature. The designation of the big American man in this episode as "racist" certainly shows Wang's disapproval of such discrimination and his sympathy towards Ding, whose Chinese nationalism appears to be the ironic consequence of a process of localization, of becoming "Asian American". Therefore, within the overarching agenda of self-critical Occidentalism, Western Orientalism of the negative kind is only strategically appropriated for a milder form of nationalistic concern—namely, in Wang's own words, to "find a way out for China".[29]

Sinophone Trouble in the Trans-regional Making of *Yellow Peril*

So far, I have focused on close readings of *Yellow Peril* and argued that its manipulation of the stereotypical Yellow Peril discourse demonstrates a complex system of Occidentalist self-critique in motion, which shares many intertextual similarities with fin de siècle Yellow Perilist literature but participates in a domestic Chinese cultural politics largely separated from immediate postcolonial concerns of Western societies. In this process of appropriation, Wang's agency as a writer has been constantly highlighted while the Orientalist trope of the Yellow Peril is stripped of any "permanent or essential content".[30] However, for a highly sensitive and sensationalist novel like *Yellow Peril*, there are always institutional forces around its production, circulation, and interpretation that go beyond the author's intention or control. In other words, the material existence of the novel also has to succumb to geopolitical factors and capitalistic power structures, which necessarily affect how its Occidentalist appropriation of the Yellow Peril discourse is perceived in and outside of China. In the rest of this chapter, I extend this case study of *Yellow Peril* to offer a materialist critique of some of the dominant

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[29] Wang, *Huang Huo*, 6. This is from Wang's preface to the 2008 Taiwanese version. My translation. The phrase Wang uses here is "尋找中國出路".

[30] Chen, *Occidentalism*, 41.

theoretical paradigms in the current development of Sinophone Studies and world literature. With a focus on paratextual materials, I argue that the publication and circulation processes of a work like *Yellow Peril* reveal flows and containments of literary ideas that require us to reexamine the limited degree of agency interventionist texts have vis-à-vis larger sociopolitical power structures.

If we see *Yellow Peril* as a literary event that seeks to exert its Occidentalist intervention in post-Mao Chinese cultural politics, it certainly took place in the most ironic way: Wang Lixiong could only publish it anonymously outside mainland China, where it remains banned today. However, this does not necessarily mean that the book has no effect inside China at all. On the contrary, after its first publication by Mirror Books (*Mingjing* 明鏡) in Canada in 1991, it enabled the publisher to establish itself as a prominent dissident cultural force overseas and subsequently publish several more editions in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and pirated versions of these editions entered mainland China as part of the popular underground literature avidly consumed by a large number of readers. If we take David Damrosch's definition of world literature as "all literary works that circulate beyond their culture or origin, either in translation or in their original language", it can be said that the production and circulation of the many Chinese versions of *Yellow Peril* point toward a "regional model" of world literature in which censorship, dissidence, and diaspora all play a part.[31] It also illustrates the very difficulty of locating this so-called "origin" itself: was it Beijing where Wang experienced the Tiananmen Incident and wrote the novel? Was it Toronto where Mirror Books first published and distributed the novel? Or was it Hong Kong and Taiwan, which provided a much larger readership as well as the outlets for the text to re-enter the mainland Chinese (black)market, albeit in the form of pirated and illegal reprintings? The fact is that none of these locations can claim to be sole "origin" of *Yellow Peril*, because the process of circulation itself is constitutive of the very production of the text—

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[31] David Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 3. For a more detailed argument about the "regional model" of world literature, see Sowon S. Park, 'The Pan-Asian Empire and World Literatures', *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 15, no. 5 (2013) <http://dx.doi. org/10.7771/1481–4374.2348 > [last accessed: 11/Mar/2018, 10:30], 8.

together they form a literary eco-system that constantly negotiates the balance between authoritarian regulation, political dissidence, and the demands of multiple interconnected literary markets.

Similarly, this multi-local and multi-directional production and movement of *Yellow Peril* offers a much more complex and nuanced picture of Sinophone cultural production than the current debates within Sinophone Studies have presented.

Inspired by the postcolonial frameworks of the Anglophone and the Francophone, Shu-mei Shih defines the Sinophone as "Sinitic-language cultures and communities on the margins of China and Chineseness" and applies it to the analysis of literatures and visual cultures in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Southeast Asia, America, as well as communities of different non-Han ethnic minorities in the PRC.[32] For Shih, the postcolonial theorization of the Sinophone is to effect the distinction between "diaspora as history" and "diaspora as value", and correspondingly, "Sinophone as history" and "Sinophone as value".[33] While "diaspora as history" and "Sinophone as history" converge to refer to the fact that Sinitic-language cultures have always existed outside of China proper dominated by Han people, "diaspora as history" and "Sinophone as value" diverge from each other in the sense that the latter emphasizes an identity politics of "anti-diaspora", or in Shih's words, "everyone should be given a chance to be local".[34] This conceptualization of the Sinophone is necessarily separatist in spirit and practice, since it seeks to highlight the difference and importance of Sinitic-language objects of knowledge/primary texts that have been sidelined in the conventional paradigm of Chinese Studies in Anglophone academia. Despite its pragmatic gains in terms of diversifying pedagogical methods and institutional resources, there has been much contention over Shih's prioritization of political ideology and contextual labels (such as where a writer comes from and what languages he or she writes in) over textual analysis and creative agency.[35] For example, David Der-wei Wang has questioned whether

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[32] Shu-mei Shih, "Against Diaspora: the Sinophone as Places of Cultural Production," in *Sinophone Studies: A Critical Reader*, eds. Shu-mei Shih, Chien-hsin Tsai and Brian Bernards (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 25.
[33] Shu-mei Shih, "The Concept of the Sinophone," *PMLA* 126, no. 3 (2011): 713.
[34] Shu-mei Shih, *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations across the Pacific* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 185.
[35] In another theoretical paper, I have raised some questions with regards to Shu-mei Shih's formulation of the Sinophone

Shih's formulation of the Sinophone is merely "a Sinitic brand of popular theories in North America, such as postcolonialism, multiculturalism, diaspora studies and empire studies…" For Wang, an exclusionist paradigm of Sinophone Studies can be "Sinophobic", and "to truly subvert the foundation of Chinese national literature, we should no longer consider it apart from the Sinophone literary system".[36] Hence, he calls for a more complex view of the Sinophone versus the PRC by paying attention to the linguistic and cultural heterogeneity within mainland China and in the various Chinese-speaking societies elsewhere, so that a neat category of "Chinese" that conflates ethnic/racial, geopolitical/national and linguistic/cultural identities can be critiqued and deconstructed.

My take on the Sinophone leans towards Wang's, as I argue that politically sensitive texts like *Yellow Peril* have intricate roots and routes, which are too multivalent and mobile to be pinpointed along the identitarian lines in Shih's paradigm. They demonstrate that, more often than not, literary forces and institutions operating in the Chinese language are already intertwined and mutually constitutive, which in effect throws the question back at scholars of literary and cultural studies: to what extent and for whom is this categorical distinction useful at all? This is the key question that the next two chapters in Section III seek to explore and answer. As for *Yellow Peril*, its trans-regional making requires the revision of Sinophone Studies in at least two ways. Firstly, as Hangping Xu has pointed out, subversive voices within the PRC can also be regarded as "Sinophone articulation" since they challenge nationalist celebrations of Chineseness, especially that found in official Occidentalist discourses such as Xi Jinping's promotion of the idea of "the Great Revival of the Chinese nation/people (中華民族的偉大復興)".[37] But this inclusion is not without contradictions. On the one

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in terms of its inadequate treatment of the Chinese Cold War, its complex genesis in American academia, and its derivative and reductionist tendencies. See Flair Donglai SHI, "Reconsidering Sinophone Studies: the Chinese Cold War, Multiple Sinocentrisms, and Theoretical Generalization," *International Journal of Taiwan Studies* 4, no.2 (2021): 1-34.

[36] David Der-wei Wang, "Sinophone Intervention with China: Between National and World Literature," in *Texts and Transformations: Essays in Honor of the 75th Birthday of Victor H. Mair*, ed. Haun Saussy. New York: Cambria Press, 60 and 63. For comments on Shih's paradigm as Sinophobia, see his lecture at Cornell University in October, 2018, available at <https://vimeo.com/300325344> [last accessed: 22/Nov/2018, 19:30].

[37] Hangping Xu, "Beyond National Allegory: Mo Yan's Fiction as World Literature." *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 30, no.1 (Spring 2018): 168.

hand, as an anti-establishment writer strongly aligned with the independence movements in minority regions like Tibet and Xinjiang, Wang's thoughts and actions certainly qualify him as a subject of "Sinophone" value. On the other hand, the anti-official Occidentalism of *Yellow Peril* relies on the appropriation of the Orientalist conflation of yellowness and Chineseness for its subversion to work, thus inevitably perpetuating the essentialist interpretation of the nation to a large extent. That is to say, Wang is essentializing just as the official nationalist discourse is essentializing. Given these paradoxical elements, I propose that we might as well view this kind of text as "Sinophone trouble". Like Judith Butler's well-known concept of "gender trouble", "Sinophone trouble" troubles not only the neat narrative of national coherence and progress but also the ideological prioritization in Shu-mei Shih's Sinophone theory.[38] As the next chapters will further elaborate, such "Sinophone troubles" abound in contemporary Chinese-language cultures and should be regarded as normative rather than exceptional. Ultimately, they are indicative of the irreducibility of text and context and reaffirm the importance of case studies, such as the ones presented in this thesis, in bringing in nuances and examples to challenge and complicate generic theoretical discussions.

Secondly, current research in Sinophone Studies that favors a quasi-Cold War binary between centers and margins tends to neglect the shifting boundaries of Sinophone communities outside of the PRC and the forms of intervention they can effectuate and have already exerted on the mainland. As the publication history of *Yellow Peril* shows, the geopolitical margins of China, such as Hong Kong and Taiwan, are not always passively victimized by Sinocentrism but actively participate in the creation and dissemination of Chinese counter-discourses that seek to influence perceptions of China in and outside of the country. Examining Chinese Malaysian writers' migration to and career

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[38] The idea of "Sinophone trouble" is reminiscent of Judith Butler's concept of "gender trouble", which she uses to disrupt binary interpretations of gender relations and propose to see gender as flexible and situated performances rather than fixed identity categories. Similarly, my use of the term "Sinophone trouble" seeks to emphasize the complexity of Chinese-language texts that cannot be reduced to Shu-mei Shih's neat binary of victimized and marginalized "Sinophone" versus hegemonic "Chinese". In other words, "Sinophone trouble" as objects of research disrupts the presupposed political inclinations of such anti-hegemonic theories and calls for self-reflections on the very process of theoretical knowledge production. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990).

developments in Taiwan, Min-xu Zhan reminds us that Sinophone regions like Taiwan often function as "the center of recognition" over diasporic Chinese cultural productions.[39] This applies to dissident or banned writers of PRC background as well, including those still living in China like Wang Lixiong, or those working in other languages overseas but still publishing the Chinese versions of their works in these "marginal" regions like Gao Xingjian (France) and Ma Jian (Britain). Indeed, with its anti-Sinocentric political agenda, Shu-mei Shih's Sinophone theory tends to exaggerate the "colonial hegemony" of the PRC while ignoring the fact that despite their limited power in the realm of global trade and international politics, Hong Kong and Taiwan are Chinese-speaking societies that have had their economic development much earlier than mainland China and possess political systems that are often deemed to be much more liberal than that of the authoritarian mainland.[40] This means that within the publishing industry or perhaps the realm of Chinese-language cultural production in general, Hong Kong and Taiwan (especially Taiwan) have, at least for the last five decades or so, been attractive locations for writers and artists alike. Moreover, it is exactly the prevalence and perpetuation of the binary thinking on the liberal-democratic Sinophone versus authoritarian China that has made dissident works like *Yellow Peril* particularly popular in the Hong Kong and Taiwanese literary marketplaces. Therefore, despite its claim to critique China via a similar postcolonial logic, the Sinophone is fundamentally different from the Anglophone and Francophone: unlike London, New York and Paris, Beijing, with its strict censorship system, has yet to become the publishing center for Sinophone literatures worldwide; on the contrary, some Chinese writers like Wang Lixiong need to rely on

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[39] Zhan Min-xu 詹閔旭. "Zai shijie de bianyuan xiezuo: Li Yongping chengwei taiwanzuojia zhi lu 在世界的邊緣寫作: 李永平成為台灣作家之路 [Writing on the Margin of the World: Li Yongping's Road to Becoming a Writer of Taiwan]," *Dong Hwa Journal of Chinese Studies* 27 (2018): 214.

[40] East Asian economists have long proposed to view the development of the region through the lens of "the flying geese" theory, with post-war Japan leading the path of industrialization and modernization for the "four little dragons" of South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan and now the big goose of mainland China finally catching up. The linearity of this developmentalist framework is of course not without problems, but it offers a more or less accurate materialist explanation for the different degrees of development in the cultural industry in these countries and regions. Although the Chinese market is the biggest in terms of the scale of production and commercial activities, its system of cultural regulation is far from advanced and issues with regards to copyrights and censorship remain as obstacles for cultural workers. See Ha-joon Chang, *The East Asian Development Experience: The Miracle, the Crisis and the Future* (London: Zed Books, 2006), 17-19 for details.

publishers in Hong Kong and Taiwan to turn their works into objects of textual and translational circulation in world literature. In this process, Sinophone regions like Hong Kong and Taiwan assert their own agency over these texts and in a way appropriate them to shape their own images as open, free and progressive. The mutation of the Yellow Peril discourse in the post-Mao context thus points towards a much larger system of competing political, commercial, and cultural forces, and yet to what extent does Western Orientalism still play a role in this multiplicity of "Chineseness"?

Occidentalism Re-Orientalized: Marketing *Yellow Peril* in English

While fin de siècle Yellow Perilism stays more or less a passive discursive object to be appropriated and rewritten in post-Mao domestic politics, a neo-Orientalistic force is in operation when Occidentalist texts like *Yellow Peril* get translated into English and become cultural commodities in a multicultural capitalistic West influenced by neo-colonial stereotypes as well as postcolonial political correctness (in terms of the sociopolitical sensitivities around the explicit uses of racist terms). This neo-Orientalistic force becomes most evident when we conduct a comparative analysis of the paratextual changes that have occurred during *Yellow Peril*'s transformation from a Sinophone text to an Anglophone text. When Anton Platero's English translation was published in 2008 in the UK, its English publisher Global Oriental must have been aware of the danger of Wang's Occidentalist Yellow Perilism when it is transplanted to a postcolonial West that is still struggling with its Orientalist past. Indeed, the racialist elements that Wang has borrowed from fin de siècle Yellow Perilism would likely be deemed politically incorrect or even outrageously racist, and the self-critiquing socio-political message the book carries might be easily lost in translation if the Western readers are not familiar with the contextual differences between *Yellow Peril* and texts like *The Yellow Danger*.
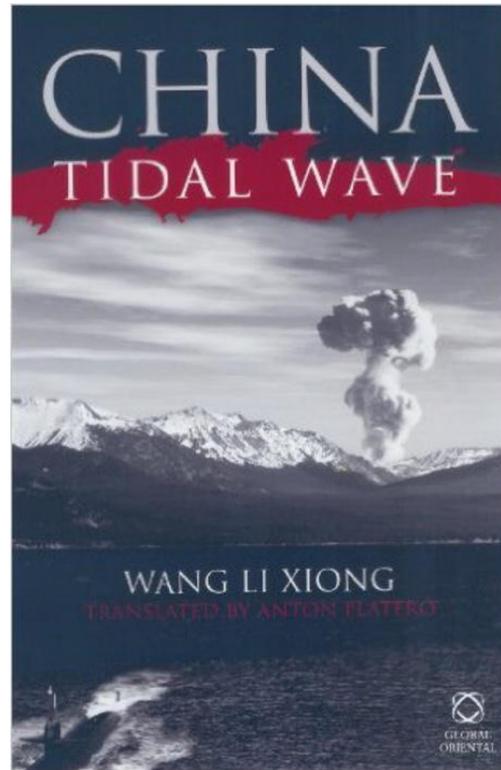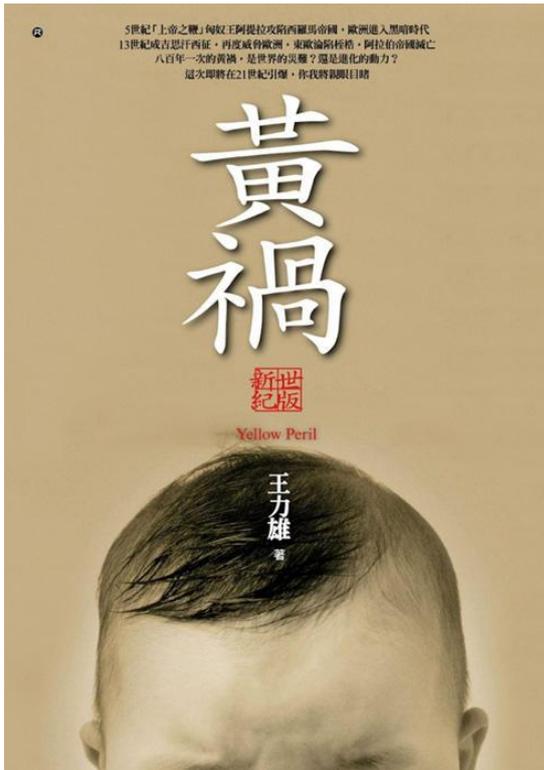
Figure 5.1 *Huang Huo (Yellow Peril)*, 2008 Taiwanese edition   Figure 5.2 *China Tidal Wave*, 2008 English edition

Given such concerns, the publisher has employed several paratextual strategies to deal with these problems and usher the readers' interpretation of the novel towards certain ideologically loaded directions. As Figure 5.1 shows, the cover of the 2008 Taiwanese version of *Yellow Peril* is given an overall brown-yellow hue and features the forehead of a (supposedly Chinese) child. The whole design emanates a sinister vibe of yellowness pertaining to the novel's racialist tropes. Moreover, it has a blurb above the title that reads: "Attila the Hun conquered the Western Roman empire in the 5th century…Genghis Khan again threatened Europe in the 13th century…the Yellow Peril that comes in every 800 years. Now it is going to explode in the 21st century, and you and I are the witnesses"; and the back cover features an endorsement by the exiled director of *River Elegy* Su Xiaokang, praising the novel as "a grand and well-organized political speculation; it might well be the first in the history of contemporary Chinese literature".[41] Identifying with Chinese culture and its self-critique to various

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[41] My translation of "5 世紀「上帝之鞭」匈奴王阿拉提攻陷西羅馬帝國…13 世紀成吉思汗西征，再度威脅歐洲…

degrees, the Sinophone readers of Yellow Peril are encouraged to connect the text to the Yellow Peril tradition of the West as well as their own political reality. Even for the pro-independence groups in Hong Kong and Taiwan, this neo-Orientalistic blurb does not appear politically incorrect, because like Shih's branch of Sinophone Studies, they are likely to appropriate such texts as evidence of their own victimization in the face of China's oppressive invasion (see Chapter 6 for a detailed study of such externalized Sinophone racism in the case of post-handover Hong Kong).

In contrast to the Sinophone edition's highlighting of racialist yellowness, the cover design of the English translation only presents a war scene where Ding Da-hai's submarine sinisterly moves away from the nuclear explosion in the distance (Figure 5.2). Indeed, the very title of the English translation "China Tidal Wave" is a deliberate circumvention of the more literal English name "Yellow Peril" printed on the earlier Sinophone editions and indicates the publisher/translator's intention to downplay the Yellow Perilist elements of the original Chinese text for their perceived audiences in the West. More importantly, on the back-cover of *China Tidal Wave*, the aforementioned Yellow Perilist blurb on the Taiwanese cover also disappears and is replaced by these words printed in big bold red characters: "THE ORIGINAL CHINESE EDITION OF THIS APOCALYPTIC NOVEL WAS FIRST PUBLISHED IN HONG KONG AND TAIWAN IN THE EARLY 1990S AND BECAME AN INSTANT BESTSELLER—EVEN IN CHINA WHERE IT CONTINUES TO BE BANNED". While the novel was very popular in the underground literary market in the PRC, there are no statistics to prove that it was a "bestseller"—clearly the blurb is not to offer an explanation for the reconciliation between "bestseller" and being "banned"; instead, it is a mere marketing strategy to sell the book using its political sensitivity. Such blatant exploitation of the "Banned in China" label as a marketing brand for translated post-Mao Chinese literature is a common practice in the Anglophone literary marketplace dominated by the liberal-democratic West. It is preceded by other prominent examples including Zhou

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八百年一次的黃禍…這次即將在 21 世紀引爆，你我將親眼目睹" and "'寫得如此恢宏而又章法井然的政治預言小說，在當代中國文學史上，恐怕還是第一部'.

Weihui's *Shanghai Baby (2001)*, Mian Mian's *Candy (2003)*, and Chen Xiwo's *I Love You Mum (2012)*, all of which have managed to achieve a certain level of commercial success in the West using this label on their covers.

Shu-mei Shih calls such antagonistic marketing strategies "the systematic", which is a "technology of recognition" used by the West to make China "decipherable" and "manageable".[42] As I have argued elsewhere, such technologies of recognition, often trapped in a dialectic struggle between intra-national accessibility (i.e. being banned in China) and international mobility (i.e. being translated and recognized overseas), still feature prominently in the making of post-Mao Chinese literature as world literature today.[43] So for Wang Lixiong, it is perhaps ironic that through Platero's act of translation, his Occidentalisation of Western Yellow Perilism has in turn had to succumb to this kind of neo-Orientalist "systematic" in the West. Much like the haunting tropes of Yellow Perilism presented in the paragraph at the beginning of this chapter, in a rather eerie way, we seem to have come full circle with this mutating force of Orientalism.

Therefore, the Anglophone journey of Wang's novel offers a brilliant demonstration of the potential contradictions and "collisions" in a "world literature" still dominated by the West.[44] On the one hand, a certain force of postcolonial political correctness in the West has demanded the necessary downplaying of racialist elements in cross-cultural translations. This is demonstrated by the rarity of explicitly racialized Yellow Perilist discourses in the West today, since the old racist marker of yellowness has long been replaced by more neutral-sounding terms like "Asian American", "Chinese British", etc (the COVID-19 pandemic in many ways has changed this, see Epilogue). On the other hand, the equally powerful "technologies of recognition", with the West as its agent, still exerts a heavy influence on the framing and reception of non-Western texts in the West. Indeed, whether in postcolonial politics or in the global literary marketplace of translation, the West will continue to hold

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[42] Shu-mei Shih, "Global Literature and the Technologies of Recognition," *PMLA* 119, no. 1 (2004): 21.
[43] Flair Donglai Shi, "Post-Mao Chinese Literature as World Literature: Struggling with the Systematic and the Allegorical," *Comparative Literature & World Literature* 1, no.1 (2016): 20.
[44] Damrosch, *What is World Literature?*, 14.

the power to set the standards as long as admission into its markets is still desirable, if not necessary, for the so-called world literature. Faced with these constraints, the Anglophone reincarnation of Wang's novel risks losing in translation both its Occidentalist message and its critical sharpness. In other words, while the old racist Yellow Peril tropes may have disappeared in the West, its neo-Orientalistic strategies for framing and presenting China in a negative, oppressive light can be regarded as a subtler form of Yellow Perilism that still dismisses the Chinese Other's original prioritization of their own contextual concerns. The stories presented in the book thus become secondary to the negative construction of China as an oppressive regime. As a paradoxical cultural phenomenon, it also begs the question: if "world literature" has to be that which "gains in translation" as Damrosch says, does *China Tidal Wave* still qualify as "world literature" despite all these critical losses in its multiple routes of wide circulation?[45] Since literary translation is both a process of linguistic transference and that of intercultural communication, evaluative concepts such as "gains" and "losses" cannot be asserted as criteria for world literature without contextualized analyses, and as the translation of Wang's novel shows, marketing strategies targeting different readerships are not always in line with authorial intention.

