Cold War and Sinophone Culture at the Borders

Shuang Shen



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Shuang Shen

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For my parents, Shen Changwen (1931–2021)
and Bai Manyi (1931–2022)

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Note About Transcription

The transcription of some names and titles into the Latin alphabet follows their common renditions, not necessarily based on Mandarin pronunciation. The Pinyin system is used in all other instances.

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Introduction

Cold War and Sinophone Culture at the Borders

This book examines the territorialization of the global Cold War in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia by reading Sinophone culture in relation to the condition of this global conflict in the mid-twentieth century. Methodologically, this book holds up two critical concepts, "Cold War" and "border," for scrutiny in terms of how they articulate with each other; how, acting independently or in concert, they have shaped the movements of bodies, cultures, and thought; and how together they have formulated the epistemological and affective frameworks that we use in thinking about the world today. We commonly associate the Cold War with divided territories such as East and West Germany, North and South Korea, North and South Vietnam, China and Taiwan. But as we mourn those separated families, divided loyalties, and unrecompensed losses as an outcome of the cold and hot wars in the middle of the twentieth century, we tend to forget that there are less spectacular and arguably more intransigent cognitive and cultural borders that have influenced significant geographies beyond the territories in direct opposition with each other. This book eschews the familiar model of Cold War Chinese studies that is primarily concerned with China versus Taiwan, or the tension between the People's Republic (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC); instead, focusing on the migrant communities outside Chinese sovereign territories, this book presents the discourses of Chineseness that emerged in this region as dynamically and dialectically connected to each other, even if they were defined in deliberate opposition.

This book intervenes in multiple fields, including postcolonial and diaspora studies, area studies focusing on China and Southeast Asia, and Cold

War and border studies. Through analyzing the discourses of Sinophone literary history, its key polemical debates, and relevant literary works, this book demonstrates the multiple functions of Cold War borders, showing how they exerted geo-power over strategic "hot spots," organized global flows of populations, people, and cultures, hardened the boundaries of aesthetic debates, and managed interracial relationships and plurilingual exchange—the multifold bordering effect in turn complicating the usual perception of the border as a mechanism of territorial and political division. Hong Kong and the Southeast Asian locations of Singapore and Malaysia are juxtaposed not just because these localities were connected through specific Cold War–inflected regional imaginaries that prompted the circulation of cultural materials and movement of resources and people; rather, their similar but also different histories of colonialism allow us to reflect on Cold War and decolonization as connected histories. This book addresses the polemical (dis)articulation of Cold War and postcolonial studies by proposing that a critical examination of borders—not just territorial divisions, but also social, political, and aesthetic boundaries—can tap into different structures of power without the need to incorporate them into a single postcolonial framework. The Cold War discourse of "China threat" in response to the founding of the Communist PRC in 1949 significantly narrowed the options for political and cultural identification for Chinese communities outside China. Yet a close investigation of the cultural production in these localities demonstrates a multiscalar affinity and placement that cannot be summarized by the simple markers of language, the identity or background of the creator, or the place of origin or of settlement.

Too often border is perceived just as a territorial boundary resembling something like "a line in the sand." In order to concretely illustrate the complexity of the concept of border and border crossing as well as demonstrate its protean potentiality "as (a comparative) method," following the lead of Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson, we can take a look at the Hong Kong poet Ye Si's 也斯 reflections on the Berlin Wall in 1990.[1] The poem "A Wall Crumbles and Another Wall Comes Up," for instance, was composed during a visit to Berlin a few months after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The poet ruminates:

> stones grow boundless a wall crumbles and at
> once over there another wall comes up try as
> you do to knock down the stones are still in
> the sky the stones are gathering high we too

believe in breaking down barriers and making
our lives transcend the past coins clinking
eyes dancing gracefully cheering and clapping
partying through the night I snatch what you
have won and make it into my victory I mount
on your square my logo I freeze you into
the object of my gaze on TV screens passionately
embracing you and I in desires forever strong.[2]

The poet, while taking in the jubilant festivities ("coins clinking" and "partying through the night") on the streets and expressing a desire of "making / our lives transcend the past," nevertheless notes new signs of conquest, signaling that "another wall [is coming] up." Lines such as "I snatch what you / have won and make it into my victory" and "I mount / on your square my logo" form an ironic tension with the phrase "passionately / embracing you," making the nature of "desires" ambiguous. What do "I" truly "desire"? Do "I" seek transcendence and reconciliation or only a repetition of erstwhile conquests—both *my* conquest of *you* and *yours* over others? As the Cold War was ending—or as some might say, dissolving—Ye Si was already questioning this temporal terminus in conjunction with the nature of *war*: If the Cold War implied the lack of a clear distinction between *war* and *peace*, then can it ever end? Doesn't a cold war imply a perpetual war that cannot be contained by clearly marked temporal boundaries?

In addition to anticipating the historiographical question of whether this unique conflict of the mid-twentieth century ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall—a question that has preoccupied many scholars of Cold War history since the 1990s—Ye Si sheds light on the ontology of the wall itself, drawing attention to its materiality and function as a spatial border and conceptual boundary, and to the various modes of crossing that it inspired, regulated, or stopped altogether. In this poem the wall is primarily figured by its material: "the stones are still in / the sky . . . gathering high." They are "gathering" there possibly because, as Ye Si explains in an essay written around the same time titled "Ghosts Behind the Wall," fragments of the Berlin Wall float around the market of Cold War memorabilia, like ghosts waiting to be selected by tourists: "I also saw some local residents renting hammers and picks to American tourists, inviting them to stand before a half-fallen remnant of the Berlin Wall, posing as heroes for the camera holding a tool in each hand."[3] The instant commodification of the wall as image directs the poet's attention to the symbolic economy of the Cold War: "if a

wall partitioning East and West Berlin was a symbol, then are those stone fragments not also symbolic?"[4] When the materiality of the Berlin Wall has been rendered symbolic, what tangible evidence can convince us that we have transitioned into a post–Cold War time and space?

Ye Si also offers some astute reflections on spatial and temporal crossings in this essay through describing his and others' crossings at the site of the former Cold War partition. While the poet "dreamt about crossing over a gap in the wall to the other side," preferably "accompanied by elevated tunes and celebratory music," before he made his own trip to Berlin,[5] his eventual choice of a less popular crossing point provided him with a far less dramatic experience: he could not locate any conspicuous signs of the erstwhile existence of the wall there or pinpoint the moment when he was on the other side. After crossing a road, he found himself in a landscape without any telltale signs that it had been on either the eastern side or the western side; the wall was seemingly as fickle as it was flimsy, no more than a line in the sand that was easily blown away with a change in the historical wind. The narrator in the essay has walked up to a major road where "trucks carrying cargo loads zoom by": "Turning around, I saw at a place that looked like an entrance a big poster with the words 'TEST THE WEST' printed on it, accompanied by images of soldiers in Soviet (or was it GDR?) uniforms. But this was not a propaganda poster, because 'WEST' there was merely a cigarette brand."[6]

Yet not all border crossings are the same. If the poet's flair for a dramatic entrance or exit was met with well-deserved mockery from this cigarette advertisement, he observed crossings made by other people that were weightier even if the border crossers were not aware of just how much baggage they were carrying. The chosen location for this observation was the famed Friedrichstrasse Station, a terminus for both eastern and western parts of the city.

> Friedrichstrasse used to be at the center of East Berlin, supposedly with many checkpoints, known for its complex procedures and myriad restrictions [on crossing the border]. Now all that is gone. Friedrichstrasse Station is full of crowds. Women in colorful print skirts, and men carrying huge suitcases, entire families from the GDR or even Eastern Europe. I wondered to myself, what do those giant suitcases hold? Gifts for relatives? All of a migrant family's worldly goods? The tools needed to sustain their livelihood? Or might it be something ephemeral that will vanish like a puff of white smoke when the case is opened? . . . Tourists

> from the western part [on the other hand] bring with them their curiosity, the young ones carrying hopes and excitement about the fall of the wall, the middle-aged tourists from the United States and Canada carrying purses in which they have tucked away their ideological conceit and certainty—they are ready to find out what they already know. Those who have come to explore market opportunities, or to hunt for exotica, cross paths with these idealists or cynics, all here to experience the sweeping changes in this city over the past few months.[7]

Here the wall is immaterial, although not necessarily impermanent, when carried on the bodies of immigrants, tourists, students, or businessmen, the cumulative effect of its historical bordering weighing the travelers down in ways they may not even be aware of themselves.

For Ye Si, then, the Berlin Wall represents something both static and moving, a tangible testament to a specific historical period and a contemporary condition that is transferable to other locations and contexts. The symbolic meaning of the wall and of each crossing is different depending on the location, the mode of crossing, and the person going through the border. The fall of the Berlin Wall, which purportedly marked the end of the Cold War, inspired comparative cross-reference for it registered particularly strongly with people like Ye Si: "coming from Hong Kong, we all yearned to learn more about what goes on behind the wall."[8] The analogous condition of living in a different border city elicited strong and complex emotions with regard to both the dissolution and the resurrection of new and old borders. Does the title of the poem actually imply that when "[one] wall crumbles" in the West, "another wall comes up" in the East? It is not entirely implausible, for Ye Si reminds us that "too much ha[d] happened" in the months leading up to the fall of the wall in November 1989, not least of which was the Chinese government's crackdown on student protesters at Tiananmen Square in June of that year.[9] This incident resonated strongly with people in Hong Kong, who were navigating their own uncertain yet predetermined historical passage toward that city's impending return to China. If the June Fourth crackdown was to be taken as an indication of "what goes on behind the wall," then it surely signified a rebordering for people in Hong Kong, at a moment that was made all the more complex because the old Cold War divisions between the West and the East were dissolving elsewhere in the world, thus raising additional anxiety about where Hong Kong should belong: in the East, in the West, or maybe nowhere at all. While Ye Si confesses to being "saddened by defeat," however, and

"concerned while feeling hopeless" about the June Fourth crackdown,[10] the symbolic bordering that concerns him does not relate solely to speculative news headlines about Hong Kong's affinity with or distancing from China; rather, underneath it all is a personal story in the essay about the speaker's growing alienation from a partner, who is addressed there only in the second person.

In a mundane scene of everyday life, "you" pack the speaker's bags and send him off on his trip to Berlin with a casual reminder to bring back a piece of the wall as a souvenir. But they both know that "you" will not be there to receive the gift when the speaker comes back. Through the figure of the wall, the poet reflects on how the soft boundaries between lovers or their commonplace differences can be transformed into a hardened and nonequivalent boundary, proclaiming to the speaker that "you are always on the right side and I am that intransigent wall."[11] Moving thus from a reflection on a European situation of division and migration to an examination of Hong Kong's analogous liminal condition, and further to a rumination over an intimate relationship gone sour, the essay conjoins the personal, the collective, and the global without collapsing these different scales into a singular one. The Berlin Wall provides an occasion to reflect on the diversity of cultures and everyday social life. "Taking down a material stone wall is easy," the poet observes, "but real life is not all symbolic; it has so many multifarious entanglements."[12] This means that there is never a single fix for everything, although it is always better to at least try to cross over: "When the wall is down and people step over the border, we will confront what has not been encountered before. There is a danger of imposing our own views on others; but isn't it also a chance to get to know the other?"[13]

Written as they were around the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall, Ye Si's poem and essay are of exemplary value for the method I have used here to examine Sinophone cultural production in Hong Kong and a specific part of Southeast Asia. I follow Ye Si's lead in probing the performative nature of Cold War borders, as well as their lasting effect, by thinking in literary terms with and against the geopolitical reality from the mid-twentieth century till today. When we think about Cold War borders, we assume, following the logic of the Cold War, that the function of these borders lies solely in polarization. But Ye Si's literary writings show that a border is much more than a physical object; it is a mindset, a discourse, or a normative structure of power that shapes our reality and creates a world for us in relation to others, and that bordering is a much more complicated operation than simple inclusion versus exclusion or the separation of the internal from the external.

The contemporary world is moving away from the geopolitical matrix of the old Cold War in some ways, but in other respects it has not abandoned the earlier discourse or structure of feeling. Less powerful nations and "peripheral" societies continue to be treated as chess pieces in the "Great Powers'" playbook. In this context, it is crucial for us to learn about the cultures of Chinese communities outside territorial China and understand how Cold War boundaries intersected with or counteracted the racial and cultural divisions underpinning the heterogeneous social lives in these communities. The Cold War, however powerful it was, as Ye Si rightfully reminds us, cannot subsume "real life," which "is not all symbolic." The places where global geopolitics transformed into a borderscape in the mid-twentieth century were legitimate dwelling places—places of "real life"—before, during, and after the onset of the global conflict. To encapsulate the multifold bordering effect of the Cold War in these locations and to consider the Cold War as both a bounded historical period and an ongoing condition, as both geographically specific and transferable to other parts of the world, we should start by taking into account borders not just as marking the end of a territory, but also in conjunction with symbolic boundaries such as ideological and political divisions, linguistic differences, and analytical taxonomies for literary and cultural analysis.

I did not follow the category of either "cultural Cold War" or "Cold War culture" when putting together an archive for this book. Rather, this book ascribes a more productive role to literature and culture in their ability to *think* the Cold War both with and against the grain of history, elucidating the meaning of this historical conflict while making it accessible to human consciousness. As defined by Gordon Johnston, "the 'cultural Cold War' [is] understood as the range of ways in which high and popular cultures were produced, deployed, interpreted and challenged" during the Cold War, while "'Cold War culture' . . . poses a broader set of questions about patterns of behaviour, attitudes and structures of thought and meaning associated with the Cold War."[14] It is clear from these definitions that both categories play up the instrumental and anthropological value of cultural expression, directing scholarly attention to the investigation of either how culture was weaponized to engage in warfare or how it describes a certain way of life under Cold War conditions. In both instances, literature or culture in general is treated as no more than a footnote to history. It constitutes what Johnston has succinctly summed up as "the Cold War's cultural dimension."[15]

Although some sections of the book examine literary productions created with a deliberate goal to fight a "cultural Cold War," the crite-

rion of critical evaluation, as I see it, is not confined by the twin poles of decrying state sponsorship as a compromise of literary value, on the one hand, and defending literariness or aesthetic sophistication as a safeguard against its degeneration into propaganda, on the other. Emphasizing the *and* that links the keywords "Cold War" and "Sinophone culture" in the book's title, I see the entanglement of cultural production and literary criticism with the Cold War as both structural and specific, deterministic and negotiated, thus calling for close examination of how institutional power and politics were manifested at a given moment, and in an individual cultural maker's ethos and political convictions. The proper way to resist the Cold War's domination over social reality and cultural life with its bipolar worldviews, I argue, is not so much to defend literature's freedom from propaganda, ideology, or doxa, but to follow historical actors' strategic negotiations while activating our own imaginations to shift the parameters of historical determinations.

Even as the Cold War claimed this part of Asia and its literature for itself, literature has found ways to talk back to this totalizing claim over reality. As our critical attention moves beyond the conventional focus on the Cold War as a duel between two superpowers, it is imperative to interrogate the meanings of such key concepts as *Cold War*, *diaspora*, *Chinese*, and *the Sinophone*. The rest of this introduction will elucidate these concepts in light of existing and future trajectories presented by the intellectual conversations emerging from multiple fields of study, including Cold War history, area studies, postcolonial studies, and Chinese literary studies. Considering how local and regional political dynamics in this geography impinge on intellectual inquiry, I propose that we start from the ground up to test our critical concepts and generate synthetic views about the Cold War's entanglement with Chinese literature and culture.

I. Cold War Bordering

In November 1961, Robert Blum, the founding director of the Asia Foundation (TAF)—an ostensibly private organization with links to the US government and the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)—recounted his visits to several Asian countries earlier that year as part of his monthly report to the foundation's board of trustees.[16] In addition to providing detailed descriptions of the local political situation in the countries he had visited and succinctly summarizing the conversations he had had with foreign leaders, US embassy workers, and TAF field representatives, as most of

his monthly reports did, this one deviated from the usual course to offer "some observations" of a general nature about Asia and the Cold War. Blum, who had earned his academic credentials at Yale University and the University of California, Berkeley, was intellectually well positioned for making general remarks of this kind. In this report, Blum candidly admitted that "any foreign organization operating in the emerging Asian countries, such as Burma, Indonesia, Malaya and Singapore, where there are highly sensitive local issues, is always in danger of being attacked by some internal political elements as an 'instrument of American imperialism.'" He even confessed that TAF had been the target of an earlier such attack, claiming, "This is, in effect, what happened when the Foundation was forced out of Indonesia in 1958."[17]

Blum, however, showed no intention of abandoning the foundation's programs in order to rectify this perception of TAF or the United States; he merely wanted to sound a note of "special caution" to colleagues who were carrying out its programs in Asia. The biggest challenges that the foundation faced in these Southeast Asian countries, as Blum saw it, were related to the different understandings of the Cold War harbored by Asian countries: "In all of the countries of Asia that I visited I was again struck by the intense preoccupation with local problems and with those international problems that touch local issues. They do not see the issues of the cold war as the United States sees them." Among the several countries that he cited as examples was Malaya, where "the overwhelming preoccupation concerned relations between the Federation and Singapore, reflecting anxiety over the communal balance between the Malays and the Chinese." Here Blum is referring to Malaya's and Singapore's intertwined paths toward independence, in which the intersection of different visions of postcolonial nationhood, interethnic relations, and territorial issues engendered a complex relationship between these two localities. Blum also expressed surprise about "the considerable amount of exchange being carried out with communist countries" that he had observed "in the neutralist countries," of which the United States had "a lack of full appreciation" and which made Blum reflect once again on the differences between the Cold War in Asia and in the United States: "Unlike in the U.S., the communist countries do not seem remote and unreal but very much present."[18]

Blum's field reports are by no means disinterested observations of world affairs; in fact, some of them were used by the CIA as intelligence briefing documents.[19] But his comment that Asians "do not see the issues of the cold war as the United States sees them" foreshadows more recent discussions

that aim to rethink the Cold War from global perspectives, questioning its historiography in the process, including its purported ending as signified by the fall of the Berlin Wall. Even Blum's use of the lowercase "cold war" inadvertently anticipates Heonik Kwon's explanation of the term as not just a "general reference for the global bipolar conflict" but also "the representation of this conflict from a particular regional point of view."[20] Lowercase "cold war" refers to both; as such, it unsettles uppercase "Cold War" as a reference to a distinct historical period with a clear beginning and end. The spatial expansion of Cold War studies over the past few decades, which has moved the field beyond a narrow focus on the competition between superpowers, has been accompanied by temporal destabilization and a general conceptual rethinking. As Odd Arne Westad proposes, the Cold War needs its own "conceptualism," its "familiar concepts and ideas" calling for new interrogations by attending to "the tail end . . . of transmissions, movements, and events more than [to] their origins."[21]

Following this line of thinking, we might ask what the Cold War meant for Hong Kong and this part of Southeast Asia. From Blum's perspective, his agenda of seizing the world for the United States' Cold War was limited by Asian people's "intense preoccupation" with local problems. If we take this limit as a strategic site for connecting the histories of the Cold War and decolonization, we can see that the mediation of each with the other placed the Cold War both externally and internally with respect to the "emerging countries" in Asia.[22] Blum's role as a US government agent with a mission to advance America's Cold War interests prevented him from seeing the other side of the picture—how the Cold War had permanently altered the historical trajectories of many Asian nations. Contemporary scholars, on the other hand, have offered various studies reckoning with the Cold War's impact from the perspective of local history, with one of the most influential accounts proposing that we should view the vast difference between the so-called "long peace" experienced by the West and the "total war" waged in the non-West as a differentiation between a cold war and a hot war.[23] While this perspective powerfully captures the traumatic experience of Asia as a theater of proxy warfare, it alone cannot describe the more subtle yet in a way more deeply ingrained imprint of the Cold War on Asian societies. One of its blind spots is that by casting Asian people as victims of a global Cold War, it approaches their culture mainly as an anthropological expression of and response to warfare. From this perspective, there is little room for a full account of Asian histories, with their rich variety of literary and cultural expressions and the dynamic cultural exchange and

mobility between disparate locations, which were organized both within and against the logic of geopolitical history.

Instead of following the influential framework of hot versus cold war in this book, I employ a conceptual heuristic of the border in order to bring into view the myriad forms of difference and differentiation that shaped Sinophone culture's variegated landscape. The recent work of a multidisciplinary community of border studies scholars situated in philosophy, political science, geography, and literary and cultural studies has complicated our understanding of borders as more than a line in the sand.[24] Borders are complex mechanisms that, according to Étienne Balibar, carry "*world-configuring*" function. "No political border is ever the mere boundary between two states, but is always *over*determined, and in that sense, sanctioned, reduplicated and relativized by other geopolitical divisions."[25] Divisions of states or political powers did not all exist between oppositional political blocs; there were in fact less conspicuous and more complex border operations underway in places that were not always in the physical territory between blocs. Consider, for instance, the representation of the short-lived merger between Singapore and Malaysia in the early 1960s in one authoritative account by Singapore's founding father, Lee Kuan Yew 李光耀.[26] It is clear from his narrative that while other issues of colonialism, race, territoriality, and language were in play at this moment in history, the Cold War division of Communist versus non-Communist was prioritized and used to orient his approach to the intertwining of relations on the ground. The discourse of Cold War polarization in this case functioned as a set of powerful cognitive borders that scrambled and reconfigured the fault lines of race, language, and gender in societies on the cusp of postcolonial independence. Such an act of cognitive bordering shaped the territorial borders between states while also altering the political landscape in the domestic context.

Cold War bordering can be used as a starting point from which to understand the Cold War's imprint on the discourse of local histories. I argue here that the critical task of what the Taiwan cultural theorist Chen Kuanhsing 陳光興 has provocatively conceptualized as a "de–Cold War" process needs to start by reckoning with the existence of borders installed under Cold War conditions and critically examining their inscription, operation, and transgression in our social and cultural life.[27] I understand the Cold War in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia primarily in terms of the dynamic social process of "b/ordering," which geographers Henk van Houtum and colleagues define as "a normative idea, a belief in the existence and conti-

nuity of a territorially binding and differentiated power that only becomes concrete, objectified, and real in our own everyday social practices."[28] This "territorially binding and differentiated power" does not exist solely at the edge of a territory; borders exist within a society as well, and in fact they constitute the very fabric of social life.

This book focuses on three domains of Cold War bordering—space, aesthetics, and language—that shaped the production of Sinophone culture in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia. The bordering processes in relation to each domain are specific and call for detailed discussions that the space of this chapter cannot accommodate. I will therefore save these discussions till later and present them in the conceptual introductions that open the three parts of this book, titled respectively "Con-Texuality," "Aesthetics," and "Language." I will further explain in the introduction to each part why considering Cold War bordering in each of the domains can facilitate a better understanding of both Sinophone culture in general and the specific geographies discussed in this book, and why certain literary works, cultural productions, and polemical debates have been selected for analysis.

Given the focus of this book on Chinese communities outside Chinese territories, it is important to understand how the Cold War's "overdetermined" borders configured what the historian Shelly Chan has characterized as a "mobile world" by mediating, facilitating, and controlling the flows of people and cultures within a set of political blocs or between blocs.[29] Some border operations took the violent form of political expulsion and exile, as in the case of Linda Chen Mong Hock 陳夢鶴, whose political and cultural activism is discussed in chapter 5. The media coverage of this activist shows how Cold War bordering mandated a certain discourse of diasporic affiliation that played up the ethnic Chinese individual's connection to China. On April 25, 1957, the *Straits Times* published an article with the sensational title "Linda—The Girl Who Is Still in Search of a Country," which discussed the dilemma Chen faced as a political detainee who was the leftist leader of a women's organization in Singapore. She had been arrested along with her colleagues at the Chung Cheng High School in October 1956, charged with posing a "security risk."[30] In April 1958, the *Singapore Standard* reported that "more than 120 people detained in Singapore and the Federation under the Banishment Ordinance are soon expected to be packed off to Red China in one ship."[31] Linda Chen, however, would not be among them, thanks to the pleas made by her father, Chen Yueshu, the owner of a publishing business, Shanghai Books. Newly married, she managed to accompany her husband to the United Kingdom, where he was pursuing graduate studies.

That the colonial government chose "Red China" as the destination for many detainees, and that the *Straits Times* made a point of mentioning that Linda Chen was "Shanghai-born" even though the family had established their business in British Malaya in 1925, gives us a glimpse into what has been known as the "China threat" shaping the politics of the Southeast Asian states.[32] That there was an active Communist insurgency in Malaya starting from 1948 enhanced the sense of jeopardy for the British colonial government and the subsequent independent states. Leftist activists and cultural workers were expelled in large numbers by the colonial states in Malaya, Singapore, and Hong Kong, but my interest in Linda Chen as a historical figure is not purely political; it extends to the cultural and language politics that were intertwined with her leftist activism. Chen, as chapter 5 shows, promoted the study of the Malay language in Chinese communities by writing and publishing books in Chinese, English, and Malay, using her family business as a platform. The underlying vision of a Malayan nation based on multilingualism and multiculturalism was deemed to be threatening to the postindependence Malayan state, which had been founded on an ideology that emphasized Malay privileges. Cold War bordering in this case allows us to understand historical figures such as Linda Chen as situated at a political borderscape also shaped by racial and linguistic fault lines. Both internal and external to "Chineseness" and the colonial and postcolonial regimes, bordering provides a critical fulcrum for examining the cultures produced by Sinophone ethnic populations in this part of Southeast Asia.

This book also examines less radical and non-leftist cultural figures to reveal patterns of connectivity that do not revolve around "Red China" as a pressure point. In chapters 1 and 3, for instance, I look at cultural programs implemented by US institutions that sent Chinese intellectuals from Hong Kong and Taiwan to work on cultural and literary magazines in Singapore and Malaysia. Whereas the American-funded programs were aimed at preventing overseas youths from returning to China, other pathways and controlled global passages of cultures and people in various directions were also opened up. The border's function does not lie in blocking movement; rather, it regulates, filters, and redirects movement or circulation. Seeing bordering as a point of bifurcation that divides a continuous surface, rather than as an absolute external break, allows us to understand how Cold War intersecting with decolonization reconfigured internal and external boundaries of the culture of the Chinese overseas, which is never a single homogeneous entity to begin with. We are tuned in to various historical figures' negotiation with the (dis)connectivity of the disparate localities featured in this book. Indeed, as Ye Si's essay and poem discussed at the beginning

of this chapter illustrate, the Cold War's flattened Manichean cartography does not do justice to the complexity of movements at and around borders or the cross-referencing of different societies that border as a comparative method has inspired us to conduct.

II. Connecting Histories

Heonik Kwon was among the first scholars to call out postcolonial theory such as Edward Said's critical engagement with Orientalism for its failure to examine how Europe's history of political bifurcation intersected with that of colonialism. Since then, various perspectives have been offered on whether it is productive to consider the Cold War as cultural imperialism as much as it manifested as political and social neocolonialism in many parts of the Global South, and whether existing postcolonial paradigms are sufficient in considering the Cold War.[33] As I see it, these critical perspectives have emerged largely because existing postcolonial discourses have performed poorly in terms of addressing the multiple empires, both Eastern and Western, and the forms of historical and contemporary imperialism in Asia. By the early 2000s, Chen Kuan-hsing had declared that "postcolonial cultural studies is at an impasse. The central problem lies in its obsessive critique of the West, which bounds the field by the object of its own criticism."[34] Petrus Liu has gone further, pointing out that the ineffectiveness of the existing postcolonial paradigm for addressing the divisions within East Asian societies has opened the door for the Cold War partition to continue to shape the discourse of geopolitics in this part of the world. Speaking of "the quandary of two Chinas," Liu claims, "if it was once easy to critique US neocolonialism, the Seventh Fleet, and US arms sales as the material conditions that guaranteed a divided Asia, today it is impossible to make that point in reference to Taiwan without appearing to support *Chinese* imperialism. Increasingly, the only politically acceptable view of Taiwan is that it is a separate and distinct entity from any concept of 'China.'"[35] If the rhetoric of anti-imperialism can be mobilized by any form of nationalism, including those that exert political or cultural domination over others, then terms such as "empire" and "imperialism" are no longer automatically clear, which in turn necessitates that the critiques of both be renewed and rethought.

Given our knowledge of the Cold War's complex introjection into societies with colonial histories, I question whether it is productive to perceive (post)colonial forms of differentiation such as metropole versus colony,

center versus periphery, or domination versus resistance as the primary and singularly significant power structure. As Prasenjit Duara reminds us, "The importance of the national *form* in the cold war should not be underestimated."[36] This means that the "imperialist or hegemonic domination of other nation-states or intervention in nation-states belonging to the other camp" needed to be filtered through an acknowledgment of the equality of nations, in what was characterized by Duara as an "interface [of] 'structural hypocrisy.'" The Cold War was thus dominated by "the imperialism of nation-states."[37] Given the very different scenarios of and responses to the Cold War's mediation of imperialism and nationalism in the geographies covered by this book, it is impossible to apply the binary framework of metropole versus colony to the analysis of cultural formations in these locations. If we intend to seek "a redefinition of postcolonial studies" that works for this geography, I propose that border as method can provide us with a framework that takes into account multiple structures of power shaped by colonial history, the postcolonial state, Cold War geopolitics, and Chinese diasporic affiliation, without folding into a single metropole-versus-colony dynamic.[38]

A small example from 1950s Malaya shows how these various structures of power were in play when it came to Sinophone cultural production. In the late 1950s, in response to the founding of the PRC and the war with Communist guerrillas in Malaya, the late colonial and early independent states in Malaya and Singapore issued a series of policies banning Chinese books published in Hong Kong from being imported and circulated.[39] The Chinese communities in those two places protested strongly against these policies, claiming that the states were targeting not just Communist publications, but in effect Chinese cultural institutions and the Chinese population as a whole. One writer declared in Singapore's Chinese newspaper *Nanyang Siang Pau* that "many local English bookstores have 'red' books on their shelves, including those on Leninism or written by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, most of them directly from Moscow. If we are talking about 'red' books, few are more 'red' than these. Yet the government has allowed English books on Communism to circulate; Chinese books even with a pinkish hue are shunned like tigers." The writer further stated, "The prejudice against Chinese schools and Chinese books supposedly has to do with the allegation that many Communist elements in Malaya come from a background of Chinese education, and their faith in Communism was cultivated by reading Chinese books on Communism. But do we have scientific evidence for these two charges?"[40] Without dwelling on the issue

of book banning here, we can see in this example how Cold War political dynamics reinforced colonial racial and linguistic hierarchies, leading Chinese communities to perceive the Southeast Asian states' book ban not just as anti-Communist policy but also as an assault against Chinese cultural institutions and cultural identity.

Hong Kong reaped benefits from the implementation of what Duara has called the "new imperialism" of the post–World War II period—the kind of development-oriented imperialism that made it possible for colonies to move up the economic ladder. At the same time, it also became a battleground for political powers on both sides of the Cold War divide. The confluence of political forces weakened local resistance toward colonialism and in effect sidelined the colonial question.[41] Unlike with Singapore and Malaysia, which were preoccupied with establishing sovereign nation-states to replace colonial rule at the height of the Cold War, the case of Hong Kong is a reminder that even though the weakening of European empires and the widespread decolonization movements after World War II gave rise to a proliferation of nation-states worldwide, not all colonies had equal access to the nation form. The "national" was not just a factor of standardization, but more significantly a factor of differentiation.

As the sociologist Lui Tai-lok 呂大樂 reminds us, whether Hong Kong would be able to pursue formal decolonization by following the path of most colonial countries in the Global South after World War II was not entirely up to its residents. Communist China's decision to not take back the colonial city after the founding of the PRC was a determination based on "pragmatism" and "political and diplomatic considerations in the context of an international political environment that was hostile toward the spread of communism." Several decades later, in 1972, China's successful lobbying at the United Nations for the removal of Hong Kong and Macau from the list of colonial territories meant that the right of "self-determination" established by the UN's founding charter was denied for these places, which did not have formal status as colonies.[42]

In light of Hong Kong's unique colonial situation, the cultural critic Law Wing Sang 羅永生 has pushed back on Chen Kuan-hsing's argument that "at this historically critical time [in the early 2000s], to de–cold war is to de-Americanize,"[43] correcting Chen's perception that the Cold War meant "the imposition of a singular [American] power."[44] Instead, Law highlights a "collaborative" relationship between Chinese nationalism (and the state of the PRC, as his analysis moves to the twenty-first century) and colonialism that foreclosed the possibility of the city's decolonization. "Under

the conditions of the Cold War," he states, "despite the political discourse of Chinese nationalism and its anti-imperialist sloganeering, the Chinese Communist Party actually worked hard to maintain the status quo of colonialism in Hong Kong and had no intention of taking Hong Kong back."[45] Given this complexity, Cold War bordering provides a more flexible rubric for engaging with the mediation of imperialism and nationalism, and the confluence of new and old empires in the localities examined in this book.

III. Troubling Diaspora

Overseas communities were subject to multiple pressures from homeland politics, global geopolitics, and the politics of the nation-states in the place of settlement. This is already reflected in the naming of the Chinese population outside China, which constitutes a form of cognitive bordering in the production of knowledge about these communities. A key concept is the term *qiao* 僑 (sojourning), as in *huaqiao* 華僑 or "overseas Chinese." Widely used in much of the twentieth century, this word emphasizes Chinese migrants' shared ancestry and implies that their stay in the place of settlement is a temporary sojourn in a foreign land. During the Cold War, both the PRC and the ROC used this term to refer to overseas communities, indicating that despite their differences, both regimes sought to manage this extraterritorial population in relation to their nation form. At the same time, external Cold War powers such as the United States also perceived the "overseas Chinese" as a Cold War front, thus deeming it necessary to win their "hearts and minds." Cultural agencies such as the US Information Service (USIS) in Hong Kong devised programs to ensure that "the Overseas Chinese [would] be denied as an asset to world communism in general and to the Peking Regime."[46] Regardless of their positionality on either side of the Cold War, these regimes all tried to shape the overseas population's loyalty to various political powers and states.

The Guomindang 國民黨 (Nationalist Party, KMT) referred to overseas Chinese migrants as either *huaqiao* 華僑 (overseas Chinese) or *qiaomin* 僑民 (overseas population) in the early twentieth century—these terms demonstrating its efforts at political mobilization in these communities to further the agenda of the Republican Revolution. After the 1949 transition, the KMT regime under Chiang Kai-shek continued this discourse after retreating to Taiwan while also inventing new terms to underscore the political mission it was imposing on the overseas population.[47] In his public speeches in the 1950s, Chiang repeatedly referred to overseas Chinese as

qiaobao 僑胞 (overseas compatriots), with the underlying implication that "all Chinese, whether living in Taiwan, on the mainland, or overseas, are compatriots united in their support for the Guomindang's counterattack on the mainland and the revitalization of the nation-state."[48] The PRC, on the other hand, took a different approach. Trying to assuage Southeast Asian states' fear that Communism was being spread via the overseas Chinese, the PRC adopted a straightforward jus soli (right of soil) policy after the Bandung Conference of 1955. This means that it encouraged the overseas Chinese population to obtain citizenship in their Southeast Asian states and required those with dual citizenship to choose one or the other. Whereas the ROC understood *qiaowu* 僑務 (overseas Chinese affairs) as an extension of its diplomatic relations with other states—and treated Chinese citizenship for the overseas population as based on a combination of jus soli and jus sanguinis (right of blood)—the PRC let overseas affairs take a back seat to international relations. However, this does not mean that the PRC severed its ties to the overseas population. From its earlier vision of a world revolution to the later accommodation of *guiqiao* 歸僑 (repatriated or returned migrants), the overseas population never completely disappeared from the PRC's domestic or international history.

Notably, as ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia transformed from "sojourners" to "settlers" in the post–World War II era of decolonization, they invited new paradigms for the discussion of not just their own social and cultural identities, but also the interracial and intercultural policies of the independent states.[49] The historian Wang Gungwu 王賡武 subsequently took the term *huaqiao* or "overseas Chinese" to task, questioning not only its oversimplification when used to describe ethnic Chinese of a variety of backgrounds, but specifically the notion of *qiao*, which for him implied "temporary residence," "a duty to return," "nostalgia for home," or the need for "a degree of official approval."[50] The debate over the term *qiao* in *huaqiao* has recently been reiterated in connection to the use of the term "diaspora" to refer to ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia. Whereas scholars such as Ien Ang, Wang Gungwu, and Shu-mei Shih 史書美 have objected to the notion of "diaspora" on the grounds that it posits an "oversimplification,"[51] implies undue glorification of transnationalism understood as rootless global mobility,[52] or connotes resistance toward settlement,[53] other scholars, including Shelly Chan, have defended its use, showing that studies of overseas communities can "help revise our conceptions of China as a whole."[54]

The underlying problem, it seems to me, lies not in the term "diaspora"

itself, but in the dualistic framework of assimilation and citizenship, on the one hand, and a return to roots in the ancestral homeland, on the other. I argue that the mobile society of Chinese overseas is nested in an elaborate web of political and social relationality that calls for analysis simultaneously at the local, national, and transnational scales, exceeding a binaristic framework such as place of origin versus host country or sojourning versus settlement.[55] I have adopted Wang's term "Chinese overseas" to replace the older term "overseas Chinese" in most cases, but at issue here is not just the change of terms, or the question of whether we employ Wang's further classifications of this group as *huaqiao* (sojourning Chinese), *huaren* 華人 (ethnic Chinese), or *huayi* 華裔 (descendants of Chinese); rather, the key is to capture historical action at the multiple scales that have shaped the subject of the Chinese overseas, whether they settled in their host country or returned to their homeland. I have reserved the use of "overseas Chinese" in reference to specific historical situations; "Chinese diaspora" and "ethnic Chinese" are also used depending on the context. The most productive outcome of the polemical debate of the diaspora should be the use of the term as a critical fulcrum for examining a force field of relationality that was configured by intersecting nationalisms as well as by the dynamics of the global Cold War, bypassing the binaristic framework mentioned above.

As much as Chinese communities outside Chinese sovereign places were pulled by either of the "two Chinas," the spaces examined in this book are not to be seen as an extension, territorially or politically, of those sovereign regimes. Since a border does not belong entirely to the territory or juridical power it delineates, but rather indicates its limits, the sites where bordering occurs are never fully incorporated into the sovereign spaces. This book thus gives more attention to a Sinophone cultural region formed from the ground up, its regionalism constituted by the writers' social and cultural activities within the adopted homeland, through their imaginative and real journeys undertaken to their places of origin, and in the connectivity forged with other cultures in their vicinity and beyond. The American foundations that funded select cultural projects, the language or racial policies of specific Southeast Asian nations, the ideology of the ROC's "overseas student" or *qiaosheng* 僑生 programs, the PRC's political agenda of world revolution, and Bandung Conference–inspired Third Worldist affinities all shaped the contours, orientations, and trajectories within and beyond this cultural region, but these external forces were not determining factors. In the end, the concrete practices and movements of people, languages, and cultures defined this cultural region, not the other way around.

The use of the Chinese language alone did not guarantee that one belonged in the Chinese homeland; nor did it automatically connote one's refusal to belong in the country of settlement. Rather, the Chinese language, which is not singular but plural, affords a critical lens to interrogate meanings such as "homeland," "return," "sojourn," and "settlement," none of which can be sufficiently analyzed solely from a national framework. For one thing, China as homeland was already complexified because the competition for and anxiety about legitimacy of the "two Chinas" played out in a historical process akin to what Naoki Sakai in another context has called "cofiguration."[56] Furthermore, the homelands, Chinese or Southeast Asian, might have been bounded territorially and juridically as a nation form, but they had already been incorporated into global structures. One telling example is the ROC's "overseas Chinese" infrastructure, which allowed its universities to take in large numbers of overseas students. As reported by Gao Xin 高信, the head of the ROC's Overseas Affairs Council from 1962 to 1972, this transnational infrastructure was sustained in large part by US support in the 1950s and 1960s. It was then vice president Richard Nixon who alerted Chiang Kai-shek after visiting Southeast Asia that "Communist China was moving Chinese youths by the shipload to China" for higher education, urging Chiang to quickly implement measures that would expand college admissions of overseas Chinese youths. "The Overseas Community Affairs Council and Ministry of Education later decided that for each admission of an overseas Chinese student, the university would receive a subsidy of 10,000 New Taiwan dollars. . . . This funding came out of subsidies from the United States."[57]

While pages taken from the Cold War playbook imbued the overseas students' journey of "return" to Taiwan with predetermined meanings, it remains uncertain whether those who took advantage of the ROC's *qiaojiao* 僑教 (overseas education) programs uniformly absorbed the ROC's anti-Communist propaganda or embraced the officially sanctioned discourse of Chineseness to the same degree. Thus, the meaning of "return" or repatriation was in itself contested even at the height of the Cold War.[58] The long-term effect of such transnational cultural infrastructure further rewrote the meanings of "return" for the different generations of overseas students who returned to Taiwan. After the 1980s, when Cold War tensions eased and Taiwanese society was liberalized, many Sinophone writers from Southeast Asia, particularly Malaysia, continued to use Taiwan as a launching pad for their literary careers, without even having studied in Taiwan or having remained there after graduation from college. In this context,

Taiwan no longer signifies an end point in a linear journey of "return"; it is merely a center for Sinophone culture or a node in a multicentered regional sphere of cultural production.

The nation form is treated not as a fait accompli in this book, but rather as a historical process that encompassed "a volatile tension between its globalism and its nationness," following Duara's observation of nation formation as a circulatory history.[59] While our discussions of Sinophone cultures in Hong Kong and these Southeast Asian nations need to be fully embedded in their local histories, the shortcoming of the sojourning versus settlement framework lies in the fact that it cannot take into account the large amount of existing scholarship that has questioned narratives of the "national" in the postcolonial states of Singapore and Malaysia.[60] This scholarship demonstrates that the national is a category of exclusion in the establishment of what Nandita Sharma has called a "postcolonial world order," which hinges on the separation of national natives from migrants, and the autochthonous from the allochthonous populations.[61] Too often those spaces, communities, and individuals excluded from the national are viewed as supplementary to national territoriality or power structures. Their only path to a viable future is thus to be incorporated into the national structure; the alternative is to be removed permanently. I do not mean to deny the radical shift in orientation toward integration into Southeast Asian societies after World War II or the vast heterogeneity of Chinese identities in the communities there; nor am I suggesting that the Chinese refused to participate in the political lives of these postcolonial states. Rather, it is important to examine the concept of "national" critically from the perspectives of communities and individuals of nonbelonging or ambivalent belonging due to political, historical, and cultural reasons.

IV. A Sinophone Intervention

In the history of Sinophone literary production in Hong Kong and this part of Southeast Asia, there are many anxious articulations of self-conscious placement at the peripheries of the Chinese civilizational order. At the same time, there are many rejections of the center-versus-periphery model altogether. For instance, Mahua 馬華 (Sinophone Malaysian or Malayan) literary history has on record several literary debates from the early 1900s on in which writers, many of them recent émigrés from the mainland, discussed how the literary tributary in Nanyang 南洋—the Chinese term for South Seas—should diverge from the mainstream of the mainland-based May

Fourth culture, even as they also claimed lineage from the latter. Especially well known is the 1948 debate on the "unique characteristics of Mahua literature and arts" (*mahua wenyi dute xing*), which I discuss in chapter 4. This was a polemical event that is commonly perceived as a localizing moment when some left-leaning cultural workers showed a commitment to the "here and now" (*ci shi ci di*) of Malayan reality, rather than considering Malaya as a constitutive part of the revolutionary struggles in China. As much as scholars have disagreed about the nature of this debate—whether it signified the emergence of a Mahua subjectivity or whether there were still numerous "China factors" seeking to incorporate Mahua literature within the "framework of Chinese revolutionary literature"—it represented a breakdown in the linear model of cultural diffusion from the center to the periphery.[62]

And yet, canonical histories of Mahua literature tend to incorporate these flash points in a linear narrative that still presents literary expression in these southern localities as a mere refrain or echo of the motifs at the center. One representative formulation is that Mahua literature has always been a continuation of the realist tradition of May Fourth culture. While there are other critical perspectives that could intervene in such a conventional historical narrative—drawn, for instance, from archipelagic, ecocritical, and Indigenous studies—the recent emergence of Sinophone studies represents a significant moment in which new critical frameworks have begun to be clarified. The term "Sinophone" is intended to throw a wrench into the use of the intentionally vague and capacious designator "Chinese," which often lumps languages, peoples, or cultures together. I employ the term "Sinophone" in this project in reference to Chinese-language production in these so-called peripheral geographies. In this section, I will situate this book in relation to Sinophone studies, with the goal of further clarifying its interventions with regard to the study of Chinese-language cultures worldwide.

I understand and use the concept of the Sinophone following Shu-mei Shih's definition of the term as "a network of places of cultural production outside China and on the margins of China and Chineseness."[63] Shih's distinction between a "denotative" use of the word (what she calls in another context "the Sinophone as history") and a polemical or theoretical definition of the term (what she calls "the Sinophone as theory") also helps explain the intervention this book will try to bring about in the study of Chinese culture in general, whether this culture is situated within the territorial Chinese state or outside it, or whether it comes from the center or

the margins.[64] The widely cited controversy about whether the Sinophone should include or exclude China is not a particularly productive conversation in my view, because any close engagement with Sinophone cultural production "outside China" should also aim to shed new light on Chinese culture broadly defined, or indeed on humanistic endeavors worldwide in their engagements with the Cold War as a global history.[65] Since the goal of this book is to problematize territorial borders and cognitive boundaries, the division of the inside versus outside should not be naturalized.

As Shih points out, scholars who have used the term denotatively—she gives as an example the literary critic Sau-ling Wong's reference to Chinese-language literature by Chinese Americans or several historians' references to Chinese-speaking Hui Muslims in the Qing empire—exhibit "an underlying intent of clarifying contrast by naming."[66] In other words, although they use the term largely to describe a certain form of language use or cultural practice, they imply that there is a qualitative difference between "Sinophone" and the more general term "Chinese." I share their recognition that "Sinophone" may signal a form of decenteredness or destandardization that is not as visible in the capacious term "Chinese." But as a cultural critic who is based in North America, I am aware that we are not the first ones to make visible this kind of "clarifying contrast" within the Chinese language and its culture. My earlier example of the 1948 debate over the unique characteristics of Mahua literature and arts shows that leftist intellectuals at the time similarly recognized the importance of naming for "clarifying contrast." This debate can thus be seen as one of many Sinophone moments avant la lettre, illustrating that even when leftist cultures emanated from (and did not completely reject) the political center of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) or Beijing, there was a historical awareness of the need for their local emplacement.

These early instances of Sinophone articulations should be of value for those of us who are interested in formulating the theoretical impetus of Sinophone studies. Thus Shih's differentiation between "the Sinophone as history" and "the Sinophone as theory"—the first term referring to "historical processes," the second to "ways of looking at the world"—can be misleading.[67] Instead, I propose that we should try to read "the Sinophone as history" theoretically and "the Sinophone as theory" historically. In order to materialize the value of the history of cultural production and polemical debates, a critical examination of the historical strategies of *emplacement* should be incorporated into our *place-based* politics.

I approach the polemical debates in Sinophone cultural history with

these two key questions in mind: How did cultural workers in Hong Kong and this part of Southeast Asia *emplace* Sinophone cultural production locally, regionally, and globally? How did they contend with the forces emanating from multiple centers at the critical moment of the Cold War's intersection with decolonization? The concern with emplacement cuts across cultural production of different political positions, and imaginative or real journeys between places of origin and settlement (or elsewhere) are complicated historical processes, whose representation in linguistic terms frequently encompasses an additional level of complexity. Shih maintains that the "place-based" politics or emphasis on "situatedness" of Sinophone studies has an inherent political value of issuing a critique of Sinocentrism and Chineseness.[68] Such a fixed set of resistant politics—counterhegemonic, antiracist, anti-imperialist, and antidiasporic—often defined from our contemporary perspectives, does not always correspond with historical articulations of emplacement, or emplaced displacement.[69]

This book shows that Cold War–inflected lines of alliance and contention played an important role in Sinophone culture's negotiations with the political and cultural centers of the PRC and the ROC, as well as with local societies. In this context, the different strategies used by authors to define their time and place in relation to other times and places were not purely cultural but sociopolitical as well. Claims of political or cultural affinity with the PRC, the ROC, or the United States cannot be taken at face value but require close analysis in terms of context and language. Let me give an example from the Singapore writer Chia Joo Ming's 謝裕民 2024 novel *Wo de Youli Xing Yiwang* (My dissociative memories), which consists of fictional renditions of oral histories by Singapore's leftist activists in the Cold War period. In one episode, a leftist detainee says to his interviewer,

> I know some people call me "Zhongguo Xiao" 中國痟 (tiong kok siau [Latin transcription in original text]). "Siau" in Fukienese means "craze." In Pinyin transcription, it is "Xiao"; in Zhuyin transcription, it is ㄒㄧㄠ. If I am "Siau" about something, it means that I am somewhere between obsessed with it and crazed about it—nothing too serious.
>
> "Tiong kok siau" translates into a passion for Chinese culture or closeness to China. . . . As I grew older, my range of concern became larger and extended in all directions. I wanted to know more about the "origin" of Chinese culture, and I have felt closer to it as I have come to know more. Is that a problem? I was imprisoned for thirteen years because of it. Why are those who feel close to England or the United

> States not called "ing kok siau" 英國痟 or "bi kok siau" 美國痟? To be frank, the moment we fell in love with China was also when we fell in love with the West. They are two sides of the same coin.[70]

This passage can be read as a leftist's self-positioning vis-à-vis Cold War and anticolonial politics. This representation of self-emplacement is mediated by multiple symbolic systems encoding the differences between written and oral language, the linguistic variations of Fukienese versus Mandarin, and the transcription systems of Pinyin versus Zhuyin. Note that this archetypical Sinophone presentation preserves the term "Chinese" and intentionally keeps it vague as a designator of nation, culture, and people. At the same time, while this passage makes visible the multiple political and cultural frameworks of self-emplacement without conflating them, the speaker implicitly corrects our presentist assumption that these symbolic gestures of self-positioning must be contradictory and cannot be held together. For instance, his "passion for Chinese culture and closeness to China" does not contradict in his mind with his political involvement in Singapore's history, and it is just as significant for the speaker to highlight the local embeddedness in the Fukienese community as it is for him to flaunt his cosmopolitanism. This passage shows that this embedded articulation of em/displacement does not always fit with the "place-based" politics of Sinophone studies defined from contemporary perspectives. Specifically, it counteracts the view that the placedness of the Sinophone needs to be set in contradistinction to discourses of Chineseness, as Shih argues in the article "Against Diaspora."[71]

Every cultural articulation comes from a specific place, including those of displacement or of de-placement, that is, those that deny their placedness. Some seemingly placeless discourses of Chineseness were in fact specifically placed in complex interimperial dynamics that are not visible through the lens of postcolonial theory's binary opposition between domination and resistance. Take, for example, the discourse of Chinese culture conceptualized by the New Confucianist scholars Tang Junyi 唐君毅 and Qian Mu 錢穆, which formed the ideological foundation of the New Asia College in Hong Kong. Their advocacy of Chineseness addressed specifically to overseas youths in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia comes across as nostalgic and essentialist. In a series of essays published in the magazine *Zuoguo Zhoukan*, which was published with US support, Tang Junyi used sentimental language to describe the racism and forced assimilation experienced by the Chinese in Southeast Asia, drawing a comparison to the tragic condition of

"scattering flowers and withering seeds" (*huaguo piaoling*). Tang looked to the glorious past of a strong Chinese empire with some wistfulness, arguing that "if China asserted itself in the contemporary world in the same way that the dynasties of the Han and the Tang did in their times, would the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia face the current situation of exclusion everywhere they turn, of losing their wealth and property, to the extent that they cannot even teach their descendants their own languages?"[72] Yet, while this discourse promulgates Chineseness as a primordial cultural identity and expresses a nostalgic longing for the imperial past, this failure to situate it in its contemporary moment of articulation indicates also "a matter of choice and [an outcome of] other historical determinations" and is "therefore both geographically and temporally specific," as Shih proposes for Sinophone articulations.[73]

The New Confucianist philosophers and their New Asia College practiced a politics that combined collaboration and resistance in the Cold War–inflected political structure of the colonial city. Their insistence on Chinese culture was targeted at the colonial government's denigration of Chinese postsecondary colleges for not living up to the standards of higher education (reflecting a perception on the government's part that Chinese was an inadequate medium for imparting modern knowledge). Their cultural nationalism and resistance to Western modernity were specifically emplaced and should therefore be seen as a Sinophone articulation, even though we do not necessarily agree in all aspects with its politics. As Law Wing Sang points out, "As members of the Cold War chorus, the Neo-Confucianists [*sic*] criticized the triumph of the undemocratic rule of communism far more than they criticized colonialism in Hong Kong." That they "failed to develop an organic relationship with the colonial Hong Kong society that hosted them" reveals their lack of recognition of the sociopolitical underpinnings of their culturalist response to colonialism.[74] This example shows that each polemical articulation should be subject to a historical materialist examination that reveals its situatedness, whether it is a discourse of diaspora or of the Sinophone. If, following the Malaysian Chinese writer and critic Ng Kim Chew 黃錦樹, Chineseness is best understood as a "performance," then all performances have specific contexts and histories.[75] To assume that the varied discourses of Chineseness have one agenda or a singular hegemonic intention is contradictory to the emphasis on the geopolitical situatedness of the Sinophone. In fact, Sinophone studies' critical potentiality is better served if the Sinophone as a heuristic were made capacious enough to address all articulations of Chineseness, progressive or conservative, including those push-backs against Chineseness.

Just as there is an urgent need for postcolonial studies to articulate with Cold War studies when it comes to the Global South, this book argues that Sinophone studies as practiced in the US academy also needs to communicate with historical and cultural studies of the Cold War in order to refine its politics and theory. One lasting effect of the Cold War has been the hardening of territorial, political, and cultural boundaries, such that one's natural reaction after the Cold War is to call for the dismantling of all walls and fences in Chinese cultural production. My project, on the contrary, calls for more complex and self-reflexive understandings of borders: we must ask who is doing the bordering and from whose position is a call for debordering issued. In specific situations, what looks like a legitimate response to the Cold War in calling for the annihilation of all borders could be an imperialist project aimed at erasing those soft boundaries safeguarding the diversity of political and social life. Such a call is often untrue to its own claim, since discriminatory differentiations can be sneaked in to ensure the interests of the powerful parties from which such a call is issued. In this book, my examination of the experiences of a variety of cultural practitioners highlights their tactful engagement with Cold War territorial, political, racial, and cultural boundaries. I intend to bring these historical case studies to bear on the critical examination of the hegemonic bordering practices in our contemporary lives, in turn materializing a Sinophone intervention that mobilizes Chinese language as a bridge, not a barrier, toward accessing the discrepant diversities of human experience and cultural articulation.

Part I

Con-Textuality

The cultural critic Law Wing Sang reads Hong Kong spy films in light of the city's political history of survival in the currents of colonialism, nationalism, and global capitalism. The role the city has been assigned by the colonialist and nationalist powers, as Law sees it, is akin to that of an undercover agent: "pinned to some strategic space-time in the 'grand schemas' of empires, nation-states, and their various political ideologies, 'Hong Kong' always seemed to be taking on some 'grand but secret' mission, the truth of which could never be publicly declared."[1] The first film of the *Infernal Affairs* series (*Wu Jian Dao* 無間道, produced in the late 1990s to the early 2000s), for instance, stages the tension between different ways of reckoning with this historical geopolitical emplacement. Whereas the undercover policeman Chan Wing Yan, played by Tony Leung, goes to great lengths to reclaim his true identity despite his deep involvement in the drug-dealing gang, the film's other main character, Lau Kin-Ming, played by Andy Lau as the mole planted in the police force by the criminal gang, represents an opposing attitude toward history and the future. Lau wants to "wipe it clean [*xi di*], however violent the cleansing might be."[2] The divergent approaches are concerned less with *uncovering* or exposing some inherent truth about the agents themselves than with dealing with the historical layering of different *covers* placed over the city. The figure of the undercover agent thus encapsulates the enigma of Hong Kong confronting its uncertain future after the 1997 handover, raising the question, in Law's terms, of how to "restore the status of the human" (*chongxin zuoren*) for the city.[3]

Law Wing Sang's vivid description of Hong Kong as a "strategic space-time in the 'grand schemas' of empires, nation-states, and their various

political ideologies" speaks exactly to the situation in which the meaning of a space is acquired through overdetermining geopolitical forces that control and regulate the global flows into and out of it, shaping its relationality with other parts of the world. In part I of this book, "Con-Texuality," I set the scene for my subsequent analysis of cultural production in Sinophone Hong Kong and Southeast Asia. While this first part functions as context in the conventional sense, it simultaneously reads the geopolitical production of these places as "con-text." Context is generally understood unproblematically as the setting or background, often social or political, that constitutes an original condition determining the meaning of a cultural or literary text. But how a place becomes the context or setting for some type of international politics, such as the Cold War or decolonization, is not to be taken for granted; rather, it is in itself a political process that calls for an analysis of what the political geographer Gearóid Ó Tuathail has called "the scripting of global space," by which a place is assigned a particular role in the overall geopolitical mapping.[4]

How do we read the context with an eye toward its history of textualization—refusing to, as the character in *Infernal Affairs* proposes, "wipe it clean, however violent the cleansing might be"? We can start by rethinking the meaning of geopolitics as something more than the realism of international relations, and instead see it as a text that bears evidence of the geographing of political power in space. "Understanding geopolitics as text," Martin Müller states, "opens an avenue to see global space as a malleable creation with political purpose and potentially multiple meanings."[5] Cold War bordering in this part of the book is understood not as the Manichean divide between the Left and the Right, but as a cartographic configuration of the global space aligned with oppositional political blocs and ideologies. Notably, Hong Kong and the particular part of Southeast Asia that I will examine here proved to be "malleable" hot spots whose "multiple meanings" became the center of political contestation. Key to such a renewed understanding of geopolitics as text is to take geopolitics "beyond the arena of statecraft" and expand geopolitical agents beyond "state-society intellectuals and institutions" to include ordinary people.[6] Editors, journalists, and writers of pulp fiction are agents in the production of geopolitical knowledge as well, playing a role that puts them on par with intellectuals of statecraft such as Robert Blum (discussed in chapter 1), the founding director of the Asia Foundation (TAF), an influential organization with close connections to the US government.

This part of the book draws its sources from various types of documents, ranging from TAF's archives, which include Blum's monthly reports

and correspondence with the foundation's Chinese collaborator, the Union Press; to the literary and cultural journals published by the Union Press; to spy thrillers authored by Hong Kong writers. Reading them in conjunction with one another ("con-textually," in fact) reinforces the notion that the spaces covered by this book—Hong Kong and a portion of Southeast Asia—can be thought of as social text that also requires interpretation and reading.[7] The intertextual conjunction between these different texts illustrates the meaning of the Cold War as it was staged in this part of Asia and demonstrates the role that cultural productions played in this process. In this part, the political history of the global Cold War, the history of a cultural institution established with specific political agendas, a serial publication with several regional editions, and a single spy thriller all call for textual analysis because they are not closed texts with predetermined meanings. Rather, it is through reading them together and against one another that we can begin to understand the cultural politics of the Cold War.

While it is true that, as Ó Tuathail asserts, "simply to describe a foreign policy is to engage in geopolitics," not all descriptions are the same. Even those that are created for the ostensible goal of "normalizing a particular world," such as cultural texts that were created to advance a certain political agenda in support of a certain worldview, have an open-ended textuality that requires decoding.[8] To that end, this first part of the book employs two forms of reading—infrastructural reading and distractive reading—in congruence with the archives examined in each chapter.

In chapter 1, which takes as its subject the ostensibly "private" Asia Foundation and its Chinese collaborator the Union Press, I employ infrastructural reading to explore a regional network for Sinophone cultural production that extended from Hong Kong as a cultural hub to much of Southeast Asia and some parts of East Asia. The word "infrastructure" brings to mind technical systems such as electrical cables and water pipes, roads and railways, but recent studies from anthropology, history, and other fields have broadened the definition, revising certain taken-for-granted perceptions and injecting new analytical vigor into infrastructure studies. Brian Larkin defines "infrastructure" as "built networks that facilitate the flow of goods, people, or ideas and allow for their exchange over space."[9] TAF's work in Asia and its partnership with the Union Press can be viewed as a Cold War infrastructure not just because it relied on "built networks" that "facilitated" transnational flows, but because it mediated and regulated the movement of people, culture, and ideas with a set political agenda in mind, thus performing the bordering function of an infra-

structural setup. This cultural infrastructure had what Penny Harvey and colleagues have called "massive ordering effects across multiple scales" on the chosen geography of this book.[10]

An infrastructural reading means more than just reading TAF's infrastructure as a network. It also means drawing on the epistemological insights gained through a closer look at something that is generally hidden from view, as the prefix *infra-* implies, and that is often taken for granted until it breaks down, which is how we commonly approach a technical system such as a power grid. Among the scholars who have urged us not to take this *infra-* for granted are Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, whose proposed notion of "infrastructural inversion" is described by Harvey as "a method of figure/ground reversal for bringing infrastructural relations into view." These scholars and their methods "direct attention to the taken for granted, and by doing so expose the relational infrastructural fabric to interrogation, and thus to politics. Connections appear as contingent, even fragile."[11] Two kinds of embedded relationships come into view through a reading of TAF's cultural projects as infrastructure: the relationship of TAF's programs to the places that sustained them and that TAF sought to change, and the relationship with the preexisting cultural talents, resources, and circulatory channels in Chinese immigrant societies, including those that the TAF projects attracted and brought together. In both respects, TAF-sponsored projects performed an infrastructural grafting in Hong Kong and this part of Southeast Asia, which in turn made their geopolitical symbolization in this part of Asia contingent and contested.

Chapter 2 exemplifies what I call a distractive reading of Hong Kong and its popular culture. Hong Kong was an important node of transport and exchange for both sides of the Cold War. In the words of the Hong Kong poet Ye Si, "Hong Kong is an empty space turned into a dueling ground for various ideologies; it is an empty box waiting to be filled, a floating signifier." This makes it hard to tell a Hong Kong story, because "everyone has tried to prove that Hong Kong cannot tell its own story; that its story has to be told by others."[12] As Ó Tuathail reminds us, "the creation of the backdrop or setting upon which 'international politics' takes place" is "itself part of world politics."[13] Yet how does one behold the "dueling ground" and the action within, the box and its content, simultaneously? Chapter 2 argues that the Hong Kong spy thriller—a genre that was heavily instrumentalized by both sides of the Cold War to spread propagandistic messages from this strategic location—delivers an answer. Fostering a multifocal reading habit that gives attention both to the locale's condition

and to the action therein, the spy thriller allows us to peel back, following Law's metaphor of Hong Kong as a story about an undercover secret agent, the historical layers in the city's process of political becoming.

Law posits the proliferation of popular culture's depictions of "righteous action, social ethics, [and] family relationships" as an outcome of the British colonial government's negotiation with the political forces on the Left and the Right during the Cold War.[14] While formulating its cultural policies, "the colonial government wanted to maintain [Hong Kong's] role as a free port, but it was afraid that the openness of the city would foster a welcoming environment for political activities to the extent that they might disrupt the stability of this place," so the government "employed a range of strategies to ensure that the freedom of carrying out cultural activities also means they are sufficiently 'depoliticized.'"[15] Compared to martial arts fictions and romantic stories—"depoliticized" narratives of "righteous action, social ethics, [or] family relationships"—the spy thriller best captures the contradiction in the city's avowed freedom by barely hiding its political content. Many spy thrillers were written by journalists or media workers; they often took current political incidents as subject matter, and the narratives usually reveal the political leanings of the writer or the publisher rather explicitly. The genre in some cases borders closely on the "political novel," of which the writer Ruan Lang's 阮朗 *Jinling Chun Meng* (Pipe dreams at Nanjing), a fictional rendition of Chiang Kai-shek's political career, could be considered a prime example.[16] Ruan's spy narratives will be examined in chapter 2, and they are unsurprisingly not much "depoliticized" in terms of content or ideological stance.

The spy thriller's proximity to politics is a reflection of the cross-contamination and mutual appropriation between political propaganda and a capitalist culture industry in Cold War Hong Kong. Popular literature that was either a direct outcome of or in one way or another entangled with a particular Cold War faction made this culture a *con-text* for the scripting of the space of the city by geopolitical forces. I hyphenate this term here to draw attention to the Cold War's signifying trace in the domain of cultural production, instead of positing the former as the inert background or determining factor for the latter. It is well known and much commented on that not all writers threw themselves into political propaganda wholeheartedly, and not all political statements in popular literature could be taken at face value. The murky boundary between politics and culture calls for reflection on how this border was engaged differently by political powers on the one hand, and by writers and cultural critics on the other. While the

former tried to direct the attention of consumers of popular culture either toward or away from politics, some writers and cultural critics on both the Left and the Right decried this kind of cross-contamination and worked to shore up the boundary between the two. But given the city's complex cultural ecology, neither approach is sufficient for addressing the situation on the ground.

Chapter 2 instead proposes distractive reading as a strategy to decode a striated cultural field with a lack of clear division between politics and culture, Left and Right, and "pure" or "serious" literature and popular culture. Distraction is not the same as escapism, for as Michael Wood puts it, "The distracted reader is not just absent or daydreaming; he/she is attracted, however fitfully, by a rival interest."[17] A distractive approach to the city's popular culture allows us to attend to how political expressions were articulated in popular forms, while noting that popular distraction was by no means apolitical.

The spy thriller's excessive politicization—a probable reason for its having been disfavored and hitherto neglected by most cultural critics in comparison to martial arts fiction, which has been well studied—can be read as a narrative of popular geopolitics, one that enhances the reader's awareness of a place's inscription on the international political map. A multifocal understanding of the genre that gives attention to both the popular form and its politicization exposes the Cold War powers' historical (in)attention to Hong Kong itself, thereby questioning the conventional perspective of the city as merely (to return to Ó Tuathail) the "backdrop or setting upon which 'international politics' takes place." In chapter 2, I thus show that the burden of making Hong Kong all but "an empty space" rests not solely on the writer, but also on the reader. Only when we have learned to read Hong Kong and its literature con-textually can we begin to think against the grain of the spatial installation of Cold War powers in the city. By articulating and textualizing the historical situation that created this genre, the spy thriller reveals the geopolitical consciousness of the city in ways that anticipate the discussion of Hong Kong subjectivity that will follow several decades later.

1

Infrastructure's Doubling Effect in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia

In November 1960, Robert Blum, the president of the Asia Foundation (TAF), paid a visit to the private US nonprofit's field office in Singapore. In a memorandum the following month in which he shared some thoughts about the trip, he sounded a note of uncertainty about his observations:

> I had not realized until my visit to Singapore how precarious the situation is there. Last year the PAP [People's Action Party] won the elections on a radical, left-wing, anti-Western program. However, under the leadership of Lee Kuan Yew it has moderated its policies somewhat and is definitely anti-Communist. . . . Local anti-American feeling is said to be particularly strong among the students and is reflected in the attitudes of the government. . . . In this difficult situation The Asia Foundation has survived and maintained for itself a position of peculiar importance. As evidenced in the Singapore scholarship program the Singapore government is prepared to deal with us although it is not prepared to be identified with The Asia Foundation in any public way. The Foundation has a range of contacts and an acceptability which are unique for an American organization in the community. However, at best this situation is a precarious one and any significant change in the political balance of power in Singapore could seriously affect the Foundation's position.[1]

Before serving as the founding president of TAF, a position that he occupied from 1954 to 1962, Blum had served in various positions in the US government, including as head of the Economic Cooperation Administration

(an agency of the Marshall Plan) in Indochina and director of staff for the 1953 Committee on International Information Activities (CIIA). He had attained counterintelligence experience in Southeast Asia, which prepared him for his new role as the leader of TAF. His concern about the situation in Singapore is recorded in one of a series of reports to the board of trustees that describe his visits to various TAF field offices, documenting both the ambition and the challenges of building and managing the organization's programs across Asia. In juxtaposing descriptions of the foundation's work with immediate and careful observations and analysis of political conditions in Asia, these reports provide a good record of the political and social context of TAF's projects.

This particular report was written a little over a month after Blum's return from Singapore. A year before his visit, the socialist-leaning PAP, headed by Lee Kuan Yew, had won a landslide victory in Singapore's general election. And yet, despite this outcome from a democratic election, Blum repeated the word "precarious" several times in his memo about the trip, showing that he considered Singapore's situation as yet another example of the overall challenge posed by decolonization movements to the United States' efforts to advance its Cold War interests in this part of Asia. Blum's monthly report from November 1961, for example, which I discuss in the introduction, shows that he clearly knew that foreign organizations trying to operate in the newly decolonized nations were likely to be perceived by the radical sectors of these societies as an "instrument of American imperialism."[2] In response to this condition, Blum tried to steer TAF's work away from the previous "psychological warfare" approach that the United States had taken in its propaganda campaigns targeting Asia. In an August 1953 letter from Blum to the staff of the Committee for Free Asia (CFA), precursor to TAF, Blum stated: "The United States can do more harm than good by merely trying to exhort other people to see things our way." He continued, "It is not enough to be anti-Communist. We must have something positive to offer the world."[3] These same points are highlighted in a 1953 report to President Dwight D. Eisenhower by the CIIA, where Blum was still working at the time, and from which position Blum had also previously expressed skepticism about "psychological warfare" in correspondence to CIA leaders.[4] The important aspect of the US public diplomacy campaign in Asia, Blum believed, was to offer "something positive," by which he meant the various cultural, educational, and informational programs that TAF was running in Asia in the 1950s and 1960s.[5]

"Precarity" and "promise" are two keywords that we can use to ana-

lyze TAF's infrastructure in Asia, which extended to Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Laos, India, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. As shown in Blum's monthly reports, this vast network reflects the territorialization of American interests in Asia during the Cold War. TAF's leadership tried to characterize the organization's relationship with Asia as one of responding to the needs of Asians. In an article addressing the readers of the Indian magazine *United Asia*, Blum strategically countered the perception of "unfriendly observers" who viewed American organizations "as evidence of United States imperialism" by emphasizing TAF's status as a private foundation rather than a government agency. (That it was funded by the CIA was revealed by several news outlets, including an investigative report published in the political magazine *Ramparts* in 1967.)[6] He further explained that "the Asia Foundation avoids directly administering any programs in Asia. To do so would mean setting up American activities conceived and directed by Americans rather than by Asians."[7] Blum also maintained this line of argument with American audiences. "A better image of the United States cannot be projected in Asia by a step-up of propaganda and psychological 'tricks,'" he stated in a speech at a high school in California in 1956. "Because of conditions in the world today and the fact that we are dependent upon others in spite of our position of power, it is all important that we develop understanding of their viewpoints."[8]

Yet, whether these promises could be fulfilled and what kind of effect they had on local worlds cannot be assessed without analyzing how TAF's infrastructure in Asia operated. Here I use the word "infrastructure" intentionally, to draw on existing discussions of technical systems such as power grids, roadways, and transportation. TAF's network was not as tangible, but it was, after all, a "'material form' equipped with 'the connective capacity . . . to enable circulation or to sustain particular life projects.'"[9] Considering this network as an infrastructure does not mean emphasizing its "thingness"; rather, "infrastructure is a fundamentally relational concept."[10] In other words, this perspective allows us to focus on how the TAF infrastructure relied on existing circulatory networks and how it transformed the existing relationality within and between various Asian communities and the world beyond.

There is irrefutable evidence that TAF was connected to the CIA in the 1950s and 1960s and that this relationship was hidden from both the American public and the foundation's Asian collaborators. But until we have examined TAF's work from the Asian end, we cannot fully assess the

imprint of the Cold War in this part of Asia. This chapter uses the foundation's archives as well as the publications it sponsored to examine how it engaged with its Asian partners, focusing in particular on its intervention into Sinophone cultural production in the 1950s and 1960s. The crown jewels of TAF-sponsored cultural programs in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia were two publications: the *Chinese Student Weekly* 中國學生周報 (*CSW*), a Chinese-language cultural magazine published in Hong Kong between 1952 and 1974, with regional editions in various Southeast Asian locations; and the literary journal *Chao Foon* 蕉風 (meaning "Breeze from Banana Leaves"), founded in Singapore in 1955 and later based out of Kuala Lumpur. These publications were not directly associated with TAF; the relationship was mediated by the Union Press (UP), a Chinese publishing house that received funding from TAF throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In addition to funding the publication of these magazines and books in various genres (including textbooks), TAF subsidized student activities and student centers through UP. All these programs, conducted across national borders in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia, targeted young "overseas Chinese," as TAF called the ethnic Chinese communities in Southeast Asia and refugees in Hong Kong.[11] Each of the two serial publications offered its own representation of this Cold War regional imaginary: UP's major publication, the *CSW*, exemplified TAF's ambitious transnationalism through its regional editions in Indonesia, Malaya, and Burma in addition to the Hong Kong version; in contrast, the more literary *Chao Foon* initially set out to emplace itself locally in Malaya, although it too drew on resources, both material and human, from elsewhere.