Focusing on the Occidentalist themes of *Yellow Peril* and the multi-directional routes of its publication, this case study has demonstrated that not only is the Yellow Peril discourse present in post-Mao cultural life, but its appropriation is also a highly complex event that has to negotiate with supra-textual structures in and beyond the Sinophone world. In the context of post-Tiananmen mainland China, such texts treat Chineseness as an internalized form of the Yellow Peril and formulate its critique based on a strong, quasi-essentialist, identification with the Chinese self, which is conceptualized as singular and univocal. However, as the idea of "Sinophone trouble" has already suggested, outside of the Chinese mainland there have been some recent trends of Sinophobia in Sinophone communities that seek to separate themselves from this Chinese self. Rather than

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[45] Ibid, 281.

internalizing the Yellow Peril discourse for self-critique, the Sinophobic discourses of these communities have activated its mutation and localization by externalizing and denouncing China and Chineseness. The following chapters draw on a range of populist and popular cultural materials from Hong Kong and Taiwan to examine the complex entanglements between the Yellow Peril discourse and Sinophone troubles. Taking both localist and nationalist perspectives from these regions into account, I continue to argue that far from a "bygone discourse…gutted of its historical racial and moral context" claimed by Urbansky, reinventions of the Yellow Peril and racialized usages of yellowness are not only common but also evoked for debates around some of the most controversial issues around Chinese identities and (self-)perceptions.[46]

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[46] Urbansky, "Fears Abroad, Propaganda at Home," 263.

Chapter 6

"A Flight of Locusts":

The Return of the Yellow Peril in Post-handover Hong Kong

The Chinese host was to resemble a flight of locusts, covering the entire sky from horizon to horizon, each member of which was armed with some implement, not so much for the purpose of killing, as for the purpose of protracting his own death, while the rest of the host pressed forward, blighting as they went.

—— M. P. Shiel, *The Yellow Danger*[1]

蝗災出現時，烏雲般鋪天蓋日的蝗蟲落下，無邊的莊稼一會兒就被吃成千里赤地。現在是放大了的蝗災—人災。

(When locusts descended like a black cloud, the crops would simply vanish for miles and miles around. Now it was many times worse. There was a plague of humanity, of starving people, bigger and more destructive than others.)

—— Wang Lixiong, *Yellow Peril*[2]

我說：親愛的朋友們，仇敵們！蝗災每每伴隨著兵亂，兵亂蝗災導致饑饉，饑饉伴隨瘟疫，饑饉和瘟疫使人類殘酷無情，人吃人，人即非人，人非人，社會也就是非人的社會，人吃人，社會也就是吃人的社會。

(I say: dear friends, enemies! After years of drought, locust plagues would usually break out. Locust plagues are usually accompanied by military uprisings, which lead to hungers, which lead to epidemics, hungers and epidemics make humans cruel and ruthless, humans eating humans, humans then become inhuman, when humans are not humans anymore, society is then an inhuman society, humans eating humans, society is then a cannibalistic society.)

—— Mo Yan 莫言, *Red Locust* (*Hong Huang* 紅蝗)[3]

As can be observed in the quotes above, the locust seems to be one of the favorite animal images

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[1] M. P. Shiel, *The Yellow Danger* (Memphis, Tennessee: General Books, 2012), 36.

[2] Wang Lixiong, *China Tidal Wave*, translated by Anton Platero (Kent: Global Oriental, 2008), 367. The Chinese original is from Wang Lixiong 王力雄, *Huang Huo* 黃禍 [Yellow Peril] (Taipei: Locus Publishing, 2008), 300 and featured here as I am slightly unsatisfied with Platero's translation: it does not capture the syntactic effects Wang has created in the original, especially in the phrase "蝗災—人災 (locust catastrophe—human catastrophe")", which juxtaposes locusts and humans in order to emphasize the scale of destruction caused by the Yellow Peril.

[3] Mo Yan 莫言, *Hong Huang* 紅蝗 [Red Locust] (Taipei: Locus Publishing, 2004), 144. The novella was first serialized in one of China's most influential literary magazine *Harvest* (*Shouhuo* 收穫) in 1987. The novel has not been translated in English yet, so all the quotations are my translation.

writers deploy when they evoke a Yellow Perilist (self-)critique against Chinese society and people. In both English and Chinese languages, the word "locust (*huang* 蝗)" often appears in association with "plague (*zai* 災)" and "crisis (*huo* 禍)"; coupled with modifiers like "swarms" or "swarming", it refers to the insect's capability to wreak havoc on agriculture and the natural environment—a locust peril (*huanghuo* 蝗禍), which happens to be homophonic with the phrase Yellow Peril (*huanghuo* 黃禍) in Chinese. The negativity of the image of the locust in human imagination is thus both quantitative (swarming) and qualitative (perilous), making it particularly germane to its own replication and sublimation in anti-immigrant and xenophobic discourses. The most prominent example of this xenophobic usage is the Book of Joel, from the Old Testament in the Bible, which depicts a scene of locusts invading Israel: "A vast army of locusts has invaded my land. It is a terrible army, too numerous to count…Bring the leaders and all the people into the temple of the Lord your God and cry out to Him there".[4] As Barry Sautman and Yan Hairong have summarized, the locust image has been used as a derogatory slur against Jews, Armenians, central Asians, Latins, the Japanese, and the Chinese in contexts as diverse as the US, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Russia, Mexico, Indonesia, etc.[5]

When Hong Kong is mentioned in relation to the Yellow Peril discourse and the locust trope, most people in the Anglophone context, especially in the West, may take the Hong Kong Chinese as the victim vis-à-vis British colonialism. After all, the city had been a British colony for more than 150 years before it was handed back to China in 1997. As the Apostle of the British Empire, Rudyard Kipling, commented in his 1900 article "The Chinese Question", Hong Kong was full of "yellow devils" that made him "frightened" and "afraid".[6] Baron John Fisher, who was "First Sea Lord of the British Empire" and commanded ships sailing from Hong Kong during the Second Opium War (1856-1860),

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[4] See Gene Kritsky and Ron Cherry, *Insect Mythology* (Lincoln, NE: Writers Club Press, 2000), 64-79 for a detailed discussion on the locust images in the Bible, all of which are negative.
[5] Barry Sautman and Yan Hairong, *Localists and "Locusts" in Hong Kong: Creating a Yellow-Red Peril Discourse* (Baltimore: Maryland Series in Contemporary Asian Studies, 2015), 39-41.
[6] Kipling quoted and discussed in David Scott, *China and the International System, 1840-1949* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2008), 109-110.

also compared the Chinese to "the locusts in Egypt", and claimed that "no pharaohs in Europe with all their mighty boats will be able to stop them".[7]

However, when the word "locust (*huangchong/wongcung* 蝗蟲)" is mentioned in Sinophone Hong Kong (especially in the local Cantonese language) today, a whole different kind of Yellow Peril would come to mind, causing discomfort, anger and embarrassment in various ways.[8] In recent years, the word "locust" has come to be exclusively associated with mainland Chinese sojourners and visitors in Hong Kong, and it is this exclusive racialist use of the term in a place with an ethnic Chinese majority that makes post-handover Hong Kong such a poignant case study for the revision of the Yellow Peril discourse. In his article "Swarm of the Locusts: The Ethnicization of Hong Kong-China Relations", Kevin Carrico refers to the rise of this racialist slur in Hong Kong as the "internal anti-Chinese sentiment" of an "internal Yellow Peril discourse", so as to point out that "a 'Yellow Peril'-type discourse, as a racialized expression of anxiety about China, exist[s] within China itself…"[9] However, I contend that describing this Hong Kong Yellow Perilism as "internal" can be misleading, because it is internal only in the sense that post-1997 Hong Kong is a SAR (Special Administrative Region) of the PRC, but the nature of this "anti-Chinese sentiment" is as externalizing and othering as fin de siècle Western Yellow Perilism. As Carrico acknowledges, the anti-locust discourse in Hong Kong refers to "Chineseness as a form of absolute difference", and I would add and emphasize that as such, it must be differentiated from the internal Yellow Perilism practiced by dissidents like Wang Lixiong.[10]

Unlike Wang's reformist self-critique that internalizes the Yellow Peril discourse based on a strong identification with the nation and people, the anti-locust discourse in Hong Kong racializes the

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[7] Quoted in Christopher Frayling, *The Yellow Peril: Dr. Fu Manchu & the Rise of Chinaphobia* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2014), 215.

[8] Since the context under discussion here is Hong Kong, in this chapter I add the Cantonese transliteration of the Chinese characters in the brackets as well, in order to emphasize the Sinophone trouble embedded in this complex situation of local languages and identities. For some of the names of organization or phrases that are really long, I leave out the transliteration but present the original Chinese so that interested readers can still locate the relevant information in Chinese. The English names of these organizations are official translations if not noted otherwise.

[9] Kevin Carrico, "Swarm of the Locusts: The Ethnicization of Hong Kong-China Relations," in *Yellow Perils: China Narratives in the Contemporary World*, eds. Franck Billé and Sören Urbansky (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2018), 197 and 203.

[10] Ibid, 204.

mainland Chinese in order to separate Hong Kong people from them. It also tends to be mixed with discourses of nostalgia for British colonialism and political advocacy for Hong Kong independence. As there is technically no officially recognized ethnic distinction between the majority of Hong Kong Chinese and most of mainland Chinese (both societies are overwhelmingly of Han composition), the racializing tension between the two geopolitical entities exposed by slurs like "locusts" operates with a differentialist emphasis on the cultural rather than the biological or the physical. In other words, "locusts" are despised as such not only because they cross geopolitical borders for commercial or other pragmatic purposes, but essentially because they are already viewed by the Hong Kong localists as less civilized and culturally inferior. In this sense, this recent reincarnation of Yellow Perilism in Hong Kong pertains to what Étienne Balibar calls "racism without races", a discursive shift from biological explanations of race and racism that has become dominant since the end of the Second World War:

> It is a racism whose dominant theme is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences, a racism which…postulate(s)…the harmfulness of abolishing frontiers, the incompatibility of life-styles and traditions…if insurmountable cultural difference is our true 'natural milieu', the atmosphere indispensable to us if we are to breathe the air of history, then the abolition of that difference will necessarily give rise to defensive reactions, 'interethnic' conflicts and a general rise in aggressiveness. Such reactions, we are told, are 'natural', but they are also dangerous. By an astonishing volte-face, we here see the differentialist doctrines themselves proposing to explain racism (and to ward it off).[11]

With particular attention to the operations of this differentialist logic, this chapter, I draw on a range of visual materials to examine the various discursive mechanisms of this anti-locust Hong Kong localism and situate the metaphor of the locust in a larger Chinese cultural constellation that highlights the vicissitudes of the Yellow Peril discourse in post-Mao China and its Sinophone "margins".

The Rise of "Locust" in the Context of Hong Kong-Mainland China Conflict

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[11] Étienne Balibar, "Is There a Neo-Racism?" in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, eds. Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, translated by Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1991), 21-22.

According to Sautman and Yan, the term "locust" as an anti-mainlander slur first appeared in 2010 on a popular discussion website in Hong Kong called Hong Kong Golden Forum (HKGF 香港高登討論區).[12] The website features numerous articles and discussion forums that serve as outlets for Hong Kong people to complain about the various social problems brought by mainland tourists, and it was also on this populist platform that the concept of "Hong Kong local consciousness (香港本土意識)" rose to prominence. Together with more than 8,000 users of HKGF, a group of localists emerged from the forum as "Hong Kong Native Power (香港本土力量)". They amassed a total sum of 100,000 Hong Kong dollars (≈12,800 USD) and published a full-page advertisement on the city's popular tabloid *Apple Daily* (蘋果日報) in early 2012. The advertisement features a huge locust standing on a hill overlooking the skyline of Hong Kong island and is covered in a sinister yellow hue (Figure 6.1). The full text on the advertisement reads as follows:[13]

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[12] Sautman and Yan, Localists and "Locusts", 3.

[13] My translation of the advertisement here is based on Carrico's but I have made several changes in terms of word choices and formats in order to re-produce in the translation both the syntactic and semantic effects of the Chinese original. See Carrico, "Swarm of Locusts", 200 for his translation, and Sautman and Yan, *Localists and "Locusts"*, 2 for their account of the original advertisement.

(Are you okay with Hong Kong
spending one million HKD every 18 minutes to raise "*seungfei*" children?
HONG KONG PEOPLE,
HAVE HAD ENOUGH!
Because (we) understand that you suffer from poisonous milk powder, (we) tolerate you coming to buy up milk powder.
Because (we) understand that you don't have freedom, (we) welcome you with "Individual Visit Scheme".
Because (we) understand that your educational system is backward, (we) let you use our educational resources.
Because (we) understand that you can't read standard Chinese, the following is written in broken Chinese:
"When [you] come to Hong Kong, please respect the local culture; If it wasn't for Hong Kong, you would all be
screwed!" *(in simplified Chinese characters)*
[WE] STRONGLY DEMAND the government revise Article 24 of the Basic Law!
Stop mainland *seungfei* pregnant women from invading Hong Kong without limit!)

Figure 6.1 Anti-Locust advert, *Apple Daily* 01/Feb/2012

The most prominent stylistic feature of this advertisement is the antagonistic dichotomy of "we" versus "you", which is made even clearer in the English translation here as sentence subjects are often omitted in Chinese. The reader is invited to enter the text identifying as a Hong Kong local by the first sentence, but this "you (as HongKonger)" is then shifted into the hidden "we (HongKonger)" in the

series of statements in the middle of the poster directly addressing the invading mainland perils. On the surface, this shift of deixis can seem contradictory and confusing, but in effect, it draws the Hong Kong addressees into a strong identification of localist solidarity. The explicit second person singular "you/*ni*/*nei* (你)" becomes the implicit first person plural "we/*women*/*ngomun* (我們)", which acts as the subject/agent for all the verbs/actions in the process of systemic othering of mainlanders as "you/*nimen*/*neimun* (你們)". Moreover, the syntactic symmetry of the four juxtaposed statements renders this *neimun*/mainland China as pathetic, unfree, backward, and uncultured but at the same time threatening and outrageous. By contrast, through the causal links highlighted by the thematization of "because (*yinwei*/*yanwai* 因為)" in these statements, *ngomun*/Hong Kong is associated with sympathy, kindness, freedom, advancement, tolerance and sophistication and yet it has been exploited, invaded, and abused. Lastly, the final exclamative slogans speak directly to the Hong Kong government and society as a whole, using the semantic force of the imperatives to urge for concrete policy changes and in the process reducing "mainland women" to the passive position of the third person.

Assisted by these stylistic strategies, this advertisement-qua-poster instigates anti-mainland sentiments via a number of references to and commentaries on recent sociopolitical affairs in Hong Kong and mainland China. Indeed, every sentence touches on an aspect of the so-called Hong Kong-mainland China conflict (中港矛盾), which started brewing after the handover in 1997 and became especially intense after the "Individual Visit Scheme (自由行)" was implemented in 2003. Although the advertisement frames the issue as a result of mainland China's lack of "freedom", this greatly simplifies the issue at hand. The scheme allows people from a number of select mainland Chinese cities to apply for individual permits to stay in Hong Kong for no more than 7 days at a time. Most of the mainland tourists take advantage of this scheme to shop in Hong Kong, usually for essential food supplies like imported milk powder and luxury goods, for which Hong Kong has a lower tariff and thus lower prices compared to mainland China. The "poisonous milk power" in the advertisement

refers to a series of food safety scandals in the late 2000s in China, which caused much distrust in domestic products and frenzy to purchase imported products, but the reports in Hong Kong about the shortages of milk powder this had caused in the city were often exaggerated.[14] The scheme was one of the major policy results of the CEPA (Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement), approved by both the Hong Kong SAR government and the Central Government of the PRC in order to boost Hong Kong's tourism and service sector after the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) breakout in the city in 2003. If anything, the scheme was passed as much in the spirit of the freedom of movement as out of the pragmatic consideration for Hong Kong's economic sustainability.[15]

Another controversial issue that features prominently in the advertisement is the identity of the so-called *seungfei* (雙非, literally "double-not") children, which refers to babies born in Hong Kong whose parents (usually from Mainland China) are not permanent residents of the city (as opposed to *daanfei* 單非 cases where at least one parent holds Hong Kong citizenship). Since the case of Chong Fung Yuen (莊豐源) decided by Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal in 2001, *seungfei* babies had been given Hong Kong citizenships without condition in the 2000s.[16] Combined with the Individual Visit Scheme, this policy led to the rise of mainland Chinese birth tourism in Hong Kong, which caused many complaints by the local people about the city's lack of sufficient medical and institutional resources to cope with the influx of mainland pregnant women and their babies. Shortly after the advertisement was published, the then Chief Executive of Hong Kong Leung Chun-ying (梁振英) announced his "zero-*seungfei* (零雙非)" policy, which effectively brought a drastic decrease in the

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[14] See Sautman and Yan, *Localists and "Locusts"*, 53 for a discussion on this exaggeration.

[15] For the scheme's impact on the Hong Kong economy, see Yun-Wing Sung et al., "The Economic Benefits of Mainland Tourists for Hong Kong: The Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) and Multiple Entry Individual Visit Endorsements (M-Permit)," *Shanghai-Hong Kong Development Institute Research Paper* 34 (2015): 1-57.

[16] Chong was born in 1997 just after Hong Kong was handed back to China and both of his parents were not permanent residents of the city. His case turned on Article 24 of the Basic Law, which at the time stated that babies would only be given Hong Kong citizenship if their "father or mother was settled or had the right of abode in Hong Kong at the time of the birth of the person or at any later time". After his successful appeal in 2001, this condition was revoked, hence the advertisement's protest to revise this revocation of Article 24.

number of *seungfei* babies being born in Hong Kong. However, it must be noted that Chong Fung Yuen's case, which took place in 1997 and set the precedent for the unexpected wave of mainland Chinese birth tourism after 2003, was approved by Hong Kong's independent legal system (a British colonial legacy most Hong Kong people are very proud of) despite the Chinese central government's advice that it might cause problems for Hong Kong in the future.[17] Therefore, the phenomenon of mainland Chinese birth tourism in Hong Kong after 2003 was in many ways an unanticipated result of a combination of legal and policy decisions, which happened exactly due to Hong Kong's relative independence from the control of the Chinese government.

Finally, the sentence in quotation marks, which is deliberately written in simplified Chinese characters and thus stands out from the rest of the text, also requires some contextual explanation to make sense of its ideological effects. First, the advertisement uses "standard Chinese (*zhengtizi/jingtaiji* 正體字)" to refer to traditional Chinese (*fantizi/faantaiji* 繁體字) and "broken Chinese (*cantizi/chaantaiji* 殘體字)" to refer to simplified Chinese (*jiantizi/gaantaiji* 簡體字). These word choices avoid the more common and neutral names given to these two writing systems and assert the former's superiority to the latter, and metonymically, Hong Kong's cultural superiority over mainland China. Indeed, as Carrico has observed, certain groups of Hong Kong localists hold the linguicist (discrimination based on language) opinion that Mandarin and simplified Chinese characters as used in mainland China are "divorcing people from their self-declared rich cultural past".[18] This othering discourse is based on a self-centered shift in the perceptions of Chineseness. To be more specific, the desirability or superiority of the Cantonese language and traditional, or "standard",

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[17] This can be observed in the final legal document concerning Chong's case, which is available in full at <https://legalref.judiciary.hk/lrs/common/ju/ju_frame.jsp?DIS=22558&currpage=T> [last accessed: 29/Nov/2018, 11:10] (see the statement by director Qiao Xiaoyang in particular). The different opinions held by the Hong Kong court and the Chinese central government were also widely reported in Hong Kong newspapers at that time. See Anon., "Lifa yuanyi: fumu shuangfang zhishao yifang xuyao shi gangren 立法原意：父母至少一方需是港人 [The Original Intention of the Legislature: At Least One of the Parents Needs to be a Hong Kong Citizen]" *Wen Wei Po* 文匯報, January 30, 2012, http://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/perceptions-of-the-east-yellow-peril-an-archive-of-anti-asian-fear-1.1895696 (accessed October 19, 2018) for example.

[18] Carrico, "Swarm of Locusts", 202.

Chinese characters is predicated upon it being even more "authentically Chinese" than whatever the mainland Chinese use. This appeal to a traditional Chinese authenticity evokes a temporal division not dissimilar to the Orientalist fetish for classical China in the modernist movement in early 20th century England discussed in Chapter 2. As a result, certain aspects of traditional Chinese culture are to be absorbed into Hong Kong culture and regarded exclusively as such, while "Chineseness", if it has to be defined as everything that is associated with contemporary mainland China, becomes corrupted, inferior, undesirable, and oppressive and thus needs to be rejected.