How do we read textual archives of such enormous scope? The *CSW* was a serial with a long publication history and multiple regional editions, and *Chao Foon*, though limited to one locality, is still being published today. In considering TAF's project from the lens of infrastructural studies, I suggest that we take Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star's proposal of "infrastructural inversion" further by considering that the "hiddenness" (as connoted by the prefix *infra-*) or invisibility of an infrastructure is itself a historical condition that ensures its operation.[12] In this context, "figure/ground reversal" is not enough to reveal various infrastructural relations; rather, we need to take into account the (im)possibility of certain relations being revealed to certain parties. In other words, I suggest that our reading of TAF's cultural projects in Asia should aim to assemble not some totalizing view, but rather a juxtaposition of "partial views" held by the Chinese editors and readers of the publications as well as the staff at the American

foundation. Those various viewing positions are historically embedded situations integral to this infrastructural operation.

This chapter demonstrates three sorts of "partial views" in relation to the *CSW* and *Chao Foon*. First, the partiality of the contemporary reader. Neither publication has been completely forgotten, but their contemporary reception is limited and partial. Modern readers view these texts in terms of their own particular geographic, political, and social positionality, which shapes which parts of these huge archives they attend to. Historical memory of the *CSW*, for instance, has been selective. In Hong Kong today, the magazine is often mapped onto contemporary concerns about Hong Kong local identity, with most interpretations that emerged in the 1990s responding to the impending "handover" of Hong Kong to Mainland China. For some people, it illustrates the political "freedom" in Hong Kong of the 1950s and 1960s (in comparison with life under the PRC and the ROC), because the city's ability to accommodate both a Communist press and an anti-Communist press was "evidence of a free press in Hong Kong."[13] Others see in this archive Hong Kong's cosmopolitanism, as demonstrated in its coverage of Western avant-garde culture from the late 1960s to the 1970s. Still others use the magazine as a case study of the complex intersection of the discourses of colonialism, the Cold War, and Chinese diasporic nationalism, in order to evaluate the articulation of anticolonial localism in Hong Kong.[14]

Indeed, only the Hong Kong edition of the *CSW* is widely read now; current readers have shown little interest in the various Southeast Asian editions of this magazine, indicating that they have mostly accepted the idea that there are strong temporal, spatial, and political boundaries between Hong Kong and Southeast Asia—even though these boundaries were constantly crossed and contested by the historical cultural workers of the UP and the employees of TAF. The UP's connections with TAF have continued to spark debate among contemporary cultural critics, pertaining not just to the orientation of the still-published *Chao Foon* (is it colonialist or localist, realist or modernist, mainly literary or purely political?), but also to the overall future direction of literary production in Singapore and Malaysia.[15] Contemporary investigations into TAF-supported projects often put their historical participants on the defensive. In oral interviews, several former UP leaders claimed that they were not aware that this publication was backed by the United States. Some of them denied that TAF intervened in the daily operations of the *CSW* and the press's other publications and projects.[16] How do we read these denials? Should we interpret them as a form

of historical revisionism, or should we take the UP leaders at their word?

Herein lies the "partial view" in the second sense: the fact that TAF wanted to treat its collaboration with the UP as a covert operation kept many of its Asian collaborators in the dark. This is clearly documented by its archive. In the contract between the two entities, TAF insisted that "outsiders . . . not become aware of the source of financial assistance of *The Chinese Student Weekly*."[17] TAF also maintained direct contact with only a handful of UP leaders, and only those who could communicate competently in English. In other words, the "partial view" of the editors and writers for UP periodicals was intentionally limited and historically conditioned. This might explain some UP workers' lack of knowledge of the company's real funding source. But it might also imply that disclosing the real funding source is and is not so important, since this information alone can only partially explain how the Chinese publishing house operated under Cold War conditions.

This leads to "partial view" in the third sense, which reflects both the way that the TAF infrastructure had to adapt itself to the changing terrain of Asia and work with existing circulatory networks, and the epistemological partiality associated with any cultural product that circulates beyond its original context of production and thus opens itself up to citation and interpretation. In other words, TAF's ambitious cultural infrastructure across Asia precluded a "total view" for either the Chinese or the Americans. The "partial views" of both groups were produced by the highly contingent nature of TAF's projects in Asia and the multiple layers of mediation between the organization and the UP—the material and structural constraints that shaped how meaning was relayed between TAF's headquarters in San Francisco and common readers in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia.

If this interpretation sounds like a not entirely critical depiction of TAF's ideological control over Chinese-language publications, that is because I argue that ideological control should not be interpreted narrowly. Too often we assume a rigid division between the text (the cultural publications) and the context (the archive, institutional history, etc.), leaning on the latter for an authoritative interpretation of the former. Yet as I argue in the introduction to part I, the unidirectionality of this relationship has to be questioned; that context is itself an open text contributes to a more nuanced and complex understanding of the relationship between politics and culture during the Cold War. As I will show, the Cold War's imprint on Chinese culture was manifested less through the censoring of content

than through the shaping of an entire cultural field and of certain aesthetic standards. The impact of these changes has persisted well beyond the lifespan of any specific publication or cultural institution.

I. The Asia Foundation as Infrastructure

The UP's collaboration with TAF's predecessor, the Committee for Free Asia, started with a proposal in 1951 to establish networks of circulation that would counter Communist propaganda.[18] In this proposal, the Youth Union for a Democratic China (YUDC), the seed organization for the Union Press, requested funding to publish a periodical and to set up a "book service"—a circulation network that would enable "anti-communist books and periodicals" to "penetrate further into the households."[19] James Ivy, the CFA's representative in Hong Kong, highly endorsed both projects, underscoring the importance of "disseminat[ing] anti-Communist information" in "this Colony where there is a tremendous flood of Communist publications."[20]

That Hong Kong was chosen as the center of production and a key node in the circulation of Chinese-language materials throughout Asia reflected TAF's geopolitical understanding of the strategic importance of this colonial city to the entire "overseas Chinese" world. This understanding was succinctly expressed in a document from the US Information Service (USIS), a US government office in Hong Kong with which TAF collaborated frequently.[21] At the end of the 1950s, one of the USIS's "country plans" described Cold War Hong Kong as attracting a motley crew of political parties and interest groups; it was "a place where communists, nationalists, third-forcers, foreign powers, strict commercialists, philanthropists and missionaries pursue their various ends without overt conflict." The USIS saw two main advantages to working in the city: Hong Kong's "overriding value" was its "proximity to the Chinese mainland"; its "second resource" was "a combination of creative Chinese talent and well-developed media facilities." The document expressed the importance of cultural and media workers to the USIS's plans, explaining, "The refugees from communism who stopped in Hong Kong rather than going to Taiwan or other places included large numbers of Chinese skilled in printing, press, magazine, book, motion picture and radio work. Usually anti-communist in sentiment, they form the largest community of creative Chinese talent in the field of communication outside the mainland. Our capacity to exploit informa-

tion coming from the mainland would be small without these people who make possible our use of Hong Kong as a publication and radio production and distribution center."[22]

Another key participant in TAF's infrastructure, one that both the USIS and TAF saw as the primary target for their propaganda campaigns as well as the group that provided the human and material resources for their projects, was the "overseas Chinese." This group, so identified by the US organizations, was a complicated mobile society, as I point out in the introduction, consisting of populations with different experiences of migration and settlement who manifested a variety of connections with the local world and China, determined by multiple factors not exclusively reducible to political leanings. Those who left China after 1949, when it officially became the Communist PRC, constituted a new group and cannot be considered as representative of the overall cultural and political orientation of Chinese migrant communities everywhere. The term "overseas Chinese" is misleading because it treats ethnic Chinese immigrants to various points in East and Southeast Asia as if they were a single homogeneous bloc, when in fact they were a heterogeneous network of people with different languages, dialects, cultural and political values, and talents.

In 1954, the USIS issued a directive emphasizing that this group crucially constituted a Cold War front, and therefore it was necessary for the United States to win their "hearts and minds."[23] In a memo written that same year, Blum reiterated this position, saying that "one of the major objectives of our overseas Chinese programs is to help the local Chinese to prevent communist efforts to dominate the Chinese in Southeast Asia."[24] TAF's Chinese-language projects, including its collaboration with the UP, were part of this operation to win over the overseas Chinese.

In fact, the overseas Chinese was in itself an infrastructural form—an assemblage of social network, knowledge, material, and cultural resources, unified (or divided) by identification with (or distancing from) "Chinese" as race and language defined in various ways. The TAF tried to appropriate the cultural resources of the overseas Chinese for its own political ends. For instance, it courted Ting Yen-shih, a Chinese publisher and bookseller who had helped the committee set up an "Overseas Chinese Publication Distribution Company" in the early 1950s. The CFA's plan for this company described it as a "distribution project" aimed at "accelerat[ing] the distribution of non-Communist materials in areas outside Hong Kong." In addition to a central office in Hong Kong, it would have branches in Bangkok, Rangoon, Saigon, Singapore, Tokyo, Djakarta, and Manila.[25] As envisioned by the CFA, this distribution network would be a commer-

cial endeavor run on a business model; the committee leadership explicitly stated that "we do not wish to supply material for free distribution."[26] Essentially, the CFA wanted to promote the model of private enterprise as part of its political message, viewing it as a way of reiterating the ideological differences between the capitalist "Free World" and the socialist management style.[27]

Ting Yen-shih's value in this endeavor lay in his own existing business network (including the circulation pathways in Thailand and Saigon that he had established with the two magazines he had published before collaborating with TAF), as well as his personal relationships with others in the region's Chinese-language publishing network. (Ting would also have reach in Burma, according to TAF, where he could rely on a friend's distribution service.) The CFA's partnership with him exemplifies "infrastructural grafting," a term coined by digital media scholar Tung-hui Hu to describe the phenomenon of "newer networks grafted on top of older, more established networks."[28] As anthropologist Heather Mellquist Lehto further explains, "The concept of infrastructural grafts helps to capture the enduring presence of preexisting material arrangements, social protocols, and power relations within contemporary systems."[29]

The strategic move by TAF to graft its infrastructure onto existing cultural networks in Asia signaled the foundation's departure from a top-down approach of propaganda and psychological warfare. Indeed, the organization's primary reason for changing its name from the Committee for Free Asia to the Asia Foundation was to distance itself from propagandizing, which was the stated mission of its sister organization, the Committee for Free Europe. As Blum explained in his general committee quarterly report for April 1954, "the similarity of our present name to the Committee for Free Europe has confused many, giving the impression that we are allied with that organization and that our approach is based on propaganda. This confusion, particularly in the countries of Asia, has led to a misinterpretation of our work, methods and objectives that has hampered our efforts." Therefore, he wrote, "the Executive Committee is considering selection of a new name which should dissipate any confusion."[30] This shift away from direct propaganda was explained in a CFA "Background Information" report that stated that the foundation would now emphasize working with local Asian talents and resources. This document highlights the collaborative programs that replaced Radio Free Asia, one of which involved working with Japanese radio stations and broadcasters for programming in Japan.[31]

Blum's remarks demonstrate that he was sensitive to what Brian Lar-

kin would term the "political address" of infrastructure, which in this case was the Asia Foundation as an infrastructural setup. It is important, Larkin argues, to examine not only how infrastructures "move things," but also how they "address people." Like art objects, infrastructures are for Larkin "always fantastic as well as technical objects. They are made up of desire as much as concrete or steel and to separate off these dimensions is to miss out on the powerful ways they are consequential for our world."[32] This is how infrastructures adopt cultural forms: they express emotions and desires and shape the world that creates them.

TAF perceived its collaboration with its Asian counterparts as a strategy for addressing Asians in ways that would project the image that Asia desired for itself, and one that would be acceptable to the United States as well. But it seems that TAF's political address—or indeed, any form of symbolic address—was open to the interpretation of multiple parties. Recall that in his November 1960 memorandum cited earlier in this chapter, Blum sounded the alarm about the foundation's future in Singapore because of the "precarious" situation there. In addition to the political flux of a continent undergoing decolonization, the historical experience of colonialism had infused a deep-seated distrust in some Asian leaders toward aid programs from a Cold War superpower. An exchange highlighted by David Price between Blum and Indonesian prime minister Ali Sastroamidjojo during their 1956 meeting is telling in this respect: "When the prime minister asked about connections between the Committee for Free Asia and the Asia Foundation, Blum stressed that the foundation 'conducted no propaganda whatsoever' to which he commented obliquely that 'there were many kinds of propaganda: was not the mere fact of giving aid a form of propaganda?'"[33] Blum defended TAF's political address against this form of questioning, stating in the introduction to the 1963 book *Cultural Affairs and Foreign Relations*, which he edited, that the "misunderstandings" that plague activities of cultural exchange (like those of TAF) "are a price we pay for living in a highly charged political atmosphere in which the political test—and often a short-range one at that—pervades almost all forms of international discourses."[34] Blum pointed out once again the centrality of the local context to political desires, emphasizing that "an understanding of the cultural and social environment in which we have to carry out our national policies is indispensable to the effectiveness of those policies."[35]

But how does one measure "the effectiveness of those policies"? While the effect of cultural exchange projects, foreign visits by scholars and students, and textbook compilations or curriculum design can be demon-

strated using various data points, that is not equivalent to the *real* effect of publications and cultural materials because a lot hinges on interpretation. This does not mean that the political agendas of these cultural projects dissipate in this emphasis on interpretation, but it does mean that it is more difficult for the meaning of a cultural object to be controlled by those who designed the project. The meaning of the "political address" of TAF's infrastructure was thus always fraught and weighed down by the baggage of politics (no matter the motives of the exchange), and TAF's programs struggled in the "highly charged political atmosphere" in Asia during the Cold War.

II. The *Infra-* of Infrastructure

Blum's monthly reports to TAF's board of trustees juxtapose descriptions of the foundation's work across various Asian locations with immediate and detailed observations of the political situation in Asia. While it is possible that they were not circulated exclusively within the foundation but also were used by the CIA for intelligence, these reports lend themselves to being read against the grain so as to enable what Penny Harvey calls "a method of figure/ground reversal for bringing infrastructural relations into view." They show the "contingent, even fragile" connections of the network, which caused TAF to need Asia's "ground" to support itself.[36] In addition to describing the foundation's work in many Asian locations, Blum's reports discuss further expansions, recounting the opening of new offices and preparations for new openings, for instance, in Laos in March 1959 and India in December 1961, as well as forays into entirely new areas, including the northeastern part of Afghanistan, Borneo, and the Ryukyus.[37] As the network expanded in scale and increasingly became the "ground" for the "figure" of US politics and the object that the United States sought to influence, Asia was neither a passive background nor an uncharted territory to be mapped and gridded by TAF's network.

The *infra-* that TAF officials needed to attend to, according to the reports, was not just domestic politics in specific Asian countries (the "trouble spots" in Indonesia and India), but also alternative networks that did not adhere to Cold War geopolitical alignments, such as the nonaligned alliance that spawned after the 1955 Bandung Conference, as well as the shifting contours of political and economic alliances within the intra-Asian context. On September 3, 1958, for instance, Blum reported that "the recognition of Communist China by Cambodia in mid-July presents a number

of serious implications for our programs in that country, especially in our work with the overseas Chinese."[38] Blum's reports repeatedly highlight the shifting ground of politics in Asia, where "networks and their components can be interconnected" but "their alignments are never exact."[39]

With the support of funding from TAF, the Union Press developed its own infrastructure that connected Hong Kong to many parts of Southeast Asia, publishing various regional editions of the *CSW* and distributing textbooks for the Chinese school curriculum across the region. However, even as the UP worked to advance the goals of the American foundation by acting as an experimental probe in the community, the UP and its publications revealed the complexity of the variegated human territory collectively referred to as the overseas Chinese by TAF. As historian Meredith Oyen tells us, "State Department ideas about the overseas Chinese were based on a few stereotypes about the population, including the idea that everyone shared certain important characteristics: they all experienced discrimination in their places of residence that required assistance to combat, they would always consider China their true home no matter how many generations removed from the mainland they were and they desired a strong Chinese government to act on their behalf."[40] Through the work of the UP, TAF quickly discovered the limits of such oversimplification and the untenability of assumptions about Chinese homogeneity and "ancestral ties" (which were embedded in the very notion of overseas Chinese, the idea that there was what Wang Gungwu has called "a single Chinese diaspora").[41] This was particularly true after World War II and during the Cold War period, when most Chinese in Southeast Asia transitioned from sojourners to settlers, putting down roots as these countries pursued decolonization and established independent sovereignties.

A close look at Blum's report from his trip to Malaya in 1961 reveals the challenges that the UP needed to face of its own embeddedness in this Southeast Asian location of its projects. This report captures a conversation Blum had with William Fleming, TAF's Malaya representative. According to Blum, Fleming "emphasiz[ed] the risks involved in our working with the Union Press organization even though the Malayan government fully approves of this activity at the present time." Blum was concerned that the UP's strong connection to Chinese culture (and TAF's connection to the UP) might anger the Malayan government. "There is always a danger that the UP may become involved in what will appear to be Chinese communal work and the Malays would take very strong exception to this and criticize us for our support," Blum wrote.[42] His report captures the Malayan gov-

ernment's sensitivity toward interethnic relations within the country and its insistence on Malay privileges in a multiracial society. In a summary of a lunch meeting with Malayan prime minister Tengku Abdul Rahman, Blum said, "I was struck by his emphasis on the continuing seriousness of the communal problem in Malaya and his strong determination to see to it that the Chinese cooperate fully in a Malay-dominated society. . . . He also spoke out against the communists and their continued attempt at subversion, principally through the Chinese."[43]

Blum's report about his meeting with the prime minister confirmed something that TAF already knew about the Chinese communities in Singapore and Malaya. As sociologist Ernest Goh has explained, in Singapore (and to a certain extent in Malaya), Chinese school graduates were seen as a "vanguard of Communist infiltration, subversion and revolution." Chinese cultural institutions were subject to criticism of "Chinese chauvinism," "reduce[d] . . . to caricature."[44] Because of this attitude, the UP adopted a largely pro-government stance, repeatedly emphasizing that it was politically opposed to the leftist student activists in the Chinese schools. Still, it was viewed with suspicion in Malaysia and Singapore simply because its Chinese cultural programs supposedly inspired "communal" feelings in the Chinese communities.

The UP projects funded by TAF had the political goal of exerting influence on Chinese students in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia. In the process of the UP's operation, linguistic and cultural differences and educational disparities were exposed as the editors at these organizations sought to assimilate to the local conditions. According to a memo sent from TAF's Singapore representative, Pat Judge, to the Hong Kong representative, Jim Ivy, in January 1955 (a little over a month after the *CSW* launched its Malayan edition), Judge "had heard from the local Chinese . . . that the language used in the *Chinese Student Weekly* was beyond the comprehension of many hereabouts." Judge said that he had shared this feedback with the *CSW* editors, who "said that they would give this some consideration."[45] The UP then decided that the Malayan edition should be edited and printed locally, an idea that reflected the organization's alignment with TAF's position and possibly also pressure from the Malayan government to integrate this Chinese-language magazine more fully into the local context. So in July 1956, the Malayan version of the magazine dropped *Chinese* from its title and restarted the issue numbering. Gradually, it began to cover more topics related to local politics. It advised students to stay away from activism with a leftist orientation, it expressed worries about the future of Chinese

education in Singapore and Malaya, and it promoted the advantages to Chinese students of studying the Malay language. The magazine effectively morphed into a local text by tapping into local networks of writers and readers, yet it retained connections with Hong Kong and, to a lesser extent, Taiwan. (In the late 1960s and the 1970s, there would also be a localization of the *CSW* for Hong Kong.) The complexity of these texts—deeply embedded in local contexts, written largely by local writers, and responding to local political issues—cautions us against reading the *CSW* as an urtext of a "single diaspora" of overseas Chinese.

The TAF archive underscores the complexity of authority commanded by such descriptors as "local" or the even more complex term "Malayanization," which could refer to either the dominant position of the late colonial or early postcolonial state or the position of migrant groups that supported anticolonialism and intended to embrace the Malayan nation. That the UP's cultural projects underwent localization does not mean that it got rid of TAF's influence or relinquished the funding support. American influence could be registered at a different scale. Infrastructures are not value free; they "express ideas about what kind of society one wants to build, who deserves what, and what kind of social relations ought to be promoted."[46] When we look closely at the *infra-* in infrastructure, examining both the figure and the ground, we can see both how the Cold War transformed Asia and how Asia redefined the Cold War.

III. Gaps and Interstices

TAF's network was also a Cold War border that policed its boundary and guarded itself against the "outside" to the network. In fact, there was a military logic behind its territorialization. This is clearly illustrated in discussions of the Union Press's 1961 request for funding to buy several apartments on Hong Kong Island to be used as *CSW*-affiliated student centers. In a memo to Blum, the Hong Kong TAF representative requested $35,000 on behalf of the UP, reiterating both how important it was for the *CSW* to maintain direct contact with Hong Kong youths and how strategically placed the proposed center would be: "The *CSW* proposes to establish a center in the North Point area, which as indicated in the map is adjacent to the Wan Chai area in which the *Youth Garden* is now located. This location appears to be excellent not only in terms of juxtaposition to the *Youth Garden* activities but in terms of the proximity to the water and to public transportation."[47] This statement tells us that the location was a strategic

choice in two ways: it needed to be close to public transportation (another reminder that an infrastructure depends on other infrastructures to operate, and thus is always an assemblage), and it would be placed close to the leftist periodical *Youth Garden*. TAF viewed *Youth Garden* as a rival to the *CSW*, almost as an enemy combatant. Foundation reports on how the UP was performing always compared the two publications' circulation figures. (The *CSW*'s circulation was shown to be several times larger than *Youth Garden*'s.) The military language in the funding request—the location is described as "vitally strategic"—reveals the symbolic meaning of this infrastructural setup: the new student center's proximity to enemy territory was a reminder that one should remain vigilant and be ready for battle at any minute.[48]

Indeed, the leftists in Hong Kong and Malaya readily recognized TAF's symbolic meaning as a cultural front in the Cold War and responded in kind. A memo to Blum from the Malaya/Singapore representative detailed some of the Left's physical and symbolic retaliatory strikes against the UP in Hong Kong and Malaya/Singapore from the end of 1958 through early 1959. It listed a variety of attacks on the UP from the Left in Malaya, ranging from boycotting the *Student Weekly* and its related activities to disrupting these activities to attacking individual student correspondents.[49] The memo included an attachment, an article published on December 23, 1958, in the Communist newspaper *Ta Kung Pao* (*Da Gong Bao*) in Hong Kong, along with its English translation. In it, the writer called out the connection between the UP and TAF (and the covert connection to CIA funding), saying that the UP was "in appearance . . . an anti-communist as well as anti-Chinese organization," but in reality it was "an intelligence office covered by a publishing business." We don't know how TAF's central office interpreted this kind of report, but there is ample evidence that the field offices paid consistently close attention to the Left's activities and its reaction to TAF projects. For instance, TAF's Hong Kong office kept a running list of leftist periodicals published in Hong Kong, along with their circulation figures, and regularly compared these to the circulation numbers of "Free World" periodicals.

These details suggest that despite TAF's emphasis on its network's decentralization and flexibility, it in fact had many hard boundaries, which were heavily policed. These documents in the TAF archives effectively attest to the existence of leftist cultural infrastructures that also supported the transmission of cultural products from Hong Kong to Southeast Asia. Although the first part of this book focuses on the United States' public diplomacy

projects, available scholarship on leftist cultural infrastructure shows the important role that Beijing played in this part of Asia as well.[50] As I see it, however, painting these networks in broad strokes, without detailing how they worked through contestation, negotiation, and collaboration from the headquarters to the cultural workers of different backgrounds, is insufficient, and the lack of access to the archives of those cultural exchange projects organized directly or indirectly from Beijing makes it difficult to do in-depth analysis of the negotiations on the ground. My attention to American cultural networks here can thus be considered as providing a methodological model for an analytic engagement with any Cold War cultural infrastructure, regardless of its political position.

Critical infrastructure studies reminds us that in addition to the networks of infrastructure, we must also see the "gaps and interstices" that are intrinsic to "*any* infrastructure."[51] As Harvey and colleagues suggest, "Rather than assuming flow as the basic infrastructural fact, with the consequence that breaks in the flow appear deviant, and thus in need of special explanation, the question can be reversed. Infrastructural studies might *begin* with gaps, interstices, and zones of opacity as infrastructural facts, which raise questions concerning the kinds of ordering these apparent 'flow-stoppers' participate in and how they do so."[52] There is plenty of evidence that TAF and its advisers shaped the orientation of the UP's publications. However, it also becomes clear from the archive that TAF's attempts to graft its own infrastructure onto existing cultural networks in Asia proliferated relations and points of connection, and that control from the center could not always be maintained.

A prime example of these gaps is Maria Yen 燕歸來, one of the founders of the Union Press and a frequent contributor to several UP periodicals. Her book *The Umbrella Garden* sought to expose the authoritarian control at Mainland China universities after 1949. It was translated into English in 1954, one of the first titles translated by the USIS, which invited Yen to visit the United States in 1957.[53] Following that trip, however, Yen published a ten-article series called "Glass Curtain" in *China Weekly*, a UP publication funded by TAF, arousing a great deal of concern among USIS staff members and TAF personnel, who considered the articles inaccurate and subjective. Some felt that they indicated that Yen "was disappointed with the America she found,"[54] and others argued that her descriptions of racial prejudice in the United States were "based on emotions, not reason."[55] Foundation representatives were concerned enough to have the articles translated into English for circulation to the organization at large, inviting experts with bilingual competence to evaluate the translations' accuracy.

The reason for the uproar at TAF was Yen's explicit factual descriptions of the economic disparity and racial segregation she had observed on her visits to Kansas, Mississippi, and South Carolina. She was sensitive to the striking economic disparities caused by racial segregation in the United States. The stories she told of white middle-class residents seemed to bear out the global narrative of America as a wealthy nation, a land of promise: for instance, Yen meticulously detailed the richness of "a New Jersey workman's" home, describing it as "entirely not the workman's kitchen I had imagined; it was rather like the cuisine classroom of an aristocratic school."[56] However, she pointed out the drawbacks of white people's material comfort, making the observation that "great abundance is conducive to waste" and that "the American way of living . . . is getting uniform and attains a high standard, while peculiarities are vanishing."[57] In contrast, she found that economic conditions among Black citizens in the places she visited were miserable under segregation. She compared a "negro quarter" in Columbia, South Carolina, with "the wooden huts on the slopes of the hills of Hongkong," symbolically equating Black people in the United States with refugees fleeing from Communist China, positioning both as "stateless orphans."[58]

Explicitly and implicitly, Yen's articles asked whether Asia should emulate either the Soviet or the American way of life. Her answer to this question can be found in her story of trying to buy a pair of shoes in an American department store—a real-life experience that in the article becomes a metaphor for how incongruent the two cultures and lifestyles were, and how impossible it would be for either Soviet or American practices to "fit" Chinese people. "If a Chinese finds it cumbersome to put on American shoes," she wrote, "I wonder how Chinese society can press forward smoothly and rapidly when Chinese industry is entirely Sovietized and Chinese agriculture is collectivized on the pattern of 'advanced socialist countries.' Will she [China] not tumble and break her neck like a mountaineer in iron shoes?"[59] She then goes on to talk about how difficult it was for her to find a dress for herself in an American department store, implying that it would be equally cumbersome for China to don American political and economic practices.

The USIS controversy over these articles was eventually resolved after TAF arranged a series of interviews with Yen. One of them was conducted by the foundation's Chinese adviser, L. Z. Yuan, whose subsequent report addressed the critique that Yen was secretly sympathetic to the PRC, concluding that she was "both sentimentally and intellectually anti-Communist."[60] Another TAF staff member argued that the critiques were a

double bluff, and that "her critical attitude toward certain American practices in her early articles probably had won for her a credibility among her [Chinese] readers for the praise-worthy things she would say later on."[61] This incident involving Maria Yen, appearing as it did in a TAF organ, exemplifies the kinds of "internal disruptions" that "direct our attention to how infrastructures work *through* their own internal inconsistencies."[62] In this case, the disruption came from an internal inconsistency at the heart of TAF's infrastructure: it equated "pro-American" sentiments with "anti-Communist" sentiments.

Yen's articulation of her own political experience highlighted this disjunction, undermining TAF's implicit and unobtrusive attempts to control the Asian network it had grafted its political desires onto. Yen showed that these two ideological stances at the heart of TAF's project did not always overlap seamlessly. This interstitial gap undermined TAF's control of the network and could be considered a leak in the borders the foundation had created between its own political project and that of the Chinese leftists in Hong Kong.

Another, arguably more consequential, gap has to do with the instability of meaning when it comes to the reading and interpretation of print materials of any kind. This instability is heightened when we encounter print culture that extends across the divides of languages and cultures. We must keep in mind that TAF's collaboration with the UP could produce meaning only through the mediation of cultural objects—in this case, the publications by the UP, which were deeply shaped by TAF's agenda even as they sometimes pushed back against it, as in the case of Yen and the *China Weekly* incident. Yet these cultural objects would need to be consumed by the Chinese readers in various locations in order to materialize the effect of TAF's work in Asia. How do we demonstrate the effectiveness of an infrastructure when, in contrast to a technical system such as a power grid, you cannot flip the switch to see if the lights come on?

Besides examining the cultural objects themselves, we can turn to another kind of data found in internal communications within TAF, one that speaks directly to the measurement of the TAF project's effect: outcome assessment. Although we usually think of the documents in the TAF archive as supplying a context for cultural objects intended for public consumption, viewing these documents as a cultural production in their own right allows us to access the foundation's understanding of their meaning. TAF's attempts to control the network for its own ends were not only external but also internal; as the archive shows, the foundation sought to shape the

narrative of its own functionality not just for its external readers, but for its own employees as well. In this archive, UP publications such as the *CSW* are treated simply as data points in the periodic reports submitted by UP leaders to TAF headquarters. These reports are fairly formulaic documents that resulted from bureaucratic "preprocessing"—the selection and presentation of information for the purpose of "control," which James Beniger defines as "purposive influence toward a predetermined goal."[63] The reports usually included the number of student correspondents the magazine had and enumerated the various activities organized by the Chinese Student Weekly Society. They always included circulation figures for the *CSW* and compared them to those of its leftist rival, the magazine *Youth Garden*—although on several occasions TAF staff members questioned the reliability of these figures. This indicates that the bureaucracy relied on this data for decision-making about which organizations to continue to fund.

Turning UP publications such as the *CSW* and *Chao Foon* into data points was a good way to perpetuate or deflate the assumption that these cultural projects worked, but TAF staff appear to have rarely engaged with them as cultural objects through reading. According to office memos, copies of the *CSW* were included with reports as examples of "deliverables" from TAF's work. These sample copies were not meant to be read from cover to cover, as cultural objects normally are. It is not that those who worked for the foundation were indifferent toward the content of UP publications; indeed, as we saw in the Yen incident, they cared greatly about the content, especially when it threatened to disrupt their work. At that time, English translations of these potentially controversial Chinese documents were created and included in the files. Under normal circumstances, however, TAF's local representatives and upper-level staff had only mediated encounters with the content of the Chinese-language magazines, relying on translations of tables of contents or quick English-language synopses of select articles written by advisers with bilingual competence. Often the translations were free and selective, tending to leave out key information. In one case, for instance, a translator decided to omit descriptions of the United States that might be construed as negative from the foundation's perspective.[64]

Ordinary Chinese readers who encountered the full content of these publications in their original language would have had a different experience with these magazines. Gaps and interstices thus emerged between languages and cultures and at the border of the bureaucratic structure of the American foundation. In deciding early on that it would operate covertly,

so that "outsiders [would] not become aware of the source of financial assistance of *The Chinese Student Weekly*," TAF made its relationship with the consumers of its cultural materials even more mediated. Chinese readers would still be subject to the ideological influence, the "ordering effects," of TAF as channeled through the UP—after all, TAF and its UP collaborators shared similar political convictions with regard to Communism—but multiple circles of reading and interpretation were created, and these did not overlap neatly.[65]

The editors, writers, and TAF officers who directly engaged with UP publications created meaning through their logistical labor in the assemblage of the TAF-supported infrastructure. People such as readers and lower-ranking editors and writers are invisible in the archive, their more direct encounters with the cultural projects relegated to "zones of opacity."[66] Archives, in other words, also offer only a "partial view" of the overall operation. The bureaucratic preprocessing that channeled information through the foundation feedback loop in order to sustain the infrastructure disembedded TAF from the world it sought to influence. Chinese readers and TAF employees could have different ideas about what was information and what was noise, thus producing different meanings of these print culture materials. In the next section, I bring into view the perspectives of some of those readers and writers who were occluded by the TAF archive, by engaging closely with several early issues of *Chao Foon*, the only literary magazine published by the UP.

IV. Repurposing Infrastructure

In a memo to Robert Blum dated June 29, 1955, Singapore TAF representative Robert Gray submitted the agreement that the foundation had reached with the UP regarding the publication of a periodical to be called *Chiao Feng* (later written as *Chao Foon*). In his accompanying cover letter, Gray laid out the periodical's position and mission within the context of the political situation in Singapore and Malaya:

> According to the Union Press, there are three main groupings to be considered in approaching work among the Chinese students in Singapore/Malaya: (1) a well-organized militant Communist front expanding in power and influence, (2) a less well-organized and smaller anti-Communist front relatively much less effective, and (3) a broad middle block of un-organized students, under pressure of increasing Communist

> intimidation, for whom existent student organizations and publications do not as yet present a strong appeal.[67]

On the basis of this observation, the UP adopted what Gray described as a "carefully planned two-fold approach." Whereas the Malayan edition of the *CSW* was targeted toward students who were "either clearly anti-Communist or fairly strongly inclined toward an anti-Communist position," this new periodical was intended to "help organize, strengthen, and expand the broad middle block of unorganized students, with the ultimate objective of swinging this block away from the Communist front." Consistent with this purpose, the magazine that was to become *Chao Foon* would be "locally organized" and "*completely disassociated publicly* with the Union Press," although in actuality it would be "under the close supervision" of the UP and *Student Weekly* leaders, according to Gray.[68]

The agreement laid out six policies for the new publication: (1) the magazine should not be "overtly anti-Communist or discuss any political issue"; (2) it should not "criticize or express resentment against the local governments"; (3) it should "advocate the spirit of democracy and the principles of human freedom"; (4) it would publish "primarily" the literature of local Chinese students while also presenting "Chinese translations of Malayan materials"; (5) it would selectively publish some material produced outside Singapore/Malaya, but only "the best such materials"; and (6) it would "engage quietly and carefully in the organization of student activities."[69]

This memo emphasized the importance of *Chao Foon*'s being seen as apolitical—a public stance quite different from the *Student Weekly*'s, which had politics written all over it from the very first issue. But what did being apolitical mean for the American foundation and for the editors of *Chao Foon*? The question was a complex one since the literary magazine was intended to integrate itself into Malaya, which was on the cusp of independence from colonial rule, as the 1955 *Chao Foon* agreement memo emphasized. TAF always sought to integrate projects into local cultures and contexts, but in Malaya this proved to be particularly complicated: in the periodical's first fifteen years, the editorial team consisted mainly of people who were not originally from Malaya. Most of the editorial staff had come to Southeast Asia from the mainland or Taiwan, routed through Hong Kong. The 1955 memo sought to address this problem of localization, stressing that the magazine would publish "primarily" the works of local Chinese writers and Chinese translations of Malayan works, and urg-

ing it to be selective with literature by nonlocal writers. The editors largely followed this directive, even presenting the journal as a "purely Malayan publication" on the cover of every issue starting from the first one. But what does this concept mean? Does it imply that all the contributors or editors were Malayan? That the magazine used local Chinese dialects? That it represented Malaya in a certain mode? This also raises the question of who could judge whether the publication was "purely Malayan." Was that decision up to the editorial group or to the reader?

Chao Foon faced criticism from TAF both for doing too much toward "instilling in the general readership and Malayan-born contributors a sense of and feeling for the stylistic and aesthetic value of modern Chinese prose and poetry" and for focusing "too little on the over-riding needs of the Chinese in Malaya and Singapore to face up to the needs of Malayan nationhood and Malayan loyalties."[70] Leftist critics, interestingly, made a similar critique of the publication, calling on it to serve the purposes of political utility. But the magazine actually had its own engagement with social issues in Malaya. It spoke openly to common concerns of both the Left and the non-Left and adopted at the early stage of its publication some aesthetic ideas that overlapped in significant areas with those championed by the Left. At the end of the 1950s, for example, when leftist circles were pledging allegiance to the newly decolonized nation-state of Malaya by advocating "patriotic literature" (*aiguo zhuyi wenxue*), *Chao Foon* made a similar turn.

Leftists' strong commitment to the Malayan nation at the time of independence is visible in the titles of a few representative articles published between 1958 and 1959 in *Daxue Luntan* (University tribune), the official publication of the left-leaning student union of Nanyang University. Chinese students' excitement about independence and decolonization is clearly evident in titles such as "The Malayanization of Social Scientific Research" (October 22, 1958), "The Malay Language Curriculum at Nanyang University" (November 26, 1958), "On Translating Malay Writings" (January 24, 1959), "A Unified Malaya and Interethnic Relationship" (April 9, 1959), "A Necessary Task of Malay-Language Education That Nanyang University Must Undertake" (June 23, 1959), and "The Missions of Chinese Literary Education in the Nation" (September 30, 1959). These titles convey an awareness of the interethnic and multilingual environment of newly independent Malaya that Chinese language and literary education needed to engage. The student writers embraced multicultural education.[71] Even so, they were quick to defend the legitimate position of Chinese

schools in Malaya alongside other native language education, criticizing the Malayan nationalist belief in "one race, one language, one culture." For instance, Jiang Shang Lin 江上林, in "The Missions of Chinese Literary Education in the Nation," argued that the various ethnic schools should not rush to adopt the national language in multiracial Malaya; he believed that Chinese-language education should be used instead of Malay as a medium and vehicle to facilitate Malayan consciousness.[72]

Although *Chao Foon* did not parrot the Left's slogan of "patriotic literature," the political stance it adopted was similar to that taken by the writers of *Daxue Luntan*. In the very first issue, the journal editors declared:

> In Singapore and Malaya, Chinese descendants make up half of the total population. In the many years to come, we will cooperate with other ethnic groups to live together in Malaya. Wouldn't we make a joke of ourselves if we have insufficient understanding of Malaya, where we give birth, live, and die? Yet how to understand a place or a nation is not something that can be achieved by browsing through a few history or geography books or by reading some publicity pamphlets. We need to delve deep into the society and immerse ourselves in practical life. Only then can some gradual understanding be obtained.[73]

The magazine reiterated this position in other early articles. In the second issue, for instance, Li Ting 李亭 advocated for a literature of the "here and now," stating that "those of us who live in Malaya must confront the reality of this place. . . . Let's not cut off our feet to fit into the shoes, and bring in wholesale some literary form that has been deemed important somewhere else."[74] Here, Li Ting sounds critical of the socialist realism advocated by leftists and the PRC, as if that "literary form" were not also an authentic genre in Malaya.

Given the *Chao Foon* writers' early agreement with the leftist position on art and education, did the magazine conflict with TAF's position? Did its positions "contribute to and assist in the Malayanization of the Chinese people resident in Malaya and Singapore, thereby lending support to major policy aims of both governments" in Singapore and Malaya, as TAF suggested?[75] We can answer these questions by taking a closer look at the literature published in *Chao Foon*, which reveals something of the editorial team's perspective on them. Fang Tian 方天 (pen name of Zhang Haiwei), a key editor for both the *Student Weekly* and *Chao Foon* from the late 1950s to the early 1960s, published some of his own short stories in

the magazine. In them he reflected on what it meant for a literary author to be emplaced in Malaya. Fang Tian grew up in China and came to Malaya via Hong Kong in the 1950s as an employee of the UP, hired to publish the *Student Weekly* and *Chao Foon*. He explains his journey to Malaya/Singapore in the afterword to an edited compilation of eleven of his short stories. These stories were all written between 1955 and 1957, shortly after he arrived, and were published in either the *Student Weekly* or *Chao Foon*.

> To prepare for these stories, I visited tin mines and rubber plantations and walked along the piers of the Singapore River to observe how the laborers work and talk. I have been to the giant shipyards and attended ship-launching ceremonies there, while watching the children of the ship-builders frolic in the pond nearby. But it is not enough to be a passive observer. . . . Fortunately, my many friends who have lived in Malaya for a long time, knowing that I am a newcomer, would fill me in about local customs and impart to me an insider's knowledge about certain trades and professions. And whenever I met friends who were eager to talk to me, I would grab them for a chat, not letting them go for hours. This is how I have collected some basic knowledge and materials.[76]

By pointing out his efforts to truly understand Malaya and its people, Fang Tian legitimized his own position in the country and defended the authenticity of his stories. His depictions of immigrant laborers centered on typical Malayan rural and urban locations such as tin mines, river docks, rubber plantations, and printing factories, and he included so many dialect phrases and terms that were specific to Singapore and Malaya that a glossary needed to be added for his Mandarin readers.

Although Fang Tian himself was not Malayan, his stories fulfill *Chao Foon*'s promise to publish "purely Malayan" literature by being set in Malaya. Like the literature of the Left, the stories share certain generic characteristics of social realism, such as featuring working-class characters. Unlike the literature of the Left, though, they reflect no attempt to analyze the social structures of Singapore or Malayan society or to issue a protest on behalf of the working class about exploitation or disparity. Indeed, despite Fang's scattered use of dialect, his depictions of immigrant lives would be equally valid in other settings, since the themes, mostly related to poverty, hardship, and aspirations for a better life, are universal to most immigrant communities.

But Fang Tian's stories also intervene in contemporary social and politi-

cal discussions in Malaya. In this respect, Fang Tian and his fellow *Chao Foon* editors neglected to follow their agreement with TAF, which stated that the magazine would not be "overtly anti-Communist or discuss any political issue" or "criticize or express resentment against the local governments."[77] One could argue that the politically charged atmosphere in the wake of Malaya's independence made it difficult for *Chao Foon* to extricate itself from existing political discussions. Or perhaps it did not wish to do so. In 1956, the second year of its publication, the magazine provided a vital platform for vibrant debates about the meaning of "Malayanization" 馬來亞化, eagerly seeking to help shape Malaya's nationhood from Chinese perspectives. These debates focused mainly on two issues: Chinese citizenship in Malaya after independence, and the future of Chinese schools and Chinese-language education in Malaya. In the June 1956 issue, Hui Jian 慧劍 wrote: "Malayanization has become an extremely important topic in Malaya today—the government has appointed a textbook committee to check primary school textbooks and ensure that they are sufficiently Malayanized; it has called for a separate committee to oversee the Malayanization of public servants in case some staffing adjustment is required; and some organizations have proposed that Malay be designated as the language of public gatherings."[78] Given these developments, Hui Jian wrote, it was important to understand the meaning of the term "Malayanization." The article argued against a narrow interpretation of Malayanization as "Malay-ization" 馬來化 (Malay-centrism), rejecting the ideology of "*yi ge minzu, yi zhong yuyan, yi wei lingxiu*" [one people, one language, one leader]. (The Chinese term *minzu* can refer to either people/nation or race/ethnicity.)

Two issues later, in July 1956, the writer Ma Moxi 馬摩西 followed up on Hui Jian's discussion, quoting (and endorsing) Hui Jian's earlier assertion that "the Chinese living in Malaya are not out to compete with the Malays for power and privilege; they simply are demanding an equal status that they deserve."[79] Building on this claim, Ma promoted multilingual practices and cultural exchange among the different races in Malaya. Addressing Chinese Malayans (*Chao Foon*'s primary audience), he emphasized how important it was for the Chinese to participate in this inclusive version of Malayanization—to "strengthen our sense of responsibility toward Malaya" by "introducing our cultural traditions [to other races] while respecting other ethnic cultures." Ma argued, for instance, that Chinese people should make an effort to learn Malay in order to participate fully in their new country and its culture. He stressed that this should be

voluntary, not forced, unlike the mandatory cultural transmission instituted by historical colonial powers:

> History has told us that the British in India, the French in Anan, the Spanish in the Philippines, the Dutch in Indonesia, all made consistent efforts to promote the colonizer's language and culture. Even if their intentions were benign, over a span of several hundred years, the native population who could understand those languages remained small. On the contrary, these people in turn became the vanguard leading the struggles for independence. Those people who are not from the former colonies but in fact know English, French, Dutch, or Spanish would have a deeper and more intimate relationship to these cultures. This means that cultural exchange is not something easily accomplished with mandatory measures.[80]

Ma was expressing a yearning for interethnic exchange conceptualized outside the colonial framework.

In 1956, according to J. Norman Parmer, in an article published the following year, Malaya was deeply involved in "vigorous constitutional debates."[81] Parmer listed three issues that were points of contention: citizenship, language, and Malay privilege. He summarized them as follows:

> For citizenship, the Malays favored a stiff residential qualification plus a knowledge of Malay. The Chinese favored the principle of *jus soli* and easy residential qualifications for the foreign-born. The Malays wanted the Malay language to be the sole official language, although many were willing to retain English for a limited period until Malay has been expanded on the Indonesian model. The Chinese asked that Chinese also be made an official language. Finally, the Malays claimed that without constitutional guarantees of special privileges (e.g., reservation of civil service positions, scholarships and business licenses) they would be overwhelmed by non-Malays.[82]

As this political context shows, *Chao Foon*'s mission—to embed itself in Malaya at this particular moment—was a far more fraught and complex task than TAF had anticipated. Contemporary events and issues in Malaya continued to be represented in the magazine from Chinese perspectives. For example, a story by Fang Tian titled "A Big Question" published in *Chao Foon* in April 1956 dramatized the debates about Chinese citizen-

ship in Malaya on the cusp of independence. Adopting a documentary realist style, Fang recounted a fictional dialogue between a Chinese store owner, Ya Xin, and his two Malay friends from the same village.[83] The protagonist was a hardworking immigrant who lived in Malaya for over two decades, and for most of the story, Fang ventriloquized his frustration with the complex bureaucratic hoops he had been required to jump through, as an ethnic Chinese person, to claim his citizenship rights and participate in Malayan political life. Ya Xin was excited to vote—to "elect one's own good government"—and rushed to the election booth, only to be told that he needed to be registered as a citizen before he would be eligible to vote. He then tried to register for citizenship, only to be told that he had not met the ten-year residency requirement; his nineteen-year stay in Malaya was interrupted by his having resided in Singapore during the Asia-Pacific War, since Singapore's inclusion as part of Malaya was under debate.[84]

While the story is designed to expose the capriciousness of the ways that issues such as voting rights and citizenship are translated into institutional procedures in nations undergoing decolonization, where it really shines is in its portrayal of how citizenship laws regulate a lively interethnic social relationship. Ya Xin voices these complaints to his two Malay neighbors, who largely empathize with his situation. However, they still argue for a differentiation between the native and the immigrant. Objecting to Ya Xin's comment that there is no other home for him but Malaya, Abdula retorts, "Not so! For us Malays, if we cannot survive here, then we truly have nowhere to go. But for you, it would be different. You may have been here for a decade or two, but you would still be able to return to China and buy a piece of property with the money you've earned here."[85]

As this interaction shows, in the social sphere, interethnic perceptions of each other are not always predicated on exact equality (or perhaps I should say equivalency), but in depicting these harmonious interactions and communications on the everyday level, Fang Tian implies that these ethnic boundaries are permeable—not walls but borders, with all the separation *and connection* that the term implies. (See the introduction for a discussion of the concepts of borders and bordering as I use them in this book.) Fang does not clarify whether the dialogues between Ya Xin and his Malay neighbors were conducted in Malay or Chinese, although there are subtle descriptions that might indicate Ya Xin was struggling to make himself understood in a foreign language (for example, Fang writes that Ya Xin "gestured with his hands" while speaking). The story seems to almost directly address the political situation: the younger Malay charac-

ter is depicted as "playing a rather major role in handling youth affairs in the village branch UMNO" (a reference to the United Malays National Organization, the leading Malay political party), and the story can be read as a fictionalized ethnographic account of the political situation on the ground in the late 1950s.[86] The author seems to endorse the perspective of Ya Xin, who is able to communicate in interethnic settings and finds it unreasonable to require working-class people to pass both Malay- and English-language tests to be eligible for citizenship. "Take for instance the convenience store shopkeeper Chen down the street. He has lived in Malaya for over thirty years and has never left, even for a little while. But he is bad with languages, and a bit slow in general. He is only adept at his own local dialect and has acquired only a few sentences of Malay, not much beyond that. English is out of the question. Someone like him is not qualified to register for citizenship."[87] Ya Xin sees this as unfair: his neighbor Chen is a productive citizen who has been in Malaya for decades, yet his linguistic and intellectual limitations mean that he will never be eligible to participate fully in Malayan civic life.

Fang Tian's story has some typical characteristics of a local-color narrative: the writing is spiced with dialect and transliterations of select Malay phrases, and the story includes a glossary that explains these phrases to readers of standard Chinese. But unlike most local-color narratives, it does not render the local society as a static tableau that caters to the exoticist interests of readers from outside Malaya. Instead, Fang sensitively tries to grasp how the structural changes in a society on the cusp of independence would affect interethnic relationships. Realism of the sort written by Fang Tian and other *Chao Foon* writers can be understood as a way for these Chinese newcomers to Malaya to participate in post-decolonization nation-building in a multiethnic and multilingual society. In this respect, the *Chao Foon* group crossed paths with the Left even though they did not fundamentally change their non-Communist or even anti-Communist political stance—an indication that the local conditions were an order of magnitude more complex than TAF's prescribed political boundary between the Left and the Right could accommodate.

V. Conclusion

Critical infrastructure studies teaches us to read this history of the Union Press and its publications as a set of proliferating relationalities. The Asia Foundation's intention for the UP publications—that they would deter

Chinese students in Malaya from returning to China or joining the local Communist guerrillas—did not preclude the possibility that a magazine like *Chao Foon* might also become a platform for the articulation of a whole other set of other issues, such as Chinese citizenship in Malaya, the future of Chinese-language education, or the vision of a Malayan multilingual and multiracial independent nationhood. These cultural articulations were part of the history of the periodical's emplacement in the wider world beyond Mainland China, and they were not objectives that TAF anticipated (or desired). The UP's responses to local events and issues are examples of "how systems and practices operate in variance with their purported objective"—an unavoidable "doubling effect" of TAF's infrastructure across Southeast Asia.[88]

When Robert Blum, in his 1960 memo, said, "I had not realized until my visit to Singapore how precarious the situation is there," he was referring to the efficacy of the TAF organizational structure in Southeast Asia, a region that was undergoing momentous historical change in the wake of World War II, geographic and national partitioning, and decolonization.[89] This chapter's exploration of UP publications shows that there was another kind of precarity looming for TAF: that some of *Chao Foon*'s Chinese-language explorations of Malayan culture, politics, and current events overlapped with the concerns and tactics of the Left in Malaya, the "enemy" against whom the UP was supposed to be holding the line. As contemporary scholar Lim Choon Bee 林春美 points out, the *Chao Foon* group shared many similarities with the leftist cultural faction, including their realist aesthetics, a common vision of a multicultural Malaya, and the practice of interlingual translation.[90] In these overlaps, we encounter the possibility that *Chao Foon* might morph into something else, no longer recognizable to or under the control of its master, whether that master was the Asia Foundation itself, or the United States, whose interests TAF represented.

2

Reading Hong Kong from Its Popular Literature

On August 29, 1956, Robert Clark, the public affairs officer at the Hong Kong branch of the US Information Service (USIS), reported to the organization's headquarters in Washington, DC, about the recent publication of the *Universal Story Paper* 環球小說叢 by Lo Ping 羅斌 (Law Bin), a Chinese publisher based in Hong Kong. Considered a "rival to the USIS Hong Kong subsidized *Story Paper*," this independent publication copied the US-funded publication in its title, length, and price. "It is a good-looking job," Clark said, explaining that "it is published in magazine form instead of in tabloid and its illustrations are printed in two colors while those of the original *Story Paper* are in one color." Its "cover design and illustrations were done by Ou Ch'in [Ou Qing], also an illustrator for Mrs. Liang's *Story Paper*."[1]

The *Story Paper* 小說報 was a biweekly serial publication put out by the pro-Nationalist publishing house Rainbow Press 虹霓出版社, with funding from USIS Hong Kong. Launched in February 1955, it published mainly three kinds of stories: "(1) stories that depict anti-Communist themes; (2) stories that combine anti-Communist messages with love stories; and (3) popular love stories."[2] Since the publication was conceived as a way to leverage the cultural resources in Hong Kong, from writers and printing presses to graphic artists, in order to engage in anti-Communist propaganda throughout Asia, it is not surprising that *Story Paper* had to contend with publications of a similar sort, most of which were put out by commercial enterprises without government funding. These latter publications were numerous, including such representative examples as *Huanqiu Xiaoshuo Cong* (Universal story series), published by Law Bin's Universal Publisher; *Haibin Xiaoshuo Cong* (Seashore stories series), published by

Shijie Shuju (World Books Publishing); and *Hao Xiaoshuo* (Good story series), published by Yuzhou Chuban She (Cosmos Publishing House). Like the *Story Paper*, these series were all published in tabloid or magazine format, sold for thirty pence in Hong Kong currency, and covered mainly the Hong Kong and Southeast Asia market, but also select East Asian locations such as Tokyo.

But why was the USIS officer so concerned about the graphics of this publication, which had such an explicit political agenda? A look at a few *Story Paper* covers might provide an answer. In the masterly hands of Hong Kong illustrators such as Ou Qing 歐晴, Gao Bao 高寶, and Dong Peixin 董培新, the covers of these "thirty-cent stories" (*san haozi xiaoshuo*) were able to frame any type of content or genre predominantly as a romance.

The covers usually feature an idealized feminine figure, always wearing red lipstick and flaunting her curvy shape, as in figure 1. The images are glamorized representations of women, although they are not always sexualized to the same degree. If the protagonists come from a traditional or rural background, or if the stories take place in a named location such as Vietnam, as in figure 2, the women might be dressed in more conservative attire that is region specific. But although their bodies are fully covered, their feminine contours are clearly visible, and their exquisite makeup and seductive looks, despite being incongruous with the stories' settings, allow them to exude the allure of a modern woman. The covers of stories that take place in an urban setting or that contain explicit seduction scenes often portray women who are stylishly dressed, their shoulders and arms bared; sometimes they are scantily clad, resembling the pinup girls in American magazines and calendars in the post–World War II era. The male figures in these images are often dynamically positioned in relation to the female figures, so as to suggest the dramatic unfolding of a romantic relationship. Most importantly, the covers of these "thirty-cent stories" are printed in vibrant colors, in marked contrast to their cheap tabloid bindings. These images call out to the reader and effectively transform the stories, with their varying degrees of political content, into commodifiable objects.

The serial publication, if we take into account both the content and the cover, tells a story about the intertwinement of and competition between popular literature and Cold War cultural diplomacy projects, a unique cultural ecology rooted in Hong Kong's position in a "shatterzone," a term used by Laura Doyle to describe "strategic inter-imperial zones, again and again vied over for their resources . . . and their geopolitical location."[3] The USIS and Asia Foundation (TAF) documents discussed in chapter 1



Fig. 1. Cover of *Xiao Shuo Bao* [Story paper] 25, “Xian Jing” [Trap] (August 15, 1956).



Fig. 2. Cover of *Xiao Shuo Bao* [Story paper] 127, "Di Er Zhe" [The second wheel] (August 19, 1960).

corroborate Doyle's perception by citing Hong Kong's advantageous geographic proximity to the mainland and the availability of creative talents and modern media facilities as "resources" that could be exploited by the United States. While the so-called lower cultural form of Sinophone pulp fiction and popular culture in general can best illustrate this geopolitical positionality, there was not a singular answer for how to manage or navigate this murky zone of cross-pollination of political messaging and the popular form.

The USIS officers who approved the funding for the *Story Paper*, for instance, believed that the mediation of the popular form should go in only one direction, with a clear end point in mind, viewing it as merely a mask for the true political agenda of this project. In more figurative terms, the tabloid's colorful cover was a mere *cover-up*. As one officer in the Hong Kong office stated in a memo dated August 23, 1956, and addressed to the

agency's headquarters in Washington, the office had "submitted four outlines of innocuous stories to be interspersed with *Story Paper* stories having a political angle." He added, "At present we have only political stories approved and to keep our line from showing too openly, we would appreciate as fast approval as possible for the innocuous stories submitted."[4] This statement shows that the "innocuous stories," those that did not contain explicit political content, were understood to be a form of camouflage—a way "to keep our line from showing too openly"—employed to deflect the public's potential judgment of this publication as mere propaganda. This USIS officer, in other words, encouraged the practice of reading *through* these covers, cutting through the "innocuous" elements in the popular form to get to the political truth.

It is not entirely clear that the cultural practitioners recruited for these projects agreed to this unidirectional trajectory of reading. Liu Yichang 劉以鬯, for instance, a modernist writer and contributor to the USIS-funded *Story Paper* project, commented on this aspect of the city's cultural life in the 1950s: "A significant number of literary works produced in Hong Kong in the '50s were created in response to specific political demands." To cope with this overpoliticization, the writers often used a twofold strategy of "straddling two boats," which ultimately defied a simple cause-and-effect relationship between the American dollar and Hong Kong literature, or between political instrumentalization and cultural production in general. The first form of "straddling" occurred when modernist writers simultaneously wrote for independent "little magazines" and contributed to American-sponsored journals; the second form manifested when writers of serious literature crossed over to the domain of pulp fiction. "Disrespecting 'the divide between the vulgar and the refined' was a rather popular attitude in the '50s," Liu remarked.[5] While this statement acknowledges the historical existence of such divides, or what I have called "borders"—not just between the vulgar and the refined, but also between the creation and weaponization of literature by both of the polarizing political camps—it also underscores the necessity of the writers' negotiation of them, however much they "disrespected" this negotiation. Their navigation *through* and *around* these divides certainly charted a more circuitous path than what the USIS officers imagined.

This chapter proposes that we should take seriously both the cover and the content of a tabloid magazine—in other words, both the popular form and its political use—in order to think critically about Hong Kong's geopolitical position in the Cold War as more than "part of the self-evident real-

ity of international politics."[6] Rather, as Gearóid Ó Tuathail suggests, the realism of geopolitics can be turned into "the problematic of *geo-politics*," by which he means the problematic of "the scripting of global space by state-society intellectuals and institutions."[7] Popular literature bears the stamp of such "scripting of global space," although in this case popular literature writers and media workers count as agents of the geopolitical imaginary as well. This chapter engages with the genre of the spy thriller as a narrative of popular geopolitics because it rose to the "specific political demands" (Liu Yichang's term) of the times more readily than some other genres did. This is not surprising, since spy narratives worldwide are most closely connected with imperial expansion and interstate relations, where undercover operatives and intelligence-gathering activities are shown to play an instrumental role. Yet Hong Kong's spy fiction has so far largely eluded scholarly attention compared to other popular forms, such as martial arts fiction or the family melodrama (better known as the "family ethics story" or *jiating luli ju* in Chinese).[8] This omission, as I see it, reflects the challenge posed by the city's cultural ecology of cross-pollination between popular culture's power to distract and the political agendas it is supposed to execute. Yet as Fredric Jameson argues, a "literary work or cultural object . . . brings into being that very situation to which it is also, at one and the same time, a reaction. It articulates its own situation and textualizes it, thereby encouraging and perpetuating the illusion that the situation itself did not exist before it, that there is nothing but a text, that there never was any extra- or con-textual reality before the text itself generated it in the form of a mirage."[9] Jameson's critique of the reification of this literary textualization as "a mirage" is well taken. But I nevertheless argue that Hong Kong spy fiction does not "perpetuat[e] the illusion" of literature's autonomy so much as, if it is approached with a specific method of reading, allow us to access "con-textual reality," thereby facilitating the decoding of Hong Kong's geopolitical consciousness in this specific historical situation.

I. Judging a Book by Its Cover

In order to read the spy thriller for traces of the political scripting of the global space, we must return to the *cover*—both literally, in terms of the colorful cover designs created by the group of artists shared by the US-funded and independent publications, and metaphorically, in terms of the politics of *covering up*. For Michael Denning, the spy thriller is all about covering up, as he demonstrates in *Cover Stories*, his 1987 study of the

British spy thriller. This is not because spy thrillers depict secret agents working under assumed identities, or because they "take their plot from the cover stories of the daily news," but because the form is an ideology, and an ideology works by covering up the truth of modern society, which for Denning has to do with the capitalist division of labor. "For what narratives are not cover stories?" he asks rhetorically. "And what is ideology if not a cover story so deeply lived as to be almost unconscious, that necessary cover story by which the individual steps into daily life and its collective webs of work, language, and sexuality?"[10]

Denning thus maintains that the popular spy thriller has two levels, its manifest content and a latent narrative. Here he sounds a little like the USIS officer who wanted us to read *through* the cover to access the political messages, although Denning decidedly would not agree with the content of those messages. He, too, advocates "mov[ing] beyond the manifest politics of these cover stories" to "re-emerge with a sense of the ideologies of the forms themselves."[11] The genre could very well be taken as a "powerful explanation" of political changes such as "the Cold War, the Suez Crisis of 1956, and decolonization"—in sum, "the end of Empire"—but "these were *also* cover stories of white collar work, of the organization man."[12] Yet is the linear progression from manifest to latent narratives, from surface meaning to hidden truth, the only way to read popular literature critically? And if we follow Denning's suggestion and read for the hidden plot of the spy thriller, does that lead us to a single hidden plot about class structure in modern society; could there instead be multiple hidden plots? Denning's use of the conjunction *also* seems to suggest that there could be more than one; the spies in Graham Greene's 1978 novel *The Human Factor*, for instance, were fighting not merely a battle between Communism and capitalism, but "a battle of books" between the popular thriller and "serious literature."[13] This implies that reading could be more complex than dispelling ideological delusions to get to the truth—it is more like peeling off a palimpsest of covers that are entangled with and overlaid on one another.

Denning's emphasis on the need to move beyond manifest content to access the spy thriller's hidden narrative resonates with a more recent discussion about symptomatic versus surface reading. In this discussion, Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus take Jameson's theory to task: "In *The Political Unconscious* (1981), Fredric Jameson argued that only weak, descriptive, empirical, ideologically complicit readers attend to the surface of the text. In an affirmative version of symptomatic reading, Jameson insisted that the 'strong' critic must rewrite narrative in terms of master

codes, disclosing its status as ideology, as an imaginary resolution of real contradictions."[14] Best and Marcus seek to redeem those "less resisting, masterful readers" who focus their attention on the surface, whether that surface refers to the materiality of a text or implies an "ethical stance" of "accepting texts" rather than "mastering or using them as objects."[15] In his reading of Hong Kong's spy narratives, which I mention in the introduction to part I, Law Wing Sang implicitly addresses this polemical discussion about surface versus symptom and further thickens the plot by suggesting that the many "covers" the city put on to realize "the 'grand schemas' of empires, nation-states, and their various political ideologies" were nothing but the *surface* of history itself.[16] It is implied in Law's political reading of the spy film that surface and depth are inseparable; trying to erase the many layers of surface is tantamount to denying the city's history and aligning its complicated "past" with a singular dominant version of history.

I propose a distractive reading approach toward Hong Kong's spy thriller, aiming to move away from a linear conception of popular literature's signifying system—one that relies on such distinctions as cover versus content, manifest versus latent, or surface versus symptomatic—and to a horizontal model.[17] Distractive reading draws attention to the process that Michael Wood calls "making deals with surpluses of meaning" in literature and film texts.[18] In a study of eighteenth-century European culture, Natalie Phillips reinforces the notion that distraction is an alternative form of concentration by suggesting that it comes from a "multifocal" rather than a "unifocal" model of attention. Whereas unifocal attention is "singular, with distraction merely a 'straying' from the intended (or natural) object of focus," multifocal attention is "inherently multiple and distraction merely a part (or consequence) of the mind's potentially infinite experiences as the brain processes a plethora of environmental stimuli."[19] Following this multifocal model of attention, distractive reading modifies the conventional framework to examine the popular culture industry, which usually sees distraction as antithetical to a political engagement with capitalist modernity. For instance, in Tan See Kam's analysis of the Shaw Brothers Studio's "Bondmania" films (*bangpian*), which were locally produced spin-offs of James Bond 007 spy thrillers in the late 1960s, it is implied that these films' "push to 'go global,'" their "cosmopolitan dreaming," went hand in hand with "blind[ness] to the politics of the day."[20] "In this sense," Tan explains, "*bangpian* functioned as distractions from political concerns of particular places and times. They were escapist fantasies characterized by a studied filmic amnesia about the conflicts, tensions and processes of domi-

nation and negotiation both in the colony's everyday local spaces and in the cosmopolitan ones beyond its borders."[21] In these readings, distraction is viewed as a kind of self-delusion, or what Bertolt Brecht characterized in his criticism of bourgeois theater as "witchcraft" that induces "'hypnosis,' the 'fog,' the power to induce 'trance'" in an audience.[22] Even though Frankfurt School critics such as Siegfried Krakauer and Walter Benjamin have tried to salvage distraction by arguing that it could be "productive" or generative, a spur to new ways of perceiving, the fundamental association of popular culture with escapist fantasies and distraction from political engagement remains unchanged.[23]

Yet Law's analysis of Hong Kong's colonial modernity suggests that the local political condition cannot be completely subsumed under the notion of capitalist modernity. The paradox of Hong Kong's status as a "free port" and the overwhelming political overdetermination to which the city was subject warrant a site-specific analysis of how the popular culture industry was situated vis-à-vis the sociopolitical structure. When Law relies on a reading of Hong Kong films depicting undercover agents to access this political history, his cultural analysis does not posit popular culture as only a symptom of a capitalist mode of production or, in Jameson's terms, an allegory of "antagonistic collective discourses of social classes"; rather, popular culture is for him an offshoot of Hong Kong's unique condition of collaborative colonialism.[24]

Understanding distraction not as a deviation from a predetermined point of attention but as a process that Wood has characterized as "making deals with surpluses of meaning" gives us room to consider the seemingly extraneous moments in a narrative that in fact betray the self-consciousness of the text's embeddedness in the cultural ecology engendered by the historical situation.[25] Best and Marcus express a similar idea in their advocacy of surface reading. They suggest that the critic should attend to "what the text says about itself"—for instance, "the traditional questions for criticism of the sonnets are already questions in the sonnets themselves; there is no need for a critical metalanguage to explain the sonnets."[26] Hong Kong popular literature has many such moments that reveal the strategic negotiations of the cultural creators, many of whom were new émigrés from the mainland, with the city and its popular culture industry itself. On the surface, their typical reaction that was shared by both the political Left and Right involved critiquing the industry while also imposing their own "political demands" on it in order to counteract those coming from the other side. In fact, there were moments of self-mockery and self-conscious double takes

in these fictions, which allowed us to see that the writers sought to make wagers with the popular culture industry as they waded into the muddy waters of interlocking power dynamics. For instance, in *Ostrich*, a novel from the 1950s written by Lin Shicun, two refugee intellectuals from the mainland manage to eke out a living in Hong Kong by writing pornographic serial fiction for tabloids. They mock their own work by calculating the value of their writings on the basis of the amount of time at a dance hall that could be exchanged for them. "Let's do this: we'll dance tonight for only two thousand words' worth of time—it takes about an hour to write that much." "Agreed! But if we churn out a thousand words more, we can dance for the equivalent of three thousand words' worth of time."[27] These characters do not delude themselves about the literary value of their writings. On the contrary, their cool-headed computation of the exchange value of this kind of literature in terms of the amount of time it would buy them on the dance floor indicates that they have been subconsciously behaving like ostriches, burying their heads in the capitalist culture industry that has supported their way of life. These moments of escapism should not be taken at face value. They indicate self-reflexivity to a certain degree, although delivered with not a small dose of self-irony, and they amount to something like "blowing the cover" of a secret agent because the utilization of cultural production for something else was exposed.

Read with equal attention to the popular form and the political messages, Hong Kong's popular literature presents the cultural producers as historical actors, the cultural field a *con-text* to the political history of intersecting power dynamics, which constituted the specific local condition of the colonial city. The popular genre of spy fiction, with a high dose of political content, is akin to the "political novel" (following Wong Chung Ming's categorization).[28] These genres often place ideologies on the surface, not at a latent level. Consider, for instance, the satirical fictional account of Cold War Hong Kong in the 1950s provided by Zhao Zifan in his 1978 political satire *Ban Shangliu Shehui* (Society of the halfway up). Zhao here gives us a glimpse into the powerful sway that American politicians held over the Chinese political world under Cold War conditions. After a fictional American diplomat by the name of Ambassador Giuseppe paid Hong Kong a quick visit in the early 1950s, "hundreds of organizations, both large and small, started their political honeymoon. The hastily established political organizations—some simply called 'the Human Society,' others sporting long-winded names as if to emphasize their overblown ambition, such as 'the Chinese People's Alliance for Freedom and Democracy Against Dicta-

torship and Authoritarianism'—show up out of nowhere often with only a husband-and-wife team as members. Their children and relatives may join in later, making the group more akin to a 'friendship union.' It seems as though the Chinese know about the art of politicking from birth."[29] The multifarious political ideologies flying about at this turbulent moment of history were not hidden; they were right there on the surface. In other words, reading the *cover* does not necessarily amount to colluding with *covering up* or engaging in self-delusion.

Zhao's satirical passage, in both its content and the popular form, implies that the Cold War's imposition in the strategic "shatterzone" of Hong Kong was not unidirectional. As Jadwiga E. Pieper Mooney and Fabio Lanza suggest, "the master discourse of the Cold War was always contested . . . and never fully dominant."[30] "De-centering" allows for "multilayered complexities of this history" to emerge and enables us to attend to "street-level politics" as well as global geopolitics.[31] We might start by recalling, but against the grain, the statement by TAF's founding president, Robert Blum, in November 1961 that Asians "do not see the issues of the cold war as the United States sees them."[32] Whereas Blum's intention was to try to integrate all of Asia into a dominant geopolitical order as defined by the superpowers, the disjunction of "the intense preoccupation with local problems" that he found to be everywhere in Asia meant that, as Pieper Mooney and Lanza put it, there were "people and groups whose activities were related to but not directly dependent on Cold War state policies at the highest levels."[33] As I will show in the rest of the chapter, the spy narrative, a genre that bears the clearest imprint of various political interests' exploitative uses of the city, affords a path, occasionally a circuitous one, toward an understanding, in Jameson's terms, of the "very situation" that "brings into being" this cultural form.

The omission of political genres by many contemporary scholars has to do with the widespread discontent with the image of Hong Kong as a forefront for political propaganda and espionage during the Cold War. While the desire to avoid reproducing such geopolitical overdeterminism is understandable, I would argue that a linear understanding of historical change does not altogether solve the problem. Law's analysis, for instance, is confined to the post-1980s secret agent or undercover films from Hong Kong, with *Man on the Brink* (dir. Kwok-Ming Cheung) offering an early example of the political expression of "the new local-born generation" after the 1970s. Implied in this periodization is an understanding that only by then was it possible "to break away from the old political ideologies to

engage with Hong Kong's position in the intersecting and overlapping political and cultural mappings" and conduct a locally embedded critique of the political condition encoded by its colonial bureaucratic structure.[34] While these observations may be sociologically verifiable, this narrow temporal focus is unnecessary, since the city's history of being "rendered as a chess piece in the conflicts between different forces in the Cold War" certainly precedes that moment.[35] Later sections of this chapter focus on the popular spy fiction from an earlier moment, starting with the post–World War II period, which as I argue, provides an even more intriguing case study of the interlocking and palimpsestic structures of power, in part because it exhibits a complex negotiation between political agendas and popular demand. Written by authors with varying degrees of local rootedness in the city, the spy narratives provide a test case for "narrating Hong Kong," affording a unique vantage point from which to explore how we should reckon with global power structures embedded in the colonial city. Our investigation of Hong Kong's political reckoning with its own past must begin there.