Second, the statement written in simplified Chinese— "If it wasn't for Hong Kong, you would all be screwed!"—is a parodic response to the condescending attitudes some mainland Chinese people hold toward Hong Kong. Indeed, the advertisement is often seen as a localist reaction against the discriminatory comments made by Peking University professor Kong Qingdong (孔慶東) on a mainland Chinese internet TV program in January that year. In the program, Kong is commenting on a video recorded in the Hong Kong subway. It shows a quarrel between a mainland Chinese parent and a group of Hong Kong passengers over her child consuming food in the carriage. Even though the event took place before the racialist symbolization of the locust became further popularized in Hong Kong, sociocultural behaviors like this are indeed often featured in the anti-locust discourse to set the "uncivilized" mainlanders apart from the "civilized" Hong Kong people, mixing discriminations based on region, class, language, and culture. Carried away by his anger at what he perceives as "unfair treatment towards mainlanders in Hong Kong", Kong made the statement "A lot of Hong Kong people are dogs! (香港人很多是狗！)", which caused great outrage in Hong Kong, and Peking University subsequently released a public statement warning its staff to refrain from saying anything "detrimental to the cooperation and harmony between Hong Kong and the mainland".[19] In a series of emotionally

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[19] Anon., "Beida yaoqiu shisheng lixing kandai xianggang yu neidi shehui wenhua chayi 北大要求師生理性看待香港與内地社會文化差異 [Peking University Requires its Teachers and Students to View the Socio-cultural Differences between Hong Kong and the Mainland Rationally]" *Chinanews* 中 國 新 聞 網 , February 21, 2012, http://www.chinanews.com/edu/2012/02-21/3685294.shtml (accessed September 29, 2018). The part of the program where Kong made all these statements can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-tIJoKT9m0> [last accessed:

charged comments, Kong further adds that Hong Kong (the name meaning "the fragrant harbor" in Chinese) "will turn into smelly harbor (*chougang*/*chaugong* 臭港)" if mainland China stops offering supplies of water, food, and tourists to the city. The statement deliberately written in simplified Chinese on the anti-locust advertisement is thus a sarcastic attempt at reversing this mainland Chinese pomposity, and together they form a vicious circle in the exacerbation of the Hong Kong-mainland China conflict. As Carrico puts it,

> The locust discourse…claims to fundamentally racially differentiate the people of China from the people of Hong Kong, but in reality is nothing but a simplistic inversion of Chinese nationalism's essentialist assumptions about the people of Hong Kong: "dogs" are replaced by "locusts", colonial pollution is replaced by post-1949 communist moral pollution, and caricatures of crass materialism and lack of culture are replaced by mirrored caricatures of crass materialism and lack of culture. To simply replace one essentialist and exclusionary nationalism with another essentialist and exclusionary nationalism is to lose sight of the openness that fundamentally differentiates Hong Kong culture from contemporary PRC culture, producing a truly perilous situation in response to a perceived peril.[20]

While he is right to point out the ideological similarities between Chinese nationalism and Hong Kong localism, Carrico's analysis here contains a couple of self-contradictions and leaves out some important distinctions. Firstly, if the (anti-)locust discourse is defined by its agenda "to fundamentally racially differentiate the people of China from the people of Hong Kong", a more nuanced view focusing on the differences between Chinese nationalism and Hong Kong localism needs to be adopted, rather than simply regarding the latter as the "inversion" of the former and subsuming them under the same category of "essentialist and exclusionary nationalism". Even though the two ideological forces operate in the same logic of Self versus Other, mainlander versus Hongkonger, to speak of a "Hong Kong nationalism" can be confusing because the city, despite its autonomous features, is not a sovereign state and belongs to the PRC, and nor do the localists address Hong Kong in the name of a (even if just imaginary) nation state. For the same reason, when we are referring to certain radical camps of the localist movements in Hong Kong that seek Hong Kong independence, it is still better to

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29/Nov/2018, 17:00].
[20] Carrico, "Swarm of Locusts", 215-216.

call them "separatist" rather than "nationalist". As Anthony Fung puts it in his article "What Makes the Local?", "Adoption of the Hong Kong label has…become a useful symbol for the locals to resist, if not to delay, national assimilation."[21] The next Chapter (Chapter 7) will further illustrate that pro-Chinese nationalism finds resonant voices in Hong Kong too, and in order to distinguish them from the anti-Chinese sentiments, it is clearer to call the anti-locust discourse and its connection to the Hong Kong independence group "localist" rather than "nationalist".

Secondly and more importantly, to call Chinese nationalism "exclusionary" can also be misleading, because the antagonism between Chinese nationalism and Hong Kong localism under discussion actually stems from the clash between the former's logic of compulsory inclusion and the latter's self-victimizing exclusion. In other words, for Chinese nationalists like Kong Qingdong, Hong Kong separatists and localists are "running dogs of imperialism (帝國主義的走狗)" because they refuse to identify as Chinese when they should; whereas for the more extreme group of Hong Kong localists, this nationalist construction of a pan-Chinese identity is neo-colonial and invasive exactly because it is compulsory and uniform. However, this dissonance between ideas of nationalism and localism becomes perilous when they are lumped onto different groups of people in a categorical, totalizing, and essentialist way. This essentialist peril takes place when all mainland Chinese people become Chinese nationalists in the eyes of the anti-locust group in Hong Kong, and the racializing functionality of the locust slur greatly facilitates this loss of distinction. As such, it must be noted that there is a difference in the degrees to which "locusts" and "dogs" are popularized in Hong Kong and mainland China respectively: while the anti-locust discourse has effectively racialized both the mainlanders and the locust symbol and treated them as mutually referential and co-constitutive, "Hong Kong dogs (*ganggou*/*gonggau* 港狗)" is not a racialization equally popularized to make "dogs" an exclusive association with Hong Kong people in the minds of most mainland Chinese.

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[21] Anthony Fung, "What Makes the Local? A Brief Consideration of the Rejuvenation of Hong Kong Identity," *Cultural Studies* 15, no. 3-4 (2001): 595.

In fact, media scholars such as Jonathan Ong and Tony Lin have pointed out that the kind of practice that Kong Qingdong was commenting on, namely Hong Kong locals taking surreptitious photos and video footages of mainland Chinese bodies in Hong Kong public spaces and sharing them on social media with the "explicit intention to humiliate", is quite prevalent in the city.[22] They regard the role of digital media in this context as an "apparatus of shame" that "redefines Hong Kong identity in reference to the undesirability of its most proximal other", namely the mainland Chinese.[23] Their observation finds its most explicit confirmation in a 2013 article in the *South China Morning Post* written by one of the leaders of the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong, Jason Ng, who encouraged his fellow citizens to mobilize around such apparatuses of shame: "phone-cam shaming has been our only weapon against the travesty of human decency. Those grainy videos give ocular proof that Mainlanders are uncivilized *nouveaux riches* who invade, devour and multiply like their namesake insect". [24] As a result of its wide-spread usage in the city's mediascape, when "*wongcung*/locusts" is mentioned in Hong Kong, images of uncivilized mainlanders would jump to mind, whereas the same kneejerk reaction is not activated by the mention of "*gou*/dogs" in mainland China—dogs very much remain just dogs there. Or if we have to identify an inversion term for *wongcung* circulating in the Chinese-language cyberspace, "*gaatzaat* (甲由, cockroach)" offers a higher degree of sociolinguistic equivalence than "*gou*/dogs". Having emerged during the anti-extradition movement in 2019 on social media such as Twitter and Facebook, both of which are blocked in mainland China, this Cantonese slang word has been used by the pro-Chinese political groups (the so-called blue camps) in Hong Kong to denigrate and criticize localist groups and figures.[25] However, compared to the popularized use of *wongcung* in Hong Kong, *gaatzaat* never had the same

[22] Jonathan Ong and Tony Lin, "Plague in the City: Digital Media as Shaming Apparatus toward Mainland Chinese 'locusts' in Hong Kong," in *Communicating the City: Meanings, Practices, Interactions*, eds. Giorgia Aielle et al. (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2017), 156.

[23] Ibid., 150.

[24] Ng quoted in Ong and Lin, "Plague in the City", 156.

[25] Chinese linguist Victor Mair has written a blog post discussing the occurrences of the term *gaatzaat* in Hong Kong media, which is available at <https://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/?p=44120> [last accessed: 29/Apr/2020, 19:00].

extent of antagonizing and instigative power most likely due to its unfamiliarity to non-Cantonese speakers (the Chinese characters cannot be typed from *pinyin* easily) as well as the censorship of sensitive political news and discussions on mainland social media. The uniform nature of Chinese nationalism may be the fundamental cause for such disparity between the popularity of *wongcung* and the limited circulation of *ganggou* or *gaatzaat*. Since even the most hardcore nationalists from the mainland would still see Hong Kong as betrayers of China and their own Chineseness, to racialize and treat Hong Kong people as a totally different (in)human category will contradict the affective logic of this sentiment of being betrayed. Therefore, it is not really accurate to regard dogs as inversion of locusts, as the former is not an exclusionary racializing discourse that seeks to separate Hong Kong and the rest of China into different racial categories.

Finally, I find Carrico's last sentence eerily similar to the antagonistic binaries advanced by the anti-locust discourse, even though his point is to discredit its irrationality. His final emphasis on "the openness that fundamentally differentiates Hong Kong culture from contemporary PRC culture" is but a subtler form of hierarchical differentiation than the anti-locust localists' aim "to fundamentally racially differentiate the people of China from the people of Hong Kong". After all, the political binary between Chinese authoritarianism and Hong Kong democracy and freedom is a key constituent of the anti-locust discourse, by which the Hong Kong localists can assert the superiority of the local over the national, leading to a differentialist logic of discrimination and condescension that pertains to Balibar's description of "racism without races" mentioned before. As I have discussed in the previous paragraphs, many of the policies that led to the rise of the Hong Kong-mainland China conflict resulted from very complex, and oftentimes unexpected, factors, instead of China simply sending uncivilized people to invade and take over Hong Kong. Moreover, wrapping the political and institutional differences between Hong Kong and mainland China in a generic culturalist language, as Carrico does with his evocation of "Hong Kong culture" versus "PRC culture", does not help with mitigating people's reactive tendency to reduce contextual collisions to simplistic categories. His uncritical assertion about

Hong Kong's fundamental "openness" echoes the SAR government's efforts at branding Hong Kong as "Asia's World City", a tactic of "instrumental cosmopolitanism" that in effect covers up the "social segregation and everyday racism in the city".[26] As Hong Kong author Koon-Chung Chan has noted, this self-branding of Hong Kong's "openness" is more than a top-down imposition of liberal pride and has since British colonial times been actively adopted by the Cantonese-speaking Hong Kong locals to assert their superiority over the rest of China or even other Asian countries:

> Hongkongers too often revert to well-rehearsed cants – Hong Kong is a place where east meets west, an island of barren rocks turned economic miracle, a free economy, a modern city that is advanced and developed, prosperous and stable. This is the colonized mindset of myopic self-congratulating winners…It goes without saying that by then the locals did not see Hong Kong as part of the third world, the tri-continents, the south of the north-south divide, or even an emerging country. It could not imagine itself sharing any commonality with other ex-colonies in South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean islands or Polynesia.[27]

Furthermore, not only is this propagandic promotion of the image of "openness" conditioned by a geopolitical psychology of distancing from Hong Kong's less developed neighbors and other third-world countries, but it also runs in sharp contrast with the city's sociopolitical reality. In Hong Kong, political power is reserved for the Cantonese-speaking locals with Hong Kong ID cards, white expats from the West get relatively well-paid jobs and the most hospitable services, and darker-skinned domestic workers from Southeast Asia occupy the lowest rung of the city's socioeconomic order and often live at the mercy of their Hong Kong employers, who could terminate their temporary work contracts and in effect deport them anytime.[28] To describe such reality of socioeconomic stratification, Barry Sautman even goes so far as characterizing Hong Kong society as a "semi-ethnocracy" governed by "a system of racial inferiorization" and "Cantonese chauvinism".[29] There is evidently much to

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[26] Ong and Lin, "Plague in the City", 154.
[27] Koon-Chung Chan, "Hong Kong Viscera," *Postcolonial Studies* 10, no. 4 (2007): 384.
[28] For a detailed study of the colonial and post-colonial history of this racialized system of class division in Hong Kong, see Barry Sautman and Ellen Kneehans, *The Politics of Racial Discrimination in Hong Kong* (Baltimore: Maryland Series in Contemporary Asian Studies, 2002).
[29] Barry Sautman, "Hong Kong as a Semi-ethnocracy: 'Race,' Migration and Citizenship in a Globalized Region," in *Remaking Citizenship in Hong Kong: Community, Nation and the Global City*, eds. Agnes Ku and Ngai Pun. (London: Routledge, 2004), 104.

uncover and discuss beneath Hong Kong rosy self-image of "openness". As the rest of this Chapter and Chapter 7 will further demonstrate, rather than fixating on such discourses of "fundamental differentiations", a more holistic and nuanced view of the interactions between Hong Kong and mainland China in many aspects of contemporary Sinophone cultural economy would not only enable us to see a bigger picture of systemic flows and negotiations, but also allow more space and agency for organic changes to happen so as to reduce essentialist antagonisms in both places.

So far, I have spent much effort to explain how the anti-locust discourse in the advertisement works, because as the starting point for the popularization of the idea of mainlander-as-locust, it contains most of the discursive and referential features that have made the conflation of the mainland Other and the sinister insect symbol distinct. Similar to how the prototype of fin de siècle Western Yellow Perilism can be located in *The Yellow Danger* (see Chapter 1), this anti-locust advertisement marks a historical moment when an anti-mainland subculture entered public consciousness and gave rise to a racialized iconicity that came to be constantly re-produced and re-worked in virtual as well as everyday discourses around Hong Kong-mainland China relations.

Notably, just as Wang Lixiong could appropriate and repurpose Western Yellow Perilism for his own Occidentalist concerns, the racialized iconicity of the locust advertisement from *Apple Daily* also succumbed to a range of mainland Chinese remaking after it spread to Chinese social media, creating a unique genre of *rengouti* (忍夠體), or "have-had-enough-ism", by which netizens vent their dissatisfaction with various social issues.[30] For example, Figure 6.2 is a reworked anti-locust poster from the Chinese internet in which Hong Kong's Victoria Harbor in the background has been replaced by the Tiananmen Square and the caption line at the center reads "Beijing people are not having it anymore!", with the rest of the texts accusing "migrants from outside (外來人口)" of disrupting the capital city's social order, driving up real estate prices and getting unfair advantages for their children.

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[30] The popular Chinese online encyclopedia site *Baidu Baike* even has an independent entry for this genre, available at <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%BF%8D%E5%A4%9F%E4%BD%93/9581109>, accessed January 20, 2020.

Other Chinese appropriations with more positive vibes also proliferated. In some cases, the locust symbol disappears altogether but the referentiality, or iconic recognizability, of the advertisement is maintained by the same yellow-black color scheme and textual-visual layout. For example, Figure 6.3 features a statue of Deng Xiaoping on top of the hill and promotes Hong Kong's neighboring city Shenzhen as a welcoming destination for all migrants.

These mainland Chinese acts of amateur image repurposing may reproduce or rebut the xenophobic sentiments of the original anti-mainland poster from Hong Kong, but they effectively de-racialize the tension between mainland Chinese identity and Hong Kong identity as constructed and instigated by the localist Yellow Perilism of the whole anti-locust movement in the SAR. Just as Figure 6.2 universalizes anti-migrant attitudes and discourses as pan-Chinese sociopolitical phenomena, images like Figure 6.3 offer sharp criticisms of such discourses to highlight the irrationality of the Sinophobic fears and accusations in Hong Kong. Both kinds of appropriation challenge the anti-locust movement's framing of cross-border migrancy as exclusively caused by uncivilized Chinese encroachment into, or even re-colonization of, Hong Kong.
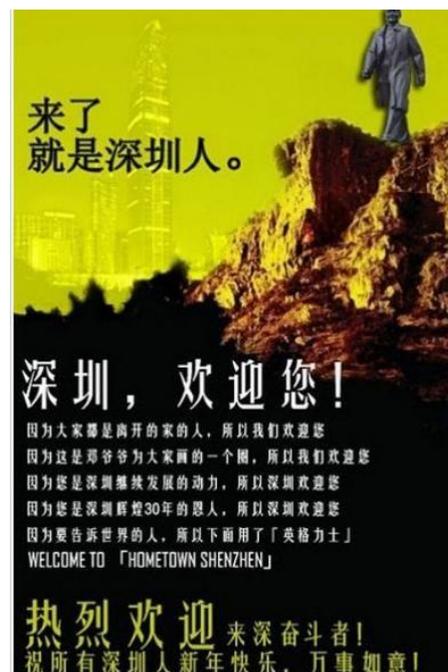
Figures 6.2 and 6.3 Reworked versions of the anti-locust advert from the Chinese internet

"The Locust World" and the Superiority Complex of Hong Kong Localism

As a process of dehumanizing symbolization, the anti-locust discourse in Hong Kong does not have a personified embodiment like Fu Manchu, but there is one particular spin-off of this advertisement that has been similarly influential and summative. About a year after the advertisement appeared, a music video entitled "Locust World (蝗蟲天下)" was uploaded to Youtube by a group associated with the Hong Kong Golden Forum, who calls themselves "Golden Locust Singing Group (高登唱蝗團)".[31] The melody of the song featured in the video is taken from local singer Eason Chan's (陳奕迅) popular love song "Under Mount Fuji (富士山下)", making it sound immediately familiar and catchy to the Hong Kong audience. Corresponding to each line of its anti-locust lyrics, the music video shows different images of mainland Chinese tourists' uncivilized behaviors in Hong Kong, including occupying seats, shouting in public, and defecating on the street. The music video thus performs an act of creative bricolage as most of these images were surreptitiously taken and had been circulating in different anti-mainland social media platforms used by many Hong Kong locals. In the video, these images are often juxtaposed or immediately followed by footages of locusts swarming in the field, which then transition to other symbols of oppressive Chineseness such as the national flag of the PRC and Chairman Mao (see Figure 6.4 and 6.5 for example).

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[31] The group later created a sub-forum called "Golden Music Channel (高登音樂台)" via which they made many more anti-locust videos, such as "Locust (蝗)" and the "The Attacking Locusts (進擊的蝗蟲)", both of which have had hundreds of thousands of views on Youtube alone. The channel was also very active in mocking mainland China during the 2019 anti-extradition movement and the COVID-19 global pandemic in 2020.

Figure 6.4 Mainland kids defecating in public in "Locust World"   Figure 6.5 Chairman Mao in "Locust World"

Figure 6.6 The yellow-red color scheme and nostalgia for British colonialism in "Locust World"

Notably, "Locust World" has a yellow-red color scheme, and red is often used as the background when political symbols appear, implying China's communist history and oppressive regime, while yellowness is always embodied by a huge locust occupying the lower section of the video (Figure 6.6). Also a possible parody of the Chinese national flag, this yellow-red color scheme is a poignant illustration of Sautman and Yan's observation that the rise of the locust image in post-handover Hong Kong has created "a yellow-red peril discourse".[32] Since 2011, "Locust World" has been watched more than 1,500,000 times on Youtube alone. It was also mentioned by *The Washington Post* in a report about the intensification of Hong Kong-mainland China conflict in 2012.[33] The song even appeared

[32] Sautman and Yan, *Localists and "Locusts"*, 1.
[33] Andrew Higgins, "China Denounces 'Hong Konger' Trend," *The Washington Post*, January 11, 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/china-denounces-hong-konger-trend/2012/01/10/gIQAmivNqP_story_1.html (accessed January 19, 2019).

in a popular TV drama, *Inbound Troubles* (老表，你好嘢！), in 2013, causing further debates among

the Hong Kong public. A brief look at some of the lyrics reveals a series of explicit social comments

on the same issues raised by the advertisement, except that the music video employs a much more

sensationalist language, directly addresses mainlanders as locusts, and expresses nostalgia towards

British colonialism:[34]

蝗蟲你的確欠打，巴士港鐵小巴
餐廳酒店商鋪內亂叫喧嘩
難道你不覺醜嗎?
街邊點煙牟下　跟手畀個蘇蝦將金滿地灑
其實見這個國家，偷呃拐騙到家
高呼一句"中國人"誰人亦怕
蟲國化名叫支那，一早醜遍東亞
一天一句普通話將我同化

來香港闖我邊境
愛侵佔地盤是你本性
寄生到身份終可以得確認
蝗蟲大肚像異形
懷孕入境卻未停
無人能阻止它搶獲身份證
蟲卵在醫院孵化侵佔病床後再走數

…
設下這圈套
每天講中國多好　對著我洗腦

…
"如沒有中國關照，香港已經死了"
香港都算真多得中國唔少

…
往日靠打拼　港英的繁華光景　再沒有保證

(Locust come out from nowhere, overwhelm everywhere
Shouting, screaming, yelling like no one could hear
Ever feel shame to yourself?

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[34] The bilingual lyrics provided here is taken from the music video itself, and the English text is not a literal translation of the Chinese original; it omits certain details but largely delivers the anti-Chinese sentiments. The bracketed explanation for "Cina (Zhina 支那)" is in the original subtitle of the video (available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWZFgkJNxDM>, accessed January 20, 2019).

Smoke like breathing in hell and then their child defecate all over the floor
See this country? Countrymen expert in stealing, cheating, deceiving, lying
"I'm Chinese!" scares the hell out of everyone
Locust nation named "Cina" (a derogatory name of China) – disgusts the whole East Asia
Everyday trying to naturalize us with Mandarin
Invading across the Hong Kong border and taking over our land – that's your specialty
Parasitic until your citizenship is recognized
Big-belly locust like aliens;
pregnant and not stopped by immigration
No one can stop them from scamming HKIDs
Locust eggs hatch in hospitals –
Taking over beds and not paying bills

…
Setting up this trap,
Brainwashing me "China is great" everyday

…
"Without China's care, Hong Kong would have been dead"
Thanks to China, Hong Kong has now deteriorated so badly

…
Built by sweat and blood, the prosperous past of British Hong Kong, shines no more)

The video expresses disgust for "improper urban behavior" such as defecating in public, suggests such behaviors as indicative of the mainlanders' inherent lack of civility and class, and "strategically positions Hong Kongers as victims in their own homeland through its choice of mournful melody".[35] As Ong and Lin have observed, the hate-mongering effects of the video's shaming tactics of bricolage editing are so strong that many messages in the comments section on Youtube express "solidarity from people in other countries who used the space to share their own negative experiences with mainland Chinese migration to their country", which has in turn instigated even more radical anti-Chinese beliefs that the perilousness of the mainland Chinese "locusts" is an issue not only for "civilized" and "cosmopolitan" Hong Kong but also for the entire world—from a local to a global Yellow Peril.[36]

The frequent mention of "the defecating mainlander" in the lyrics and their visualization in the video also resonate with the observations of David Inglis that subordinate groups within social, racial

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[35] Ong and Lin, "Plague in the City", 158.
[36] Ibid.

or class hierarchies tend to be depicted as "faecally undisciplined" and "excrementally libidinous" in comparison to the normative, thus superior, group.[37] In fact, such "tropes of the faecal" were quickly picked up and reproduced by numerous follow-up music videos published by Hong Kong Golden Forum as the most compelling tool to "racialize Mainland Chinese bodies as inferior, benighted and poorly suited to the temporal rhythms integral to modernity in Hong Kong's fast-paced climate of advanced capitalism".[38] For instance, one of the most popular spin-offs within this genre of anti-locust music video is a song called "Disgusting Cina Style (核突支那 Style)", which has been viewed on Youtube more than three million times.[39] Based on the South Korean hit song "Gangnam Style", the lyrics mock the accent of mainlanders speaking Cantonese and repeat the Korean phrase "*eotteohge* (어떻게, meaning 'how to')" many times in its homophonic rendition into Cantonese as "*odukke* (屙篤茄, meaning 'shitting')".

If we situate the locust symbol in the genealogy of the images of mainland Chinese people in Hong Kong visual culture, it becomes clear that this localist Yellow Perilist discourse differs from earlier representations via an emphasis on the economic and political power of the PRC as an imminent threat.

Prior to the handover in 1997, Hong Kong TV dramas and films tended to portray mainlanders as either the innocent, laughable country bumpkin, represented by the character Ah Chan (阿燦) in the popular TV drama *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly* (網中人, 1979), or the sinister communist trouble-maker, such as the mainland gangsters in the film series *Long Arm of the Law* (省港旗兵, 1984-1990).[40] After the Sino–British Joint Declaration was signed in 1984 to confirm that Hong Kong

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[37] David Inglis, "Dirt and Denigration: The Faecal Imagery and Rhetorics of Abuse," *Postcolonial Studies* 5, no. 2 (2002): 208.

[38] John Lowe and Eileen Yuk-ha Tsang, "Disunited in Ethnicity: The Racialization of Chinese Mainlanders in Hong Kong," *Patterns of Prejudice* 51, no. 2 (2017): 153.

[39] The video is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-bzN7sG5Ro>, accessed April 29, 2020.