II. The Spy Thriller in an Interimperial City

Sinophone spy fiction of the post–World War II period places Hong Kong in the midst of multiple empires, illuminating a historical condition that Laura Doyle has called "inter-imperiality": "Despite the familiar rhetoric of rise and fall, world empires with their various projects of modernization have not existed simply sequentially. They have overlapped with each other, battled each other, and borrowed from each other, forming each other through processes of transculturation."[36] Spy fiction that depicts wars and espionage prior to the formal onset of Cold War, as exemplified by the works of Qiu Zhang 仇章 (?–1951), confirms that the Cold War followed on the heels of multiple "successive and converging" empires, its arsenal assembled through the retooling and reorganizing of "sediments [left by previous and coexisting empires] in material, linguistic, philosophical, and political forms."[37]

A native of Guangdong, Qiu Zhang was best known for his novels featuring Agent No. 5, an intelligence officer for the Nationalist government during the Resistance War against Japan. The first novel in this series, titled *Secret Agent No. 5*, was published in 1943, before the Asia-Pacific War ended. The character of Agent No. 5 was later revived in *War of Espionage in Hong Kong*, which was published in 1949. Although he is barely remembered today, Qiu Zhang was very popular in the 1940s. His novels

were published in Shanghai as well as in various cities in the Pearl River Delta; one book was adapted into a movie, and others were turned into radio plays by the famous Cantonese broadcaster Li Wo.[38] Qiu died prematurely in 1951, at the very beginning of the Cold War. His final novel, titled *Lou Wang* (Slipping through the net), which depicts Communist undercover agents stranded in Taiwan, shrewdly anticipates the geopolitical reconfiguration of this part of the world through presenting a different cartographic mapping from those of his earlier stories representing his favorite subject—espionage during the Resistance War. While he did not live long enough to experience much of the geopolitical rivalry that would dominate the following decades, he acutely sensed that what has come to be known as the "Cold War" would mean redrawing the borders and remapping the path of movement. Through a change in topos from the earlier extensive network across Asia to a hole in a tree in southern Taiwan, he articulated what Ó Tuathail has called "the problematic of *geo-politics*" in the popular form, following the temporal progression from the Asia-Pacific War to the Cold War.

In Qiu Zhang's early novels, Hong Kong is placed in the center of a regional war zone connecting South China with the rest of East Asia, particularly Japan and Korea, but also South and Southeast Asia, including India, the Philippines, and Singapore. Although his focus was on the Asia-Pacific War, it seems as though neither his contemporary time nor the place of Hong Kong could be rationalized without citing the multiple successive and contemporaneous empires that, in Doyle's terms, were constantly "overlapping," "battling," and "borrowing from" one another. The Asia-Pacific War was thus understood as an interimperial war between unevenly distributed empires, with the smaller and weaker nations dragged in as collateral damage. *War of Espionage in Hong Kong* opens with a panoramic description that emphasizes Hong Kong's geopolitical significance as "an immodest stepping stone for the British Empire in the Far East." When "the gates of Guangzhou were graciously opened" by the Chinese to the "roaring" British warships, Qiu Zhang wrote, "the Shamian Concession [in Guangzhou] enabled the British Empire to gain a foothold and a pivot [into China] from Hong Kong. It is this pivot that has borne the weight of Hong Kong's fate and well-being over the past hundred years. Using this solid foundation as a springboard, the British Empire was able to hop onto Singapore, Sumatra, Borneo, and New Guinea in the past century, and make sure that its 'Oriental offspring,' India and Burma, continued to grow under the protective wings of their 'oceanic master.'"[39] Hong Kong

is presented as a nexus that enabled the British empire to extend its global reach across the Pacific. The exchange of intelligence and information that this marketplace facilitated followed the same pattern, often benefiting the rich and powerful nations at the expense of smaller and poorer ones. "This intriguing and mysterious place is full of the most powerful brokers, as if it were a world-class auction house. They engage in the most insidious dealings in a bidding war that reaps benefits from the interests of the oppressed nations and the weaker ones, particularly those with a poorly equipped national defense system. So this place is in effect a global marketplace where weaker nations or ethnicities are offered up for sale."[40] The narrator's discussion of imperial history plays up the spatial dimension of colonial power. This knack for map drawing shows that popular writers such as Qiu Zhang did not regard geopolitics as a domain reserved solely for national or state actors; rather, they presented geopolitics as already integrated into the everyday life of ordinary people, something "lived all at once in the neighborhood, at the imperial court, on the road, in the body, and amid the invasive stream of political events and news."[41]

The interimperial perspective produces a different understanding of China's War of Resistance against Japanese imperialism by deemphasizing the war's nationalist overtones. While the conventional view of this war presents Japan as an aggressor and China as a righteous defender of its independent sovereignty, Qiu Zhang understands the war as the competition between new and old, Western and Eastern imperial powers, thereby making room in the novel for the Japanese military and its spies who articulated an anti- (Western) imperialist rhetoric only to justify Japan's own imperialist ideology predicated on the notion of an "East Asia Co-Prosperity" zone. Hong Kong's security interests were strategically placed at the center of this imperial rivalry. In the novel, before the British colonial government surrenders Hong Kong to the Japanese army, a Japanese general prophetically predicts that the British authorities will be bound by their colonial mindset and will not seek support from the Chinese army, since they "would be afraid of losing Hong Kong to the Chinese if the Chinese army were allowed to enter Kowloon."[42] From this position, Japan's ostensible anti-imperialism will give it an advantage over the British with regard to China's well-being. A Japanese spy thus tries to persuade Agent No. 5 to side with Japan, arguing that, just like Japan itself, "Hong Kong, Singapore, Myanmar, . . . Borneo, the Philippines, and Hawai'i" are all "oppressed nations," and that "the enemy of Japan's secret service is the British in Hong Kong and the Americans in the Philippines, not the Chi-

nese." To this propagandistic rhetoric, Agent No. 5 retorts, "This is a predictable trick played by the Japanese in their so-called War of Greater Asia. The English and Americans are China's strategic allies now. We can forget our disappointment in them and forgive them. As long as they treat the Chinese race as an equal partner in the future, they are friends of the Chinese people. I have already joined the British Far Eastern Bureau of Intelligence."[43] Note here that Agent No. 5's defense of China's collaboration with the British in the war against fascism rests largely on a strategic consideration. Becoming "an equal partner" with the British appears to be a bigger concern than attaining independence from colonial occupation. Agent No. 5's lack of enthusiasm toward the rhetoric of anticolonial nationalism could be because this rhetoric was already coopted by the proponents of Japanese imperialism. Yet Agent No. 5 is sorely disappointed during his collaborations with the British Far Eastern Bureau of Intelligence. He thinks that the British officers display a deep-seated distrust of Chinese agents and are generally incompetent in their engagement with the Japanese army. When the British commander refuses to involve Chinese troops in protecting Kowloon just as the Japanese general predicted, Agent No. 5 sadly admits that Britain "won't accept the helping hand of an ally because it essentially believes in its own invincibility." "To the British," in Agent No. 5's view, "Japanese warmongers defeated China only because China was poorly equipped militarily. The British Empire's well-supplied army would only make the enemy cringe with fear. Nothing could be further off than this perception."[44]

In these popular narratives about Agent No. 5, Qiu Zhang brings into view an imaginary of the Pacific that is complexly intertwined with the histories of empires, in which Hong Kong's prime geographic position gave it the important role of a linchpin in this interimperial rivalry, affording a perspective that went far beyond the immediate locality itself. In one of the Agent No. 5 narratives that document the conquest of Hong Kong by the Japanese army, we encounter characters from a variety of national backgrounds—not just Chinese, Japanese, and British, but also Russian, Canadian, Indian, and Korean. All of them are pulled into an interimperial war with Hong Kong at its epicenter. Qiu's mapping of the Asia-Pacific War differs from the territorial imagination of either the Japanese or the British; nor does it conform to China's nationalist imaginary, which posits Hong Kong as an outlier of Chinese territory but whose only viable future lies in its eventual incorporation into China through overcoming its history of colonialism.

Another way for Qiu Zhang to emphasize the centrality of Hong Kong in the global conflict is to play up the theme of interculturality and transnationality. This theme is presented through tropes of "mongrelization" and "place-polygamy," to borrow Tan See Kam's description of the Bondmania films produced by Shaw Brothers, and the depiction of "cosmopolitan entities of uncertain nationality and political persuasion, existing beyond, and hence exceeding, the political boundaries of the nation-state."[45] Qiu obsessively explores the bicultural background of Agent No. 5 and his female partner, Agent No. 13. They are both presented as colonial subjects whose upbringing and knowledge gained from Japan have given them an advantage in serving as spies for China's Guomindang (KMT) regime. Qiu Zhang had worked as a journalist, and his decision to subtitle his story series *True Records of the War of Espionage in the Far East* betrays his intention to use real-world political figures and events as material for popular fiction. To underscore the theme of biculturality, he recruited the mysterious historical figure Yoshiko Kawashima, a notorious Japanese spy known to Chinese readers as Chuandao Fangzi. We are told in one of the novels that both Agent No. 5 and Agent No. 13 have lived in Miyazu, Japan, where they shared a deep friendship with two female Japanese secret agents who had been personally trained by Kawashima. Although this connection with Kawashima is a bit circuitous, it established a ground of familiarity with the audience, since there had already been a number of sensational renditions in popular literature and media about this figure when Qiu wrote his stories.

One quality that makes the real-life Kawashima a favorite subject for urban legends is her "uncertain nationality" (Tan's phrase). By birth a cousin of the last Qing emperor, she was raised by a Japanese official and influenced by her foster parent's militaristic ideas. She developed into a talented spy working for Japan, hoping in part to use Japanese power to eventually reinstate the Manchu Empire. After the war, she was found guilty of war crimes in China, including having a role in instigating Sino-Japanese conflicts in Shanghai in 1932, which eventually expanded into full-blown war. Kawashima's double identity became an issue of mystery and controversy. Even at her trial, when she was accused of betraying China, she defended herself by arguing that she was actually Japanese by nationality, not Chinese.

In Qiu Zhang's stories, Agent No. 5 is frequently tested regarding his loyalty to Japan, to China, or to the British Empire because of his own transnational and possibly interracial background. He is more than a secret agent working for China; he is also an infiltrator into the enemy's culture.

His double identity as a political and cultural undercover agent raises questions about whether his transnational experience is an asset or a liability for his "real" job as a spy for China. For the reader, it is always possible that Agent No. 5 could be a mirror image of Yoshiko Kawashima, even though the novels do not give us any reason to doubt his loyalty to China. Agent No. 5's biculturalism can be read allegorically as a typical Hong Kong subjecthood, a product of the city's position at an East–West crossroads. If so, this reading confirms Law Wing Sang's observation that the question of political loyalty was central to the city's political history, since colonialism's contamination situated Hong Kong at a place of ambivalence in terms of its national belonging. Rather than presenting dramatic renditions of individual identity struggles, Qiu Zhang spins one tale after another about transnational and intercultural lives, as if to confirm the reality of this structural ambivalence.

In an unusual short story that is not a spy narrative, "Parallel Coastlines," Qiu narrates from a first-person perspective the story of a boy confronting the traumatic reality of having to choose between his parents at the onset of the Asia-Pacific War. Whether he departs for China with his Chinese father or remains in Japan with his Japanese mother, his choice will mean the loss of an integral family member. The story is divided into two parts: the first part focuses on the helplessness and sorrow of the boy's pneumonia-ridden mother in a Japanese port city on the brink of war; the second part depicts the father's heroic participation in China's War of Resistance by drawing on the medical and military training he has received in Japan. The story suggests that the two parents, despite their divergent futures, share an analogous experience, which is the inevitability of sacrifice for the war. In the middle of the story, the father tells the child, "We must seek revenge and cleanse ourselves of the shame we carry because of [those people in] Tokyo. The sacrifice that Mother has to take is inevitable."[46] It is unclear what "shame" the father is referring to, whether it is the impending future of China's colonization or some form of discrimination faced by Chinese nationals living in Japan. But when, later in the story, the father has to depart for the front and leave his son behind, the narrator tells us that "even though this is against his will, for the sake of sacrificing for the nation, there is no other way."[47] The word "sacrifice," which rationalizes both the father's patriotism and the mother's abandonment, complicates the message about a patriotic war and a Chinese national's voluntary participation in it. We don't know enough about Qiu Zhang's biography to ascertain whether the diasporic and biracial family he depicts in this story is based

on his own personal experience, but the doubleness connoted through the metaphor of "parallel coastlines" and the mirroring of the two sides of the war convey a strong sense of melancholy quite incongruent with the typical heroic tone in most narratives about the War of Resistance.

In what ways does Qiu Zhang's spy fiction set in the Asia-Pacific War relate to the Cold War? Sorin Radu Cucu and Roland Végső pose a similar question in their reading of Herman Melville's novel *Moby-Dick* as an allegory of the Cold War, asking, "How was it possible for an American writer to portray the Cold War as early as 1851?" In their answer, they suggest that we think of the Cold War as "a symbolic mutation in the sequence of the world wars of the twentieth century" and thus, quoting Anders Stephanson, as "war-like in every sense except the military," erasing the boundary between war and peace. If the Cold War signifies not a distinct historical episode but a mode of "conflict where the distinction between war and peace no longer applies," then the War of Resistance can be understood as simply an early phrase of a "perpetual war" turned cold at some point.[48] In fact, almost all of Qiu Zhang's fictional renditions of China's War of Resistance against Japan were published at a moment when the Chinese world was experiencing the Cold War as a "hot war," for the battles between the Communists and the Nationalists followed right on the heels of the War of Resistance, leaving very little breathing room for ordinary people. Qiu's novels thus reflect this state of "perpetual war," but he was mostly concerned with identifying an opportune location from which to construct a world geography of wars, so as to devise the best strategies for surviving a seemingly never-ending conflict. Hong Kong, connecting the larger territory of South China with East and Southeast Asia as well as with Western imperial powers, is the site that provides his spy novels with their political underpinning.

III. *War of Espionage in Hong Kong* Redux

"The Spy Ring in Tokyo," the title of a short story by Jun Ren 俊人 (pen name of Chen Zijuan 陳子雋, 1917–89), makes it sound like the story could be a sequel to one of Qiu Zhang's narratives.[49] Its Chinese title, "Dongjing Jiandie Wang," calls to mind some of Qiu's most popular works, such as "Encounters with the Chinese Spy Ring" (Zaoyu Zhina Jiandie Wang) and "Tokyo Rose" (Dongjing Meigui). But Jun Ren's story originated from a very different institutional background. It was published in 1956 in the USIS-funded *Story Paper*. Jun Ren must have been among the favorite

writers for this popular literature project, for he had helped launch this endeavor in February 1955 by authoring the publication's first story.

Mirroring the city of Hong Kong as depicted by Qiu Zhang in *War of Espionage in Hong Kong*, Jun Ren's story places a "spy ring" from North Korea in Tokyo, a setting that is not described in any detail. The story does not include a single Japanese character; its entire plotline involves Korean settlers and visitors residing in Tokyo. At the beginning of the story, two North Korean agents arrive in Tokyo and become involved in twin plots of defection: Han, the senior officer, manages to persuade a South Korean pilot who is there to attend a training session to defect to North Korea with his plane, while Nam, the junior officer in charge of communication, is somehow seduced by his landlord's attractive niece, Choi, and eventually defects to the other side. This means that the "spy ring" working for North Korea mirrors a similar setup working for the "other side": both employ women and the phantasmagoria of a capitalist city as bait to seduce their targets. However, North Korea's "other side" is never named: It remains ambiguous whether the agents that subverted North Korea's spy game come from South Korea, Japan, or the United States.

The story appears to be constructed on the logic of similarity, making the writer's treatment of the opposing sides in the Cold War seem fairly balanced. For instance, Kikuko, a North Korean agent who is tasked with seducing the South Korean pilot Kim, is the mirror image of Choi, Nam's love interest. But there are some subtle but significant differences in the author's treatment of these parallel plotlines, which in turn reveal the story's political leaning. For instance, compared to the spies working for the Free World, Han and the North Korean spies embody an additional layer of secrecy: Han's dark history is revealed when Choi recalls that he was responsible for investigating her father back in North Korea and causing his death. His ruthlessness is also manifested when the group is chased by the police, and he does not think twice before deciding to sacrifice his comrade. At the same time, while some North Korean agents such as Kikuko are clearly identified as spies, the story never reveals whom Choi works for or whether she is even a professional spy. Choi's functional role is similar to that of a professional spy: her seduction of Nam makes him divulge their mission in Tokyo, as a result of which this plan is sabotaged. But it is crucial that the reader see her as just an innocent civilian, despite various clues suggesting otherwise (for instance, she does not dance like someone from North Korea, as the gullible North Korean agent Nam notices at one point), because it is based off the anchor of this character that a world of

normalcy is issued forth, from which self-serving Communist agents like Han deviate. Thus, Choi cannot be a reduplication of the professional spy—the political position of the story hinges upon this character being human and normal, someone who is the diametrical opposite to the political instrument Han or Kikuko.

Végső has argued that American Cold War spy novel operates from a non-equivalent "dividing line separating the normal world of democratic publicity from the secret world of espionage" and perpetuates a perception of "the relationship of these two domains as a necessary supplementarity." The goal for this representational structure is so that the reader can identify with the values of the "normal world" while recognizing the danger of the "enemy within."[50] Jun Ren's "The Spy Ring in Tokyo" follows a similar structural principle in its treatment of the paralleling twin plots of defection. If we consider it as a sequel to Qiu Zhang's 1940s narrative *War of Espionage in Hong Kong*, we can see a stark difference in terms of the authors' geopolitical imagination. Whereas Qiu showed a complex and concrete "scripting of global space" with disparate localities differentially positioned in interlocking imperial mappings conjoined through Hong Kong, Jun Ren followed the dominant pattern of a Manichean and schematic world, with key locations such as Tokyo depicted as an archetypical locality of the Free World: Tokyo comes across as a generic capitalist city at the forefront of a political standoff with the socialist bloc, or the "other side." As a matter of fact, this story could be taking place in Hong Kong or Berlin. That a USIS officer misrepresented a plot detail in the paperwork submitted to obtain funding for its publication—the authorization form erroneously claims that the North Korean spies were "trained in Communist China"—suggests that "The Spy Ring in Tokyo" could be taken as a thinly veiled representation of Hong Kong.[51]

Authorization forms were required for every title that received USIS funding support. These documents give us a glimpse into the agency's interpretation of a publication's value. The form filled out for "The Spy Ring in Tokyo" explained the "specific objective [to] be served by the publication" in the following terms: "A revelation in fictionalized form of Communist espionage activities which if possible in Japan under Japan's tight security measures can take place anywhere else in Southeast Asia to the detriment of the interests of the countries concerned."[52] This amounted to the USIS telling the newly decolonized countries in Southeast Asia—the intended audience for most USIS publications, including the *Story Paper*—something like, "If Communist infiltration could happen in Japan, it could happen in

your country, too." The abstract nature of the setting, that Tokyo could be Hong Kong or Singapore, contributes to the serial logic of the USIS's strategy of political messaging.

Judging from this authorization form, "The Spy Ring in Tokyo" was most likely viewed as a "political story" rather than an "innocuous story," a distinction made in the previously mentioned USIS document.[53] Yet this political story also contains some "innocuous" elements, including the love plot and details about adventure and espionage. As I have argued, the USIS encouraged a reading that would cut through the stories' "innocuous" elements to get to their "political angle."[54] Did this plan succeed in luring the distracted reader into the realm of the political? Could it have backfired if the reader had chosen to focus only on the "innocuous" elements and dismissed the political content as irrelevant?

My proposal of giving "multifocal attention" to Hong Kong popular literature as an interface between state politics and the culture industry implies that there is no overall guarantee for reading with or against the USIS's "political angle" in this cross-contaminated field of propaganda and popular culture. But the instability of this literature in achieving a propagandistic end does not exempt an author from carrying their own propagandistic bias. The ideological message of "The Spy Ring in Tokyo" is unambiguous. That the author, similar to the USIS officer, wanted to cut straight to its political core can be seen to some extent in the narrative's lack of attention to the setting: that Tokyo could be Hong Kong or any city on the Cold War front line implies a denial of the locality's inherent meaning beyond its functional role "in the intersecting and overlapping political and cultural mappings," to borrow Law's description of Hong Kong.[55]

IV. The Writer as Spy

Although Ruan Lang (pen name of Yan Qingshu 嚴慶澍, 1919–81) was not from the same political camp as Jun Ren, the two shared some similarities in terms of their backgrounds as media workers and their common tendency to approach the spy novel as a complementary medium for disseminating political messages. Ruan was an editor at *Xin Wan Bao*, which as an offshoot of the Communist newspaper *Da Gong Bao*, was founded in 1950 and known for its accommodation of both leftist and non-Left writers and its refusal to repeat verbatim the talking points handed down from Beijing.

Ruan Lang knew intimately the close connection between political interests and journalism and wrote about it in his satirical novel *Ren Zha*

(Human trash), which was serialized in *Xin Wan Bao* in 1951. The novel's main character, referred to simply as Chairman, who is a retired Nationalist army general seeking refuge in Hong Kong, is shown to have received funding from the United States at one point to start a newspaper. Not only does this publication demonstrate a clear political interest (it has published articles predicting the impending takeover of China by the KMT), but it is also corrupt in terms of its organization: Chairman has made his son the general manager, his daughter the staff writer, and his third wife the celebrity film actor whose headshots frequently appear on the newspaper's entertainment pages. This satirical account of the rightist sectors of the media industry addresses mostly left-leaning readers in Hong Kong and China, but it is not just a roman à clef alluding unambiguously to American-funded organizations such as the Asia Publishing House 亞洲出版社; it could also be seen as imparting a kind of self-understanding about the nature of Communist media work as practiced by leftist journalists such as Ruan himself.

Ruan Lang later recalled that "we employees [of Communist newspapers such as *Da Gong Bao* or *Xin Wan Bao*] viewed our work not as a 'rice bowl,' but as an enterprise of New China."[56] He also explained that literary creation for him was something "appended to" his main job of journalistic reporting at the newspaper, and as part of his writing process, he tended to "spend a lot of time mulling over the theme of a story, as well as the characters and plotline used to illustrate that theme."[57] Ruan's depiction of his work experience as a leftist media worker confirms the privileging of political propaganda over literary value, despite the obvious differences of the Communist press where he worked and the fictional self-serving corrupt rightist newspaper that he satirized in his novel.

Ruan Lang's description of literary writing as supplementary to journalistic reporting as a medium of Communist propaganda also explains why many of his literary works from 1950s and 1960s Hong Kong depict real-life incidents. His novella *Xiang Gang Wuyan Xia* (Hong Kong under the roofs) can serve as an example here.[58] Published in 1958, it takes as its subject the October 1956 clash on the streets of Kowloon between Communists and Nationalists over the hanging of flags on KMT's National Day, which resulted in the deaths of around fifty people. Ruan offers a dramatic rendition of the conspiracy behind the scenes, blaming the KMT agents who work with a Catholic priest and American spies as the real perpetrators of the violence. The story resembles Jun Ren's "Till We Meet Again," which offers a pro-KMT account of the disruption of Premier Zhou Enlai's trip to Bandung. Jun Ren and Ruan Lang made no attempt to disguise

their political objective of setting the record straight and exposing the evil of the other side through literary representation. *Hong Kong Under the Roofs* operates not on an understanding of the relationship of literature to social reality in terms of mimesis, but on the assumption that literature can directly influence public perceptions of reality.

As a politically sensitive media worker, Ruan Lang had a knack for conspiracy theories and stories about surveillance and spying, even when he was not writing a conventional spy story. In "Wu Hui" (Misunderstanding), for instance, an American academic working in Chinese studies, Mr. Shields, has come to Hong Kong to collect information on China using a private business as a cover. Shields claims to be emulating a real-life director at TAF, Richard P. Conlon, who submitted a well-known report to Congress in 1959 titled "United States Foreign Policy in Asia" under the aegis of a private organization called Conlon Associates Ltd. "Just like his colleagues [working with Conlon on his report], he [Shields] puts up a 'Private Research Organization' sign and tries to get the real scoop on what is going on in Hong Kong."[59] But in Shields's nightmares, he is haunted by a montage of newspaper headlines from the newly independent countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, all calling for the "new imperialists" to get out. "It's all because of the influence of China's situation in 1949," his mentor had told him before he left for Hong Kong.[60] This story touches on a theme not unfamiliar to readers of spy stories in Hong Kong: Qiu Zhang's popular thrillers also established the fact that Hong Kong was a node of information exchange and intelligence gathering during the Asia-Pacific War. But whereas Qiu was primarily interested in military intelligence pursued by professional spies, Ruan showed that the civil sector was also deeply involved in pervasive surveillance and intelligence activities, leading to an emphasis on the militarization of everyday life during the Cold War. Similar to the American academic Mr. Shields, who approaches information gathering as a spy, his wife, Lina, also engages in spying, digging into the backgrounds of the domestic servants the couple has hired.

Ruan Lang repeatedly incorporated global geopolitics into everyday life, which ended up producing a double effect: on the one hand, this reinforced the penetration of surveillance into the social order; on the other hand, the persistence of the culture of spying even after the geopolitical orientation had changed meant that the political agendas for the Communist press in Hong Kong and for his spy stories fell to secondary importance. Ruan Lang's story "She Ya" (Fangs), published in 1974, includes allusions to China's border conflict with the Soviet Union at Zhenbao Island in 1969

and President Richard Nixon's visit to China in 1972, representing the Soviet Union as a bigger threat than the United States.[61] The main plot of the story revolves around a garment factory owner, Mr. Zhang, who for several years has collaborated with a businessman, Zhuge Fa-ke, on large clothing orders supposedly for export to Japan. (It is unclear whether the author intended the transliteration of Zhuge's Chinese name, Fa Ke, to be a convenient pun on the English word "fake.") Zhang has long suspected that the manufactured items of clothing have been shipped to the Soviet Union instead of Japan, since they are oversized for Japanese consumers. He further concludes, based on other clues, that Zhuge is a Soviet spy. For instance, he has learned from his bookseller friend that Zhuge has been purchasing Mainland Chinese books in large quantities and shipping them to some unknown destination. One stormy night, Zhuge pays a visit to Zhang's family home and openly discloses his true identity as a Soviet spy. He tries to recruit Zhang to work for the Soviets, promising him Soviet citizenship and diplomatic protection in the event that the Soviet Union should launch a nuclear attack on China. Zhuge's offer is ultimately rejected outright, and his exaggerated claims about Soviet military power are exposed—all thanks to the superior knowledge of global geopolitics exhibited by Zhang's teenage son, Xiaosong.

Like many of Ruan Lang's other stories, "Fangs" riffs off a real incident: in August 1972, Hong Kong Special Branch officers arrested two Soviet sailors and a stateless Chinese person for spying and deported them to a Soviet ship. This incident, which was widely reported in Hong Kong's English- and Chinese-language newspapers, reflected Hong Kong's importance to the Soviet Union as a trading port for commodities such as cotton fabric and clothing, as well as for intelligence gathering.[62] "Fangs" draws on the topical relevance of this incident, but the story's message can be construed more broadly than the political objective of exposing Soviet spying in Hong Kong.

Zhang's son is a brilliant spy in the making. Xiaosong has an insatiable hunger for information gathered through common channels—his biology class, a typical TV documentary, or English-language newspapers one can easily find in the public library, for instance—and he knows how to strategically use this information to psychologically unsettle his opponent, who on this day is the Soviet spy who has come to visit their family. Through the figure of Xiaosong, Ruan Lang underscores the degree of militarization that has pervaded everyday life, sufficient to make a soldier out of a common schoolboy.

The story further places the precocious and vigilant schoolboy firmly in Hong Kong's cosmopolitan environment, showing how he takes advantage of the seemingly unimpeded free flow of information across the Cold War divide to expose the Soviet lies pushed by the professional spy. Notably, the story shows that the useful information he weaponizes all comes from the West: Xiaosong has learned everything he knows about venomous snakes from his biology teacher, who is from the United Kingdom and likes to talk to the students about the British government's extraction of fangs from poisonous snakes, referring to the efforts to root out Soviet spies there. Xiaosong has also taught himself about the 1969 war with the Soviet Union at Zhenbao Island through reading British newspapers and watching documentaries at the local public library. After Zhuge arrives at their house, Xiaosong makes a point of carrying out a seemingly casual conversation about venomous snakes and their poisonous fangs, all the while dropping insinuations about Soviet spies. His performance unravels Zhuge psychologically. In the end, when Zhuge pretends to disclose Soviet state secrets to Zhang by claiming that the Soviet Union has everything set up to eliminate China through deploying midrange missiles with nuclear warheads, Xiaosong bursts out laughing, pointing to an English-language newspaper that Zhuge brought with him, where the "state secret" has already been openly reported. Importantly, Zhuge's lack of English competency puts him at a disadvantage in this war of information.

Through the character of Xiaosong, Ruan Lang's spy narrative is able to "bring into being" the social condition of Hong Kong, to which this story is also "a reaction," to repeat Jameson's discussion about the relationship between literature and its social context.[63] Furthermore, Xiaosong is a practitioner of the approach that I call "distractive reading," following Michael Wood's description, meaning that the reader is constantly distracted by competing interests and needs to negotiate with surpluses of meaning. In the politically divided world of mass media in Cold War Hong Kong, readers were presented with information coming from both the East and the West, in multiple languages. Whichever political position a specific reader took, it did not completely obscure information from the other side or in other languages. On a larger scale, information was constantly exchanged and shared, following patterns consistent with the shifting geopolitical currents. Xiaosong knows how to use this environment of information flow and exchange to gain an advantage over the Soviet spy Zhuge. One detail at the end of the story illustrates this point nicely: Xiaosong quotes from a report in a British newspaper about how the United States has shared intel-

ligence with China regarding Soviet missile deployment. This enables him to call Zhuge's bluff, showing that his "state secret" about the Soviet Union is not so secret after all. This detail supports William Tay's statement that in Hong Kong, "a free port" used as "an entrepôt and a place of mediation" for cultural flows of multiple political orientations, the divided cultural field paradoxically engendered disrespect toward political boundaries or facilitated selective sampling across the aisle for cultural consumers.[64] In describing Cold War reading culture, Tay wrote: "Many avid literary readers in those days would not think too much about Left versus Right when it came to books or magazines—they would read them only for the literature. Many other cultural workers recall that they used to read both American and Soviet literature in translation, as well as Chinese literature from the 1930s, plus some experimental works from Taiwan."[65] I would argue that the ordinary Hong Kong literary reader might not "think too much about Left versus Right," not necessarily because they did not care about politics, but because their interest in political division was out-competed by their interest in literature. The depiction of Xiaosong implies that becoming a distracted reader was a useful skill of survival in an over-saturated literary field of political messages and information. Ruan Lang's story still follows the geopolitical trajectory at this moment, with the normalization of US–Chinese relations in sight; hence, Western media in the English language is given a positive representation here. Thus, "Fangs" is no less ideological than Ruan's earlier stories that take explicitly critical positions toward the United States, but this story also makes it clear that a propaganda war owes much to the informational networks that were established in Hong Kong, that "entrepôt and . . . place of mediation," in Tay's words. For leftist cultural workers, who, much like their counterparts on the Right, usually held a derisive attitude toward Hong Kong's coloniality, Ruan Lang's story comes closest to acknowledging the affordances of its colonial modernity for the dissemination of policies and positions from Beijing.

This story raises two key questions: Who is the spy, and for whom does a spy work? Xiaosong's alter ego in real life is none other than Ruan Lang himself, or more generally the media worker and writer whose job it was to disseminate and exchange information. The Chinese official in charge of propaganda work in Hong Kong, Liao Chengzhi, reportedly said this to leftist media workers in Hong Kong in 1959: "Some people worry about what will happen to them if they spend many years working in Hong Kong—but what will happen to them when they return [to the mainland]? Are they going to become rightist? Such worry is unnecessary."[66] In actu-

ality, this was not a needless "worry" at all. We need only remember the fate of Luo Fu, Ruan Lang's colleague at *Xin Wan Bao*, who was charged by Beijing in 1982 with committing espionage and working undercover for the United States in his official capacity as a newspaper editor and writer at the Communist media organization in Hong Kong. My point is not so much that certain leftist cultural workers were wrongly accused of spying by the suspicious authoritarian regime in Beijing, but that Hong Kong, akin to what Anne Anlin Cheng has called a field of "susceptibility" or a "contaminated zone," has made political activities such as spying as well as composing politically inflected spy narratives possible and necessary, while at the same time constantly deflecting their political trajectory, sending off on tangents the path of both propaganda work and cultural production. Cheng implores us to attend to the pleasure of cultural consumption and aesthetic appreciation in "those murky moments of contamination when reification and recognition fuse, when conditions of subjecthood and objecthood merge, when the fetishist savors his or her own vertiginous intimacy with the dreamed object, and vice versa," and this is how I read Hong Kong spy narratives as a double entendre commentary on the city's geopolitical history.[67] In the "zone of contamination" of Hong Kong, there is always room for the likes of a talented professional or proto-spy such as Agent No. 5 or Xiaosong, and perpetual worry that such a figure will be contaminated, with where their loyalty falls becoming an eternal question.

V. Conclusion

Popular literature in general and the spy story in particular bear the stamp of what Ó Tuathail has called "the scripting of global space," but it is not the "state-society intellectuals and institutions" that revealed the intricacies of such political and narrative plots, but writers and readers of popular literature.[68] In all the fictional texts discussed in this chapter, the realism of international relations is transformed into the practice of literary realism, in which individuals and places caught in the web of geopolitics are given a space of self-reflection, the power of making choices—albeit speculative choices in most cases—that may not always align well with the dominant narratives of the state and other political powers. That this spy fiction tends to riff off real-life narratives about undercover agents is not unique to Hong Kong—John Le Carré's 1974 *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, for instance, is one of several fictional retellings of the well-publicized story of British intelligence officer Kim Philby. This chapter emphasizes how through renarrating

the strategic placement of Hong Kong's position "in the 'grand schemas' of empires, nation-states, and their various political ideologies," the spy narrative as popular geopolitics affords critical consciousness of the place itself, despite the excessive politicization of the genre.[69]

Qiu Zhang's last story, *Slipping Through the Net*, published in 1951 shortly before his death, is also derived from a real story, one about a high-level KMT military officer named Wu Shi, who was found to be a secret agent working for the Communist Party in 1950 and executed soon afterward.[70] Set in Taiwan, the story focuses on several undercover Communist agents who had worked closely with General Wu Shi but somehow "slipped through the net" when Wu Shi's cover was blown. These secret agents, led by the "Mysterious One," escaped to the forests in the southern parts of Taiwan, where they sought shelter in a hole inside a giant tree, waiting in vain for rescue from China, which they knew would not arrive. The story ends with the tragic death of two agents, the lone "Mysterious One" successfully evading capture once again and disappearing into the crowds of southern Taiwan. Different from his earlier action-packed narratives, which take place at transportation hubs and are full of movement, this story articulates a theme of stunted movement, broken connectivity, and hardening of boundaries. This mildly comic scenario of the heroic agents being stranded inside a tree hole turns out to be a stark but realistic depiction of the geopolitical standoff between China and Taiwan with the onset of the Cold War in the early 1950s—an era that Qiu Zhang barely experienced even as he somehow managed to grasp the spatial configurations of power most accurately.

Spy fiction lives on to tell the contemporary story of a new Cold War in the twenty-first century. Qiu Zhang couldn't have known that by 2025, the narrative about Wu Shi's successful infiltration into the upper echelons of the KMT military would receive yet another new narrativization in the form of a Chinese-produced TV drama, *Chenmo de Rongyao* (The unsung glories). This time the reality-turned-script of Cold War geopolitics delves into the bordering between China and Taiwan in a way that plays up the general's heroic sacrifice in a battle to reunite Taiwan with China. Out of the net of surveillance and terror—a realistic depiction of the political climate in the early decades of KMT's rule in Taiwan—has spun a new yarn that posits Taiwan as a last frontier waiting to be incorporated into the Chinese territory.