[40] See Iam-chong Ip, "The Specters of Marginality and Hybridity," *Chinese Sociology & Anthropology* 30, no.3 (1998): 45-64 for a detailed discussion on how these works conjure up Hong Kong victimhood as a strategy to Otherize mainland China as a sociopolitical space of backwardness and violence. Needless to say, many commonalities can be found between

would be under Chinese sovereignty after 1997, images of the PRC and the mainland Chinese in media increased rapidly. Despite the existential anxiety towards the PRC's communist history and one-party system, many of these images come with a strong sense of confidence in Hong Kong's materialistic attraction and economic power and often present a linear narrative of backward mainlanders getting enticed and assimilated by the colonial city's capitalistic lifestyles. For example, the hugely popular film series *Her Fatal Ways* (表姐，你好嘢！ 1990-1994), featuring local star Carol Cheng Yu Ling (鄭裕玲) as the title character, shows how a communist woman cadre from mainland China gradually falls in love with Hong Kong (and its men!) after conducting several government missions and eventually becomes a Hong Kong citizen. One of the major methods the films use for their comic effects is to have the cadre, nicknamed "mainland cousin", speak in pretentious communist slogans in official settings but reveal her desires and praise for the feminine consumer goods and sexy men of Hong Kong in more private scenes. As Shu-mei Shih points out, this arrangement "confirms the superiority of Hong Kong culture because it is spoken by a staunch Communist Party cadre who has henceforth been very careful to hide her fascination".[41]

From a historical perspective, even though Hong Kong was separate from the mainland for more than 150 years, for the first hundred years it acted as a free port for the Chinese to move in and out and was not a place most of them would consider settling down in. It was not until the late 1960s, when the mainland was closed to the capitalistic world and the British colonial government started to implement more welfare policies to appease local leftist sentiments inspired by the Cultural Revolution, that a distinctive Hong Kong identity started to emerge.[42] Unsurprisingly, this distinctive Hong Kong identity was not so much created against the conspicuous racial Other, namely the white British

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this existing strategy and the new wave of anti-locust movements in Hong Kong in the 2010s.

[41] Shu-mei Shih, "Gender and a New Geopolitics of Desire: The Seduction of Mainland Women in Taiwan and Hong Kong Media," *Signs* 23, no. 2 (1998): 310.

[42] One crucial event in the process of Hong Kong local identity formation is the leftist riots in 1967, commonly known as "the 67 riots (六七暴動)". As Clement Tsz Ming Tong has pointed out, the violence and extremist views displayed by some of the participants in the riots resulted in Hong Kong residents' further distancing from the revolutionary rhetoric of the mainland. See Clement Tsz Ming Tong, "The Hong Kong Week of 1967 and the Emergence of Hong Kong Identity through Contradistinction," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch* 56 (2016): 40-66.

colonizers, as formed in contrast with the "mainland cousin". In other words, it emerged as an intra-racial distinction that serves to mark the capitalistic superiority of "the Hong Kong Chinese" at a time when a designation like this was not as oxymoronic as it may sound now. As local scholar Lo Kwai-Cheung has pointed out,

> For most Hong Kong people, an inner distance is still firmly maintained in their consciousness to differentiate themselves from mainlanders and assert their superiority. Even after 1997, Hong Kong locals continually subject mainlanders to slurs and discriminate against them as unsophisticated country bumpkins or corrupted entrepreneurs from across the border. New immigrants from China are generally seen as uneducated, uncivilized, violent, and lazy. There is a looming prejudice against new mainland arrivals, especially after the Asian financial turmoil. Hong Kong people believe that mainlanders will take away their jobs, worsen Hong Kong society, and destroy the city's prosperity and stability.[43]

This "inner distance" and Hong Kong's assertion of superiority also explain why, after the PRC further opened up its market and accelerated its economic reform in the 1990s (starting with Guangdong province neighboring Hong Kong no less), the intra-racial distinction constructed for Hong Kong-mainland China differentiation would have to evolve into a racializing discourse like the locust. According to Ma Kit Wai and Tsang Chung-kin, postwar Hong Kong identity was long characterized by the ideological forces of "Getting Rich Mythology (創富神話)", "Opportunism (機會主義)", "Utilitarianism (功利掛帥)", and "Individualism (個人主義)", and together they constitute what Rey Chow calls the city's "compensatory economics" for its lack of political and cultural power with an emphasis on local material wealth.[44] As the PRC gradually catches up in the game of global capitalism and eventually becomes an economic superpower, Hong Kong's positional superiority cannot be sustained solely on a material basis anymore and must seek justifications in other domains, such as politics and culture. Against this background, these ideological forces associated with capitalism have

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[43] Lo Kwai-cheung, *Chinese Face/Off: The Transnational Popular Culture of Hong Kong* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2005), 207-208.

[44] Ma Kit Wai 馬傑偉 and Tsang Chung-kin 曾仲堅, *Yingshi xianggang: shenfenrentong de shidai bianzou* 影視香港：身份認同的時代變奏 [TV, Film, and Hong Kong Identity] (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2010), 127 and Rey Chow, "King Kong in Hong Kong: Watching the 'Handover' from the U.S.A," *Social Text*, no. 55 (1998): 102.

gradually come to be viewed as negative, rather than positive, qualities, and they are increasingly interpellated onto the image of the mainland Chinese, especially in the recent rise of feminizing caricatures of the "crazy rich mainlander", the *nouveau riche* class of the PRC.[45]

What this genealogy of cultural representation reveals is that mainland China has morphed from a backward yet innocuous and assimilable presence to an unneglectable and threatening power in the Hong Kong imagination. As Iam-chong Ip says in his summative work on Hong Kong's new identity politics, "Mainlanders have transmogrified from laughable, despised but unthreatening 'relatives' to a menacing massive swarm of 'locusts'."[46] More importantly, these "locusts" are rich and unruly from the Hong Kong localist perspective. Economic prowess, it turns out, is something desirable and benign only when the Hong Kong self is in possession of it. By contrast, when the mainland Chinese country bumpkin finally gets rich, such power is to be viewed with disdain, which is then justified via the new politico-cultural binaries of Hong Kong liberalism versus mainland Chinese dictatorship, Hong Kong openness versus mainland Chinese censorship, and last but not least, Hong Kong victimhood versus mainland Chinese oppression. In other words, for the anti-locust localists of Hong Kong, it was exactly because mainland China's capitalistic achievements are *conditioned* by these sociopolitical factors that they should still be regarded as inferior or even "primitive" compared to those of Hong Kong. As Mirana Szeto comments,

> Sinophobic/xenophobic invectives are directed not only against the government in Beijing, but against immigrants and even tourists from China. Like the Yellow Peril imaginary of the United States, this nativist, Cantonese-centric Hong Kong, of which the anti-Chinese anti-immigrant coalition called Hong Kong Native Power is a key example, assumes cosmopolitan, "advanced" capitalist superiority against the barbaric, ruthless, "primitive" capitalism of China and therefore characterizes people from China as "locusts" and products from China as toxic "weapons of mass deception." Its similarity to the imperial imaginary of racial superiority is too obvious to miss.[47]

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[45] Alvin K. Wong, "Including China? Postcolonial Hong Kong, Sinophone Studies, and the Gendered Geopolitics of China-Centrism," *Interventions* 20, no. 8 (2018): 1105.

[46] Iam-chong Ip, *Hong Kong's New Identity Politics: Longing for the Local in the Shadow of China* (London: Routledge, 2020), 88.

[47] Mirana Szeto, "Sinophone LIbidinal Economy in the Age of Neoliberalization and Mainlandization: Masculinities in Hong Kong SAR New Wave Cinema," in *Sinophone Cinemas*, eds. Audrey Yue and Olivia Khoo (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2014), 140.

Apart from the threat of invasion embodied by the locust, this shift of economic prowess from Hong Kong to mainland China has given rise to another popular slur against the latter—"the powerful country (*qiangguo*/*keunggwok*/強國)", which is used by Hong Kong netizens in a sarcastic way to mock the oppressiveness and pomposity of the mainland Chinese government and people. The term was proposed by the Chinese Communist Party in the 1990s to promote nationalist pride in the Chinese population through online propaganda platforms such as the "Strengthening Nation Forum (強國論壇)" and, more recently, interactive smartphone applications like "Study Powerful Nation (學習強國)". As averse as they are to any official Chinese nationalist propaganda, the Hong Kong localists picked it up in the 2010s as "an umbrella word for all kinds of mainland Chinese to be hated".[48] By satirizing mainland China's "power", these localists share with authors like Wang Lixiong a strong mission of antiauthoritarianism. However, despite such manifested resemblances at the level of rhetoric, the localist branch of Yellow Perilism in Hong Kong differs from the self-critique by mainland-based intellectuals like Wang and seeks to dissociate from China and Chineseness, often via an assertion of political, social, and cultural superiority. More importantly, mainland China's "power" is such a nuisance for these Hong Kong localists exactly because they also realize how much the Hong Kong economy has come to rely on the capitalistic power of these "mainland locusts", who they perceive as "flawed consumers" not because "they could not afford goods and services" but because "their consumption craze is deemed to be out of control".[49] Put simply, mainland money is wanted but the people spending that money are detested. Therefore, it must be pointed out that localist discourses such as "the mainland locusts" and "the powerful country" are essentially strategies of Othering packaged with an anti-authoritarian, but not anti-capitalistic, language.

More importantly, these strategies of anti-authoritarian Othering have lent a certain level of discursive legitimacy to the Hong Kong localists, not only because they have assigned Hong Kong to

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[48] Ip, *Hong Kong's New Identity Politics*, 87.
[49] Ibid., 63.

a sympathy-inducing victim position vis-à-vis a growing superpower, but also because they prove to

be consistent with the broader neo-Orientalist framework through which the liberal democracies of the

West view China. This is why the populist and xenophobic views of the Hong Kong localists are

sometimes echoed by left-leaning China Studies scholars in the West, such as Arif Dirlik, who explains

"the racialization of relations between Hong Kongers and Mainlanders" as the logical consequence of

"the greedy and crass behavior of many Mainland tourists with their arrogant, proprietary attitude

toward Hong Kong…putting pressure on public resources…and every[day] commodities". [50]

Explaining what he calls "Sinological Orientalism now", Daniel Vukovich points out that after the

defeat of Maoism and the left in China, Western discourses on China have shifted from a "Cold War

colonial discourse" of difference to a "capital-logic of the PRC becoming-the-same".[51] However, he

stresses that this logic of becoming-the-same is not without conditions and limits, the most salient of

which is the fall of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), namely the end of authoritarianism in China:

> The logic of China becoming normal like "us"—a step away, if the C.C.P. will fall—came to seem like common sense. This sameness has its limits, and again I wish to emphasize the *becoming* logic as opposed to the belief that China has fully arrived where we are. One can still detect signs of an older, more openly racist logic of essential difference at times. Totalitarianism-as-oriental-despotism, with all that says about native passivity or flat-out stupidity, certainly veers towards the latter. In any case, the standard of measure and positional superiority remain the same.[52] (original emphasis)

Therefore, in an ironic yet effective move, the strategies of anti-authoritarian Othering employed by

Hong Kong localists further strengthen Hong Kong's alliance with the West via a strong self-

identification with Shu-mei Shih's "Sinophone as value", namely the victimized position of being

"margins of China and Chineseness".[53] In other words, Hong Kong's localist antiauthoritarianism taps

into established tropes and views of Chinese politics in the West and thus finds in this position of

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[50] Arif Dirlik, "The Mouse that Roared: The Democratic Movement in Hong Kong," *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations* 2, no. 2 (2016): 676.
[51] Daniel Vukovich, *China and Orientalism: Western Knowledge Production and the P.R.C.* (London: Routledge, 2012), 23.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Shu-mei Shih,"Against Diaspora: the Sinophone as Places of Cultural Production," in *Sinophone Studies: A Critical Reader*, eds. Shu-mei Shih, Chien-hsin Tsai and Brian Bernards (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 25.

marginality and victimhood the continued possibility to assert a geopoliticized form of postcolonial superiority over China. As Sautman and Yan say, Hong Kong identity is "more than just…regional or local…" but is "a hybridity in which an association with the West endows it with a distinction and superiority vis-à-vis other local identities, as well as a power to represent and Orientalize the 'uncivilized' natives".[54]

In hindsight, the discursive legitimacy derived from this association had definitely played a role in the overwhelming attention Hong Kong and Western media put upon the yellowness of the Umbrella Movement in 2014 (and to a lesser degree, the Anti-Extradition Movement in 2019), while its Yellow Perilist undercurrents, in the form of continued anti-locust discourses, had been "massively underplayed by…major media outlets as well as by Hong Kong-based intellectuals".[55]

Perilous Undercurrents in Yellow Hong Kong

The Umbrella Movement (雨傘運動), also known as Occupy Central (佔領中環), is one of the most prominent public protests in Hong Kong history. It took place in September 2014 and lasted for more than two months, with tens of thousands of people occupying the main financial districts on Hong Kong island such as Central and Admiralty and asking for universal suffrage for the election of Hong Kong's chief executive. The movement was sparked by the decision of the PRC's Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC) of 31 August, 2014, which prescribed a selective pre-screening of candidates for the 2017 election in Hong Kong and was thus viewed by the protestors as an act of mainland China blocking the development of democracy in Hong Kong. Most of these protests were peaceful and the movement was reported positively with the label "pro-democracy" in Western media, but much less favorably in mainland Chinese media. Local opinions about the

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[54] Sautman and Yan, *Localists and "Locusts"*, 23.
[55] Daniel Vukovich, "A City and a SAR on Fire: As if Everything and Nothing Changes," *Critical Asian Studies* 52, no. 1 (2020): 5.

movement remain divided, especially in relation to the 2019 Anti-Extradition Movement, which involved more violent conflicts among different groups.[56]

Notably, yellow was the color that the movement had selected as part of its thematic design, with items like yellow ribbons and yellow umbrellas quickly evolving into potent pro-democracy symbols (see Figure 6.7). This prominence of yellowness is not entirely a coincidence because the yellow ribbon as a political symbol for protest and democratic change is internationally recognized even though its specific meanings have differed significantly in different contexts. For example, the nonviolent resistance against the Ferdinand Marcos government in the Philippines in 1986 was also known as "the Yellow Revolution", and people deployed the color in a range of ornaments to show their support for the movement. In the US the yellow ribbon was already used by the suffragettes in the 19th century to advocate for women's rights but has also been widely used by the American armies to boost their morale in their wars in the Middle East. More recently, the yellow vests movement in France is another clear use of the color as a symbol for popular resistance.[57] As far as the particular context of Hong Kong is concerned, it must be noted that this yellowness as used throughout the protests was highly politicized but rarely explicitly racialized, and most scholars would agree with Sebastian Veg's argument that the Umbrella Movement should "be seen as the mobilization of Hong Kong defining itself as a civic community around the claim for universal suffrage".[58] What I mean by "the Yellow Perilist undercurrents" of the movement, however, is that despite the mainstream framing of it as a coherent whole characterized by rationality, civility, and dedication, there had always been certain

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[56] The scholarship on the movements is as divided as the media reports so it is difficult to cite any authoritative analysis without political biases. To categorize these complex movements one way or another is not my focus here, since I am only interested in the racialization of the color yellow in particular cultural events that took place during these movements. For more detailed discussions on the media reports and divided opinions about these movements, see Tai Wei Lim and Xiaojuan Ping, *Contextualizing Occupy Central in Contemporary Hong Kong* (London: Imperial College Press, 2015) and Pang Laikwan, *The Appearing Demos: Hong Kong During and After the Umbrella Movement* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2020).

[57] Richard Crook, "The History of the Yellow Ribbon," *BBC*, October 07, 2014, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-29521449 (accessed April 19, 2020).

[58] Sebastian Veg, "The Rise of 'Localism' and Civic Identity in Post-handover Hong Kong: Questioning the Chinese Nation-state." *The China Quarterly* 230 (2017): 341. A 2016 documentary on the movement by Chan Tze-woon (陳梓桓) is also entitled "Yellowing", but again the racial dynamics of the color is suppressed in its pro-democracy narrative.

conservative elements within Hong Kong society that appropriated the similarly localist concerns of the movement to push their own xenophobic rightist agendas.[59] On the one hand, there is the anti-mainland Yellow Perilism, in which the peril is assumed to always come from the mainland. On the other hand, there is an unacknowledged re-purposing of the power of yellowness and swarming in the Umbrella movement's own image and practices. These racialist elements in the movement are not only perilous for the attacked mainlanders but also detrimental to the core demands of the peaceful camps involved in the protests. Moreover, it is exactly because the positive response to the Umbrella Movement in Western media and academia had been overwhelming, or even morally compelling, that little reflection seems to be have been made on these Yellow Perilist elements.

Figure 6.7 The Yellow Symbols of the Umbrella Movement[60]

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[59] The participation of these conservative elements has always been noticed by local critics in Hong Kong as well. See Keui Lung-yu 區龍宇, "Yusan yundong de zifaxing he zijuexing 雨傘運動的自發性和自覺性 [The Spontaneity and Self-reflexivity of the Umbrella Movement]" *Hong Kong In-Media* 香港獨立媒體, October 28, 2014, https://www.inmediahk.net/node/1027865 (accessed January 29, 2019) for example.

[60] This picture is from Nectar Gan and Stuart Lau, "Hong Kong's Occupy Protest 'was an Attempt at Color Revolution': PLA General," *South China Morning Post*, March 03, 2015, https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1728027/hong-kongs-occupy-protest-was-attempt-colour-revolution-pla-general. (accessed January 19, 2019).

Indeed, sinophobic sentiments become a lot harder to detect and condemn when wrapped in the language of pro-democratic/antiauthoritarian localism, and they require us to be more alert about the essentialist dangers of political binaries, especially when it involves something as taken-for-granted as democracy. For example, Figure 6.8 uses another well-known object of yellowness in contemporary Chinese culture, the *Yellow Rubber Duck* (大黃鴨), as political satire to criticize Chinese authoritarianism. Created by Dutch artist Florentijn Hofman, the 26-meter-high inflated sculpture has appeared in many big cities in the world since 2007. People in Hong Kong first saw it floating in Victoria Harbor in May 2013, weeks before the annual commemoration event for the Tiananmen Incident on June 4th. This annual gathering in Victoria Park is usually attended by tens of thousands of Hong Kong people not only as a gesture of resistance but also as a demonstration of their pride in Hong Kong autonomy, since information and discussion with regards to what happened on that day decades ago remain tightly restricted in mainland China. Figure 6.8 came about first and foremost as an artist's attempt to localize the antiauthoritarian sentiments displayed in such gatherings. Replacing the marching tanks with a line of cute rubber yellow ducks, its designer Michael Miller Yu (余奉祖) built on the iconicity of the famous Tank Man photo taken by the American journalist Jeff Widener in 1989 (Figure 6.9) and successfully revived its protest value across the Sinophone world. As Joyce Goggin et al comment, "this image strategically deployed the helplessness of cute objects…to highlight the absence of the threatening tanks that were present in the widely circulated original image in a way that simultaneously recalls the peaceful nature of the students' protest".[61]

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[61] Joyce Goggin et al, "The Aesthetics and Affects of Cuteness," in *The Aesthetics and Affects of Cuteness*, eds. Joyce Goggin et al (New York: Routledge, 2016), 24.

Figure 6.8 The marching yellow ducks designed by Michael Yu   Figure 6.9 The original Tank Man Photo
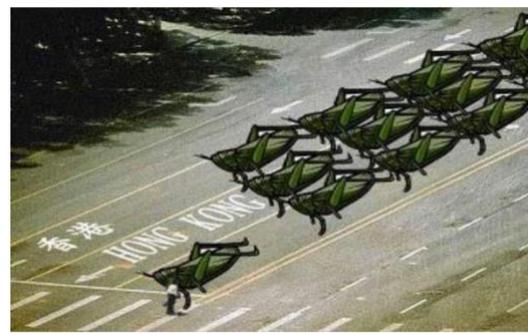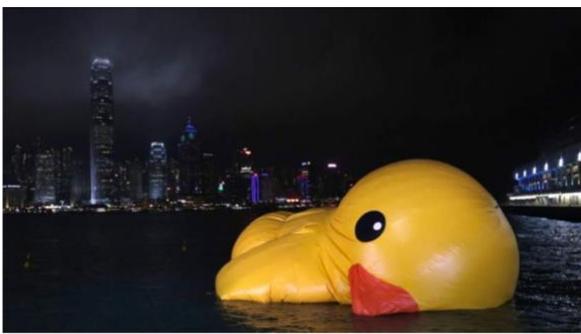
Figure 6.10 The deflated yellow duck in Victoria Harbor[62]   Figure 6.11 The marching locusts in Hong Kong

The image soon spread to the mainland Chinese social media platform *weibo* and had been seen and reposted by many users before it was taken down by the authorities. Taking this image as an example of how the June 4th has become a form of "public secrecy" in contemporary China, Margaret Hillenbrand argues that the remaking and circulation of political "photo-forms" like the Tank Man require us to revise the cliched narrative of "amnesia" plus censorship in explaining the ways in which traumatic political events in Chinese history are being remembered.[63] While I fully agree with her view that such narratives exaggerate the power of censorship, blame the people for their supposed forgetfulness and thus can be "reminiscent of Cold War paranoia about the Yellow Peril—mind control

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[62] This picture was taken by Tyrone Siu and cited in Joyce Lau, "The Art Hong Kong Really Loves: 'Rubber Duck'," *New York Times*, May 24, 2013, https://rendezvous.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/05/24/the-art-hong-kong-really-loves-rubber-duck/ (accessed January 19, 2020).

[63] Margaret Hillenbrand, *Negative Exposures: Knowing What Not to Know in Contemporary China* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020), 192.

and brainwashing of a passive populace", it must be pointed out that many of these reworked images did not originate within mainland China but rather appeared first in Sinophone cultural spheres such as Hong Kong, where political events deemed sensitive by the CCP can still be discussed as public topics with local relevance, not secrets.[64] The yellowness of the ducks in Yu's image was therefore the beginning of a process of chromatic symbolization for the rapidly developing localist protest spirits and in a way functioned as a precursor of that of the ribbons and umbrellas deployed in the 2014 Umbrella Movement.

With its Hong Kong origin in mind, we may link Miller Yu's mashed-up image to two different photo-forms that generated and channeled much anti-mainland Yellow Perilism for the more radical groups of localists around 2013 and 2014. The first one (Figure 6. 10) concerns the widely reported news in mid-May 2013 that the giant duck in Victoria Harbor was deflated due to unknown reasons. As the yellow duck was taken as a symbol of Hong Kong pride and resistance, rumors started to spread around social media in Hong Kong that it was vandalized by "uncivilized mainlanders" who threw unextinguished cigarette butts at it.[65] These rumors fed into existing localist antagonisms against mainland tourists and caused so much tension that the Chinese state broadcaster CCTV had to issue an online statement explaining that "the big yellow duck was not burned to death by Shenyang (a city in northeast China) tourists, and the exhibition organizers are just doing a routine examination of the artwork".[66] More or less a sociopolitical farce conjured up by anti-mainland groups online, this rumor had shown how easily mainlanders become scapegoats or targets of criticisms for any irregularities or aberrant happenings in Hong Kong society: as the Yellow Duck goes down, the Yellow Perilism goes up.

The second image (Figure 6.11), with no known designer, started circulating online during the

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[64] Ibid., 18.

[65] Reported in Lau, "The Art Hong Kong Really Loves".