These examples confirm once again that geopolitics is not a business only reserved for nation-states or state-affiliated agents. Rather, cultural

workers from different positions should count as political agents—they prepare us through the stories they create to grasp the geographic distribution of power and the relationality of different localities in the global configuration. Whether we choose to read with or against the grain, geopolitics is an open text in which the intermingling of "innocuous" and "political" elements always generates "surpluses of meaning," in the words of Michael Wood, calling for a different kind of attention—a distracted kind of attention—to trace the meandering ramifications of this literary genre for the ordinary reader. While the Cold War is sometimes taken on a tangent from its designed trajectory of political production due to the complex geopolitical situation of the Sinosphere, it did not altogether disappear; rather, it has seeped into and shaded the colors of everyday life.

Part II

Aesthetics

The debate between modernism and realism started in the interwar period among European intellectuals, with, for instance, Bertolt Brecht taking the side of modernism and György Lukács that of realism. As history moved on from that moment, this division became increasingly calcified. "Once the Soviet Union took 'ownership' of realism," Joe Cleary states, "it was inevitable perhaps that its great Cold War antagonist would eventually, as a kind of reflex, espouse modernism."[1] This agon between modernism and realism did not leave out the decolonizing nations in the Global South. In recent decades, starting with Frances Stonor Saunders's influential book *The Cultural Cold War* (2000), which exposes how the CIA shaped the discourse of American modernism through secret funding lines, critiques of modernism have been largely focused on the relationship between modernism and the American Cold War state.[2] The modernisms of the postcolonial world, too, came under fire, as it was revealed that some cultural institutions that promoted modernism abroad were also products of US patronage and secretly funded by the CIA. Consider, for instance, recent studies on the African journals *Black Orpheus* and *Transition* and the Arabic journal *Hiwar*, or the Conference of African Writers of English Expression, held in Uganda in 1962.[3] On the other side of the Cold War, the Soviet Union's sponsorship of *Lotus*, the official publication of the Afro-Asian Writers' Association, has led to calls for renewed studies of socialist realism in the Global South, although studies of the US side of the Cold War so far have significantly outnumbered studies of the USSR side.[4] In this context, is it fair to conclude that the aesthetic boundary between modernisms and realisms worldwide reduplicated the political division between the Left and the Right, if not that between the United States and the Soviet Union?

The literary archive seems to point in that direction. In Malaya of the 1950s and 1960s, for instance, the standoff between the modernist groups and the realist camp was real and intense, but more energy was spent on drawing the line and solidifying the division than on understanding the context of the debate, let alone convincing the other side why one's own side was right. In the Sinophone context, this aesthetic opposition was further complexified by the Cultural Revolution in China, where the prevalence of a vacuous yet militant rhetorical style influenced the debate, engendering sloganeering in leftist journals such as *Lang Hua* (Waves) in Kuala Lumpur, which vowed in its second-anniversary issue to "expunge the grime of all modernist art, and launch a new era of realist art." This kind of sloganeering offers little in the way of explanation about why modernism is "bourgeois," "subjective," and "reactionary," or how the "line struggle"—the term itself reflects the transposition of the political struggle between the proletarian class and the bourgeoisie onto the aesthetic domain—between the two came about.[5] If we want to avoid understanding the circulatory history of the modernism-versus-realism debate in a diffusion model (as a primarily metropolitan affair that trickled outward to the peripheries) and undo the rigidity of this debate, it is necessary to take an alternative approach to the archive. In lieu of "the inevitable taking of sides between a good and a bad stance," as Fredric Jameson suggests, "including the situation itself in *realism*'s meaning" is key to understanding how this aesthetic stance performed historically. The same comment, I would add, applies to modernism as well. Jameson writes, "Now the political assessment and judgment do not remain extrinsic, in some field outside the object to be judged; it is in the very terms in which we think and define the thing itself, accompanied by a history that assures us of its own ephemeral topicality, and that the judgment will not remain the same the next day, or in its next avatar."[6] What is "the political assessment and judgment" that emerged from modernist and realist literature in Malaya and Hong Kong? And how does this "assessment and judgment" help us "define the thing itself"?

Part II sets out to answer these key questions, drawing on a different aspect of Cold War borders—their involvement in "making or creating worlds," or what Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson describe as "their role in the scene of *fabrica mundi*."[7] Henk van Houtum and colleagues have come to a similar understanding of the border, describing it as "much like a window [that] offers a view onto the world." They add, "*B/ordering*, as the strategic fabrication and control of a bounded sphere of connectivity, constitutes a reality of (affective) orientation, power and ease, thereby

expressing desire for protective distance from the outside world."[8] For the Malaysian Chinese critic Ng Kim Chew, the literary *mundi* has taken on a name—a "southern Chinese republic of letters," which includes locales such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, and parts of Southeast Asia.[9] This regional cultural sphere was formed through travel, from the "southern literati" who moved from China to the south in the early twentieth century, to "expatriate Chinese authors" who sought exile in Hong Kong, to, more recently, "overseas students" of Chinese descent (*qiaosheng*) who went to Taiwan for their education or to pursue a literary career. This cultural region was formed through "historical contingencies, including the collapse of the Chinese empire, the sealing off of the People's Republic, Hong Kong's colonization, the establishment of Taiwan's republic and the attendant suppression of nativist elements, and the status of Huayu [the Chinese language] within the Malayan emergency."[10] What Ng describes here illustrates what Houtum and colleagues called the "strategic fabrication and control of a bounded sphere of connectivity" by geopolitical currents, including the Cold War and its articulation with local political powers.[11] Yet Ng deemphasizes the contested nature of any endeavor to appropriate space for political purposes in the regional sphere of the "southern Chinese republic of letters." If borders and bordering practices engender a "pattern of the world," to use Mezzadra and Neilson's term, that is not solely an outcome of cartographic endeavors; it emerged out of the movements themselves, including contestations at the borders, among which the aesthetic antinomy between modernism and realism counts as one dominant form.

We therefore need to examine this striated sphere not just two-dimensionally, as a mapping on a flat surface, but three-dimensionally, by sliding up and down the scale, where we will find a lack of coordination between, and even a contradiction within, the flows of political power, people, and culture. The meanings of specific locales are rendered into ambivalence, not lining up neatly with their predetermined positions in the Cold War mapping. For instance, the experience of Bai Yao 白垚, who will be discussed in detail in chapter 3, offers a fresh take on one significant locale in the Cold War mapping of the Sinosphere: Taiwan. Originally from Guangdong in Mainland China, Bai Yao eventually came to Malaya via Hong Kong and Taiwan to work for the American-sponsored Union Press (UP), where he initiated a modernist poetry movement using *Chao Foon* as a primary platform. Identified by Ng Kim Chew as "the leading modernist," Bai Yao is seen as an example of the "many historical and geographic links" that made Taiwan "a center of Chinese literature."[12] One such "link"

was the ROC's Cold War–inflected "overseas students" program, which I discussed in the introduction. Bai Yao was among the first generation of overseas students to take advantage of this program and pursued higher education at National Taiwan University in 1953. But Taiwan represented more to these overseas students than just an anti-Communist front and a surrogate homeland in the Free World. In a short memoir recalling his experience in Taiwan in the 1950s, Bai describes his support for a fellow *qiaosheng* from Indonesia who took a leadership role in the May 1957 mass protest in Taipei against America's exterritorial privileges there. The protest was provoked by an incident in which a Chinese soldier was gunned down by an American serviceman, who was later acquitted by the US military court.[13] This isolated incident, not entirely uncommon at the military bases in Asia, where American superiority could be blatantly brandished, raises interesting questions about what Taiwan meant for itinerant individuals such as the Indonesian student or Bai Yao, and what they took away from this place. These contradictions suggest that the ideologies underlying the "historical contingencies" Ng talks about—anti-imperialism, anti-Communism, some version of nationalism, and others—were not perfectly aligned even at the height of the Cold War. This confirms that borders are, to use Thomas Nail's language, "literally and actually in motion," meaning that they are contingent on the ground beneath them—Nail mentions "the shifting sands and tides along coastlines" that provide the foundation of physical borders between the United States and Mexico—and undergo multiple mediations and continuous contestation.[14]

Bordering strategies such as "the sealing off of the People's Republic" might have created different worlds to the south, but borders are places of separation as well as contact. I therefore prefer to view the debate between modernism and realism as a lived borderscape, with the suffix *-scape* resonating with the term "shape," referring, in the words of Chiara Brambilla, to "the act of 'shaping' a composition of manmade spaces on the earth that work and evolve not based on natural laws but to serve a community, thus arising from the collective nature of the landscape."[15] The value of the concept of borderscape, according to Brambilla, is that it describes the border as signifying "power in space," "a political tool for ordering reality," at the same time that it brings attention to a context for "alternatives to the static exclusivity of landscapes of dominant power."[16] Part II gives emphasis to how both sides in the aesthetic debate inhabited and shaped this borderscape, in such a way that they created local worlds in relation to each other and to other places, thereby invigorating cultural production and literary history writing in this "southern Chinese republic of letters."

The act of *fabrica mundi* in the Cold War aesthetic realm would not have happened without a determination of the coordinates of the cultural sphere. A central argument of the two chapters in part II is that literary modernism and realism in this regional sphere shared the commonality of reading the "situation" in "a history . . . [that] will not remain the same the next day" (Jameson's terms) into their definitions. The two camps, which were oppositional despite their geographic and aesthetic overlap, manifested a common desire to confront the *ci shi ci di* (here and now) of Sinophone cultural production in this part of Southeast Asia under the conditions of the Cold War and decolonization. We need only to juxtapose two sets of manifestos issued respectively by the realist and the modernist schools to recognize their common concerns with the "here and now."

Shortly after the Asia-Pacific War concluded, the Communist cultural worker Jin Zhimang 金枝芒 (pen name of Zhou Shuying 周樹英, 1912–88, but writing under another pen name as Zhou Rong 周容), propelled the polemical debate about "the unique characteristics of Mahua literature and arts" to new heights with his essays "On Mahua Literary Arts" and "More on Sojourners' Literature," published between December 1947 and January 1948 in the Communist newspapers *Zhanyou Bao* (Brothers in arms) and *Minsheng Bao* (Voice of the people). He used the term "Mahua" in reference both to Malayan Chinese people and to the Chinese-language literature that they produced. One side in this debate argued that Malayan Chinese writers should be concerned with and represent the reality of Malayan society; the other side stated that since China's antifeudal and anti-imperialist struggles had the same goals as anti-imperialism in Malaya, Malayan writers should represent Chinese reality as well as Malayan reality. Jin Zhimang was an adamant defender of the first position.

Jin Zhimang's treatise "On Mahua Literary Arts" starts with a summary of the new developments in "democracy movements," then moves on to fault "the literature and arts of Malaya, or shall we say Mahua literature" for "consistently lagging behind, falling behind reality and the struggles."[17] Several paragraphs later, the author again comments on Mahua literature's inability to keep pace, this time stating sarcastically, "All literature has its uniqueness. That Mahua literature has waited until now to raise this topic for discussion . . . only shows how much Mahua literature and arts have been left behind by reality itself."[18] Notably, Jin is not calling Mahua literature backward in comparison with more advanced literatures in other places; rather, he is describing a situation in which reality has outpaced literature and the writer. This temporal lag for him is related to the spatial coordinates of Mahua literature: the fact that many Mahua writers were

new emigrants from China meant they had to catch up with the "here and now" of Malaya. These sojourners or new immigrants' preformed sense of reality of China had made them "fall behind." Jin Zhimang beckoned such a writer to "insert himself" into a new reality; he could not simply grab on to some preexisting notions of realism in creative works.

This essay reveals a more complex understanding of realism than it being a literary mode set out to mimetically represent a preformed reality. Reality is presented here as multiple and moving, or as Jameson puts it, "a history in movement and a future on the point of emergence"; the realist writer needs to approach it through "a discovery process," not as a reflection of something static and already determined.[19] Two decades later, the modernist school, represented by the poet and literary editor Liang Mingguang 梁明廣 (a.k.a. Wanyan Ji 完顏籍), used that same line of thought to justify the need for a new literary language so as to catch up with contemporary reality. In the manifesto "When the Rooster Crows for the First Time in 1968," published in the literary supplement of *Nanyang Siang Pau*, for which he served as literary editor, Liang described a new reality that the Mahua writer needed to confront. The changing times, not just in his immediate environs but globally, had prompted the need for literary innovations, which Liang associated with modernism. "I am not living in the China of the times of Hu Shih and Chen Duxiu," he states in this manifesto. "I am turning the pages of a new calendar for 1968, with my feet planted in Singapore and Malaysia. . . . My preoccupations are the withdrawal of troops, the Vietnam War, cancer, color, language, taxation, the surgical implantation of mechanical prostheses inside the human body." The list of "various and complex anxieties"—exactly what Liang meant by entries such as "the withdrawal of troops" and "color" is unclear—does not follow a particular order; the mixing and matching of items large and small, from concrete to abstract, denotes a dissonance that may be the source of the speaker's anxiety. To capture this multiscaled reality requires a new artistic language and mode of expression. Liang writes, "We have come to the point where both the external [world] and language are vague, their truth inaccessible. When I begin to explore the inner truth, I realize that there is no distinct causality for human behavior, and that most occurrences unfold in medias res, with no clear beginning, middle, or end. I thus cannot abide by the Aristotelian model of 'Three Unities.'"[20] For the three years it spent under Liang's editorship, the *Nanyang Siang Pau* literary supplement served as a forum for Sinophone modernism alongside several other literary magazines, most prominently *Chao Foon*. "When the Rooster Crows"

and another manifesto by Liang, "Shall We Open a Window and Take a Look at the World Outside?," launched what is commonly recognized as the "second wave" of literary modernism in Sinophone literature in Southeast Asia. (More will be said about the "first wave" of literary modernism in chapter 3.)

The manifestos by Jin Zhimang and Liang Mingguang represent endeavors of *fabrica mundi* through configurations of literary time and place in relation to the rapidly changing local and global reality. It is important to recognize that Liang's call to "open a window," which invited other writers to look out toward the wider world, was simultaneously an attempt to frame the "world outside"—a "strategic fabrication" indeed—for readers of the local place. This put the editors, translators, and writers of the literary journals in both modernist and realist camps in an intermediary position, their shaping of both the domestic and global literary worlds betraying their political orientation; equally importantly, these cultural workers' mediation facilitated the articulation of the Cold War reality with the new historical coordinates and frameworks, which, commonly and differentially for both modernists and realists, pivoted to the house of "China of the times of Hu Shih and Chen Duxiu"—in other words, the May Fourth culture. Jin Zhimang and Liang Mingguang may not have shared the same perception of the historical changes confronting them—Jin saw history as propelled by revolutionary struggles, while Liang credited the new currents in his contemporary moment to technological advancements and changes in the geopolitical situation—but both described the temporal and spatial movements as shifting the coordinates of their worlds, forcing Mahua writers to establish new aesthetic language and new modes of engagement with this reality. The realist and modernist camps thus shared a common concern with how the historical situation could be written into the definition of the literary forms they each championed.

Part II demonstrates that the conceptual boundaries around such terms as "modernism" and "realism" were constructed in tandem with geographic and temporal bordering, with a goal to grasp the "here and now" of this part of Asia. The chapters in this part give more attention to the Southeast Asian portion of the Sinosphere than to Hong Kong, mainly because the modernism-versus-realism debate was most contentious in these areas. In Hong Kong, there does not seem to have been an explicit debate or even well-defined opposing schools: the *Wenyi Xinchao* 文藝新潮 (New currents in literature and the arts) has been labeled as "modernist," but mainly ex post facto, by later generations of critics. The lack of a

well-recorded debate between modernists and realists in Hong Kong might be because the two sides found a common enemy in what both perceived to be the crass commercialism of the city's colonial modernity; the antinomy between "serious" literature and popular literature in turn presented a more pressing issue for cultural practitioners during the Cold War.

In the contemporary era, the agon between modernism and realism in Mahua literature remains alive at least for some writers, for reasons that (as I argue in chapter 4) realism is still practiced by those cultural workers who intend to confront the suppressed history of the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM), and that aesthetic merit is still seen by some as in conflict with literature's utilitarian value. A comparable scenario simply does not exist with regard to Hong Kong literature. But as Ng suggests with his notion of a "Southern Chinese republic of letters," these localities were not sealed off from one another or from the world beyond, and the regional sphere had its centers and peripheries, whether commonly recognized or self-identified.

3

The Making of a Modernist World in Hong Kong and Malaya

In his editor's afterword for the seventh issue of *Wenyi Xinchao* (New currents in literature and the arts), published in November 1956, Ma Lang 馬朗 lists the "astonishing turbulences" that "have overtaken everyone" "from within our immediate environs to the far corners of the earth." "Whether we are talking about the Kowloon incident, the Hungarian Revolution, the riots in Singapore, or the wars in Egypt, we can viscerally feel that the world is changing, new flags are being hoisted, new hopes are awakening and rising from the ruins. This has made us realize that now is not the time to settle for imperfection, to wait for things to happen on their own, or to escape to self-fulfillment." Following this grand opening, he summarizes the major orientation of the issue: "Taking to the street from the ivory tower and the muddy morass—or, as we've said since the last issue, we want to connect literature and arts with real life. This goal has begun to be realized in this issue."[1]

Wenyi Xinchao was a "little magazine" that was published in Hong Kong from 1956 to 1959. Ma Lang, a third-generation Chinese American who had spent most of his youth in China, had had a burgeoning literary career as a poet and editor in Shanghai in the late 1940s. Disillusioned with the tightening political control over writers and intellectuals in the PRC, he moved to Hong Kong shortly after the 1949 transition. He served stints as a pulp fiction writer and an employee of the police force while editing *Wenyi Xinchao*—an "idealistic" (in his own words) venture where his true passion lay—until his return to the United States in 1959. This short-lived publication (only fifteen issues) would be hailed as the bastion of Hong Kong modernism by literary historians in later decades.

All the incidents that Ma Lang lists as precipitating factors—including the uprising against the Soviet invasion in Budapest, the Chinese school riots in Singapore, and the Suez Canal crisis—were explicitly linked to the Cold War. "The Kowloon incident" refers to a lesser-known conflict between Guomindang (KMT) supporters and leftist factions that unfolded on the streets of Kowloon on the ROC's National Day, October 10, 1956, and thus was also a "hot" incident in the Cold War. Calling on writers to "take to the streets" and "connect literature and arts with reality," Ma Lang put into practice what Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel would later call "geomodernism," a neologism that emphasizes "the geopolitical history to which all modernisms respond, the transperipheral and international exchanges within which they take shape, and the long global history that has prepared their emergence."[2] This chapter calls attention to two distinct but related aspects of the practice of geomodernism in Hong Kong and this part of Southest Asia: (1) how modernisms "respond[ed]" to "geopolitical history" from their specific locations; and (2) how modernisms created their own geographies through circuits of movement of people, culture, and capital (Doyle's "transperipheral and international exchanges"), which in turn allowed their creators to inhabit the place *as* modernists. The two aspects are closely related, for disparate spots on the face of the earth—as Ma Lang has identified in his references to Singapore, the Suez Canal, Budapest, and Kowloon—are not strung together randomly. The travels for individuals and for texts and the geopolitical reasons behind these movements are "con-textual," to use my keyword from part I, with the aesthetic logic of modernism, the two being conjoined and entangled, and the relative weight that one carries being, to some extent, a determining factor over the other. This is how I see geomodernism as a borderscape: it refers to a space produced by both geopolitical forces and aesthetic endeavors, whose "here and now" is never confined to the spatial and temporal boundaries of the physical location or the present moment.

The focus of this chapter falls on a broader geomodernist region that centers on Hong Kong and part of Southeast Asia but also involves other Chinese-speaking societies and the rest of the world. My discussion here will give more emphasis to Malay(si)a and Singapore than to Hong Kong, for the strategic reasons I outline in the part II introduction, but giving more attention to Southeast Asia does not mean omitting Hong Kong from the picture. The infrastructural position of Hong Kong as a cultural conduit that connected Southeast Asia with Taiwan and China reflected the movements and geopolitical bordering of the Cold War and decolonization;

this regional setup is implicitly involved even if not explicitly acknowledged. It is most clearly manifested through cultural institutions such as the Union Press (UP) publications *Chao Foon* and the *Student Weekly*, which directly recruited editors and authors from Hong Kong in the initial stage of their operation, but independent "little magazines" also manifest a similar mapping.

Modernist movements in the Sinosphere unfolded in disparate localities in ways that were connected but were not necessarily in sync with one another or unified in their aesthetic or political stance. In 1956, when Ma Lang started *Wenyi Xinchao* in Hong Kong, a friend from his Shanghai days, Ji Xian 紀弦, launched a modernist journal in Taiwan called *Xiandai Shi* 現代詩 (Modern poetry). The two journals actively collaborated, with *Wenyi Xinchao* featuring Taiwan poets, and vice versa. At that time, the slightly more junior poet Bai Yao was pursuing his studies in the History Department at National Taiwan University as an overseas student from Hong Kong. It seems that he was already preparing to move to Malaya after graduation, for he had published an article in 1954 in the *Student Weekly*, which was influential among readers in multiple locations across Southeast Asia. At National Taiwan University, Bai Yao was soaking in the fervor for modernism while feeling mildly discordant with the last of the six axioms laid out by Ji Xian in his modernist manifesto, which declared that modernism should be "loyal to the nation, anti-Communist, and promotive of freedom and democracy."[3] Bai regarded this axiom as a "political imperative," saying, "This kind of political constraint is precisely what literature needs to break away from."[4] Whether this comment constitutes revisionist history we will never know, but upholding aesthetic autonomy in opposition to political utilitarianism (an objective that from some perspectives also meant drawing a line between modernism and realism) was a consistent position for Bai Yao; indeed, it was a centerpiece in the modernist theory he laid out in 1959 for *Chao Foon*, where he served as editor for several years.

This chapter places itself in the thick of these simultaneities and discordances, exploring a modernist geography that was forged in part by the genre of "little magazines," so called not because they were small in size or had a short run, or because they were independent and unaffiliated with the state or big corporations (characteristics that are not uniformly true for the little magazines considered here), but mainly because they were home to experimental and modernist writings often aimed at more limited audiences. That is, the historical development of the "little magazine" over-

lapped with that of modernism, making it possible to think of the two in conjunction with each other. At least this is the compelling argument made by Eric Bulson in his book *Little Magazine, World Form*.[5]

Modernism creates geography by leaning on certain traveling terms, one of which is "aesthetic autonomy." It is better to think of this term as an interface, and not as something with a fixed meaning across geographies. Peter Kalliney suggests in his study of African postcolonial cultural institutions that postcolonial African intellectuals exploited "the malleability . . . , even the contradictions" of the concept to assert independence from colonial tutelage and "negotiate their complicated relationship with state bodies and nationalist movements."[6] He offers this summary: "At least five versions of artistic freedom were put into circulation through the institutions examined in this essay: emancipation from colonialism; independence from the postcolonial nation-state; avoidance of politics in order to foster collaboration among multiple constituencies; freedom from politics altogether as a professional disposition; and ideological neutrality in the Cold War."[7] Kalliney's analysis sheds methodological light on research on modernisms in non-Western contexts under the conditions of the Cold War and decolonization. It reminds us that the argument that all claims of aesthetic autonomy are politically conditioned is true, but not so far as to describe the actual political performance of the term under specific circumstances. The key is "what politics" and "where."

Undeniably, the rhetoric of aesthetic autonomy used by European intellectuals is already politically weighted under Cold War conditions. For those intellectuals affiliated with the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), for instance, aesthetic autonomy translated into safeguarding the expressive freedom of the Free World "as the antithesis of Soviet authoritarianism."[8] Stephen Spender and his collaborators at the magazine *Encounter* "use[d] the modernist doctrine to support [the CCF's] version of 'negative liberalism,' which involved attacking Communism without clearly advocating capitalist democracies."[9] Given this context, it seems warranted to call the modernists' bluff on their claims of artistic autonomy by pointing out that the concept was corrupted at the source. But this approach does not fully explain the circumstances in which the concept of aesthetic autonomy was used by writers in specific localities, or allow for the possibility of its being called on to do other kinds of political work in the local situation. In Cold War Taiwan, for instance, where anti-Communism reinforced the KMT's authoritarian rule, modernism frequently joined hands with political liberalism to resist authoritarianism, which writers did not always place at the

other side of the Cold War divide, but instead placed more immediately in their local context.[10] The claim of aesthetic autonomy in turn connoted a gesture of noncompliance toward the official cultural policy that promoted propaganda literature.

This means that we need to separately consider each instance of the concept's invocation. *Chao Foon* bears some resemblance to the African literary journals *Black Orpheus* and *Transition*, in that all three magazines reckoned with American patronage to varying degrees. Recall from my chapter 1 discussion of *Chao Foon*'s engagement with its funding agency, the Asia Foundation (TAF), that two aspects of its agreement with TAF prepared the ground for the cultivation of modernism over a decade after its 1955 founding. According to the UP's agreement with TAF regarding the publication of *Chao Foon*, the magazine was not to be "overtly anti-Communist or discuss any political issue" (in contradistinction to its sister publication the *Student Weekly*), including criticizing local government; and it would publish "primarily" literature by local Chinese students while making judicious use of some materials produced outside Singapore/Malaya.[11] These directives, as I have shown, were given new interpretations by the editors after the first issue in November 1955. The magazine conveyed clearly articulated political positions that were a motley blend of anticolonialism, patriotism for the emerging independent nation, defense of Chinese citizenship and Chinese culture, and criticism of Communism.

The UP's connection to TAF was revealed by Communist newspapers in Hong Kong as early as 1958, although the American foundation's connection to the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was not mentioned.[12] Regardless, a divide quickly arose: TAF's archive shows that it regarded leftist publications as its competition, and the Left carried out physical and symbolic attacks on the *Student Weekly* in Hong Kong and Malaya. As the social and political enmity quickly evolved into battles "at penpoint," to use Monica Popescu's term, the line was drawn between the not so perfectly aligned positions of the Left/realism/art's social value and American sponsorship/modernism/artistic value, or art for art's sake.[13] In the early 1960s, *Chao Foon*'s editor Huang Ya 黃崖 joined the battle, publishing several articles critiquing realism and promoting individualism and artistic value, while going to great lengths to introduce the magazine's readers to Anglo-American modernist writers (including T. S. Eliot, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, and Joseph Conrad) as well as New Criticism.[14] At the same time, however, *Chao Foon* had many areas of overlap with the concerns of leftist factions, including critical engagements with a variety of social issues

at the juncture of Malaya's independence, the promotion of local culture, and the practice of realism (see my discussion of Fang Tian in chapter 1).

In the end, although the boundary between modernism and realism in Mahua literary arts became hardened and took on a reality of its own, writers and intellectuals on both sides engaged with this division in multiple ways: some reinforced the hardened boundary, while others went across or above the border, or stepped aside altogether. These various strategies were part and parcel of geomodernism's "response" to geopolitical history, but more significantly, they also signal how the borderscape was inhabited, how other (non–Cold War related) political and cultural concerns were articulated, and how a new dwelling place could emerge at the imaginary site of a literary magazine. In tracking these various engagements with this cognitive boundary, this chapter examines modernism's (a)political pretension and its aesthetic logic, with the goal of identifying the possibilities for turning this borderscape into literary dwelling places situated in Sinophone localities.

I. Modernism on the Streets of Kowloon

Although my primary focus is on the Southeast Asian scene from the perspective of the literary magazine *Chao Foon*, it is necessary to start with Hong Kong, both to outline the regional context of Sinophone modernisms and to demonstrate the specific mode of mediation in modernism's access to geopolitical reality as practiced on the ground in the city.

Judging by Ma Lang's abovementioned afterword in the November 1956 issue of *Wenyi Xinchao*, we might think that he had crossed over to the realist camp with his promise "to connect literature and arts with real life" in the magazine, except that there was not a "line struggle" between modernists and realists in Hong Kong at the time, at least not openly. We have to look elsewhere for a justification of this statement—perhaps to Stephen Spender's article "The Modernist Movement Is Dead," which appeared in the *New York Times* in August 1952, and which Ma Lang translated and published in the second issue of *Wenyi Xinchao* in April 1956.[15] Ma found a kindred spirit in Spender on several issues, the most significant of which was modernism's address to reality: in his introduction to the Chinese version of Spender's article, Ma states that it outlines the "goal of the modernist movement."[16] Spender, who was primarily concerned with Euro-American modernisms, including the Russian avant-garde, asserts

in the *New York Times* piece that modernism emerged from the artist's confrontation with "contemporary phenomena like machinery, the industrial city, and neurotic behavior." The artist's "heroically sensitive modern mind" propelled him to cultivate "a hostile attitude to society and all its institutions."[17] Ma Lang underscored Spender's emphasis on the modernists' confrontation with reality by stating in the introductory passage to his translation that "for Spender, art is never a place of refuge for the artist or the audience; rather, it encompasses a 'real conflict with life,' whose tenacious materiality, affect, and sensibility get analyzed and broken down before being transformed into [artistic] expression."[18] For both Spender and Ma, then, aesthetic autonomy did not mean turning away from modern life, even though they had different interpretations about what constituted modern life. Spender's own summary of "harshly modern realities" as comprising "the machine, the city, absinthe or the prostitute"—a highly selective list issued from a gendered perspective—differs quite a bit from Ma Lang's interpretation.

For Ma Lang, in contradistinction to Spender, "harshly modern realities" found their manifestation not in the French capital or some generic modern society, but on the streets of Kowloon, an Eastern city that became a Cold War battleground as well as a backdrop for the practice of modernism in Hong Kong. Ma's "news story" (his term) "Streets Under the Sun," which appeared in the November 1956 issue of *Wenyi Xinchao*, depicts the violent events that transpired on October 10, 1956, in Kowloon. As described by the historian John Carroll, "clashes between pro-Beijing and pro-Taipei supporters over a Nationalist flag that had been removed from a resettlement block resulted in riots in Kowloon. . . . When pro-KMT mobs attacked and killed communist sympathizers, the Hong Kong police responded by firing on the mobs. By the end of the week, almost 60 people were dead and more than 400 had been hospitalized."[19] In "Streets Under the Sun," which was hastily written and published barely one month after the Kowloon incident, Ma Lang cast as the story's protagonist someone who is desperate to make sense of the chaos:

> [He] had no time to think, but felt something inside him waiting to explode, a sentiment dying to get out. An opportunity he had been awaiting for years finally arrived. He needed to do something. In the past, he had been living like an insect in hibernation, useless, powerless in most people's eyes. At this moment he was full of energy. Palms sweating, face

> reddened, breath quickening, he moved to the front of the crowd and pointed toward what lay behind him, shouting, "Don't go away empty-handed. Come, take down the fences."[20]

The desire to become "one of the forerunners of the Republican Revolution" pushes the protagonist to the front of the crowd, which he leads until violence breaks out: "Heads, one after another, all over the sky and the earth, jumping, turning, like rounds of waves. He turned around to look and could only see bloodshot eyes, hair flying, gasping mouths that looked like black holes, everything else invisible, all swallowed up by these crowds. The crowds were so easily agitated that if even a feather had fallen from the sky, people would have rushed to grab it and tear it up." The nameless protagonist then overhears a conversation that makes him realize that he has been manipulated by a few faceless agitators, allegorically represented as belonging to two oppositional groups, "moon worshippers" and followers of the sun. Whereas the sun represents a utopian order "where no war is waged among people, no jealousies or power struggles . . . where [there are] literature and arts essential for the cultivation of morality and happiness," these "moon worshippers could not see the sun; instead, they used class struggle as an excuse to persecute those who would try to stop them or follow the sun." Following this realization, however, the protagonist cannot stop himself from unleashing his repressed irrationality. He violently beats up an innocent boy who has graciously approached him to return his wallet with an ID card attached to it.

Rewriting a scene from a "hot war" into a cold war allegory of the conflict between good and evil, or internally between a person's hero complex and a desire for peace and normalcy, the writer could not have made his political stance more clear. Herein lies another commonality between Ma Lang and Stephen Spender. Spender had joined the Communist Party only to later become disillusioned, a sentiment that was captured in *The God That Failed* (1949), a collection of essays edited by Richard Crossman with contributions by Spender and other former members of the British Communist Party. This position resonated strongly with Ma's own experience when he read this book while in Hong Kong. As Ma explained in an interview several decades later, he had left China "purely for political reasons" after witnessing several bouts of public criticism targeting playwrights and editors whom he had worked with.[21] The story "Streets Under the Sun" thus takes on some autobiographical significance: the protagonist, who is self-characterized as an "intellectual," could be the writer himself—both

are akin to the "heroically sensitive" modernist that Spender described in his *New York Times* essay. Read in this way, Ma Lang's diagnosis of the situation of modernism in his times is simultaneously more dire and more invigorating than Spender's. Whereas Spender argues that the modernist movement of the early twentieth century had died out by the 1950s because it was too successful, its edginess having been blunted by the cooptation of the market and academic institutions, Ma's modernist artist was not bathed in the glory of market success or shielded by the university; rather, he suffered from a broader form of depression that stemmed from a more capacious disillusionment with political ideals and social institutions.[22]

This political disillusionment was clearly articulated in the clarion call that Ma Lang issued to "engineers of the human spirit" in the first issue of the magazine, urging them to "come join us." As he stated in this treatise, "the forerunners on whom we have staked so much hope have fallen, become lost, or stopped inquiring or searching." Unlike Spender, though, Ma was not content with pronouncing the modernist movement over; instead, he wanted to reinvigorate it, although his vision for the new movement was simultaneously political and artistic. In the same article from the inaugural issue, he depicted the magazine as "a place with wide-open doors, a place of tolerance," and invited fellow writers to come in to "pluck the forbidden fruit" and reach toward "a Utopia where we dare to cry, to sing, to speak."[23] This statement shows his difference from Spender: whereas Spender was content with translating social and political revolution into what he called "the revolution of the word" (Spender saw the two forms of revolution unified in figures such as Sergei Eisenstein), Ma Lang wanted to make a straightforward connection between modernism and freedom as a political ideal.

Outside the translation of Spender's article, Ma Lang never used the term "modernism" or "modernist movement" in reference to his own magazine *Wenyi Xinchao*. He did not come to embrace these terms until later; when he was pressed on what they meant to him, he pointed to the "new trends and modes of expression that had begun to surface in [Chinese] modern poetry by the '40s," a development that he saw his magazine as continuing.[24] This is another area in which we can discern a difference between Ma's sense of literary history and Spender's. As outlined at the beginning of Spender's *New York Times* essay, Spender was quick to highlight the "extraordinary inter-relatedness of all the arts," from Paul Valéry to James Joyce to Ernest Hemingway to Igor Stravinsky, in the formation of a singular "modernist movement"; Ma, in contrast, was more

concerned with constructing a genealogy of China's modern poetry, however intermittent and discontinuous. Ma wanted to construct a literary history based on his own memories of reading and criticism, Leonard Chan tells us, pointing to a special issue of *Wenyi Xinchao* that reprinted early twentieth-century works by writers such as Shen Congwen and Duanmu Hongliang.[25] Ma's revisitation of literary history was not exactly aligned with his later political stance in opposition to the PRC, although he clearly expressed a favorable judgment of modernist writers of the 1930s such as Mu Shiying and Shi Zhecun, who were disfavored by the socialist realist–dominated establishment after the 1950s.

Crucially, however, Ma Lang's modernist historiography was not limited to China. His eagerness to present a global modernist panorama in *Wenyi Xinchao* can be keenly sensed through its list of translated authors and works, which was capacious and eclectic, not unified by theme or political stance. In fact, the editor apologized at one point for ceding too much space to translation instead of creative writing. The list of translated authors shows that Ma Lang was unafraid of moving beyond the few Western poets whose names were already familiar to Chinese authors, such as T. S. Eliot and Rainer Maria Rilke: the magazine published translations of Latin American authors such as Octavio Paz, for instance; and, inconsistent with its anti-Communist stance, it did not entirely exclude writers with leftist orientations such as the American poet Muriel Rukeyser.