[66] See Anon, "Dahuangya louqi bingfei bei 'tangsi' zhishi lixing tijian 大黃鴨漏氣並非被'燙死' 只是例行體檢 [The Giant Yellow Duck was not 'Burned to Death', just Routine Examination]" *Sina* 新浪娛樂, May 15, 2013, http://ent.sina.com.cn/s/m/w/2013-05-15/21093921478.shtml (accessed April 29, 2020) for a report about this incident and the CCTV statement.

Umbrella Movement and provides a perfect example of the kind of anti-locust localism that ties all the aforementioned uses of the Yellow Duck together, despite the disappearance of the duck in it. Contrary to the parodic deployment of the marching ducks in Figure 6. 8, this image allegorizes the mainland-Hong Kong conflict by replacing the tanks with invading locusts. It continues the trend of remaking Tank Man started by the marching duck image and takes the antiauthoritarian message of these existing photo-forms to a new level, namely racialized hatred against mainland China and its people. The connections among these three images constitute a "concentrated intertextuality", which reiterates Hillenbrand's point that "Repurposings of iconic images now relate as much to each other as they do to their original source."[67] Indeed, the tank man in this image is no longer the pan-Chinese symbol of democratic fighter but a localized figure representing the braveness of the civilized (hence humanized) Hong Kong people in the face of the invasion of barbarian (hence animalized/dehumanized) mainlanders. Similar to the wide-spread rumor about the duck's deflation, such images and the subsequent sociocultural discourses they stir up in Hong Kong society demonstrate how much of a ideological slippery slope it is when antiauthoritarianism gets mixed with radical localist ideologies that seek to humiliate and exclude.

Although the Umbrella Movement officially ended just before 2015 and failed to change NPCSC's decision to pre-screen candidates for the 2017 election of the Chief Executive, much of the pent-up dissatisfaction with and negative affect towards mainland China remained, and localist cultural production and political struggle did not stop simply because the protesters had to cease their occupation of the city's central districts. In mid-2015, a set of infographic pictures designed by the pro-independence art organization Local Studio HK (本土工作室) went viral on social media in Hong Kong and spread overseas as part of the localist campaign to promote what it says in the title—"Hong Kong is Not China".[68] Utilizing an explicitly binary structure, these pictures rehash many of the

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[67] Margaret Hillenbrand, "Remaking Tank Man, in China" *Journal of Visual Culture* 16, no.2 (2017): 133.
[68] Crystal Lau, "'Hong Kong is not China': Artist's Illustrations Go Viral," *Shanghaiist*, May 05, 2018, http://shanghaiist.com/2015/07/01/hong-kong-not-china-illustrations/ (accessed April 19, 2020). The pictures presented

ideological tactics employed in the original locust advertisement and its subsequent developments, mixing antiauthoritarian political criticisms with Otherizing prejudices against mainlanders. They effectively reify and sublimate localist sentiments into a separatist-qua-chauvinist worldview normalizing Hong Kong superiority. This worldview based on neat divisions may seem to have retreated from the conspicuous racialist discourse of the locust but in fact has only shrouded it in culturalist codes that may appear "progressive" according to the universalist standards of liberalism championed by Western democracies: the umbrella symbolizing Hong Kong "openness" versus the communist oppression represented by the hammer and sickle (Figure 6. 12), orderly and civilized Hong Kong citizens versus disruptive and dirty Chinese (Figures 6. 13 and 6.14), proud and resistant Hong Kong people versus brainwashed and submissive Chinese (Figures 6.15 and 6.16), and last but not least, authentic traditional Chinese culture preserved in Hong Kong versus inferior coldhearted mainland culture supposedly epitomized by the two different writing systems (Figure 6. 17).

here are also taken from this news piece.

Figure 6.12-6.17 Select pictures from "Hong Kong is not China" by Local Studio HK

Anti-China rhetoric and actions within the more strictly defined realm of official politics also became prominent in 2016 and reached another climax in the Anti-Extradition movement in 2019. Immediately after the end of the Umbrella Movement, a new localist political party called Youngspiration (青年新政) was founded and its leaders, Yau Wai-Ching (游蕙禎) and Baggio Leung (梁頌恆), won two seats in Hong Kong's Legislative Council in 2016. Controversy broke out after they wore flags printed with the slogan "Hong Kong is not China" and deliberately mispronounced "The People's Republic of China" as "people's re-fucking of Chee-na" during their oaths of office ceremony. They later tried to excuse these mistakes by saying that they merely had a strong local accent and were not aware that "Chee-na" was a derogatory term for China, which was hardly a sincere explanation considering how popularized the term was by music videos like "Locust World" and

"Disgusting Cina Style" among localist circles.[69] Because they did not complete this standard oath-taking procedure as required by Hong Kong government regulations, the NPCSC interpreted Article 104 of the Basic Law and disqualified them as elected legislators, but this decision was reported in Hong Kong and Taiwanese media as China oppressively "preventing them from taking office", again assigning these hate-mongering anti-China localists to the position of innocent victimhood.[70]

In 2019, massive protests in Hong Kong took place again after the Chief Executive Carrie Lam proposed an extradition bill that seeks to establish a mechanism for transfers of fugitives among Taiwan, Macau, Hong Kong, and mainland China. The movement against this bill is called *Fansongzhong* (反送中), which literally translates as "against sending to China", because the protestors believe that this bill would essentially allow Hong Kong legal independence to be eroded by the political considerations of the central Chinese government. While the major protests in the movement were peaceful and mild in their defensive demands, its spin-offs in some local districts had seen the waving of the British colonial flag and the burning of the Chinese flag, with which protestors sought to chase mainlanders out from public areas in their "revolutionary" attempts to "recover/liberate (*gwongfuk/gaungfu* 光復)" Hong Kong.[71] Moreover, yellowness continued to symbolize the resistant spirits of the localists as they promoted the idea of "Yellow Economic Circle (黃色經濟圈)", encouraging Hong Kong people to spend money only on goods and services provided by local suppliers and retailers who do not have mainland investment or views sympathetic to the SAR government or China. After COVID-19 broke out in early 2020, a number of such "yellow" shops made local headlines by declaring that they only welcome customers who can speak Cantonese or English as well as those from Taiwan (thus making

[69] Ip, *Hong Kong's New Identity Politics*, 69.

[70] Brian Hioe, "'Continued Controversy in Hong Kong over Oath Taking by Localists," *New Bloom*, October 20, 2016, https://newbloommag.net/2016/10/20/controversy-localist-oath-hk/ (accessed April 21, 2020).

[71] Anon, "Guangfu Tuenmengongyuan youxing shiweizhe chai wuxingqi shaohui 光復屯門公園遊行 示威者拆五星期燒毀 [Marching to Recover Tuen Mun Park, Protesters Took Down and Burned the Chinese Flag]" *E-united* 聯合日報, September 22, 2019, https://eunited.com.my/281935/ (accessed May 03, 2020)

their real intention to exclude the mainlanders rather explicit).[72] Like the rumors around the deflation of the yellow duck mentioned before, it seems that as the Yellow Economic Circle prospers, the Yellow Perilist undercurrents of the localist movements also become more manifest.

"Locust" as an anti-mainland racial slur has not disappeared from Hong Kong public culture either. After Beijing imposed the controversial National Security Law (國安法) in Hong Kong in July 2020 to formally control the dissident political forces in the city, it was mocked by anti-mainland localists as "Locust Security Law". This mockery became popular because it plays with the homophonic connection between the character for "nation (*guo*/*gwok* 國)" and another common character (apart from *huang*/*wong*) for "locust/grasshopper (*guo*/*gwok* 蟈)", and this locust "*guo*" is often deliberately written in its simplified form as "蝈" in order to emphasize its mainland Chinese origin (Figure 6.18).[73]

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[72] Tang Ching Kin 鄧正健, "Cong guangrongbingshi shijian kan 'xianggangren' gongtongti de xiangxiang 從光榮冰室事件看「香港人」共同體的想像 [Observing the Imagined Community of 'Hong Kong People' from the Glory Café Incident]" *The Initium* 端，March 01，2020，https://theinitium.com/article/20200301-opinion-hk-identity-community/ (accessed May 03, 2020).

[73] Anon, "Moguishan zaixian zhipan 'guoanfa cuihui xianggang' 魔鬼山再現直幡「蝈安法摧毀香港」 [Slogan 'Locust Security Law Destroys Hong Kong' Appears Again on Devil Mountain]" *Apple Daily*, May 29, 2020, https://hk.appledaily.com/breaking/20200529/SPWHSYST6ESJBESTUMMNL7ZBQQ/ (accessed November 03, 2020).

Figure 6.18 A giant banner mocking the "Locust Security Law"[74]

From 2012 to 2020, anti-Chinese localism in Hong Kong has had its fluctuations and intermittent eruptions. As the main targets of these protests gradually shifted from mainland tourists to specific policies with regards to Hong Kong's political and legal autonomy, the locust as a racialized symbol seems to have gradually disappeared in public spaces and discourses both online and offline. However, all of the examples presented in this Chapter have shown that the locust is merely one among many forms of reification via which the Yellow Perilist undercurrents in the localists' struggle against China and Chineseness assert their influence. These localists' assertions of victimhood and resistance were

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[74] The banner appeared immediately after the law was passed but was soon taken down after photos of it circulated widely online. This particular photo was taken by District Councilor Kenneth Cheung and reposted by Hong Kong Free Press on their Facebook page.

tainted by Yellow Perilist ideologies when they failed to distinguish the CCP, the Chinese government, SAR government policies, mainland Chinese culture, and mainland tourists and people in their generalized negative preconceptions and perceptions of Chineseness (how to make these distinctions and what additional problems they may induce is another debate, and so is the question of to what extent they view themselves as embodying another kind of Chineseness or not being Chinese at all). I must stress that it has never been my intention to dismiss all of these localist concerns and their efforts at negotiating for more autonomy and freedom in Hong Kong as entirely racist and condemnable, since such a totalizing position would inevitably bring us back to Carrico's unhelpful assertion with regards to the Hong Kong-PRC binary criticized at the beginning. However, I do see an urgent need to identify the racist/Othering aspects of the localist movements and address the detrimental effects specific cases of Yellow Perilism/anti-mainland racism can have not only on the Chinese people targeted but also on the short-term goals of these localist movements as well as the long-term relationship between Hong Kong and mainland China. This is also how Yellow Peril as a historically informed comparative method of cultural investigate demonstrates its contemporary relevance beyond minority politics in the West.

Coda: Yellow Locusts and the Sinophone/Sinophobe Divide

Just as Wang Lixiong could appropriate fin de siècle Western Yellow Perilism for his post-Mao critiques, the locust image as a specific manifestation of a new Yellow Perilism in the context of mainland-Hong Kong conflicts is fundamentally performative and does not possess any inherent meaning to be exclusively associated with anti-Chinese racism. In fact, the locust as an animal symbol has long been used by authors and artists in the wider Sinophone world to perform critiques of different kinds. For example, Mo Yan's novella *Red Locust* stands out as the only widely known modern Chinese literary work that features locusts prominently. As the quote at the beginning of this Chapter illustrates,

the novella links locusts to the rise of "cannibalism", a critical metaphor for greed and corruption in Chinese society first used by Lu Xun as China transitioned from the decayed Qing dynasty to a republic. Mo Yan uses detailed descriptions of locust plagues as part of his strategy of "grotesque realism" to criticize the negative effects of post-socialist urbanization on rural Chinese culture, foreshadowing the theme of "racial degeneration" found in his later works such as *Red Sorghum*.[75]

Another work of significance that employs the locust as a metaphor for racial critique is *Yellow Peril*, an installation artwork by Huang Yongping (黃永砯), who is the leading figure of Xiamen Dadaism, a well-known deconstructionist art movement in 1980s China. First exhibited at The Museum of Modern Art in Oxford in 1993, this installation generated much controversy as Huang put live insects—a thousand locusts and five scorpions—in a cage partially covered by a yellow silk canvas.[76] As he explains in the artist's statement accompanying this work, he was inspired by the fact that "yellow" and "locust" have the same pronunciation "*huang*" in Chinese and sought to address the escalating cultural confrontation "between civilization and imagination" in light of increasing Chinese immigration to the West after the Tiananmen Incident in 1989 (himself one of these immigrants after relocating to Paris that year), "like the one represented in the picture by Knackfuss" (the original lithograph discussed in Chapter 1).[77] The swarm of locusts in this work therefore gains a kind of diasporic and transnational significance, offering provocative views on the phenomena of transnational population dislocation and the survivalist racial logic of contemporary capitalism.

These works' racialist tones differ from those expressed in the anti-locust movement in Hong Kong because their critique, whether directed against Chinese society or contemporary East-West

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[75] Ling Tun Ngai, "Anal Anarchy: A Reading of Mo Yan's 'The Plagues of Red Locusts'," *Modern Chinese Literature* 10, no.1/2 (1998): 10 and 19.

[76] Huang is no stranger to controversy due to his proclivity to destruct the materials making up his art. Letting live animals fight with and eat one another is but one of such destructive impulses often found in his other works. In the same year 1993, a bigger installation featuring live reptiles and insects, "Theatre of the World", was displayed at the Guggenheim Museum in New York. When the museum organized a reappearance of this work in its 2017/2018 "Art and China after 1989" exhibition, it received heavy criticism from animal rights activists and media and in the end prohibited Huang from using live animals. See Sarah Cascone, "'The Guggenheim Pulls Controversial Animal Artworks from its China Show Over Threats of Violence," *Artnet News*, September 26, 2017, https://news.artnet.com/exhibitions/guggenheim-pulls-controversial-animal-artworks-threats-violence-1095467 (accessed April 21, 2020).

[77] Huang quoted in The Museum of Modern Art Oxford, *Silent Energy* (Oxford: The Holywell Press, 1993), 17.

relations, is based on a strong identification with the locust as the "yellow" Self.

Indeed, as an externalizing form of Yellow Perilism that seeks to exclude and humiliate the Chinese Other, the locust symbol as it appeared in post-handover Hong Kong begs fundamental reflections on the theoretical idea of the Sinophone and its generalist and reductionist tendencies. In her conflation of "Sinophone as history" and "Sinophone as value", Shu-mei Shih's formulation of the Sinophone as "margins of China and Chineseness" takes for granted the desirability of anti-diaspora localism without paying any contextual attention to how often localist identities and movements are built on excluding and denigrating the Other in a manner similar to her proposed idea of excluding China from the Sinophone.[78] If Chapter 5 has used the publishing and translation routes of Wang Lixiong's *Yellow Peril* as an example to point out the complex entanglements of cultural flows among different Sinophone regions that make Shih's agenda to exclude China rather unrealistic and counterproductive, the case study of the anti-locust discourse in post-handover Hong Kong questions the assumed benignity and *a priori* moral-political legitimacy of the so-called "Sinophone value". With the multifarious and complicated definitional debates around both categories in mind, we must ask: Can the "Sinophone" be racist toward the "Chinese"? And where is the line between Sinophone resistance and Sinophobia? The answer to the first question is definitely affirmative, as all the case studies presented so far have exposed the inadequacy of generalizing theoretical frameworks like the Sinophone and signaled a need to return our focus on texts and their specific contexts, hence my idea of "Sinophone troubles" that trouble not only hegemonic conceptualizations and promotions of Chineseness but also reductive and exclusive academic theories.

As for the second question, again case studies are important exactly because a clear line between Sinophone and Sinophobe is very difficult to draw solely on a theoretical level. The Yellow Peril as discursive formations of anti-Chinese sentiments appears trans-historically, transnationally, and is yet always situated within their specific performative agendas and demands, and so does the Sinophone,

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[78] Shih,"Against Diaspora", 25.

either as a mass noun denoting specific groups of people or as an adjective describing Sinitic-language cultural production in the broadest sense. However, even the idea of "Sinophone troubles" can be challenged by specific phenomena: what happens when popular culture practiced by Hong Kong and Taiwanese celebrities celebrates racialized ideas of yellowness and expresses explicit Chinese nationalism? As such popular culture products rely on these celebrities' non-mainland background for their marketability in mainland China and the wider Chinese-speaking world, they seem to belong to "Sinophone as history" but totally lack "Sinophone value" and thus further trouble Shih's neat division between a hegemonic China/Chineseness and the resistant Sinophone. In the next chapter, I end this Sinophone Section with a discussion of such "Sinophone troubles", which trouble Shih's paradigm by deliberately *not* troubling Chinese nationalism.

Chapter 7

Re-popularizing Yellowness:

More Sinophone Troubles in Contemporary C-pop

Sing! China (中國好聲音), a reality show based on singing competitions, is one of the most popular TV programs produced in China in recent years (2012- present), and millions of Chinese-speaking people have been watching it online around the world. One song has stood out as particularly popular in the show since it was performed in the grand finale episode of the 2018 season and again in that of the 2019 season. Titled "People of the Yellow Race (*Huangzhongren* 黃種人)", it is one of the most popular songs of Nicholas Tse (謝霆鋒), a Hong Kong-Canadian singer who served as one of the mentors on the show in 2018. Tse himself has performed the song in numerous concerts and TV programs since it was released in his 2005 album *Yellow* (*Huang* 黃). Sung in an upbeat melody accompanied by the sounds of many traditional Chinese music instruments, the lyrics of this particular hit easily make it the most explicit Chinese pop, or C-pop, song in embracing and championing a racialized idea of yellowness:[1]

來自翻過五千里的浪　還是待重建的城牆
所有歷史褪色後的黃　聚成夕陽染在我身上

來自流過五千歲的汗　還是傳說中的盛唐
所有淘在江湖裡的黃　只等我來給它名狀

＊黃種人　來到地上　挺起新的胸膛
　黃種人　走在路上　天下知我不一樣

＃越動盪　越勇敢　世界變更要讓我闖
　一身坦蕩蕩　到四方　五千年終於輪到我上場

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[1] The English translation quoted here is taken from Yiu Fai Chow who wrote the Mandarin lyrics, and for the parts (the segment marked with "△" as well as the final two lines) he has not translated, I use my own translation to make it complete. See Yiu Fai Chow and Jeroen de Kloet, *Sonic Multiplicities: Hong Kong Pop and the Global Circulation of Sound and Image* (Bristol: Intellect, 2013), 34-35. The other lyrics quoted in this chapter are my translation if not noted otherwise.

△從來沒有醫不好的傷　只有最古老的力量
　所有散在土地裡的黃　在種繁強非常東方

Repeat　＊,＃

RAP:
天下哪兒看不到黃色的臉　鮮紅色的血　流在十三億的人
你說這是我的憤怒　我說這是我的態度
奮不顧身勇往直前　只有我們中國人

Repeat △

越動盪　越勇敢　留下屬於我的黃
一身坦蕩蕩　黃天在上　看我如何做好漢

(Is it from the tidal waves that swept through 5000 miles
Or the wall that awaits reconstruction?
History fades into all the yellow
Condensing into the setting sun, on my back

Is it from the sweat that dripped through 5000 years
Or the legendary Tang Dynasty?
Jianghu stirs up all the yellow
Waiting for me to give it a name, and a shape

＊Yellow people, walk on earth
　Stick out a new chest
　Yellow people, walk on earth
　The world knows that I am not the same

＃More chaos, more courage
　The more the world changes, the more adventurous I become
　With nothing, I go everywhere
　After 5,000 years it's finally my turn to step onto the stage

△There have never been injuries that cannot be cured
　But only the most ancient power
　All the yellow scattered in the earth
　Is flourishing in this very Orient

Repeat　＊,＃

RAP:
Everywhere in the world you will see a yellow face
Red blood flows in 1.3 billion people
You say it's my fury
I say it's my attitude

Fearless, marching forward
Only us, the Chinese.

Repeat △

More chaos, more courage
The yellow that belongs to me remains
I am open and poised
The yellow sky above
Is watching how I become a true man!

As the title and lyrics make clear, the color yellow is mobilized in this song to promote a racialized image of a strong rising China. Strong sentiments of nationalist pride in China's long history and ancient culture culminate in the individualist statements in the repeated core stanzas, which are expanded and sublimated to a grand collectivist "us, the Chinese" in the rap section. The hypermasculine tone of the last line—"做好漢/become a true man"—is reinforced in the music video of the song, which shows Tse, dressed in traditional Chinese armor, erect a huge phallic monument and shoot fire arrows into its mouth with the terra cotta army he has awakened from the Gobi desert (Figure 7.1 and 7.2). When Tse performed this song with his best mentee in the finale episode of the show in 2018, many more musical and visual elements were added to boost its Chineseness even more on stage, including big Chinese drums with yellow dragon patterns, a duo of Beijing opera performers, and calligraphic writings of the lyrics in red ink projected onto giant screens.[2] Such unapologetic celebrations of racialized yellowness are almost self-Orientalizing and reminiscent of the equally nationalistic poetry written by intellectuals and officials like Liang Qichao and Zou Rong discussed in Chapter 1. However, the geopolitical background of this new yellow pride is completely different. Rather than anti-imperialist reactions against Western bullies and invasions and the very real threat of Western partition and colonization of a decayed Chinese empire, Tse's song bases its regional and global ambitions on the fact that China in the 21st century is a superpower on political and socioeconomic fronts, which has to be commended culturally as well.

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[2] The recording of this performance is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_FmkN_OFPw0> (accessed March 27, 2020).

Figure 7.1 and 7.2 Screenshots from the music video of *Huangzhongren*[3]

While the global ambitions of yellow pride in the song are made clear in the repetition of phrases concerning "on earth (地上)", "the world (世界)", "everywhere (四方)" and "all under heaven (天下)", its regional significance in the Sinophone world, including mainland China, has to be contextually examined in the trend of the so-called Hong Kong-Taiwan popular music, or *gangtai* pop (港台流行音樂), which started in the 1970s and had dominated the C-pop market until at least the early 2010s. This Chapter examines the decades-long phenomena of racializing yellowness in *gangtai* pop and extends the theoretical reflections of the previous chapters further by focusing on the dialectics of "Sinophone troubles" in the realm of commercial popular culture.

Gangtai Pop as Sinophone Troubles

The rise of *gangtai* pop can be categorized as a significant episode of Shu-mei Shih's "Sinophone as history". The development of consumer culture, of which the demand for popular music in Mandarin and Cantonese is a part, resulted from the political marginality of Hong Kong and Taiwan vis-à-vis the

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[3] The music video is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YSrHhsatCWo> (accessed March 27, 2020).

People's Republic of China (PRC). The economies of Hong Kong and Taiwan (officially called the Republic of China, ROC) developed most rapidly in the 1980s and 1990s after the PRC gained recognition as the only representative for China in the United Nations in 1971 and established official diplomatic ties with the US in 1979. This is not only because these regions could, or had to, focus on economic development as their power in international politics diminished but also because their geographical and cultural proximity to mainland China lent them great economic opportunities after the mainland implemented the Economic Reform and Opening policy in the late 1970s. Many *gangtai* companies moved their factories and production lines to the mainland to take advantage of the cheap labor cost there, and in the process the GDP per capita in the two regions soared and is still ahead of even the most developed cities in the mainland such as Shanghai and Beijing as of 2021/2022. According to the statistics from the National Bureau of Statistics of China and the International Monetary Fund, as of 2020-2021, the average GDP per capita of mainland China is around 12,000 USD, Shanghai 23,000 USD, Taiwan 32,000 USD, and Hong Kong 49,000 USD.[4] These figures are important in discussions about *gangtai*-mainland cultural interactions because by asserting an exclusive mode of "Sinophone" victimhood, scholars like Shu-mei Shih often neglect to mention the fact that these Sinophone societies are rich and developed regions that have actively participated in the economic exploitation of cheap mainland Chinese labor. Their cultural clout is backed by this very economic development. Rather than being oppressed by the big Chinese Other, *gangtai* scholars sometimes even describe phenomena of *gangtai* companies moving to the mainland as Hong Kong's "northbound colonialism" and Taiwan's "sub-imperial consciousness" vis-à-vis the mainland and other underdeveloped neighbors in Asia.[5]

In the 1970s, *gangtai* pop singers did not have to engage directly with mainland China as it was

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[4] The figures can be checked with IMF DataMapper at <https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/index.php> (accessed September 22, 2021).
[5] Wing-sang Law, "Northbound Colonialism: A Politics of Post-PC Hong Kong," *positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 8, no.1 (2000): 211 and Kuan-hsing Chen, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* (London: Duke University Press, 2010), 62.

still a poor socialist enemy-state in the Cold War. For example, the most celebrated Taiwanese singer of that generation, Teresa Teng (鄧麗君), famously kept her promise that she would never set foot on the mainland till the country "fulfills Sun Yat-sen's Three Principles of the People (nationalism, democracy, and the livelihood the people)".[6] But such "non-relation with China" soon became undesirable and increasingly hard to practice as the mainland reformed its economy and opened up its market.[7] A new generation of pop singers emerged in Hong Kong in the 1980s and 1990s. Represented by the "Four Heavenly Kings (四大天王)", they were immensely popular across Chinese-speaking communities in the world. After the Sino–British Joint Declaration was signed in 1984, it became common for them to produce and perform patriotic songs in both Cantonese and Mandarin in mainland China. For example, one of the kings, Andy Lau (劉德華), has many hit songs that celebrate Chinese nationalism via racialized language, or more specifically, via what Yinghong Cheng calls the formula of "two blacks and one yellow"—"black eyes, black hair, and yellow skin". These supposedly categorical racial features of the Chinese are thematized in his famous song "Chinese People (中國人)", which was released in 1997, just months before the official Hong Kong handover ceremony attended by British royalty and Chinese officials on the 30th of June/1st of July. Politically charged references to race such as "eternal yellow face (永遠不變黃色的臉)" also get repeated in an updated version of "The Oriental Pearl (東方之珠)" that he sung with mainland singer Na Ying (那英) in a gala celebrating the handover.[8] There are numerous other *gangtai* songs from this period that became widely known in mainland China, such as "Descendants of the Dragon (龍的傳人)", "The Brave Chinese (勇敢的中國人)", and "My Chinese Heart (我的中國心)".

In Taiwan, the democratization and de-sinicization process championed by the increasingly

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[6] Chen-ching Cheng, "The Eternal Sweetheart for the Nation: A Political Epitaph for Teresa Teng's Music Journey in Taiwan," in *Made in Taiwan: Studies in Popular Music*, eds. Eva Tsai et al (Oxford: Routledge, 2020), 204.

[7] Shu-mei Shih, *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations across the Pacific* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 30.

[8] Cheng Yinghong, *Discourses of Race and Rising China* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 27.

powerful DPP (Democratic Progressive Party) from the 1990s onwards has not mitigated Taiwanese music producers' attraction for the profitable mainland market, especially considering the fact that compared to Cantonese-speaking Hong Kong, songs sung in Mandarin, or Mando-pop, had much more common currency across the Taiwan Strait. A new music genre called "China-Wind (*zhongguofeng* 中國風)" emerged in Taiwan in the 2000s, which can actually be more literally translated as "Sinophone" as well but boasts a cultural politics completely opposite to Shu-mei Shih's localist paradigm discussed in Chapter 5 and 6. It has made singers like Wang Leehom (王力宏), Jay Chou (周杰倫), and S.H.E immensely popular in mainland China, as songs in this genre incorporate and highlight the sounds of an array of traditional Chinese instruments and foreground traditional Chinese cultural elements textually (lyrics) and visually (music videos). Common deployments include the *qipao* attire, traditional Chinese medicine, and Chinese idioms and sayings, to emphasize the common heritage of Chineseness across Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the mainland.[9]

The rise of *gangtai* pop as a Sinophone cultural force has had huge impacts on local and general constructions of Chineseness. It has served as a valuable source of cultural identifications for Chinese-speaking populations all over the world but is rarely discussed in Sinophone Studies. There are several reasons for this lack of discussion, or perhaps more accurately, this unwillingness to address the popular, and all of them illustrate how *gangtai* pop presents what I have been calling "Sinophone troubles" in this Section for the binary vision of Shih's theory.

First, as I have mentioned above, the rise of *gangtai* pop was indebted to the opening up of the mainland Chinese market and provides an example of the entangled cultural flows among different Sinophone regions, which is much more obvious and influential than the illicit circulation of literature

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[9] The most popular examples that deploy these elements include "East Wind Breaks (東風破, 2003)" and "Chinese Herbal Manual (本草綱目, 2006)" by Jay Chou, "By the Plum Tree (在梅邊, 2005)", "The Mightiest Hero (蓋世英雄, 2005)" and "Open Fire (火力全開, 2011)" by Leehom Wang, and "Everlasting Longing (長相思, 2003)" and "The Chinese Language (中國話, 2007)" by S.H.E, and yellow as a racialized color also appears in this genre, such as in the song "Yellow Skin (黃皮膚, 2007)" by Alan Ko (柯有倫). See Chow and de Kloet, *Sonic Multiplicities*, 59-80 for a detailed discussion on the China Wind genre and its implications for Sinophone politics.

like Wang Lixiong's *Yellow Peril*. According to Kevin Lathan, a series of structural social changes in post-Mao China created the ideal conditions for *gangtai* pop to become a pan-Chinese phenomenon, including "improved standards of living, the single-child policy…changing tastes associated with improved education…and the cultural vacuum created following the destruction of the Cultural Revolution".[10] These conditions and entanglements present troubles for Shih's conceptualization of a hegemonic Chinese center versus repressed Sinophone margins, because unlike embodiments of American cultural imperialism such as Hollywood films (which also have their commercial appeal), mainland China asserted its influence over *gangtai* pop not through direct cultural incursion and dominance but through newly established but rapidly increasing market attraction. In other words, the Sinophone margins as locations of cultural production in this capitalistic exchange have always been fully complicit in the construction of this center-periphery relation. More importantly, how far *gangtai* pop was a "peripheral" cultural force needs to be questioned as these celebrities have massive followings and huge influence in mainland China and are commonly seen as embodiments of wealth, style, and modernity by their Chinese fans.

Second, Sinophone complicity in the capitalistic exchange of *gangtai* pop necessarily demands the participating cultural practitioners to literally sing along the unchallengeable official lines of Chinese nationalism in the PRC. This complicity certainly does not sit well with Shih's promotion of "Sinophone value" that *a priori* positions places like Hong Kong and Taiwan as resistant victims offering "different local and trans-disciplinary criticism" (but this does not mean *gangtai* pop cannot plan their criticism in subtle ways such as parody, see the discussion below).[11] Shih's quasi-postcolonial paradigm of hegemonic China versus resistant Sinophone reveals its nature as an idealistic theoretical assertion when it comes to the prevalent phenomenon of trans-regional *gangtai* pop packed

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[10] Kevin Latham, *Pop Culture China! Media, Arts and Lifestyle* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio, 2007), 344.

[11] Shu-mei Shih 史書美, "Huayuyuxi yanjiu dui taiwanwenxue de kenengyiyi: wei 'zhongwaiweixue' huayu yu hanwen zhuanji suoxie 華語語系研究對台灣文學的可 能意義:為《中外文學》「華語與漢文專輯」所寫 (Implications of Sinophone Studies for Taiwan Literature: A Response Essay)." *Chung Wai Literary Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (2015): 142.

with racial nationalism. Yinghong Cheng points out that rather than the Chinese center directly claiming superiority over the Sinophone margins, racial nationalism became an integral part of *gangtai* pop owning to the "socioeconomic inferiority complex" of the mainlanders:

> …racial sameness reduced social differences between the pop stars and their audience by satisfying the latter's self-esteem. The mainlanders' socioeconomic inferiority complex before *Gangtai* and overseas Chinese was now mitigated: much richer and living a free life, the *Gangtai* and overseas fellow Chinese nonetheless had to come to "us" to find their sense of belonging, which had been either lost or suppressed by the societies they had resided in and was now so longed for in their music.[12]

The lack of research or even mention of the pan-Chinese influence of *gangtai* pop in Sinophone Studies contrasts with its predominant focus on highly specific local literary movements such as Chinese Malaysian literature in Taiwan (在台馬華文學), and in this process Shih's Sinophone theory reinforces its own conflation of "Sinophone as history" and "Sinophone as value" by selecting texts that most readily fit her vision of the resistant localist Sinophone.[13] Needless to say, such self-fulfilling sifting of research materials is more than problematic as a theoretical move and makes Sinophone Studies prone to Sinophobic biases affected by Shih's own anti-PRC political views.

Last but not least, as with the dominant focus on official politics in "Yellow Peril" studies (addressed at the beginning of Chapter 5), there is also an obvious division between the high culture realm of serious literature and film and the low culture realm of popular music and cyberspace communication maintained by current developments of Sinophone Studies. Drawing on postcolonial theories developed in disciplines like English, Modern Languages, and Comparative Literature, the idea of the Sinophone as developed by American scholars like Shu-mei Shih and David Der-wei Wang

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[12] Cheng, *Discourses of Race and Rising China*, 32.

[13] See Min-xu Zhan 詹閔旭, "Duodigonggou de huayuyuxi wenxue: yi mahuawenxue de taiwan jingyu weili 多地共構的華語語系文學：以馬華文學的台灣境遇為例 (Sinophone Literature as Places-Based Production: On the Predicament of Sinophone Malaysian Literature in Taiwan)." *Bulletin of Taiwanese Literature* (台灣文學學報), no. 30: 81-110 for a detailed discussion on how Taiwan became a recognition center for Chinese Malaysian literature in the first place and how such phenomena indicate a certain level of Taiwan-centrism in Sinophone Studies. There have been some recent efforts by a younger generation of scholars to bring the discussion on music to Sinophone Studies but they again tend to focus on local genres and dialects rather than the popular and the trans-regional. See Nathan Amar, "Including Music in the Sinophone, Provincializing Chinese Music," *China Perspectives*, no. 3 (2019): 3-6 for example.

tends to address grand political debates such as Sinocentrism and hegemonic Chinese culture without widening their taken-for-granted elitist horizons confined to the high culture realm. This is particularly counterproductive not only because the line dividing the two realms is becoming increasingly blurry and permeable in the era of global capitalism but also because popular culture in its aural and visual formats now asserts much more influence on national and racial identity construction than literary classics. Therefore, for Sinophone Studies to maintain its relevance as an academic discipline or a school of thought, Chinese-language popular culture has to be taken seriously as research objects, and as "Sinophone troubles". They are also opportunities for reflecting on the problematic political assumptions embedded in the theoretical formulation of the Sinophone. To put these reflections into practice, the following segments of this Chapter return to Nicholas Tse's song and present, as a case for comparison, the construction of yellowness in the works of another C-pop star Jeremy Chang.

The Troubled Making of "People of the Yellow Race"

The story behind the production of Tse's "People of the Yellow Race" offers a fitting illustration of the blurry line dividing academic idealism and pragmatic market concerns, and more importantly, of how the latter subsumes and co-opts the sometimes-hypocritical statements of the former. The lyricist of the song, Yiu Fai Chow (周耀輝), is a well-known figure in the *gangtai* music industry and has written numerous pieces for a wide range of pop singers, including the Four Heavenly Kings. He already completed a Bachelor's Degree in Comparative Literature at Hong Kong University and a Master's Degree in Communication Studies at the University of Amsterdam and was due to start his doctoral project on Chinese-Dutch popular culture at the latter when he was commissioned by Tse's producer to write "People of the Yellow Race" in 2004. I mention these details about Chow's academic background here because as a trained scholar in cultural studies, one would expect him to possess a reasonable level of sensitivity towards the kind of racial nationalism displayed in the lyrics of the song,

and yet his own account of how he came up with the idea of yellowness as a strategy of "claiming Chineseness in order to disclaim" is full of self-contradictions.[14]

As Chow recounts in a semi-academic semi-autobiographical essay, Tse was becoming more and more popular in mainland China in the early 2000s, and the audience got very excited whenever he sang Andy Lau's "The Chinese People" in his concerts there. To further capitalize on his popular image as a stylistic but patriotic Hong Kong star, Tse's team wanted to produce an original song "about being Chinese" for him and contacted Chow for the task.[15] Up to that point, Chow's lyric output in both Mandarin and Cantonese was predominantly about love and romance, and as he admits, "I (he) think(s) my (his) job is to deliver some potential 'counter-narratives' from Hong Kong (on the margins of Cultural China) popular culture (on the margins of Chinese Culture)".[16] In other words, the task given by Tse's team put Chow in a difficult position and he had to strike a balance between the commercial demand for Chinese nationalism and his own "Sinophone value" of resisting such nationalism. Chow explains that the idea of racialized yellowness came to him as he wrote the first draft, in which he employed three different strategies to subtly subvert Chinese nationalism. They are worth quoting in some length in order to examine why the end product turned out to be completely opposite to what Chow says he intended:

> First, I decided to problematize the category of 'Chinese', constructed and guarded fiercely with hegemonic discourses, with the category of 'yellow', which, for all its mythical and therefore more fluid qualities, should be more open to interpretations and contestations. What is yellow? … Risking grand narratives of Chineseness presumably inherited by the Chinese, I tried to put the historical burden back to the individuals of today, to give the 'yellowness' your own name, your own shape. Second…I tried to trouble the narrative (of Chinese nationalism) with indirect references to past tyrants in Chinese history. For instance, one of the original chorus lines read: 'Yellow people, who buried you with the dead?' It was an allusion to the imperial practice of burying people alive to keep a deceased emperor company during his final journey to the underworld. Another chorus line read: 'Yellow people, who caused you harm?', which was my reference to the 1989 crackdown. If Chinese people suffered, I was trying to suggest, the suffering was inflicted not only by foreign enemies, but also by the fellow Chinese. Finally, fearing this song would be an instrument for a collective performance of Chineseness … I tried to inject more histories, more possibilities and, ultimately, more me, instead of us. I tried to twist a narrative of

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[14] Chow and de Kloet, *Sonic Multiplicities*, 30.
[15] Ibid., 33.
[16] Ibid., 25.

cultural, national unity to individual plurality.[17]

In the paragraphs following these statements, Chow tells us that these strategies were subsequently undermined by mainland censorship, which had his "references to past tyrants" deleted, and a new rap section was written and added by Nicholas Tse himself to make explicit references to "us Chinese".

However, notwithstanding these later developments, Chow's idea of "problematizing" Chineseness via "yellow" was questionable from the start. Chow's frequent references to Chinese history ("5,000 years", "legendary Tang Dynasty") and concepts ("*Jianghu* 江湖", meaning rivers and lakes in reference to Chinese martial arts) have rigidified yellowness as a Chinese racial color, effectively positioning the Chinese as the representative and leader of "the yellow race". In other words, the "fluid qualities" of yellowness have not been explored via mentions of other "yellow nations" such as Japan or Korea, and the song repeated the welcoming and self-glorifying attitude that the Chinese had towards the concept of "the yellow race" when talks about the Yellow Peril in the West first spread to late Qing China, an attitude not really shared by other Asian nations (recall the discussions in Chapter 1). In the Cantonese version of the song, which is simply titled "Yellow (*Huang*/*Wong* 黃)", Chow connects "the yellow race" to numerous Chinese concepts concerning the color, such as "yellow earth (黃泥)", "yellow spring (黃泉)", "yellow skin (黃皮)", "yellow lotus (黃蓮)" and "yellow bronze (黃銅)", and thereby naturalizes a strong racialist conflation of Chineseness and yellowness. Therefore, Chow's idealistic claim about disrupting collective Chineseness via an individualist claim of yellowness was flawed even without the addition of Tse's rap section. Moreover, the censored lines that supposedly contain "references to past tyrants in Chinese history" are very general and ambiguous. Read together with the rest of the lyrics, they could be easily taken as celebrating yellow resistance against white imperialism, which is a key component of Chinese nationalism as it has been promoted by the Chinese government through emphases on China's "Century of National Humiliation" in

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[17] Ibid., 33.

textbooks and public discourses.[18] The effects of Chinese censorship on the draft are thus exaggerated in Chow's account, and the interpretive context of the performances underestimated.

Yinghong Cheng has also noticed the self-contradictions in Chow's cultural and academic practices but explains them in terms of "an insensitivity or even blindness to intra-Chinese racialism…common among Chinese intellectuals". [19] However, I would argue that rather than representing some kind of common Chinese intellectual blindness to race, Chow's account reveals a much more complex field of capitalistic complicity and discursive performativity, in which he participates with full awareness of the implications. On one hand, like Nicholas Tse and other *gangtai* pop stars, Chow was motivated to write a song like "The People of the Yellow Race" by the rapidly growing mainland Chinese market (he has continued to write such popular songs subsequent to receiving his PhD), and in order to get a share of that pie, political correctness in the form of Chinese nationalism had always been part of the deal. The song was not even that innovative in its use of racialized yellowness since the formula of "two blacks and one yellow" had long been established by earlier generations of *gangtai* singers like Andy Lau. On the other hand, publishing in English as a renowned professor in the humanities, Chow has to maintain his academic persona as a queer localist Sinophone critic and must adhere to the standard pluralist views against hypermasculine Chinese nationalism, almost as if conforming to another kind of political correctness.[20] That is why in his account above there is hardly any mention of lyrics-writing as a business activity, and in its stead one is given many culturalist explanations that construe his complicity in the capitalistic exploitation of Chinese nationalism as compromised but justified attempts of Sinophone resistance. A schizophrenic scheme of double performativity thus emerges as a pattern in Chow's multilingual discursive practices, and to put it rather directly or even cynically, it allows him to accumulate economic capital in the

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[18] William A. Callahan, *China, The Pessoptimist Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 45.
[19] Cheng, *Discourses of Race and Rising China*, 62.
[20] Chow is one of the very few openly gay cultural figures in Hong Kong and in recent years, he has been actively promoting LGBT rights as well as Hong Kong localist politics in media, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXmClJJz57s> (accessed March 27, 2020) for example.

Sinophone exploitation of the mainland market as well as academic capital in the Anglophone promotion of critical thinking: say and do one thing in Chinese, say and do another in English. Recalling the analyses put forward at the end of Chapter 5, is this not similar to how the book covers of the Sinophone and Anglophone editions of Wang Lixiong's *Yellow Peril* have differed?

Ultimately, the making of "People of the Yellow Race" is a story of Sinophone trouble that once again shows how difficult it is to position cultural practices in the Sinophone margins as completely separate from those in the so-called Chinese center, since this very binary falls apart when racialized tropes of yellowness sweep across borders for capitalistic gains.

Yellow Against White: Jeremy Chang's Chinese Nationalism

Another prominent example of *gangtai* pop's re-popularization of yellowness is the Taiwanese musician Jeremy Chang (Zhang Hongliang 張洪量). A dentist-turned-singer-turned-author, Chang is widely known across the Sinophone world for his love songs, such as "Do You Know I am Waiting? (你知道我在等你嗎？)" and "Hiroshima Mon Amour (廣島之戀)", and yet much less discussed is his systematic ideology about "the yellow race" promoted in both his music and his writing. Having established his name in Mandopop after a series of love song albums, in 1992 Chang released a new collection of songs with the pop music company Rock Records (滾石), all of which were written and produced by himself. Entitled "Guts of the Race (*youzhong* 有種)", this experimental album plays with the polysemy of the character "*zhong* (race/guts/category)" in Chinese and was made with explicitly racialist themes. As the introduction printed in the booklet accompanying the album explains, Chang had moments of "deep feeling" about "the origin of the human races" when he was studying in New York in 1991, and the new album presents his "in-depth observations and research" on "the origin

and evolution of the Chinese race" and "the past and future of the yellow race".[21] Similar to Nicholas Tse's "People of the Yellow Race", the introduction to Chang's album already reveals an unquestioned conflation between the Chinese and the yellow. However, Chang differs from Tse in terms of his active evocation of a larger category of yellowness that not only subsumes but also gets dominated by the Chinese. One of the songs, "We Are All the Same (我們都是一個樣兒)", epitomizes this evocation and situates Chang's racialist concerns in world politics of the 1990s and displays a majoritarian ideology of pan-Chinese bonding:

> …
> 黑色白或黃　我們還是祖先黃種人的老樣兒
>
> …
> 有時會想起中華民族的苦難
> 台灣的解嚴　香港的 97 年
> 華東水災流過我們同胞期盼的臉
> 統獨的問題　污染的環境
> 每件事都影響我們的心情
> 美國的衰退　蘇聯的解體
> 日本興起帶動了黃白異位的轉機
> 十幾億的中國人　黃種的大部分
> 在這時候又能扮演什麼關係
> 唷　我們的事情　不管大小事　事事都關心
>
> 喜怒哀樂早已經注定在我們身上
> 什麼血統就會孕育什麼情感
> 什麼感嘆　終究我們都是一個樣兒
> 我的家鄉在台北　我的家鄉在北京　我的家鄉在上海
> 我的家鄉在香港　我的家鄉在廣州　我的家鄉在拉薩
> 我的家鄉在青島　我的家鄉在長春　我的家鄉在重慶
> 我的家鄉在吉林　我的家鄉在高雄　我的家鄉在伊犁
> 我的家鄉在西安　我的家鄉在桂林　我們的家鄉在山頂洞
>
> (Black white or yellow, we are still the same as our ancestors of the yellow race
>
> …
> Thinking of the hardships endured by the Chinese race sometimes

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[21] My translation of "張洪量藉由音樂創作傳達了他對中國人種的起源、進化、種族的勇氣和黃種人的過去及未來的展望，所作的深刻觀察與探究". The introduction can be read at <https://music.douban.com/subject/1466034/> (accessed March 27, 2020).

The lifting of martial law in Taiwan, the year 1997 for Hong Kong
The Eastern China flood of 1991 flowed past the aspiring faces of our compatriots
The problem of unification versus independence, the polluted environment
All these events affect our moods
The decline of the US, the dissolution of the USSR
The rise of Japan has brought an opportunity for the yellow and the white to switch places
More than a billion Chinese, the majority of the yellow race
What role can we play at a time like this?
Yoh! Our issues, big or small, we have to care

We are destined to experience all kinds of emotions
Our emotions are conceived in our bloodlines
What an exclamation! We are still the same at the end
My home is Taipei, My home is Beijing, My home is Shanghai
My home is Hong Kong, My home is Guangzhou, My home is Lhasa
My home is Qingdao, My home is Changchun, My home is Chongqing
My home is Jilin, My home is Kaohsiung, My home is Yili
My home is Xi'an, My home is Guilin, Our home is Shandingdong)

In these unrepeated lines sung with a fast tempo, Chang expounds a worldview of yellow-white competition that harks back to what I have discussed in Chapter 1, namely all the alarmist discourses about a race war endorsed and promoted by cultural figures such as M. P. Shiel, Chen Tianhua and Zou Rong at the beginning of the 20th century. The economic rise of "yellow" Japan since the 1980s is seen as a "*zhuanji* (轉機)", a kind of "opportunity" or "turning point", for the Chinese, who possess quantitative advantage and are bound to play a significant role in leading the world after great white powers like the US and the USSR remove themselves from the center stage of world history. With the emphases on "ancestors (祖先)" and "bloodlines (血統)", the fast repetitive chants of the last section of "home" exclamations highlight a series of locations, which not only include Taipei (as the capital of the exiled regime of Republic of China), the British colony of Hong Kong (as this was before 1997), but also prominent cities in regions inhabited by ethnic minorities such as Tibet (Lhasa), Xinjiang (Yili), and Guangxi (Guilin). Chang's idea of Chineseness is therefore the complete opposite of Shu-mei Shih's vision of "Sinophone". As a Taiwanese singer, he mentions the lifting of the martial law in Taiwan not to promote any localist politics of democratization but to emphasize a shared sense of Chinese "hardships (苦難)", which shall be mobilized to contribute to the ascendance of the yellow in

the post-Cold War world order.