The "here and now" of Ma Lang's modernism is thus full of contradictions. In terms of spatial boundaries, his political alienation from the PRC after the 1949 transition did not quite jibe with his nostalgic attachment to China's literary history of the early twentieth century. Looking at the titles of his own poems published in *Wenyi Xinchao*, we can see that his memories lingered over China as he charted imaginative journeys to the far reaches of Chinese territory, from the northeastern borders close to the battleground of the Korean War to Hunan in central China, before landing in Hong Kong. The ideal of aesthetic autonomy here is also contradictory, for while phrases such as "pluck the forbidden fruit" and "a Utopia where we dare to cry, to sing, to speak" connote a liberalist, antitotalitarian stance, Ma Lang did not intend for literature to claim an autonomous zone for itself, sealed off from political statements or historical reflections. In fact, Leonard Chan has claimed that "modernism for people like Ma Lang and Kun Nan was seen as a solution to the 'political disturbances' they experienced, even though this solution did not prove to be so effective

in the end."[26] This reminds us that the mere claim of aesthetic autonomy does not automatically answer the question of how the two sides of the term "geomodernism" ("geo" and "modernism") engaged with each other in specific instances. Instead, close analysis of both the literary texts and the historical situation is called for. Ye Si had this to say about Ma Lang's poem "The Troubadour Who Has Burned His Lyre": "The poet's tone is filled with contradiction. But this contradiction is not just a rhetorical device; it is because the poet was himself placed in a historical space-time of contradiction."[27] Only by attending to the rhetorically and mediated "contradictions" can we read, heeding Fredric Jameson's advice, "the [historical] situation . . . in [the] meaning" of modernism itself.[28]

II. Shifting the Coordinates of May Fourth to Malaya

To delineate the literary canvas and relationality of Mahua literary modernism, I devote the rest of this chapter to the literary magazine *Chao Foon*, focusing in particular on two moments in this ongoing publication's long history, 1959 and the end of the 1960s, when a set of manifestos announced the arrival of literary modernism in two waves. At the end of the 1950s, the editors and writers for *Chao Foon* made use of modernist discourses, specifically the rhetoric of aesthetic autonomy, to reconfigure the coordinates of Mahua literature vis-à-vis other ethnic communities in Singapore and Malaysia, other Chinese-speaking territories in the region, the rest of Asia, and the West. What Liang Mingguang described as "the China of the times of Hu Shih and Chen Duxiu"—that is, the May Fourth culture—was the common anchor that facilitated the connection between the *Chao Foon* group and the cohort of *Wenyi Xinchao* from a few years earlier. That is, just as Ma Lang engaged with modern Chinese poetry of the first half of the twentieth century to articulate modernism's emplacement in post–World War II Hong Kong, the *Chao Foon* group also torqued "the China . . . of Hu Shih and Chen Duxiu" in trying to articulate the "here and now" of Malaya.[29]

In April 1959, with the publication of a manifesto titled "A Revolution, Once Again, of New Poetry," written by the magazine's poetry editor, Bai Yao, *Chao Foon* launched a modernist movement with which it would be associated for decades to come. Bai did not use the term "modernism" or even "modern poetry" in this article, opting instead to use "new poetry," a more conventional term that betrayed his allegiance to May Fourth dis-

course. Nevertheless, his ideas for a second "revolution" of "new poetry" were closely modeled on the modernist manifesto penned in 1956 by his counterpart in Taiwan, the poet Ji Xian.[30]

In this article—which was intended to be read together with Bai's poem "Ma He Jing Li" 麻河靜立 (Standing still by the Muar River), which had appeared in the *Student Weekly* the previous month—Bai Yao laid down five ideas for a "new poetry" revolution: (1) new poetry comes from a horizontal transplantation of old poetry, not from a vertical inheritance; (2) rhyme and regulated verse should be abandoned; (3) form should be determined by content; (4) reason should be upheld as well as sentiments; and (5) poetic revolution means choosing between new and old, good and bad.[31] Bai's idea of "new poetry" had clear resonances with Ji Xian's manifesto of a few years earlier, but also some critical differences. As a poet whose erstwhile nom de plume, Lu Yi Shi, came from a transliteration of the English name Lewis, Ji understandably delineated a global framework of East versus West for Taiwan's modernists. He too advocated "horizontal transplantation" over "vertical inheritance," even though for some poets from Taiwan, "horizontal transplantation" carried the controversial implication of submission to the influence of primarily Western modernist poetry and abandonment of one's own tradition. He characterized modernist poets in Taiwan as seeking to "expand and develop the spirit and essence of all emergent modernist schools after Baudelaire" and looked to Anglo-American modernists such as T. S. Eliot for models when it came to issues of reason versus sentiment, form and content. Ji Xian was a staunch antisentimentalist and veered close to formalism in his advocacy of "pure poetry." Notably, the last item in his six-point manifesto was an ideological message: he argued that modernist poetry should be "loyal to the nation, anti-Communist, and promotive of freedom and democracy."[32]

Despite his reluctance to address all "modernists," as Ji Xian had, Bai Yao borrowed other wordings directly from the 1956 manifesto. The first point of Bai's manifesto, that "new poetry comes from a horizontal transplantation of old poetry, not from a vertical inheritance," used Ji's terminology, retaining much of the ambiguity in Ji's original document. Half a century later, in his own account about this manifesto, Bai claimed that "commentators have taken the term 'horizontal transplantation' to mean 'taking root in the local environs'" for Mahua literature, and he expressed his concurrence with this interpretation, even though it was not what he originally had in mind.[33] This explanation makes sense if we cross-reference other statements in Bai's manifesto, including his claim to be a "Chinese

Malayan": "I will not forget that I am Chinese, and I also know that I am Chinese Malayan. A specific combination of soil, sunlight, and water has yielded this particular fruit."[34] Departing from Ji Xian's desire to place Taiwan's modernist poetry school on par with "all emergent modernist schools after Baudelaire," Bai Yao emphasized the theme of Malayanization, which was the path that *Chao Foon* had pursued since its inception.

Moving Sinophone Malayan modernism away from the East-West framework of Ji Xian's manifesto, Bai Yao was eager to negotiate a literary relationship with the genealogy of modern Chinese poetry, beginning with the May Fourth movement. He picked up the early twentieth-century discussion of modern poetry's relationship to the tradition of classical Chinese poetry and tried to stake out new ground by championing a few neglected poets of the earlier twentieth century, most notably Liang Zongdai 梁宗岱. Liang was known for writing French symbolism–inflected poetry that engaged in a deliberate dialogue with the classical Chinese poetic tradition. He had studied in Europe in the 1920s, where he became acquainted with Paul Valéry. The two poets had some cross-cultural exchange, with Valéry writing a preface for Liang's French translation of classical Chinese poetry, and Liang translating Valéry's poems into Chinese. Liang remained in China after 1949, teaching in the French Department at a university in Guangzhou, and when he was forbidden to write poetry during the Cultural Revolution, he worked on translations of French poets, including Stéphane Mallarmé and Charles Baudelaire, and Western authors, including William Shakespeare (with a focus on his sonnets), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and William Blake. Bai Yao's engagement with Liang Zongdai traversed the historical and geopolitical divide of the Cold War.

With respect to Bai's relationship to the May Fourth tradition, it seems that he was interested neither in upholding it (in contradistinction to the Left's understanding of literary history, which claimed that Sinophone culture in Southeast Asia inherited the legacy of May Fourth social realism) nor in challenging it in any explicit way. Rather, he scrambled the temporal and spatial coordinates, creating a time warp that claimed a direct lineage from a few select poets of the May Fourth era, among them Liang Zongdai and Wu Xinghua, while moving these figures to China's "south" (including such places as Guangzhou and Hong Kong), and furthermore to Sinophone Malaya.

Bai Yao found his own position on artistic autonomy, which he characterized as literature's spirit of individualism or *wenxue de geti zhuyi*, confirmed in Liang Zongdai's notion of "pure poetry," referring to "a uni-

verse on its own that has absolute independence and freedom."[35] Liang's articulation between French symbolism and Chinese classical poetics—manifested, for instance, in his 1934 commentary on symbolist poetry, which borrowed the classical Chinese poetic concept of *xing*, referring to the evocation of sentiment or mood through poetry—further influenced Bai's sympathetic take on the Chinese lyrical tradition.[36] Bai Yao was vague about the forms of "new poetry" that he hoped to construct after a second "revolution." On the one hand, he called for the abandonment of "regulated verse" or "rhyme," claiming that "form is to be determined by content." "Content" here may be an allusion to the need for poetry to reflect contemporary times, as he maintained that "modern poetry is the poetry of the contemporary moment; it is the poetry of our living world."[37] On the other hand, despite these claims, he himself wrote classical poetry frequently, modeling himself after Liang Zongdai. Vowing to simultaneously uphold both "reason" and "sentiments," Bai Yao opened his poetry to the lyrical tradition of Chinese classical poetry, which differentiated it from Ji Xian's Eliot-influenced modernism.

Judging from Bai Yao's own poetry written around the same time, this second revolution redux did not mark a significant departure from the style of Chinese modern poetry in the first half of the twentieth century. His famous poem "Standing Still by the Muar River" (1958) is an apt example of, to use his own terminology, *xin shi* (new poetry), rather than *xiandai shi* or *xiandai pai* (modern poetry or modernist poetry). But he had a strong sense of dislocation from the original scene of *xin shi* of the early twentieth century, as well as the time and place of Liang Zongdai. This dislocation, I would argue, marks both a self-conscious placement in a cultural periphery vis-à-vis the center, and a temporal distancing of modern time from the historical past and the cultural tradition associated with it.

Let us take a closer look at "Standing Still by the Muar River," which established Bai Yao's reputation as a modernist poet. This poem, hardly obscure or nonfigurative, is more closely aligned with Chinese "new poetry," such as that of Wen Yiduo, Dai Wangshu, or early Bian Zhilin, although it also shows some influence of the modernist school in the West, such as the style of the Anglo-American modernists Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot. Describing a simple encounter between the speaker and an old woman picking clams on a riverbank, the poem conveys a sensibility that some would associate with the modernist penchant for impersonality and detachment, and it relies heavily on images to articulate the sentiments.

The poem can be read as a metacritical reflection on Bai's translocation to Southeast Asia and the concomitant repositioning of the Chinese poetic tradition in this new locality, particularly if we take seriously the setting of the encounter—the Muar River in Malaysia. Toward the end of the poem, the speaker appeals to time, here described as an abstract and universal entity, to create some emotional distance from the familiar scenario of a migrant person's homecoming for the Lunar New Year. A sojourner's separation from home is here attributed to nonsubjective empty "time" so as to remove the speaker from an otherwise sentimental scene: "Spending the New Year away from home for the eighth time / Time is not mine / The sun has set. So what, it's the Lantern Festival." These last few lines echo the sense of distance in earlier sections of the poem, where the speaker and the old woman are positioned in the same topos but in a nonassimilative relationship—they are a pair in "mirror image separated by time. . . . Time creates distance, rendering the familiar strange," according to the poet's own explication several decades later.[38]

Autonomy implies, then, creating "a universe on its own," one whose "independence and freedom" (Liang Zongdai's phrase) are achieved imaginatively, only after reckoning with one's translocation. In Bai Yao's discussion of Liang Zongdai in his memoir *Remembrance of Years Past*, he recalls a series of lectures organized by a poetry society at Pui Zheng Middle School in Guangzhou, which Bai attended from 1946 to 1949, and where Liang had also been a student several decades earlier. Their common status as alumni of this school and their shared native place of Guangdong enabled Bai, who was then in Ipoh, Malaysia, to imagine a connection with Liang, despite a twofold temporal and spatial distancing—the episode is his remembrance of the poetry society's activities at Pui Zheng Middle School, which in turn consists of the Pui Zheng cohort's remembrance of Liang's days at the school. Bai Yao's widely recognized first Mahua modernist poem is similarly an aesthetic illustration of translocation and dislocation both vertically and horizontally. We can conclude on the basis of this discussion of Bai Yao's theory and practice of modernism that the geopoetic topos of Pui Zheng Middle School provided the necessary mediation for the poet to come to terms with his "here and now" after crossing both physically and imaginatively the multiple topos in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and this part of Southeast Asia, despite the borders separating these locales. It also meant that the Cold War cartographic division between Malaya and China was temporarily displaced, if only in Bai's imagination.

III. A Mediated Address to Malaya

Does aesthetic autonomy imply political distancing? The Malaysian writer and literary critic Ho Sok Fong 賀淑芳 would say yes. For Ho, "Southbound Chinese intellectuals" such as Bai Yao "chose not to engage with the pressing social issues in the newly independent nation undergoing a Malayan Emergency. Most Union Press members . . . had a limited understanding of politics, which led them to oppose the cultural policies of the Chinese Communists while avoiding discussions about the political situation in Malaya."[39] Bai Yao indirectly spoke to this question in a speech given at a seminar on "modern poetry" in Kuala Lumpur (most likely in the early 1960s). He dismissed the theories of various modernist schools in the West, stating that "modern poetry is contemporary poetry; it is the poetry of the world in which we live. So it must be different from the verses of the Song Dynasty, the lyrics of the Yuan, Shakespeare's sonnets, or Shelley's 'Skylark.' . . . It is distinguished from that of the past and the future."[40] But how does the modern poetry advocated by Bai Yao address the political currents of the "world in which we live"?

In his two-volume memoir *Remembrance of Years Past*, book 4, "Castle of Fanaticism," opens in the third person, with Bai Yao's alter ego encountering Singapore for the first time. The first section positions Singapore—and for that matter, the entirety of Malaya—within two frameworks: the city that has been a "revolutionary battleground against colonialism and Communism in recent decades," and the historical "Nanyang" (the Chinese word for South Seas), which has been "made into a new land" through successive waves of Chinese migration and settlement.[41] These two frameworks for Malaya—the former "a revolutionary battleground," the latter "a land of purity"—clash in his mind, making him long to detach from contemporary politics. Throughout book 4, he observes from the sidelines various forms of activism by student groups, workers' unions, and politicians running for election, while harboring in his mind an ideal of Cultural China, described as "a concept, something to long for, and a spirit—boundless and timeless. Once you accept it, you become part of it and it will never leave you, turning you into a torch and bringing light and heat to the people around you."[42] It seems at first as though the idea of Cultural China is a cultural revolution just as significant as the political battles, but book 4 concludes by admitting that this cultural revolution has failed: "The Cultural China he had in mind appeared so insignificant that it would instantly be transformed into politics by the hot steam [of the tropical city].

Any cultural activities are equated with taking a political position, either Left or Right, with no option for a middle ground."[43]

The ideal of Cultural China that Bai Yao alludes to in his memoir can be traced to the writings of New Confucianist scholars at New Asia College in Hong Kong, where the Union Press had its headquarters. The cultural critic Law Wing Sang has made an observation similar to Ho's about these scholars, primarily Tang Junyi and Qian Mu, stating that they "criticized the triumph of the undemocratic rule of communism far more than they criticized colonialism in Hong Kong."[44] As a repository of various eclectic ideas centered on championing humanism and the spirit of Chinese culture, Cultural China as practiced by the UP cohort was thus not entirely devoid of political content. As Bai Yao's memoir shows, UP youth camp activities sometimes revolved around criticism of the Yan'an Rectification movement and the Communist persecution of liberal authors such as Wang Shiwei, and the activities led by UP staff such as Fang Tian were aimed at influencing students in Malaya with anti-Communist ideologies about politics and literature.[45] This suggests that, in contradistinction to Bai's assessment, "fanaticism" was not just the domain of the Left in a place caught in the Cold War on the cusp of decolonization. Bai's assessment of the political situation in Singapore, where "being leftist is fashionable over there; it is an indication of a progressive mindset and the positive development of one's identity," is thus not altogether unbiased.[46] In other words, Bai Yao did subtly take sides when it came to political discussions, especially those concerning China, even though his memoir registers a strong desire to distance himself from the politics of both the Left and the Right, as well as from realism, including the nonleftist realism practiced by older members of the UP such as Fang Tian, as discussed in chapter 1.

Bai Yao's shift of the imaginary topos from China of the May Fourth period to Nanyang—not Southeast Asia or Malaya, but specifically Nanyang, "a land of purity" in his words—contributed to his highly mediated engagement with the politics of Malaya, a place he stayed for several decades without ever obtaining citizenship there. In a series of essays published in 2013 in the Singapore newspaper *Nanyang Siang Pau*, Bai contextualized his own migration to this part of Southeast Asia, along with that of other UP colleagues, within the long history of Chinese migration to Nanyang, using language that strongly resonates with what David Der-wei Wang has termed in a different context a "postloyalist" imaginary: "Every time there was unrest in the Central Plains," Bai wrote, "the literati class would follow in the footsteps of ordinary people and move to the south in

waves. That is exactly what happened in the Jin Dynasty under the reign of the Yongjia Emperor, when the northern tribes wreaked havoc in China. When the Tang poet Li Bai wrote 'Running to the South,' he was referring to moving south of the Yellow River or the Yangtze. But in modern times, this journey has meant setting sail on the sea and traveling down to the 'southern seas.'"[47] "Postloyalist" discourse refers to an imagined connection with imperial China's political and cultural center after that center was lost in a dynastic transition and the literati loyal to the previous dynasty had retreated to the periphery, oftentimes in the south. In Bai Yao's imagination, Nanyang is a place of diversity and vitality, where despite the prevailing motivation of seeking wealth, the Chinese cultural legacy has been sustained and passed on through self-funded Chinese schools: "This place, with mixed and impure cultures, still retains its vital spirit. Here heroes and bandits mingle, but people treat one another with sincerity. Although most people are eager to get rich, they will still donate money to establish schools. Here there is no dearth of local legends and folk heroes, all of them longing for the righteous regimes of Emperors Yao and Shun."[48]

The postloyalist imagination, Wang explains, is anachronistic but not necessarily conservative in all cases. In terms of its political effect, the postloyalist imagination "ranges from sentimental fabulation to political engagement, such that it cannot be streamlined into either resistance or governance."[49] It might look like a nostalgic longing for the bygone era of emperors and feudal lords, but it is actually a response to modernity's temporal rupture—a modern remembrance of things past, or what I have earlier called a time warp of remembrance. In other words, what Wang has characterized as "postloyalist" discourse counts as a version of modernism in the end.

In this sense, Ho Sok Fong's assessment that southbound Chinese intellectuals such as Bai Yao "avoid[ed] discussions about the political situation in Malaya" is not entirely accurate, for she does not fully take into account the mediation of "postloyalist" modernism in one's access to Malaya's politics. Her evaluation is somewhat subverted in Bai Yao's case if we consider the latter's libretto *Han Li Bao*, written at the end of the 1960s and published in the combined January–February 1970 special drama issue of *Chao Foon*. It was set to music and staged in Kuala Lumpur in November 1971. The "operatic epic in four acts," as Bai called it, tells the story of a fifteenth-century Chinese princess who, as the author was well aware, is recorded in *Sejarah Melayu* (the Malay annals), the first history book recounting the rise and fall of the Malacca Sultanate, but not in Chinese

records of the Ming's diplomatic contact with the sultanate.[50] The Chinese princess is referred to as Hang Li-Po in John Leyden's translation of the *Malay Annals*.[51] Bai Yao most likely drew on the Chinese or English translations of the *Annals* in writing *Han Li Bao*; the Chinese version closest to his time would have been the one that was created by Xu Yunqiao based on an English translation.[52]

That Bai chose to tell a premodern story about Chinese-Malay diplomacy taken from a canonical Malay text not only connoted a gesture of openness toward Malay culture, which had been a common practice in *Chao Foon* since its founding, but was also indexical to the contemporary moment, a particularly contentious time in the history of race relations in Malaysia. May 13, 1969, which historian Leon Comber later called "the darkest day in Malaysian history," witnessed what has been officially acknowledged as the country's worst race riot, resulting in the deaths of close to two hundred people. In reaction to the partial defeat of the Alliance Party by the opposition parties in national and local elections, which resulted in the perceived loss of Malay dominance in the Parliament, a series of killings, arsons, and lootings erupted in Kuala Lumpur involving mainly the two major ethnic groups in Malaysia, the Malays and the Chinese.[53] *Han Li Bao* was published in *Chao Foon* eight months later (Bai Yao likely played a part in this decision, since he was one of the journal's editors then), and the first performance of this work in 1971 situated it squarely within the worsening interethnic relations in Malaysia.

Han Li Bao is not a direct representation of these events, having been completed before they took place, but its publication so soon after May 1969 might be construed as a roundabout response to them. Right after the incident, the Malaysian government mandated that newspapers pause publication for a few days; it subsequently implemented strict censorship regulations, prohibiting the public circulation of content that "negatively affects interracial harmony." Foreign publications such as *Time* magazine were required to remove certain pages with allusions to this incident before they were allowed to enter Malaysia.[54] In this climate, *Han Li Bao*, a story that in Bai Yao's telling carried the message of "interracial harmony," was perhaps as direct an address of the contemporary reality on the ground as one could expect.

In the opening scene of Bai Yao's opera, the Ming princess sets sail for Malacca, accompanied by two maidservants and five hundred soldiers, to marry Sultan Mansur Shah in a diplomatic arrangement designed to maintain peace between the Chinese Empire and the Malacca Sultanate. There

is then an attempt to assassinate the princess at her welcome ceremony, staged by the prince of Sanaloca, the leader of a neighboring kingdom that is in competition with the sultan. The play goes on to show the budding romance between one of the princess's maids and one of the sultan's warriors. It concludes with an attack by the prince of Sanaloca, who injures the sultan and is subsequently killed when the heroic Han Li Bao plunges a knife into his chest.

The original version in the *Malay Annals* tells a more complicated story, focusing on the competition between the Malacca Sultanate and the Chinese emperor and the demand for parity. The Malay story begins with the Chinese emperor sending a sack of needles to Sultan Mansur Shah to represent China's large population. The sultan reciprocates by gifting a sack of grain to the Ming emperor, one for "every person in his dominions"—a gesture that impresses the emperor enough that he is willing to marry his daughter Li-Po to the sultan.[55] There is no discussion of Li-Po's journey to Malacca in this version; instead there are detailed descriptions of the Chinese emperor's admiration for how the Malays process grain for food and how they cook and eat certain vegetables. He is so impressed that he orders his entire empire to take up these practices. Li-Po is then sent to Malacca, where she converts to Islam, along with her attending servants—another detail that is missing from Bai Yao's Chinese retelling. A few years later, Li-Po asks to go back to China, and the sultan agrees. He sends her on the return journey, but a violent storm carries her vessel to the neighboring state of Burné, whose ruler, the *sangaji* of Burné, wants to get to the bottom of Sultan Mansur Shah's relationship with the Ming emperor, inquiring specifically whether the king of Malacca has presented himself "as an inferior" to his Chinese father-in-law in the king's correspondence with the emperor.[56] The accompanying official plays with semantics, stating that a "humble greeting" to China is being conveyed by "all of us here, not the raja of Malacca," a claim that ultimately pacifies the ruler of Burné. The story ends with the Chinese emperor coming down with a skin condition, possibly chloasma, upon receiving Sultan Mansur Shah's salutation, which is eventually cured when he drinks water that the sultan has used to wash his face and feet.

"In the historical context of *Sejarah Melayu*," we are told, "a person may be infected with chloasma . . . upon skin contact with a person of royal blood, suggesting an unhealthy union between that royal figure and common person. Thus, the Emperor's chloasma via his daughter's contact with Sultan Mansur Syah serves to show that he is not sufficiently royal for the

Malay Sultan to be making 'obeisance' despite the conventions of showing indebtedness to his wife's father."[57] In the view of the authors of this article, the parity of the two empires is maintained by the accordance of equivalent value to the two gifts that bookend this story: the Chinese princess and the "discarded feet-washing water as a prestigious item, worthy as a gift."[58]

Bai Yao's version presents the Chinese characters and their perspectives favorably, strategically eliminating those parts of the story that might provoke the racial sensibilities of Chinese audiences, including Han Li Bao's conversion to Islam and the Chinese emperor's consumption of the sultan's feet-washing water. All details concerning interimperial rivalry or the smaller empire's demand for parity with the larger and more powerful one are eliminated in his telling. Instead, the story is focused on a heroic woman's dedication to her role as a mediator of peace between empires and her devotion to her new master and her new land. The opera exudes a stronger sense of classicism than Bai Yao's modernist poetry, going so far as to adopt the *Chu Ci*, a classical lyrical form that dates back to the third century BCE, in some musical sections, and not shying away from the use of regulated verse, which he cautioned his fellow modernist poets against in his manifesto. The elevated classical style, though, does not prevent the opera from taking on contemporary resonance. In a duet between Han Li Bao and the sultan upon her arrival in Malacca, the princess sings, "Thank you, thank you / For your warm hospitality / That has warmed my heart / Making me feel no longer like a stranger; no more lingering / over the days of the past." The sultan replies, "No more lingering over the past / Here, there is a new land / Here, there is a new hope / I too am here, keeping you company at your side."[59] This theme of adopting a new homeland is reiterated later in the play when, facing the invader from Sanaloca, Han Li Bao is reminded that she could go back to China and resume her life as a princess, a suggestion that she firmly rejects: "I live and will die here. No one can send me away. This is my home."[60] If, following Grace V. S. Chin, "the story of Hang Li Po travelling across the seas to marry the Melakan Sultan can be read as an allegory of the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia," then these statements declaring the voluntary assimilation by a new immigrant, as well as celebrating the image of a welcoming host, are not to be taken lightly as only a historical comment.[61] Bai Yao's retelling of the Han Li Bao story paints a much more harmonious picture, given the social reality of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In many ways an urtext of Malay-Chinese interracial relationships, the story of Li-Po was staged at least five times between the late 1960s and the

late 1990s, and has had even more adaptations in the early 2000s, with the most recent and intriguing use seen in the Malaysian Chinese director Chong Keat Aun's film *Snow in Midsummer* (2023), which engages with the remembrance of the May 13 riot.[62] Situating Bai Yao's opera within this living legacy, we are inclined to conclude that the author's modernist imaginary of Nanyang was constructed in concert with his consideration of the real-life contemporary situation in Southeast Asia, with the actual engagement of the two pushing the spiritual imaginary to the limit in terms of its ability to accommodate the complexity of the local situation from the perspectives of language, gender, and theatrical form.

IV. Shifting the Coordinates of Mahua Literature, Redux

In this section I discuss another dimension of *Chao Foon*'s literary canvas that became more prominent in the late 1960s, amid what is commonly recognized as a second wave of Mahua modernism, launched by a new editorial group. As I will show, this readjustment of Mahua modernism's coordinates not only brought more expansive temporal and spatial latitude toward the larger world beyond the Sinosphere, but also interwove reading, criticism, and creative writing more tightly in the process of forging a community centered on this literary magazine. Through the various genres of writing published in each issue—translations and criticism of foreign writers, juxtaposed against new works produced mostly by local writers—the *Chao Foon* group presented themselves as avid readers of foreign literature, even more prominently than their identity as creative writers. The magazine thus played the role of a cultural intermediary: armed with a journalistic sensitivity toward the latest cultural trends, it sought to articulate the cultural tastes and literary sensibilities of the local scene with those elsewhere. Remembering Liang Mingguang's provocative call to Mahua writers to "open a window and take a look at the world outside" in 1968, we must ask how the magazine framed "the world outside" while shaping the landscape in the local context.[63]

To consider the various features of *Chao Foon* in conjunction with one another, I need to shift from a narrow focus on one or two significant figures or texts to a more comprehensive mode of analysis. How the magazine chose the foreign authors to represent and how the different genres of writing were set in relation to one another are important issues in this section. This also implies that the macroscopic approaches substantiated by the largely statistical work of compiling an exhaustive list of translated

authors and works in a journal's history, or constructing a bird's-eye visualization of the various networks and linkages, imaginary and material, engendered by *Chao Foon*, are necessary but insufficient, because they tend to produce static descriptions of an evolving text by treating all threads as equivalent and ignoring the hierarchy or dissimilarities between them. The temporality of a serial publication is sometimes ignored as well. While I rely on available macroscopic discussions of *Chao Foon* such as Phoon Kwee Hian's 方桂香 historical study of the Chinese modernist literary movement in Singapore,[64] my approach also takes inspiration from Eric Bulson's study of the "little magazine" as a "world form." Bulson makes a point of reading a magazine "both as a *medium* . . . and as a *material object*." "Form," as he understands it in his study, "identifies both the internal structure of the magazine and its external shape, design, and construction. Such an emphasis makes it possible to recover the specificity of each magazine within a national, regional culture and within a transnational network, and it is one of the ways we can see how local production (and local print cultures and histories) was always bound up with more abstract social and political forces."[65] By observing the lines of movement, connection, and tension that were formed at specific moments—the "form" of the magazine, in Bulson's words—we can begin to see how "the internal structure" of a magazine addresses the "abstract" structures beyond the bounded object or the locality of its production.

Before I delve into specific issues of *Chao Foon*, I must provide some contextual information about the magazine's history at the end of the 1960s. When issue 202 came out in August 1969, *Chao Foon* had a new design and a new list of editors. (Their names were printed in every issue thereafter, a new practice in this respect.) Two of the new editors, Tan Swie Hian 陳瑞獻 (a.k.a. Mu Ling Nu 牧羚奴) and Lee Yu Cheng 李有成 (a.k.a. Li Cang 李蒼), had been born and raised in Southeast Asia and were not affiliated with the Union Press cohort, which was originally formed in Hong Kong. The other two editors, Yao Tuo and Bai Yao, were both longstanding UP members. The magazine had a fresh new look; there were more pages in each issue, and the price had gone up slightly. Compared to earlier issues, a larger portion of each issue was devoted to translations of various kinds, including literary works, essays about art and artists, and critical commentary on specific authors or their works. There were also fewer reprints from other Chinese-language magazines published in Taiwan and Hong Kong—a distinct departure from the trend in much of the 1960s, when the magazine was under the direction of Huang Ya.

Huang Ya had already made a point of introducing broadly defined modernist authors and criticism to Chinese readers in Malaysia and Singapore. With the change of editorship in 1969, the introduction of foreign authors quickened in pace and grew in size. That additional foreign authors were introduced and given more in-depth discussions suggests that their significance was heightened in the minds of the new group of editors. Based on the list of literary translations published in *Chao Foon* that Phoon Kwee Hian compiled, we can identify several general tendencies in the types of networks that the editors sought to establish.[66] The first and most salient of these trends was Anglo-American and European modernism: *Chao Foon* published translations of works by Rainer Maria Rilke, Samuel Beckett, T. S. Eliot, Ernest Hemingway, Franz Kafka, James Joyce, Günter Grass, and Alain Robbe-Grillet, among others. Second, literary criticism following the methods of New Criticism was featured prominently: William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" appeared in the magazine with an accompanying essay by Cleanth Brooks and a reading of the story by Robert Penn Warren, and essays from influential Western cultural journals such as *Cahiers du Cinéma* were also published. Third, there was ample attention to Soviet dissident writers, especially those who had been awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, such as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, as well as to Soviet literature and narratives from the twentieth century, such as the dancer Vaslav Nijinsky's diary and the poems of Marina Tsvetaeva. A fourth tendency was the centering of literary translations of Malay literature from Malaysia and Singapore and some Indonesian literature, including by established figures such as Chairil Anwar from Indonesia and Tongkat Warrant from Malaysia, as well as new and emergent writers.

A decade earlier, Bai Yao had engaged with May Fourth culture in order to emplace modernism in Malaya, but by the late 1960s, under the new editorship, *Chao Foon* seemed to have put May Fourth in the rearview mirror. This "strategic fabrication" of the world in *Chao Foon* was temporally coded, indicating that the editors were eager to create a sense of simultaneity with Western media and plug into external networks of multiple kinds. In addition, for the magazine, the world was not just far away but also close by. *Chao Foon* sought to establish national and regional networks by publishing translations, interviews, and criticism of writers from the nearby Malay-language literary world, forging intercultural ties in the plurilingual local society (an issue that I will temporarily suspend until chapter 5).

Temporality is significant here because the new editorial group at *Chao Foon* exhibited a journalistic sense in the decisions they made about trans-

lations and their uses. While their primary interest was literary, they also covered contemporary social topics via literary representations. After all, the editors were kindred spirits with Liang Mingguang's modernist writers, who were concerned with a wide variety of issues in modern life, from the Vietnam War to the surgical implantation of mechanical prostheses inside the human body. For instance, the August 1969 issue (no. 202) of *Chao Foon*, the first one edited by the new editorial group, covers the timely topic of the American astronauts' landing on the moon—not directly, but through a translation of Archibald MacLeish's article "A Reflection: Riders on Earth Together, Brothers in Eternal Cold" (the Chinese version used a simpler title, "A Look at New Humanity from Earth"), along with his 1923 poem "Ars Poetica" ("Shi Yi" or "The Art of Poetry" in Chinese). When it came to representing the United States for Asian readers, *Chao Foon*, in comparison to another Chinese-language cultural magazine, *World Today* 今日世界, did not demonstrate a dedicated or comprehensive interest in the United States beyond American literature. The latter was funded by the US Information Service (USIS) in Hong Kong and distributed for free in Chinese-speaking regions.[67]

Chao Foon showed more interest in Soviet writers in the late 1960s than it had in previous years. In the September 1969 issue (no. 203), one-third of the content was devoted to translations of Soviet authors' works. A short story by Anatoly Kuznetsov, who defected to the West in 1969, was followed by an excerpt from a letter Kuznetsov had written declaring his withdrawal from the Soviet Writers' Union, highlighting in particular his denunciation of socialist realism, which he characterized as authoritarian aesthetics. That was followed by a translation of Yevgeny Yevtushenko's long poem "Babi Yar," possibly because it has some thematic connection to Kuznetsov's novel by the same title, which had been published in a much-redacted version in the Soviet Union and was made available in its entirety after his move to the West. The section on Soviet-related literature ended with a translation of a poem by the Czech poet Óndra Łysohorsky celebrating the sacrifice of Jan Palach, whose self-immolation in a public square in Prague was meant to be a protest against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Appended to the poem was an essay by Bai Yao under the pen name Miao Miao 苗苗 that included the text of a letter signed by eighty-eight Soviet authors declaring their support for their Czech colleagues, followed by a call from the author for freedom of choice and freedom of expression. This sequence of articles suggests that the magazine's interest in Soviet literature newly accessible to the Western readers due to

the authors' defections was intrinsically tied to a political stance of antiauthoritarianism and the messaging associated with the internal dissension from and revolt against Soviet domination.

But that was not always the case. Sometimes *Chao Foon* took an unexpected turn that complicated the picture of immediate political alignment. One distinct characteristic of its coverage of Soviet literature was its interest in literature from before the Stalin era that exhibited modernist tendencies. For instance, three poems by the early twentieth-century poet Marina Tsvetaeva were published in November 1969, in a special issue dedicated to poetry (no. 205). A long treatise by Meng Zhong Ji 孟仲季 titled "On the Modernization of Poetry" anchored that issue. It comprehensively discussed the relationship between the modern industrial revolution and modernist poetry, ending with a defense of Mahua modernism against negative labels such as "poisonous weed" and "regression."[68] In cross-referencing this treatise with the rest of the issue, which in addition to the poems by Tsvetaeva includes poetry and prose by Samuel Beckett, Chairil Anwar, Federico García Lorca, T. S. Eliot, and Rainer Maria Rilke, we can deduce that the editors intended to create a global mapping of modernism that included Soviet authors and in which modernist poets from the Western and non-Western worlds were placed on equal footing in terms of creativity and the spirit of innovation. This issue suggests that the desire to plug into a global modernist network—what Tee Kim Tong 張錦忠 calls in another context "imagining an avant-garde community"—paralleled geopolitical alignment, although the two networks did not completely overlap with each other.[69] Also featured prominently is another pre-Stalinist artist, the Russian dancer Vaslav Nijinsky, whose diaries were translated into Chinese by Xiao Fei and Tan Swie Hian and published first in *Chao Foon* in May 1970 (no. 210) and then as a separate volume. We can conclude, then, that the literary field constructed by this magazine, always multiple and often negotiated, cannot be reduced to the flattened Cold War global pattern.

These examples demonstrate that *Chao Foon* under the new editorship certainly did not put its non-leftist political leanings behind it; its criticism of the authoritarianism of the Soviet Union (more than China by the late 1960s) continued, but at the same time, political alignment was not the only network that interested this magazine. *Chao Foon* showed as much, if not more, interest in plugging into global cultural networks. In these respects, Bulson's reflection on literary magazines in postcolonial Africa may be worth cross-referencing. Bulson states that "*Black Orpheus* and *Transition* [which were funded by the CCF with funding from the United

States] may have cultivated this sense of autonomy in order to promote an independent literary and critical sphere in the countries across Africa, but the network to which they belonged, and the affiliations established therein, made it impossible to detach completely from the geopolitical games going on around them."[70] While *Chao Foon*'s placement in postcolonial Southeast Asia differed from the situation of these two magazines in postcolonial Africa, Bulson's reminder that plugging into a network implies contingency on larger sociopolitical structures is worth bearing in mind.