Moreover, the seemingly individualist thematization of the first-person singular possessive "my" in the last section of the lyrics is in effect an allegorical strategy to bring out the collective racial category of "our". This collectivism culminates in the mention of Shandingdong in Zhoukoudian, the site where the Peking Man was found. As Yinghong Cheng points out, since its discovery by archeologists in the 1920s, the Peking Man has been used by many Chinese scientists to support a theory of "homo sinensis", namely that a species of "primitive hominids" evolved independently in China.[22] While this theory is still being debated among the scientific communities, there has been a proliferation of both official and unofficial discourses since the 1980s that promote the idea of "homo sinensis" as the ultimate evidence of the uniqueness of the Chinese race, who must be regarded as the "precursor" of all "modern Mongoloids", including the Japanese, the Korean, the Mongolian etc (harking back to the physical anthropologists mentioned in Introduction). Barry Sautman has referred to this phenomenon as "paleoanthropological nationalism in China", and clearly Chang's song is an example of this racial nationalism.[23]

In the title song for this album, "This Race Has the Guts (這個種有種)", Chang pushes his espousal of racial nationalism to a new level as he mixes ancestor worship, references to Chinese history and cultural symbols, and biological and genetic terminologies to picture the rise of the revitalized Chinese race. Written in a series of rhyming five-character lines, Chang's lyrics for this song definitely mark a high point in *gangtai* pop's promotion of yellowness and Chinese racial nationalism, which makes Nicholas Tse's 2005 song seem rather mild in comparison:[24]

這個種有種　遺傳來的勇　追究根植處　黃土撒的種

[22] Cheng, *Discourses of Race and Rising China*, 144.
[23] Barry Sautman, "Peking Man and the Politics of Paleoanthropological Nationalism in China," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 60, no. 1 (2001): 95.
[24] To reproduce some of the rhyming effects of the original lyrics, I have translated some less racialized phrases rather freely. For example, "瞳孔放大浪" is rendered as "the pupils singing along" here but may be more faithfully translated as "the pupils are releasing big waves". The original phrasing does not contain any crucial racialist message and is arranged more for the purpose of rhyming with the previous ending lines, so it makes more sense to prioritize the rhyming than strict meaning transference.

紋身圖騰龍　野性烙骨中　黃河血脈流　蒙古樣面孔
造化基因裡　膚色染色體　細胞分裂後　繁殖在各地
只要一息尚存　靠著體內餘溫　原始的本性　隨時會覺醒
…　深處藏性格　祖先早賦予
…
怒髮的秘方　曾經幾度亡　鳳凰浴火生　春風吹又昌
…
沉寂太久後　靜脈強曲張　血球跳戰舞　瞳孔放大浪
釋放腎上皮質素　激流排出汗腺孔…
潛能載滿腔　臍帶再連上　灌溉新生命　族譜延綿長
喊聲震破喉嚨　從低處吼出高亢　造化本有種　重整這一黨

(This race has the guts, the bravery it inherits
Where are its roots? the seeds spread in the yellow earth
Tattooed with totems of dragon, a wildness branded in the bone
Bloodlines of the Yellow River flow, faces of the Mongol
Genes of destiny, chromosome, and the color of the skin
Cells dividing, everywhere reproducing
Even with just one breath, with the body's warmth,
The original true nature, any second awakens
… Deeply hidden is the personality, long endowed by the ancestors
…
Anger the secret recipe, almost went extinct
The phoenix rises from fire, as the spring winds resurrect
…
Silent and still for too long, the veins are getting too strong
Blood cells are dancing for war, and the pupils singing along
Releasing adrenalin, sweat rushing from every pore…
Filled with potential, the umbilical cord has been reconnected
Instilled with new life, our pedigree is extended
Shouting till the voice breaks, high spirits roaring from the low rung
Destiny possesses the guts, to reorganize this gang)

Unlike Nicholas Tse and his team, who only wanted to have an original nationalist song to perform for his mainland Chinese audiences, Jeremy Chang has taken his racialist ideologies much further by proactively bridging the divide between the low culture realm of popular music and the high culture realm of serious public discourse. More specifically, he achieves this by writing books and giving public talks. In 2013, he published a nonfiction book entitled *Yellow Book* (*Huang Shu* 黃書) in Taiwan, which was quickly picked up by Huazhong University of Science and Technology Press for a mainland Chinese edition released in 2014. A mixture of popular history, layman narration of debatable science, political treatise and personal opinions, Chang's book does not follow any strict citational

rules but is nevertheless labelled on the back cover as a "bestseller (暢銷)" in "social science (社科)" by the university press. Its semi-academic status is further boosted by an endorsing preface by Chang's brother Chang Shang-kuan (張上冠), a professor of comparative literature and cross-cultural studies at Soochow University in Taiwan.

Every copy of *Yellow Book* comes with a CD of Chang's 1992 album, and as he recounts in the introductory foreword, he had been planning this book for more than 20 years since his days in New York.[25] The book cover design is the same for both the Taiwanese and the mainland Chinese editions, and it literally turns Chang into a man of deep yellowness via photoshop (Figure 7.3). Although Chang states in the beginning chapter that "yellow" as a racial color was a pseudoscientific notion propagated by Europeans since the 17th century, he does stand by the theory with regards to the existence of a racial category that bounds together "the descendants of the Peking Man, including Eskimos, Native Americans, Melanesian and Pacific Islanders, Chinese (meaning Han and all the minority ethnicities in China), Japanese, Koreans, Southeast Asians, Austronesians, Arctic and Siberian aboriginals".[26] He explains that for the lack of a better term, he has to use "yellow" to summarize the diverse historical experiences of this group and stimulate a sense of revival and pride against the dominant "white race".[27] While Chang does not specify any theoretical sources to justify such inclusive claims on what constitutes "the yellow race", the line about "faces of Mongol" in the lyrics of "This Race Has Guts" and his mention of the Arctic aboriginals and Native Americans hark back to the ideas of 19th century European anthropologists discussed in the Introduction. Moreover, for Chang, this inclusive categorization of "the yellow race" does not affect the central and leading position of the Han Chinese

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[25] Jeremy Chang 張洪量, *Huangshu: huangzhongren de guoqu yu weilai* 黃書：黃種人的過去與未來 [Yellow Book: Past and Future of the Yellow Race] (Wuhan, Hubei: Huazhong University of Science and Technology Press, 2014), 5.

[26] Ibid., 15 and 17. My paraphrased translation of "各地黃種人最有可能的共同祖先，是以山頂洞人為代表的族群(包括愛斯基摩人，美洲印第安人，環太平洋美拉尼西亞大洋洲人，都與中國漢族系出同源)" and "黃種人可廣義界定為，以原始黃種人為絕對多數主體的以下主要民族：中華民族(含漢，蒙古，藏等五十六個民族)，大和民族，朝鮮族，東南亞各族，南島語系族，北極地區黃種原住民，美洲原住民，以及西伯利亞原住民".

[27] Ibid., 12. My paraphrased translation of "事實上，稱作黃色完全沒有科學依據. 本書為了讀者方便，在新的科學命名法出來之前，暫時仍用黃種人這個名詞".

at all, even though he asserts more than once in the book that "the Han people now are the least pure stock among the yellow race" due to a long history of intermixing with "the Turks, the Jews, Northwestern Whites and other foreign races".[28] In the posters for Chang's book tours in China (Figure 7.4 and 7.5), nationalistic clichés like "the Chinese lion is awakening" are often used to emphasize how much of a leading role the Chinese must play in the survival and great revival of "the entire yellow race".
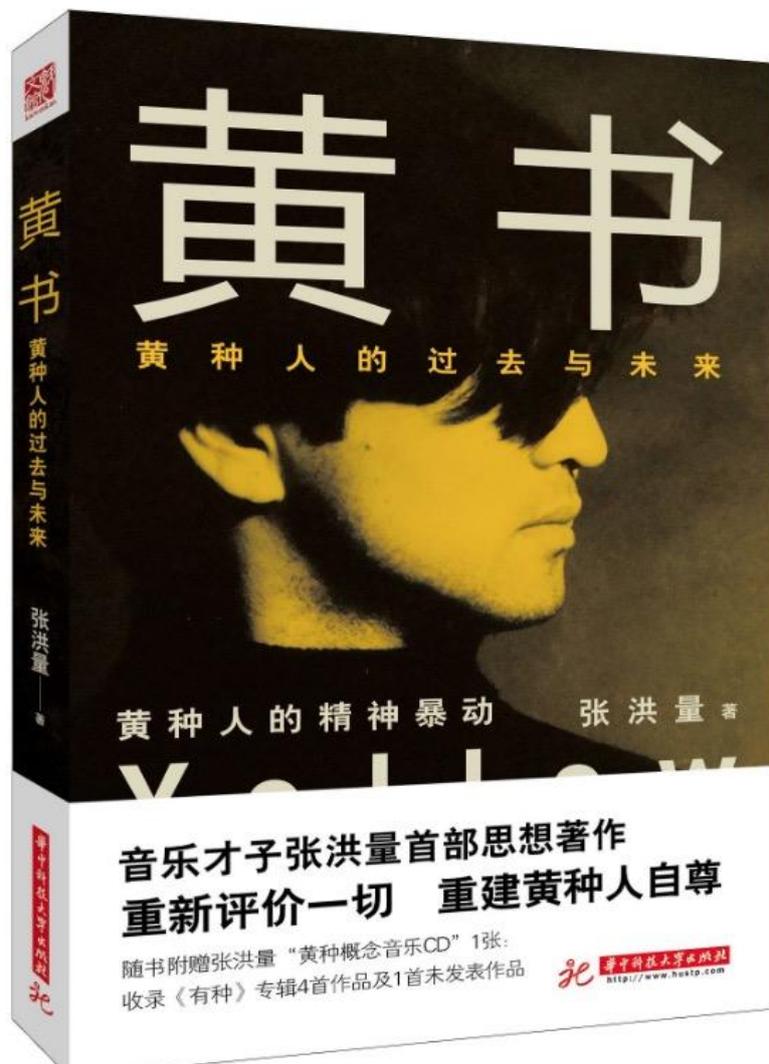
Figure 7.3 Jeremy Chang's *Yellow Book*

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[28] Ibid., 19. My translation of "北方的漢族有很多不同種族的基因滲入，如與突厥人，猶太人，西北亞白人等異種混血，足見現在的漢族是最不純種的黃種人".
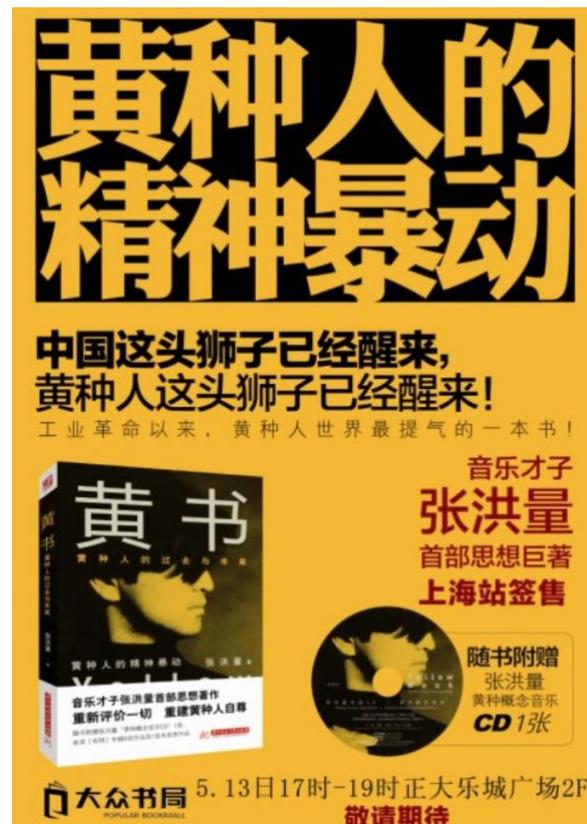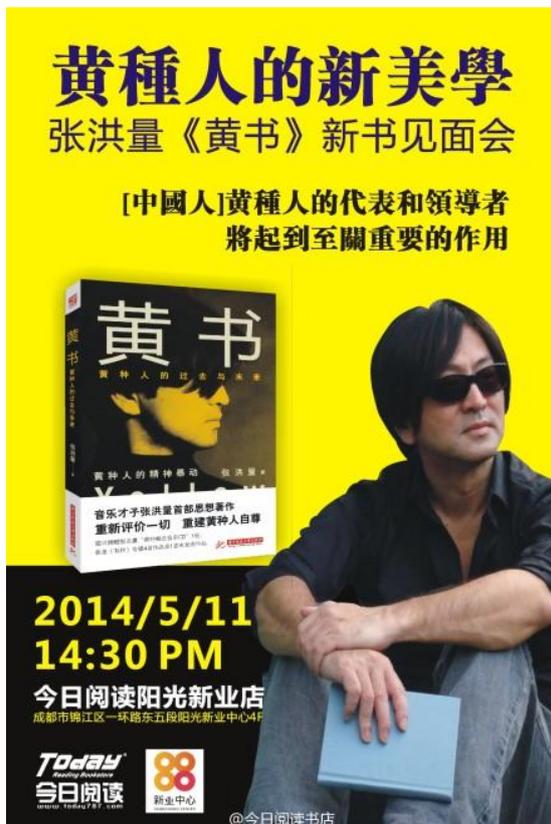
Figures 7.4 and 7.5 Posters for Jeremy Chang's book tours in China[29]

Chang regards *Yellow Book* as a systemic exposition of the ideological force behind his 1992 album, and in many ways, it is like an expanded 21st century version of the race chapter in Kang Youwei's *The Great Commonwealth* (1901) (discussed briefly in Chapter 1), only with more self-contradictions. It is therefore another counterexample against Urbansky's statement cited at the beginning of Chapter 5, namely that the Yellow Peril discourse in contemporary China have become "a motif completely gutted of its historical racial and moral context".[30] The book's self-contradictions arise as Chang struggles to balance his racial-nationalist urge with certain assumed universalist

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[29] These publicity materials are available online, see <https://www.douban.com/event/21508758/> (accessed May 03, 2020) and <http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_9f5d6f0d0101j783.html> (accessed May 07, 2020).

[30] Sören Urbansky, "Fears Abroad, Propaganda at Home: Reflections on the Yellow Peril Discourse in China," in *Yellow Perils: China Narratives in the Contemporary World*, eds. Franck Billé and Sören Urbansky (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2018), 263.

standards of humanitarian spirits, which he must declare as disclaimers against accusations of racism.

For example, on the one hand, he states in the foreword that the book is not "anti-Western, anti-white" but aims to "stop different races from discriminating against one another, prevent wars between nations and ethnic groups, and establish a multidimensional civilization based on humanity".[31] On the other hand, weaving a revivalist discourse for "the yellow race", Chang discusses European colonial histories with explicitly accusatory and essentialist language, arguing that these histories of colonial conquests and anti-yellow genocides are proof of "the evil nature at the core of Western culture (西方文化核心的劣根性)".[32]

Moreover, just like Kang Youwei, Chang advocates "interracial marriage in massive numbers (大量異種族通婚)" and states that mixed-race people are "angels for human peace in the future (未來人類和平的天使)" because they are a mirror with which both the white and the yellow can see through the evils embedded in their own cultures.[33] Replacing the Western calendar with the Yellow Emperor Calendar (黃帝紀元), Chang lists a chronology of "the yellow race" on the back cover of the book and the last item "Yellow Year XXXX" marks the era in which the yellow and the white will have established a new world civilization order—a grand future of "yellow-white balance (黃白平衡)".[34] However, not only does Chang neglect to mention any other racialized groups apart from white and yellow in his radical proposal for large-scale interracial marriage, but he is also obsessed with essentializing the different physical traits of these two competing groups in order to promote his views on world cultural development. For example, in later chapters on Western dominance in the field of

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[31] Chang, *Huangshu*, 7. My paraphrased translation of "如果只看《黃書》其中幾章或斷章取義，很容易以為《黃書》是反西方，反白人，反 G8 的書，但其實並非如此。我寫作《黃書》的目的，是真誠地希望人類不再相互迫害，各種族不再相互歧視，民族或國家之間不再有戰爭，世界能建立起以人性為本但又超越人性局限的多元文明".

[32] Ibid., 66.

[33] Ibid., 60 and 62.

[34] Ibid., 198. The idea of "Yellow Emperor Calendar" also harks back to the late Qing period and was first raised by Liu Shipei (劉師培) as a revolutionary thinking tool to get rid of both feudal and foreign calendar systems. See Alvin P. Cohen, "Brief Note: The Origin of the Yellow Emperor Era Chronology," *Asia Major* 25, no. 2 (2012): 1-13.

music and dance, Chang explains that this is because classic art forms have been designed for "the white vocal cord (白人聲帶)" and white "physical body structure (身體的天生結構)" and urges people of "the yellow race" to stop being "parasites" of the white race in the art world and design their own music and dance genres.[35] Ultimately, these self-contradictory aspects of *Yellow Book* are rooted in the essentialist and nationalist adoption of anti-colonial politics that goes back more than a hundred years in Chinese history. The academic endorsements for the book have not mitigated its sensationalist aspects, and the tenuous line between radical proposals of decolonization and conservative dogmas of racial essentialism is constantly crossed and blurred as Chang plunges through realms of the serious and the popular.

If Nicholas Tse troubles the localist paradigm of Sinophone *gangtai* culture by chanting "us Chinese" in the rap section, Jeremy Chang takes such Sinophone trouble further as he makes it explicit in *Yellow Book* that it is the PRC that will lead "the yellow race" towards the so-called "yellow-white balance". In Chang's paradigm, the political regime of the PRC dominates Chineseness, which in turn dominates the racial category of yellowness. While he admits that the long history of intermixing with other ethnic groups has made "Chinese people" hard to define, he nevertheless proposes using the Chinese language, or more accurately, "the writing and speech of the Han (*hanzihanyu* 漢字漢語)" as the common denominator to locate Chineseness; and the PRC, occupying the land in which *hanzihanyu* originated, has the largest number of native speakers and is thus the center of Chineseness by default.[36] Moreover, Chang describes the PRC as the first "yellow nation free from white Western influence (完全獨立自主於西方白人勢力之外的黃種人國家)", thereby insinuating that both China in the Republican period and contemporary Taiwan are subordinate to white dominance and unfit to lead the yellow.[37] From 1992 to 2014, the rise of the PRC as a powerful economic and political force

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[35] Chang, *Huangshu*, 231 and 237.
[36] Ibid., 38-39.
[37] Ibid., 99.

in the world has indeed made Chang's expressions of racial nationalism much more direct and straightforward.

Section Coda: Return of the Yellow "Locust"

Just like the intra-ethnic racist troubles it encounters in the context of the anti-locust discourse in post-handover Hong Kong (Chapter 6), a binary paradigm of hegemonic Chineseness versus resistant Sinophone falls short of critical power when addressing the racial nationalism in contemporary C-pop that spreads across and bounds together Hong Kong, Taiwan, mainland China as well as overseas Chinese communities. The key questions raised by the three chapters in this Section, namely "what if the Sinophone is racist?" and "what if the Sinophone is nationalist?", must be discussed thoroughly with detailed case studies if Sinophone scholars wish to tackle the issue of Chineseness beyond the confines of academic idealism reinforced by preselected literary classics. Just as the color yellow has been racialized as performative discourses of Orientalist and Occidentalist ideologies in different contexts, there is nothing inherently oppressive or resistant in abstract concepts like Chineseness or Sinophone. Whether racist or nationalist or both, the adoption and appropriation of particular racial signifiers are always already situated in specific sociopolitical struggles, which can easily shift as they themselves get appropriated and reappear in a related discursive environment operating with a different set of ideological agendas and mechanisms. Again, this is why the transnational and situated approach to the study of racialization is so important.

To illustrate this potentiality of shifting appropriations and the multiplicity of political and cultural ironies it can generate, I end Section III with a final example, one that re-localizes the nationalistic celebration of yellowness via the locust slur and thus connects the two racialist discourses. Compared to the popularity of "People of the Yellow Race" in mainland China, the Cantonese version of Nicholas Tse's song, "Yellow (*Huang*/*Wong* 黃)", is far less popular in Hong Kong as a result of all the localist

sentiments discussed in Chapter 6. In fact, Tse's career shift from Hong Kong to the mainland has long been a subject of mockery for the localist netizens active on anti-mainland websites like the Hong Kong Golden Forum (HKGF). In 2013, a satiric rewriting of "Yellow" began to circulate there, and Tse and Chow's repetitive mention of the color in the original lyrics has been replaced with that of its homophone "locust (*Huang*/*Wong* 蝗)":[38]

蝗蟲一身可憎的氣焰　自由大地任佢闖蕩
蝗蟲衍生幾千種惡習　聚成大禍在攻佔香江

蝗蟲湧港這一種惡像　煉成大事毒你心臟
蝗蟲長出叫囂的細路　未來現在讓你出汗

＊從毋忘　雙非的卵　老遠過黎亂撞
　　閻羅王　都不敢擋　這個世代太動蕩

＃單非蝗　雙非蝗　法國瑪麗佢夠膽闖
　　原來新生蝗　好倡狂　中央指令佢將香港染蝗

△蝗蟲衝關可悲的故事　讀成二字讓你失望
　　蝗蟲充斥已失的正義　未來現在讓你出汗

Repeat　＊,＃

RAP:
果十幾萬雙非　係咪想搵狗我笨
你黎搶學位　我問點解我要忍?
我既無奈我既憤怒
蝗蟲　繼續放任無度
打尖發癲　隨處大便
只因你地低幾等!

Repeat △

一身蝗　千種狂　你我也必須武裝
別讓黑心蝗　翻天覆浪　保家衛港　男兒漢

(Locusts full of despicable arrogances
Wander across the free lands
Locusts deriving thousands of bad habits

Gather a big peril to capture Hong Kong

The evil phenomenon of locusts swarming into Hong Kong
Make big news and poison your heart
Locusts breed clamorous kids
Now and future make you sweat all over

＊Never forget, the *seungfei* eggs
　　Crashing everywhere from afar
　　Even the king of hell dare not stand in their way
　　This world is too chaotic!

＃*daanfei* locusts, *seungfei* locusts[39]
　　They have the guts to overwhelm hospitals in Hong Kong
　　Turns out that newborn locusts, so savage
　　The central government orders them to take over Hong Kong

△The pathetic stories of locusts invading borders
　　So disappointing
　　The lost justice, teeming with locusts
　　So threatening

Repeat ＊, ＃

RAP:
Hundreds of thousands of *seungfei*
Do they think I am stupid?
You grab our university degrees
Why do I have to put up with it?
I am angry and helpless
Locusts, roam free, no rules, cut queues, go crazy, shit everywhere
Just because you are inferior!

Repeat △

Full of locusts, thousands of arrogances
You and I must weaponize
Don't let the black-hearted locusts block the sky and overturn the waves
Protect Hong Kong our home, like a true man!

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[39] As mentioned in Chapter 6, *seungfei* (雙非) refers to babies born in Hong Kong whose parents (usually from Mainland China) are not permanent residents of the city, and *daanfei* (單非) refers to those with only one parent from Hong Kong. Both are mocked here as descendants of uncivilized mainland "locusts". Such "pure-blood" localist logic is rather self-defeating and ironic considering the fact that almost all of the Han Chinese in Hong Kong are migrants or descendants of migrants from mainland China. The mentions of "France (法國)" and "Mary (瑪麗)" in the next line refer to the two famous hospitals in Hong Kong, St Teresa's Hospital and Queen Mary Hospital.

From *huang*/yellow to *huang*/locust, racial nationalism and anti-nationalist racism seem to have been trapped in an unending discursive tango in Sinophone Hong Kong. For as long as this chain of discursive appropriations grows, the Yellow Peril is likely to retain its relevance as a haunting presence in contemporary culture related to perceptions and contestations of Chineseness. Phenomena of Sinophone racism and nationalism serve as reminders of how inadequate and lop-sided it is to discuss the Yellow Peril only in terms of yellow-white, or East-West, interactions, and connections.

Conclusion: The Persistent Engagement with Yellow Perilism

The diversity of sociocultural contexts and the multitude of genres of primary materials covered in this thesis may yield the impression that the Yellow Peril discourse, or the racist ideological force of Yellow Perilism in general, is a set of transhistorical and universalist phenomena attached to the differentialist *modus oprandi* of modernity. Namely, since a unified and singular force of modernity necessarily differentiates Self from the Other in hierarchical and discriminatory ways, the "Yellow Peril" is but one specific manifestation of such cultural racism, or racism disguised as culture. However, it must be stressed again that such generalist understandings of Asian racialization are emphatically *not* what the case studies presented so far strive to achieve. Neither is it my aim to tease out the specific mechanisms of this modernity or prove whether such a singular modernity exists across different geo-cultural contexts. Instead, the transnational and situated approach that underpins all of the case studies in this thesis highlights the performative nature of Yellow Perilism, both in its reincarnations and reinventions and via its conspicuous absences and reversals in various cultural practices of (re-)appropriation and contextual reactions.

The conclusion of these studies may at first sight appear counterintuitive: there is nothing inherently anti-Asian about the Yellow Peril discourse, and there is nothing inherently anti-racist about its deliberate erasure either. As explained in the Introduction, definitions and analyses of anti-Asian racism and its associated racializing uses of the color yellow have long been confined to the Euro-American contexts and dominated by Eurocentric binarisms like East-West and Yellow-White. For this reason, the "Yellow Peril" has been so exclusively associated with a fixed imaginary of race and racism, namely the race relations of white majorities against Asian minorities. As a result, whenever the trope is evoked in the English language today, it tends to mark discursive entries into debates around identity politics situated in specific Western societies, perpetuating such constructed notions as "the West" or "Asian American". It is therefore often used to present a historical narrative of not just Asian

racialization, but of Asian minoritization vis-à-vis whiteness. It is against this foundational assumption of what I have called *discursive ossification* in the Introduction that the case studies in this thesis have been conducted. As I have laid out in each Section Coda, they are set up in interconnected ways to turn Yellow Perilism into a comparative method of close and contextual reading. As Chapter 1 and 5 show, the Yellow Peril discourse can be evoked for different purposes, and even when the purposive reappropriations of this discourse seem to fall on nationalist sentiments, these sentiments can be drastically different. The late-Qing intellectuals saw in fin de siècle Yellow Perilism the potential for China to dominate the world, whereas a post-Mao writer like Wang Lixiong transformed its racist caricatures into powerful self-critiques of Chineseness. The analyses offered in these chapters clearly demonstrate that Yellow Perilism is not merely a racially specific substrate of Orientalism but may operate in multiple directions and function as a methodological force travelling back and forth between Orientalism and Occidentalism, especially when the influence of literary markets and cultural institutions are also taken into consideration.

Moreover, Section III as a whole has made it clear that just like the mutative and appropriative reappearances of the Yellow Peril discourse across different contexts, the recurring praise for or criticisms against "China" and "Chineseness" from different ideological angles also expose the very constructed-ness of these concepts, both as geopolitical entities and as sociocultural formations. On the one hand, China is but one among many possible primary objects of reference for studies on the Yellow Peril discourse. On the other hand, like the "Yellow Peril", "China" carries no inherent meaning, and nor are the contents of "Chineseness" necessarily conditioned by antagonistic race relations and their cultural manifestations. In this regard, the Chinese South African life writings examined in Chapter 3 offer examples of active self-constructions of Chineseness in a non-Western context rife with institutional racism, while Chapter 2 and 4 may serve as cross-cultural references for each other in their shared focus on poetic constructions of Chineseness as positive Orientalism. Just as Yellow Perilism in its various reincarnations is not always about a "bad China" or the "bad Chinese", there is

nothing inherently good about the Chinese image promoted by these cases of positive Orientalism. Only through close reading of their discursive environments and relevant processes of translation can the entangled ideological factors and textual effects underpinning these poetic appropriations be uncovered and investigated in detail. The same caution against inherent meaning and ideological assignments can be applied to all the other contextual entities investigated in the case studies, such as "England", "South Africa", and "the Sinophone regions". Rather than attaching *a priori* value positions such as racism or anti-racism to these locations as isolated contexts, the *situated-ness* of the transnational and situated approach uncovers the cultural links between them and in this process disrupts the neat categories and rigid disciplinary divisions supported by conventions of periodization and area formation. The concept of "Sinophone troubles" raised in Section III is but one example of how shifting our critical attention from external qualifications of singular contexts to such inter-contextual links exposed through cultural narratives of Asian racialization can further complicate existing modes of reading and doing identity politics. It also constitutes another cautionary move to emphasize the importance of comparative close reading of the materials at hand.

If there is nothing inherently racist about Yellow Perilism, why has the Yellow Peril, either as a cultural trope or a sociopolitical referent, persisted? How does it retain its historical and discursive relevance despite the repeated declarations of the post-racial? As David Theo Goldberg poignantly points out, "The post-racial is not just the denial of lingering racial conditionality, it's discarding of the racial to the past."[1] The continued cultural manifestations of Yellow Perilism in a diverse range of contexts form productive transnational dialogues when examined together. However, this does not necessarily mean that there is a uniform "racial conditionality" of our post-racial present that produces them, even though this post-racial present, as Goldberg highlights, is no less charged with racist sentiments and institutional forces in its denial of racial and class inequality at both local and global levels.

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[1] David Theo Goldberg, *Are We All Post-Racial Yet?* (Cambridge: polity, 2015), 74.

Indeed, the "lingering racial conditionality" Goldberg mentions should not be taken as the residue of old forms of racism attached to biological and anthropological discourses. It is rather the context-specific evocations and mutations of racist discourses that nevertheless remain interconnected culturally. While it would be difficult to identify any direct links between the nationalist fervor of the late Qing intellectuals around the idea of the "Yellow Peril" and the celebrations of Sinocentric yellowness in contemporary *gangtai* songs (which is why these two chapters have not been put in the same Section under the organizational principle of this thesis), it would be equally difficult to deny the similarities of their modes of expression and main political and ideological messages. These similarities stem not from the same global racial structure of White versus Yellow that has simply persisted, but from the volatile trends of geopolitics involving China's changing positionality vis-à-vis the changing self-perceptions of different cultural groups located outside China, and sometimes of those inside China and the wider Sinophone world too. Similarly, while Pound's positive Orientalism may not have any direct influence on Brutus's conceptualization of "Oriental verse" and his own aesthetic ideologies, there are undeniable similarities in the cultural politics they insisted upon, not in terms of the established ideas of modernism or socialism but with regards to the pursuit of an alternative poetics to break free from the literary constraints of their specific environments, imposed by either cultural conventions or political regulations. In other words, "China" was useful to them not because it is a static geopolitical entity governed by the Other; on the contrary, "China" has kept its discursive relevance and persistence exactly because it is a malleable object of aesthetic and ideological value, which can be readily manipulated in both high-brow and low-brow cultural products to serve literary and sociopolitical purposes specific to the contexts at hand. What the transnational and situated approach to the study of Asian racialization does is lay out the very processes of cross-cultural constructions of race and bring them to bear on critical reflections on the interactive negotiations between past and present racisms or cultures of racism.

While it is certainly not unreasonable to assert that Yellow Perilism will keep being reinvented as

long as geopolitical tensions between China (or Japan, or East Asia) and the rest of the world exist and fluctuate, such positivistic readings of cultural texts prioritize the power of the contextual over the textual and thus are but one aspect of what this thesis has set out to achieve. The cultural practitioners examined in this thesis invested their creative energies in manipulating tropes associated with Yellow Perilism and images of China and Chineseness because they understood the power of culture. More specifically, they understood the power of cultural racism and anti-racist culture in shaping people's perceptions of themselves not as disparate individuals but as belonging to specific ethnic groups, nation states, or transnational communities. Like how "yellow" has been deemed politically incorrect and rendered obsolete as a term for racial designation in the English language, the transnational and situated diversity of the Yellow Peril discourse and the associated cultural tropes may one day fade away from public memories despite the efforts of studies such as this one to uncover the links embedded in their multifarious manifestations. However, as long as the urge to racialize continues to materialize in cultural forms, (under-)currents of Yellow Perilism will always be present and scholarly engagements with the complex cultural histories of Asian racialization will continue to have their value and significance.

Epilogue: COVID-19 Sinophobia and More

"China virus! Kung-flu! Chinks! Go back to China!"

"Yellow" people residing in the West have been encountering such verbal aggressions frequently since the COVID-19 pandemic started in early 2020. While "China virus" and "Kung-flu" have been popularized by former US President Donald Trump, the latter two phrases are nothing new for most people of East and Southeast Asian descent living in the West, as they are common xenophobic attacks they would occasionally get before the pandemic.[1] Since the first major outbreak of the virus took place in the Chinese city of Wuhan, the pandemic has caused a global resurgence of Sinophobic Yellow Perilism targeting everything "Chinese", including restaurants, people, and cultural habits. Outside East Asia, these anti-Chinese sentiments tend to target everything perceived as "yellow" as well. As part of the trope of "Yellow Peril", racist imaginations that associate Chinese culture with dangerous and contagious diseases have a long history in the West. During the SARS outbreak in 2003, Western media and public discourses already portrayed China as "the site of exotic and unhygienic culinary traditions as well as authoritarian secrecy, a lethal combination" threatening to break "the boundary between first-world health and third-world contagion".[2] The proliferation and prevalence of such discourses and related incidences of racial violence in the West during the current pandemic have once again pushed Asians to reflect on their racial positions in relation to the overarching white supremacist structures lurking behind the façades of Western liberal multiculturalism.

However, in the diasporic Asian communities, there is a lack of consensus over how to react to this latest wave of Sinophobic Yellow Perilism. For example, upon hearing the racist exclamations above, the first reaction of many Asian Americans is still to say "I am not from China. I was born here,

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[1] Maegan Vazquez and Besty Klein, "Trump Again Defends Use of the Term 'China Virus'," *CNN*, March 19, 2020, https://edition.cnn.com/2020/03/17/politics/trump-china-coronavirus/index.html (accessed June 16, 2021).
[2] Belinda Kong, "Pandemic as Method," *Prism: Theory and Modern Chinese Literature* 16, no. 2 (2019): 380.

and I am American." Similarly, soon after Trump popularized those new Yellow Perilist phrases, a variety of "I am not Chinese, I am xxx (Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese, Hong Kongese, American, etc.)" T-shirts started appearing in online stores, offering non-(mainland)Chinese "yellows" the most blatant declarations to distance themselves from China.[3] For those Asians who would buy and wear such T-shirts, their desire to disassociate with the foreign "yellow", particularly the Chinese foreigner from the mainland, must be very strong and urgent. Yet attempts at such disassociations are self-defeating in the face of the overwhelming xenophobia channeled through phenotypical racism, which disregards the nationality, place of birth, and length of stay of the targeted Asian person, who is simply perceived as "looking Chinese". What's worse, they exacerbate such xenophobia by implying that racial animosity might be okay if it is directed toward the "right" target, namely Chinese foreigners. Again, by emphasizing that they are not foreign or the "innocent" and harmless kind of foreign, certain sections of the diasporic Asian communities have ironically perpetuated the xenophobic logic of contemporary Yellow Perilism in the West.

The transnational and situated approach to the study of racialization I seek to promote with this thesis gains new relevance against the persistence of such dissociative reactions in the diasporic Asian communities. As all the case studies presented so far have demonstrated, the Yellow Peril discourse has always been transnational and performative in its various routes of development and mutation. It manifests as different social and cultural reifications of xenophobic sentiments as it travels from one specific context to another. In other words, its situatedness cannot be fully grasped without its transnationality, and vice versa. Therefore, simply disassociating oneself from the foreign is not an effective means to counter Sinophobic racism as the most prominent form of Yellow Perilism in our contemporary age, which does not distinguish the local and the foreign, or different kinds of foreignness, in its rigid imagination of yellowness.

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[3] Helen Mo, "'I'm not Chinese' T-shirts Fuel Racial Hatred'," *China Daily*, April 16, 2021, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202104/16/WS6078f270a31024ad0bab5fbc.html (accessed June 16, 2021).

As long as this Sinophobic Yellow Perilism remains transnational in effect, its studies and counter-discourses must also reach out to groups and contexts beyond national boundaries. Contrary to the self-minoritizing and China-distancing paradigms, I would suggest that the perpetual foreigner stereotype (discussed in the Introduction) is worthy of preserving, because there is nothing wrong with being foreign. Being foreign abroad is essentially a transnational and situated condition that tends to be temporary and transitional but never psychologically fixated in a single location or predetermined by one's race, native language, and cultural background. Anyone may become foreign by travelling to and residing in a place far away from home, which may turn into a new home after the passing of time and the increasing sense of familiarity. Hence, to stand together with "Chinese", "Asian" or "yellow" against xenophobia and racism is to embrace the foreign and the transnational, a condition that is not specific to people who fall under these identity labels.

In order to build the coalitional strength needed in confronting Sinophobic Yellow Perilism, points of mutual understanding must be established among the diasporic Asian communities as well as the general public.

First, white supremacy and its institutional bases and structural forces should be the main target of Asian struggle against racism in Western societies. As white supremacists ignore the multifaceted differences among the Asian communities, it is self-defeating for Asians to dwell too much on divisions of class, nationality, and culture when uttering their rebuttals against the overarching racist structure that has reduced all of them to "chinks", "Orientals", "yellows" or simply "Chinese-looking" in the first place. It is this primary struggle against white supremacy that unites "yellow" Asians as a coalitional front and warrants collaborations with other oppressed groups and communities of color. Internal differences and diversity are important, but their importance is secondary to the primary struggle against white supremacy.

Second, it must be recognized that anti-Asian racism and Sinophobia are linked. As mentioned in the Introduction, the long history of anti-Asian racism in the West is not all about China, but neither

can we say that anti-Asian racism, especially in the contemporary age of economic competition and political rivalry between the US and China, is not about China at all. The demonization of China and the Chinese people constitutes a major ideological force that underlies many racist incidents targeting Asians in the West. The assimilationist mechanisms of China-distancing and self-minoritizing are only effective to a very limited degree without informed sensitivity toward the geopolitical tensions behind Sinophobia *per se*.

Last but not least, as discussed in Section III with my idea of "Sinophone trouble", anti-Sinocentric critique should be used in a dialectical manner to facilitate criticisms of Sinophobic racism rather than the other way around. While it would be ridiculous to suggest that all criticisms against the Chinese government (not a homogenous single-brain entity as the Sinophobic discourses would have it) are inherently racist, the opposite is also true: Asians do not need to be explicitly anti-CCP or anti-PRC to be protected from racial attacks or have the legitimacy to campaign against Sinophobic racism. After all, white supremacists who attack Asians are unlikely to have been motivated by their genuine care for the people living in Sinophone regions like Hong Kong, neither do they care about whatever contentious issues that different overseas Chinese groups are arguing about. There will be no anti-racist coalition across the Asian communities if everyone must agree on such complex political divisions within Asian politics *a priori*. The main struggle is against white supremacy, and this should always be remembered.

<center>******</center>

As this thesis opens with a personal narrative on race and racialization, I think it would be apposite for me to close it with one as well.

When I was researching the history of Chinese in South Africa for Chapter 3, I contacted a fourth-generation Chinese South African community leader via a China-Africa academic network. Since he

gave me permission to retell his story in my thesis but asked to remain anonymous, let us call him Mr. A. For most of our online interview conducted in early 2021, Mr. A was telling me about his Cantonese background, how his great-grandfather became a transnational merchant in early 20th century Johannesburg, how his grandparents and parents acquired their South African citizenship, and what they experienced as "Colored" or "yellows" during the apartheid era. I was trying to confirm some of the historical details I gathered from scholarly works on the Chinese South African communities and relate his family's experiences to those presented in Darryl Accone's and Ufrieda Ho's books. However, toward the end of the interview we started chatting about the rise of anti-Asian racism in relation to Sinophobic Yellow Perilism in the countries we were living in. Both the UK and South Africa were facing new waves of COVID-19 cases after local variants of the virus appeared, which spread much faster than what Trump called "China Virus". Mr. A expressed his frustration with the persistent Sinophobic racism he and his family encountered in their daily life since the pandemic began. He also complained about the ineffective ways the South African government had been dealing with the spread. To my surprise, he then started praising the Chinese government for its efficient handling of the pandemic, including tough lockdown and quarantine measures, strict border and information control, and strong state surveillance and rigorous contact-tracing—aspects of China's crisis management deemed to be undemocratic and too draconian by many Western media.[4]

I was surprised by his enthusiastic and positive remarks about China, because having just finished reading Ho's *Paper Sons and Daughters*, I remembered how she mentions that many Chinese South Africans nowadays regard Chinese migrants from the PRC as the new "Yellow Peril" who engage in illicit activities, display uncivilized public behaviors, and are suspiciously associated with an authoritarian regime. I could imagine how frustrated some Chinese South Africans must be when other South Africans take what these PRC migrants do as representative of all Chinese in South Africa.

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[4] For example, see The Editorial Board, "How China's Authoritarian System Made the Pandemic Worse," *The Washington Post*, April 18, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/how-chinas-authoritarian-system-made-the-pandemic-worse/2020/04/17/2a72c652-80ba-11ea-9040-68981f488eed_story.html (accessed June 16, 2021).

Again, the phenotypical racism of lumping all "Chinese" or "yellow" together would be at work here. However, what Mr. A expressed was the extreme opposite of the mechanism of China-distancing I have discussed above. To me, his remarks at times amounted to a kind of diasporic "positive Orientalism" (recall Chapter 4) that was shaped more by his strong dissatisfaction with South African society during the pandemic than by any objective and critical assessments of what was actually happening on the ground in the PRC.

Rather than agreeing or disagreeing with his remarks directly, I mentioned how different his opinions about China were compared to those expressed by many in the diasporic Chinese communities I met in the UK. I explained that due to the historical ties between the UK and Hong Kong, many in the Chinese British community were critical of the Chinese government, especially when the 2014 Umbrella Movement and the 2019 Anti-Extradition Movement were taking place (discussed in Chapter 6). Mr. A started laughing as he responded that "That kind of diasporic Chinese also exists in South Africa, but I am not one of them!" He then recounted his negative experiences in Hong Kong when he travelled there in the 2010s. Growing up in a Cantonese-speaking household, he had always been attracted to Hong Kong cinema, from popular martial arts movies played by Bruce Lee (李小龍) to the arthouse films of Wong Kar-wai (王家衛). However, every time he travelled to Hong Kong, he was mistaken for a mainland Chinese by the locals because his Cantonese had a distinctive accent that Hong Kong people associate with mainlanders from neighboring Guangdong province. Because of that, he experienced first-hand how mainlanders were treated by certain sections of the local population and became critical of the general sociopolitical anxiety about Chinese encroachment in the city. When I mentioned that the anti-locust discourse in Hong Kong is the major focus of a different Section of my thesis, he confirmed that though he never encountered it himself, he read about the derogatory slur many times after he came back to South Africa. He explained to me that "pervasive Sinophobia in the city" was part of the reason why he cancelled the plan to send his kids to schools in Hong Kong. He feared that they would be discriminated against and that they might become

anti-China.

 By that point we had already been chatting for hours, and the ethnic rapport we managed to build between us by condemning Sinophobic racism was palpable, so I responded casually to his comments on education in Hong Kong. I said, "You probably shouldn't worry too much about that! There seem to be many patriotic celebrities in Hong Kong. I also talk about them in my thesis. Maybe your kids will like them." To my surprise again, Mr. A already knew a lot about these celebrities and their patriotic songs. He even recommended a new song to me, which I had never heard of. Titled "Red (紅)", it is written and sung by Hong Kong singer Jackson Wang (王嘉爾), who is not only very popular in mainland China but also has had a very successful career in South Korea as a member of a K-pop band. Released in 2019, the bilingual lyrics (English and Mandarin Chinese) contain many lines about yellowness, showing that the kind of racial nationalist Sinophone trouble I have discussed in Chapter 7 is still flourishing:[5]

I'm not alone baby 我的血液紅 (my blood is red)
要感謝所有黃皮膚們外界的愛 (thank all yellow-skin love from outside)
…
Stay a hundred China popping living all way long
Jackson & ICE be rocking sipping on the *maotai* now
…
Flying in a jet 廣州 (Guangzhou) Hong Kong Shanghai to 北京 (Beijing)
中國人, 流著中國血 (Chinese people, Chinese blood flowing)
我一直往前走 (I keep proceeding)
So hungry 怎麼吃也還不夠 (ever feeling full)
Drop it low. Asking for More
不用記住我的名字 (no need to remember my name)
All you gotta know
我是中國 90 後 (I am Chinese of the post-1990 generation)
…
用時間來證明我的一切 (I will prove everything with time)
黃皮膚的榮耀圍繞在我周圍 (the honor of yellow skin surrounds me)

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[5] The English translations in the brackets are mine. The song can be accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7bpGZKj6XA> (accessed June 15, 2021). There is also an updated version of this song with even more nationalist content. It was performed by Wang together with many traditional Chinese artists in the popular TV program Soundwave Partners (音浪合夥人, 2019), available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8p5IcEEv0D8> (accessed June 15, 2021)

I never expected that my interview with Mr. A would connect so many different aspects of the Yellow Peril discourse explored in this thesis, but one can say that such is the generative power of comparison. As his stories demonstrate, individual experiences of racialization are multifaceted and dynamic. Like how I have arranged the different case studies in this thesis to speak to one another in comparative ways, his personal encounters with the racial interpellation of yellowness are transnational and situated, plural and interconnected. Moreover, as we bonded over our anti-racist struggles and reflected on our opinions about specific political and cultural phenomena, it became clear that racializing discourses and cultural products are not only produced and disseminated with transnational mechanisms designed for specific sociopolitical environments, but also consumed and reiterated transnationally from situated perspectives of culture.

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