V. Conclusion

A close reading of the fiction by Mu Ling Nu (pen name of Tan Swie Hian) featured in one of *Chao Foon*'s two special issues on fiction (June/July 1970 [no. 211] and August 1970 [no. 212]) can illustrate how Mahua modernism organized literary relationality. Two short stories by the author, "The Porcupine" and "The Untouchable," are given extra attention in a section titled "Special Focus on the Stories of Mu Ling Nu"; among them, the former lends itself to a metacritical reading regarding how Mahua modernists negotiated with the outside world. The central characters of "The Porcupine" are a trio of boatmen consisting of the bearded Porcupine (who is also the narrator), the Little Grasshopper, and Wen Niu. They make a living by operating a small boat (called a "bumboat" in the story) and peddling merchandise to sailors entering the harbor on larger ships. The story is told in a vivid and dynamic manner, full of detailed descriptions of the movements of both the human characters and the boats at split-second junctures between life and death.

"The Porcupine" displays some distinctly modernist sensibilities, particularly in terms of its conscious allusion to and self-placement in a multilingual languagescape. The text in itself has an English version, which the author created himself shortly after the Chinese version was published. The story both on the level of content and in terms of its mode of existence exemplifies multilingual practice and translation as a theme. At one point in "The Porcupine," Big Beard chides his fourteen-year-old companion for picking up the bad habit of smoking:

> "Baiser!" replied Little Cockroach, with a malicious smile: a French word, picked up by bumboatmen to use as a swear word even though they did not know the actual meaning. Sailors and boatmen are strange linguists: when they don't know how to say "black" in the other per-

> son's language, they tug at their hair; when they can't say "white," they show him the colour of their shirt. And gradually, one picks up words. Little Cockroach had a good memory and he learnt swiftly—especially those dirty words. And he also knew how to invent his own language for international communication.[71]

In this scene of creative language acquisition, what is bartered here is not just a concrete product but the equivalent value of languages as well. That is how tugging at one's hair translates into "black" for an English speaker. This motif of innovative linguistic exchange juxtaposed against commodity exchange in the story implies that the literary magazine's exchange with the larger world beyond Malaya can perhaps be likened to Mahua modernism "invent[ing] [one's] own language for international communication." *Chao Foon*'s editors are like the "strange linguists" depicted in the story; its emergence out of the various geopolitical and aesthetic encounters can be contentious at times: just as the writer tells us in the story of a later moment, "Once a British sailor had wanted to buy a lady's skirt worth eleven American dollars: Little Cockroach, not knowing then how to say 'eleven,' instead said 'one-one.' The British sailor understood him to mean two dollars and gave him a Singaporean ten dollar note and asked for the change. Little Cockroach refused and asked for more: but his own broken English only resulted in the murdered English of the sailor, who was as thick as a pig."[72] Here what is being exchanged is not just a woman's skirt, but spoken words as well. As "broken English" was answered in kind with "murdered English," "war almost broke out."[73] This last sentence is from Tan's own 1967 translation, but is not in the 1980 translation.

"International communication" in the textual field of *Chao Foon* means embedding the creative works by Mahua writers into multiple cultural networks. Modernism in the Mahua context, then, is about reading this literature comparatively and situating it in relation to literary counterparts and conventions, both East and West. In the space of the magazine, such issues as parity and originality are to be negotiated, not entirely predetermined by the structural unevenness of the world literary space, which in turn brings the modernists to reckon with the particularity of the "here and now" of the literary magazine's production. Just like Little Cockroach and Big Beard, *Chao Foon* inhabited a literary borderscape of unevenness and competitiveness and made it a dwelling place of literary production.

Encounters between objects and cultures of nonequivalent power and status can be risky, even violent at times, as Mu Ling Nu writes of the life-

and-death struggle in the little boat's attempt to align itself with the much bigger *Argus*. "Trying to align our boat with the ship I pulled the rudder to the right but the *Argus* was pressing forward like an express . . . and our boat looked merely like an ant dragged into the billows." In a distinctly modernist gesture, Mu Ling Nu in the next sentence merges the smallest with the largest scales and situates the precarious little boat in the midst: "My ant-like boat couldn't resist the pressure of the currents from the South China Sea and the Straits of Malacca."[74] This sentence captures the essence of practicing modernism at sea: it focalizes on the strategic navigations of the powerful political and cultural currents both in the immediate vicinity and in the world at large, which also characterizes the cultural gestures of both *Wenyi Xinchao* and *Chao Foon*. This chapter has given attention to these specific moments of negotiation, in turn revealing the larger global geopolitical structure and that of the world literary field.

4

Writing Literary Realism in Malaya

The Malaysian literary critic Chong Fah Hing 莊華興 describes the Communist writer Jin Zhimang as someone "who exists but is not present."[1] He is referring to the fact that after the state of emergency was declared in Malaya in 1948, Jin Zhimang joined the guerrilla forces in the jungles; the author and his literature disappeared from public view until the 1990s, when the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) signed a peace agreement with the Malaysian government. Before joining the guerrilla forces, Jin had already established a reputation in Malaya as a realist writer of stories set mostly in the Asia-Pacific War. He was also a polemicist, well known in particular for his contribution to the debate over the "unique characteristics of Mahua literature and arts," which involved left-leaning cultural workers in Malaya and Hong Kong from 1947 to 1948.[2] Jin Zhimang's disappearance from public view after the late 1940s was not a discontinuation of his literary career, for we know that he wrote fiction and edited newspapers while in the army. But the Communist guerrilla war was a taboo subject for several decades: it was forbidden for most literature associated with the CPM, including that of Jin Zhimang, to be publicly circulated. Such restrictions were eventually loosened after the armed struggles were over, and the cordoning off of this history from the "normal" social world fueled the subsequent resurgence of "Magong stories," or stories about the CPM (Magong is the Chinese word for the CPM).

The interregnum and interstitial space of silence was the structural condition for Magong stories (*magong xiaoshuo*), a broad category that the critic and writer Ng Kim Chew has defined as stories that use the party "as subject matter (including the activities of the CPM guerrilla army, CPM members as main characters, or the repercussions or damage from that

revolutionary history)," in contradistinction to *magong shuxie*, or "writings by [former] CPM members."[3] Obviously, not everyone who currently writes about the CPM is historically affiliated with the party, and the material conditions for cultural production within the CPM army or under the CPM's direct rule have never been reproducible outside the world of the CPM. Therefore, it makes more sense to depict the Communist history by focusing on its silencing, which has produced what might be called a sense of "irrealism," to use a term popularized by the Warwick Research Collective. Irrealism, following Michael Löwy, describes the aesthetic of "an imaginary world, composed of fantastic, supernatural, nightmarish or simply nonexistent forms," and situated in a "border territory between reality and 'irreality.'"[4] In trauma narratives featuring the disappearance from family or public life of a Communist soldier or fellow traveler as a metonym for amnesia about the history of the Communist Party, the "unrealness" or "irreality" of the CPM is frequently posited as a narrative premise and aesthetic motivation. The disappearance of the Magong figure sets in motion a search for the past; it stages a reckoning with history and becomes the center of a nonlinear experimental rendering of this history. Writings that are derived from the aporia of Magong can range anywhere from mythologization of the Communist soldier to postmodern pastiche of the CPM's history. One good example is Li Zishu's 黎紫書 2000 story "Shan Wen" (Mountain god of plague), in which the "nonpresence" of the Communist soldier supports his status as a mythological figure who is simultaneously awe inspiring and mysterious, his identity shifting between charismatic guerrilla leader and betrayer of the revolutionary cause.[5]

While these stories present productive engagements with the history of the armed struggles led by the CPM, an emphasis on the Communist guerrilla's "existence without presence" only describes *our* narrative position in relation to this history—in other words, the position of those of us living in the "normal" social world outside the jungle. For those who took part in the guerrilla war, of course, that history is anything but "nonpresent"; on the contrary, it remains all too real and fully embodied, although the "real" is no less mediated, as with those stories situated outside the jungle. Thus, alongside Magong stories derived from the CPM's state of "existence without presence," there is another group of stories that are invested, however naively, in the "realness" of history; these stories exhibit formal features that are often associated with literary realism in general, and socialist realism in particular.

Using the example of the Magong story to reflect on realism as both

practice and taxonomy in Mahua literary history, I argue in this chapter that literary realism demands a better examination than it has hitherto been given. My intention is not so much to defend the inherent virtue of realism or socialist realism as on par with or superior to modernism, but simply to argue that since not all Magong stories can be described in terms of modernism or even "irrealism," either objectively (that is, judging by their formal features) or subjectively (that is, according to the authors' understanding of their own aesthetic proclivity), realism should *also* be taken seriously. For sure, Magong realism was certainly not the only realist genre in the Sinophone literary history of Singapore and Malaysia in the twentieth century. Many realist writers who were outside the revolutionary battleground—among them Fang Beifang 方北方 and Miao Xiu 苗秀—continued to write throughout the period of guerrilla war. But under the calcified division between modernism and realism, the socialist realism practiced by CPM members both in the period of the armed struggles and afterward posits the real as counterposed to modernism, embodying in more extreme ways than the "softer" mode of social realism the deficiencies that critics of literary realism often highlight: it is allegedly aesthetically crude, epistemologically naive, and artistically compromised because of its susceptibility to appropriation of political ideology. In other words, Magong narratives doubly inscribe themselves on the realism-versus-modernism antinomy, underscoring this division as both political and aesthetic. In turn, examining Magong narratives in conjunction with the historical onslaught on realism's shortcomings affords us an opportunity to reflect on the possibility and potential of reading literature in ways that are not aligned with the division of political blocs.

In fact, some accusations of socialist realism's aesthetic deficiencies can hardly be gainsaid, and the defense of realism as an aesthetic strategy that will get us closer to historical truth (as has been claimed by several former Magong writers) is hardly convincing. Ng Kim Chew is thus justified in calling out some realist writers of Magong stories for playing fast and loose with the distinction between literature and history, sometimes with the goal of closing off conversation and deflecting criticism of their works.[6] What I am proposing here is that the investment in the "realness" of history as exhibited in some realist narratives about Magong should be taken seriously. This does not mean that realist narratives are to be taken *as* history, or that narrating this history from certain positions will produce more "authentic" histories or better literary narratives (no matter if that narrator was an eyewitness to the guerrilla war or even the CPM general secretary

Chin Peng, whose memoir promises to share "my side of history").[7] Yet the postmodern suspicion of reality—and, to varying degrees, poststructuralists' knack for deconstructing all narrative constructions—is not the only position to take. When authors claim that their narratives about Magong are "historical fiction," it might reflect not a naive conflation of history and literature, but a genuine belief in the recoverability of history. Their consequent writings, which take largely a realist form, characterized by such traits as a linear structure, an omniscient point of view, and concrete and figurative descriptions of persons and places, should therefore be treated not as literature created in bad faith, but as literature proper, and thus no less appropriate than modernist works for critical inquiries into their form, theme, and language.

The broader question derived from my engagement with literary realism in conjunction with the history of the CPM has to do with the issue of taking literary realism as a valid aesthetic object in its own right—that is, a literary corpus with identifiable stylistic features—and not merely as a method, a useful distinction made by Colleen Lye.[8] Some contemporary scholars who have attempted to rectify the privileging of modernism over realism in critical discourse and literary studies suggest that we should reach across the aisle, so to speak. The Warwick Research Collective, for instance, argues that "to read modernist literature in the light of combined and uneven development is then to read it with one eye to its realism."[9] In addition to promoting reading "against the grain" by attending to "modernism's realism," they expect that "the defence of realism will take the form of an identification of its modernism."[10] Even so, as Lye observes, this leveled address of realism and modernism does not translate into a full recuperation of realism per se. "A realist-appearing realism" remains hard to describe, even after we have succeeded in reading modernism and realism across their generic divide.[11] The form of realism endorsed by the Warwick Research Collective is irrealism, with formal features such as "anti-linear plotlines, meta-narratorial devices, un-rounded characters, unreliable narrators, [and] contradictory points of view"—in other words, modernist-looking realism—but what about those forms of realism that do not look like modernism?[12] Is traditional realism doomed to die a second symbolic death after the revolutionary prospect associated with the realist form largely diminished in the 1960s? What is realism anyway in this day and age, when literature has opened up to realist representations produced by other media forms?

I am not advocating that realism be resurrected tout court; nor do I think

that trying to salvage certain more palatable subgenres of realism (such as irrealism) is sufficient to reverse the stereotypical impressions of literary realism engendered by the Cold War. But attempting to redeem realism by routing it through modernism does not take us far beyond the conventional mode of thinking of literature in terms of political blocs or expose the political and cultural differences that exist within a single bloc. As I argue later in this chapter, despite the close friendship between the CPM and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the socialist realist literature produced by Magong cultural workers does not share the political and social condition of Chinese literature of the Seventeen Years (1949–66), or the "red classics" produced in that period. Each realist narrative calls for proper literary analysis that is site specific.

Literary realism deserves a closer look also because, as Lauren Goodlad suggests, realism in practice is not the same as what the discourses of realism suggest that it should be. "The references to 'classic' realism that crop up in our critical discourse often serve as placeholders for a set of stable generic or formal conventions that have never existed," Goodlad says, and "we need to question the taxonomic work these terms perform."[13] Goodlad is referring here to the European realist canon, but as this chapter will show, even the socialist realist works produced under the CPM's tutelage and control could have agendas beyond political mobilization and propaganda. Thus, the stereotypical perceptions of socialist realism are not always borne out by the actual works. Magong literature provides fertile ground for engaging in this discussion because the questions raised by this genre—mainly regarding literature's relationship to political ideology and control and the historical legacy of Communist struggles in places without state socialism—can be productively explored in ways that are sensitive to the formal affordances of literary realism.

In fact, despite the contemporary rethinking of the modernism-versus-realism antinomy and the renewed attention to emergent forms of realist writing, critics in Western academia have been slow to recuperate or reevaluate socialist realism. In the context of Mahua literary history, the question arises as to whether realism in association with the CPM armed struggles is a thing of the past. Does realism have a role to play in contemporary history after the end of the revolution? One way to reflect on the limits of Sinophone literary realism is by reflecting on its ethnic bindings. The intertwined histories of the CPM and the ethnic Chinese in Malaysia and Singapore raise key questions about whose history it is and how we remember it from a contemporary perspective. "For a long time," states

historian Ngoi Guat Peng 魏月萍, "CPM has invariably been 'ethnicised' as a Chinese party, with its struggles portrayed as a political expression/representation of the Chinese, generating an imagination on the part of the general public that 'CPM members are all Chinese.'"[14] Literary critic Show Ying Xin 蘇穎欣, likewise, argues that as a manifestation of the reconstruction of memories about the CPM's struggles, "some former CPM members reduced the historical memories of leftist struggles to the ethnic memory of the Chinese as they resisted state accounts [of these struggles]."[15] The Chinese intellectual circle, Ngoi argues, has reinforced the popular view that "CPM membership was made up mostly of Chinese who dominated CPM's movement" and overlooked "the Malay CPM's impact on the domestic political process."[16] Is the literary realism practiced by Sinophone writers capable of confronting the ethnic bindings that have been simplistically imposed onto the CPM's history? This chapter examines the works of the contemporary Malaysian filmmaker Lau Kek Huat 廖克發, which share an epistemological and aesthetic orientation with literary realism, to address this aesthetic form's capacity to represent a multilingual and multiracial Southeast Asia.

I. The "Here and Now" of the Guerrilla War

As I discuss in the introduction to part II, Jin Zhimang called on migrant writers from China to catch up with the "here and now" of Malayan reality. His polemical essays "On Mahua Literary Arts" and "More on Sojourners' Literature," published between December 1947 and January 1948 in the Communist newspapers *Zhanyou Bao* (Brothers in arms) and *Minsheng Bao* (Voice of the people), were written before Jin joined the guerrilla army in the jungles. How, then, in the face of this unfamiliar environment, did urban writers such as Jin himself keep up with the new reality of armed struggles? What was the "here and now" for the Communist guerrilla soldier?

To answer these questions, I suggest that we cross-reference Jin Zhimang's output as a writer with his work as an editor. As a cultural worker in the Twelfth Regiment in charge of propaganda work, Jin marked the ten-year anniversary of the Anti-British National Liberation War in 1958 by launching a project to collect stories about his comrades' experiences. While some of the accounts that he solicited were written, others were told to him orally, and he in turn transcribed and edited them. He then selected some of these stories to publish in a serial publication titled *Ten*

Years, which was circulated in mimeograph form among the soldiers. Some of Jin's own works from this period were included in the series and circulated in the same way. We also know from the notes attached to his novels that some of them were adapted from stories he had collected from other soldiers. For instance, a note at the end of his novel *Ganbang Wulong* (The Wulong kampong) states that "this piece was largely adapted from Comrade Yongding's article. In addition, after consulting the narratives by Comrades Yangping, Lao Jiang, Ah Han, and Gan Zai, which depict more or less the same content, I fleshed out the story by incorporating quite a bit of additional material [taken from these articles]."[17] In fact, attributions of this kind appear not only in Jin Zhimang's own writing, but also frequently alongside the narratives by other people. It is thus hard to ascertain the exact authorship of the stories in this series, or the editor's role. We can only assume that these stories, including those authored by Jin himself, were produced through some type of collective process—not that the author, the editor, and the reader formed a homogeneous entity, indistinguishable from one another, but that the distinction between their roles was undefined and often blurred.

From the editorial notes published at the end of several issues of *Ten Years*, we can get a sense of the multiple roles played by the editor of the series, who presumably was Jin Zhimang throughout: he served simultaneously as a writing instructor, a political guide, and an editorial gatekeeper. In his note at the end of series 1 (also published in the army newspaper *Torch*), Jin says that it is not enough to write about "one's own experience of hardship, danger, and some major contribution to the revolution"; that would be merely "a running account of history" (*liu shui zhang*). Rather, one "should focus on detailed facts," have a central idea, and "not write just about yourself in an isolated manner, but give attention to the comrades who were with you during an incident."[18] At the end of series 2, he explains that "when comrades praise or criticize other people, or talk about themselves," they should try to "illustrate everything with specific details," not "summarily give comments first and then add some fragmentary, trivial, or even irrelevant facts." With respect to something major, Jin emphasizes, the factuality of the stories "needs to be verified by the cadres in charge."[19] This note tells us that the stories in this series could be used as an outlet for comrades to voice their opinions about other comrades—a function that sets them apart from most literature written for public circulation.

The editorial note at the end of series 4 is particularly significant, since it delves into the question of how to make meaning from real-life experience.

"*Ten Years* is about real people and real events," Jin states, "but it is not about 'keeping a log' [*shi lu*] of these incidents. . . . When we import these facts [into the stories], we need to use edification as our guide to determine how to adapt them to fiction, what to make more of and what less. It is important to be selective and know clearly where the emphasis lies."[20] He further discusses how negative incidents, such as defeats in battle, hunger, and other challenges in daily life, can also have an educational effect, but states that some positive meaning has to be drawn from these negativities:

> Comrades whose armies were attacked or broken up or who were injured tend to address these challenges first [when telling their stories]. Some of them provide multiple accounts of experiences of this kind. With these incidents, if we put emphasis on how the comrades bravely retaliated after the enemy's attack, how they performed courageously on the battlefield and persevered to overcome the adversity of the enemy's attack . . . then they will add meaning [to these stories about setbacks]. But if we only write about how the armies were fractured and thrown into disorder when they found themselves under attack by the enemy, how our vigilance was lacking or our leadership was inadequate . . . that serves little purpose.[21]

Another editorial note advises soldiers to focus on more than just the "big victories"; small actions such as "ambushes or run-ins with the enemy, or even defeats on the battlefield" could all make for good stories, but "you have to focus on how the comrades showcased their brave performances and courageous spirit. Only then does a story take on an edifying function."[22]

As is typical with socialist realist literature, the editor has a major role to play here in the production of meaning of realistic stories. The editor is largely responsible for managing what Brandon Taylor has described as a central paradox of socialist realism—"the combination in a single formula of the principle of 'depicting reality' at the same time as showing it in its 'revolutionary development.'"[23] The tension between "depicting reality" and making positive meaning from challenges and adversity, prominently foregrounded in these editorial notes, is commonly found in the writing process of other socialist realist narratives from China as well. For instance, in the making of the "red classic" *Red Crag*, a novel by Luo Guangbin, Yang Yiyan, and Liu Debin that depicts the torture and eventual execution of underground Communists in the notorious Zhazidong Prison, run by the Guomindang (KMT) in Chongqing, the authors quickly found that

it was not enough just to write about their own experience of imprisonment at Zhazidong. From 1950, when they produced their first report on the experience of imprisoned Communists, to 1961, when their novel was finally published, the three authors worked with various editors, both in their hometown and in Beijing, with the goal of "transcending 'what really happened' to them and embracing the potential 'historical truth' hidden in the data under which they were still overwhelmingly buried."[24] They were encouraged to situate the experience of imprisonment and torture in the context of "the promising political situation outside the walls of the prisons" and to recognize that "those executioners and captors are on the contrary the prisoners de facto."[25]

Yet there are some crucial differences between a Chinese "red classic" such as *Red Crag* and the serial publication *Ten Years*, two projects from roughly the same period. First and foremost, the long time that it took to transform the three authors' multiple earlier accounts into the final critically acclaimed novel would have been unimaginable for soldiers writing from the battlefront in a guerrilla war in Malaya. The difference in terms of the political situation between a state where a Communist revolution had already been won and a place where the Communist Party was still in the fighting phase should not be underestimated.

Relatedly, the identification of a targeted audience and the eventual input of that audience into the production of a socialist realist narrative need to be considered as well. In the case of *Red Crag*, the story was created with a public audience in mind and was performed publicly from the very beginning. One person who listened to Luo and his coauthors during their early public storytelling sessions recalled that "each time it got richer, more concrete, and the details more vivid."[26] The contributors to the *Ten Years* project, on the other hand, could not have imagined a similar scenario of public performance and circulation for it. In his preface to the series as a whole, Jin Zhimang addressed this series' audience directly: "The entire *Ten Years* publication consists of [depictions of] *our own* revolutionary activities. We ourselves and our comrades in arms are its subject; the events [we describe] are things that we or our comrades personally experienced. This is stuff you are familiar with and feel close to. It can be said that this is *your* stuff. No matter how crude it is, this is the kind of stuff that you would love and treasure."[27] Note the use of first-person and second-person pronouns in this passage. The editor insists here that *Ten Years* is *for* his fellow Communist soldiers, in the sense both that they are the project's intended audience and that it was created with their interests in mind. The

contributors, we are told, were not paid in cash but were compensated with a copy of the publication. This moves *Ten Years* closer to a work of self-representation—an autoethnography of sorts—than to a standard socialist realist work that was produced under the tutelage and control of the party and aimed at mass mobilization or political cultivation.

In considering the different material conditions of the relative stability in Communist China and the guerrilla war in Malaya, we are reminded that socialist realism needs to be adapted to on-the-ground reality and must confront its own anxieties with the "here and now." Given that *Ten Years* most likely did not have a lengthy process of maturation or the multiple layers of editorial intervention that most "red classics" in China underwent (the actual extent of such intervention here is unknown), its multiple "truths" experienced by the authors most likely did not cohere with the dominant "truth" demanded by the party. In other words, it is possible to read the *Ten Years* project against the grain. I am suggesting not that socialist realist literature is recuperable only if it has failed to achieve the political objective of propaganda, but rather that the multiple "truths" of socialist realist narratives are often occluded by the binary opposition of "truth" and "lie," with the party monopolizing "truth." *Ten Years* and Jin Zhimang's novels complicate this binarism.

Aside from the functions of advocacy and edification, these stories, including those written by Jin Zhimang, can be viewed as "autoethnography" in the sense in which Mary Louise Pratt has defined the term: "a text in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them." Pratt explains that "autoethnographic texts are not . . . autochthonous or 'authentic' forms of self-representation"; they are "construct[ed] *in response to* or in dialogue with" ethnographic representations of them as the other.[28] Pratt gives as an example an Indigenous Andean author's appropriation of a European colonial genre, the chronicle. Although we are not dealing with the same kind of colonial situation, there was plenty of negative propaganda about the CPM circulated by government media outlets, to which the CPM soldiers' accounts can be considered as providing counternarratives. At the same time, the stories can be considered as autoethnography in terms of their documentary impulse and the soldiers' desire to accurately portray their participation in a guerrilla war. The focus on the hardships they endured along with their dedication to the revolutionary cause led to a different mode of realist representation, one that did not always line up with the revolutionary romanticism touted by the editor and the party. Many of the

stories focus on the laborious process of looking for food in the jungles. Some give detailed descriptions of how wild fungi or plants were gathered and processed and how elephants or deer were hunted and cooked, along with describing the unrelenting pain of food poisoning. Deaths from accidents, wounds, and sickness are even more prominent in these narratives than heroic sacrifices in battles. Negative incidents such as betrayal, desertion, and even suicide are addressed head-on, in unflinching detail.

In a memorable account titled "In the Days of Hunger" from series 4, which is entirely devoted to stories about the "Long March" (the strategic transfer of the main army unit toward the northern Malaysia-Thailand border), Fan Ping, who was a new soldier at the time, describes how he and another comrade, Hong Li, coped with hunger, sickness, and the challenging terrain after they were separated from their unit and got lost in the jungle. What kept them going was their sheer will to survive, coupled with a determination to not become "a shameless deserter."[29] When Fan Ping discovered that Hong Li had hanged himself, he felt utterly alone and desperate, and contemplated suicide as well. Then, realizing that he was just about "to betray the true color of a revolutionary soldier," he came to his senses.[30] Fan Ping's suffering and desperation are palpably conveyed in his narrative, as is his dedication to the revolutionary cause. The overall impression one gets from this gripping account and others can be summed up with keywords such as *kunan* (bitterness and hardship), frequently used by many of the authors, and *guangrong* (honor and glory), which appears just as frequently in this project. One gets a sense of the course of the anti-imperialist revolution as meandering and painful, much like Fan Ping's experience of trekking through the jungle in a desperate attempt to reunite with his comrades; the realism of a guerrilla war is palpably conveyed, not entirely overshadowed by socialist realism's dominant emphasis on a teleological progression toward a bright future. Many accounts end with clichéd and abstract formulations such as "the heart, burning with revolutionary fire, has never forgotten about the party or the revolutionary cause," but these statements do not detract from the embodied experience of participating in the revolution, including both the hardship or the tangible joy of everyday victories, such as conquering a giant elephant or receiving a precious gift of salt from a sympathetic villager.[31]

Jin Zhimang's novel *Hunger*, a Magong literary classic that had its first limited circulation in 1960, exhibits the same autoethnographic impulse as the *Ten Years* project. It is a powerful novel, despite its often-formulaic language and staid descriptions befitting the socialist realist convention.

The plot focuses on a small regiment of fourteen soldiers who, having lost contact with the main unit and with the villagers who would normally have been able to supply them with food, are left to fend for themselves, grimly facing the horrors of starvation. One after another, the soldiers die of hunger: some perish after consuming poisonous weeds; others are killed in accidents while trying to harvest food, or by enemies while trying to climb into the barbed wire enclosures where the villagers live. The novel is memorable for its depictions of a wide "variety of forms of dying": "with concrete figurative descriptions, they are like a close-up within an enlarged frame, endowed with strong visual impact," Ng Kim Chew states.[32] As much as the depictions of the many faces of hunger and death—Ah Dong's "barest of bare-boned faces," with "protruding cheekbones and sunken cheeks," or Xiao Liang's "eyes wide open, but covered by a film of whiteness"—distort the proper proportion of a realist frame, thus imparting an irrealist or even surrealistic sensibility, the novel is squarely within the realist mode of narration at other moments.[33] This is evidenced, for instance, by *Hunger*'s documentary impulse, which is similar to the kind exhibited in the stories collected in *Ten Years*.

The novel is structured around a series of individual sacrifices, sometimes at the expense of a tight narrative form and sufficient character development. The format is loosely serial, with different chapters describing a successive chain of challenges experienced by various characters. There is often no clear connection to the main character; in fact, it can be debated who the main character is and whose story the reader should give more attention to than others. The seriality of the plot means that new characters are introduced throughout the novel but just as quickly disappear from it. For instance, chapter 18 introduces Lao Fang, a former lumber factory worker who is now taking on the job of climbing a tree to harvest lemons. We are not given much background on this character, except that he may have come from the same village as two other characters in the story. He ends up falling from a lemon tree while gathering food, and the injuries he sustains are so painful that he decides to take his own life, in the same chapter in which he is introduced. Similarly, chapter 23 introduces Xiao Liang, who we are told is "the only person who has gone to school in Lao Liu's army."[34] He and two comrades are sent to fetch some hidden cans of salt. Overjoyed at having found them, he sneaks out at night to consume some of this precious delicacy for himself. Unable to stop himself from continuing to eat salt, he dies of sodium poisoning at the end of chapter 24. These are minor characters, to be sure, but every character in *Hunger* arguably

suffers from some degree of underdevelopment. While this has been perceived by some critics as symptomatic of the artistic deficiency of either the genre of socialist realism or its practitioner, it could also be indicative of a conscious choice made by the author to emphasize the unflinching materiality of the body and its dependence on the external world, at the expense of full-fledged individual identities.

Socialist realist narratives are supposed to center around a "positive hero," whose characterization, following Katerina Clark, cannot be a "static identity," but needs to illustrate "a normative progression from dark to light."[35] It is important for this hero to undergo a process of development. In Clark's words, "According to the general understanding of Marxism–Leninism, which assumes that there will be progress in humankind, especially in a post-revolutionary situation, an individual is not meant to occupy a static position on the continuum stretching from unchecked spontaneity to full consciousness, but to progress toward and through ever greater degrees of consciousness."[36] None of the characters in *Hunger* entirely fit this description of a "positive hero." The character that comes closest is Manzai, whose name means "the reckless kid," denoting an identity similar to that of an ingenue or the figure of the son (someone "perverse, headstrong, or willful on occasion") in Clark's description of a "positive hero" in Soviet literature. Coming from a revolutionary background—his older brother Lao Liu is the leader of the guerrilla regiment, and his sister Yu Lan and brother-in-law are both members of the brigade—Manzai has the greatest claim to the identity of a "son" in the regimental "family." His enthusiasm, his inexperience at fighting in a guerrilla war, his weakness in reining in his appetite for food, and his bravery during several key battles are all depicted in great detail, but this character grows only slightly over the course of the novel. In the end he becomes more mature and more willing to cope with hunger and hardship, but most of the time it seems as though his function is to "provide diversion from the ritual of maturation that structures the novel's plot," since his appearances are often accompanied by lighthearted banter, offering some much-needed comic relief in this otherwise grim story.[37]

Precisely because *Hunger* was not written in "a post-revolutionary situation" (Clark's term), the notion of progress in terms of narrative development is reconceptualized. Jin Zhimang's emphasis on the "here and now" must also imply a worlding of socialist realist aesthetics, requiring this literary form derived from the Communist universal to adapt to the reality of the tropical jungle and the specific conditions of the revolution in Malaya.

The unit is cut off from its material base in the literal sense of not being able to replenish its food supply. Although the unit has a clear goal of reestablishing these connections, the trajectory of their action is quite murky, so there is little in the way of historical progress. Are the loose structure and lack of character development indicative of artistic crudeness on the part of Jin Zhimang? Or did perhaps Jin simply take too seriously his own statement that the "entire *Ten Years* publication consists of [depictions of] *our own* revolutionary activities," and that "it can be said that this is *your* stuff" as well?[38] His novel, just like the narratives written by CPM guerrilla soldiers that he edited, does not conform to the standard formula of the socialist realist novel of the high Stalinist era or the "red classic" in China; instead, it should be seen, like those narratives, as autoethnography that the Communist soldiers created for themselves and for posterity. If there is a universal model of socialist realism, then it unravels in the face of the "here and now" of the jungles of Malaya.

II. Revolution's Temporality

Asking provocatively, "Why does a failed revolution also need fiction?" Ng Kim Chew draws attention to the untimeliness of the CPM stories depicting the revolutionary struggles: "by the time they were finally brought to light, the revolution had already ended, and the revolution's failure became the works' interpretive context." He adds: "The specific 'realities of the here and now' had already become 'history.'"[39] Perhaps the most unnerving aspect of this revolution, from the perspective of the former CPM soldiers, is not so much the success or failure at its end, but the protracted and messy process of ending in itself. Their stories demonstrate that a narrative about revolution does not come from the epic tradition, a place in which, as Mikhail Bakhtin puts it, "everything is finished, already over."[40]

For the writer Hai Fan 海凡, for instance, the representation of the messy ending of the revolution relies on certain nonfictional realist genres—specifically diaries and reports—to depict a temporality without closure and to cast a reflexive glance at revolution. A leftist activist from Singapore, Hai Fan joined the guerrillas in the 1970s, "so late that he missed almost all the major events in the CPM's history, except for the disbandment of the guerrilla force," in the words of Ng Kim Chew.[41] His choice to include his own diary in his first book—a mix of fictional and nonfictional accounts of the guerrilla war—shows his dedication to literary realism, understood not as standard socialist realism, but simply as a form that values an eye-

witness perspective and conveys a belief in the recoverability of history. The diary, which was published at the end of the collection *Yulin Gaosu Ni* (Thus spoke the rainforest), contradicts the dominant teleology of the revolution by providing a history that does not have a resolution and that is overly personal.[42] Hai Fan's adoption of the diary format indicates his tacit recognition that the realist author's task is anything but a simple or naive representation of a commonly acknowledged reality.

The entries from Hai Fan's diary are dated from January to April 1990 and chronicle, among other things, the preparations made for the disbandment of the guerrilla force following the Hai Yat Peace Agreement of 1989. At this point, the CPM needed to come to terms with its late 1960s history of purges against those so-called counterrevolutionary elements. Both the past and the future are messy, difficult to fold into a linear narrative of dialectical transcendence, which is probably why Hai Fan preferred the diary form. If, according to Boris Groys, dialectical materialism that underpins socialist realism can be understood in light of Hegel's dialectics, with the caveat that it is not Absolute Spirit that resolves historical contradictions, but political praxis, Hai Fan's diary documents the moment when the "political praxis" of the revolution came to an impasse, and the "historical contradictions" could not be resolved.[43] For instance, when the relatives of those persecuted during the purge come to the peace villages to demand an answer, or when soldiers such as the author himself reunite with their families and face the anxiety of rejoining society, the CPM's narrative of historical progression is complexified, if not refuted.

For Hai Fan, one way to honestly confront this complex reality is to break up the linear structure of a work of realist fiction with nonfictional bits. In his latest novel, *Yulin de Beiying* (The back views of the rainforest), he incorporated sections of this diary and other nonfictional texts, including a field report filed by an army unit leader, into the fictional narrative.[44] In a chapter that starts with the fictional character Song Jun's diary—virtually a word-for-word copy of Hai Fan's own diary, published several years earlier—Song Jun reports that when the history of the purge became an open topic of discussion among the soldiers, the organizational hierarchy in the army fell apart, and common soldiers were no longer willing to openly praise their superiors as they had before. "Are people forgetful or just plain snobbish when we lose any respect we had for our superiors as soon as we have stepped outside the jungle? Or is it that stacking up memories has distorted our simple knowledge of the past?" he wonders in his diary.[45] Notably, the acknowledgment of multiple truths, figuratively represented

by the "stacking up [of] memories," does not lead to a postmodernist suspicion of truth; it paradoxically fuels a search for hidden truths.

In chapter 5, for instance, a field report filed by "the leadership of the XX commando team" is transplanted in its entirety into the fictional narrative.[46] The author of the report, the unit leader He An, decides to share it with the widow of a soldier named Ah An, after Ah An has been killed in cross fire with the Thai army. The timing of Ah An's death does not cohere with the chronology of the revolution; it happened during a battle after the peace treaty had already been signed, making his death less like a heroic sacrifice, and more like collateral damage tacked on to the messy ending of a war. The report, written in a style that is reminiscent of the soldiers' accounts collected in the serial publication *Ten Years* or in Jin Zhimang's novel *Hunger*, does not focus on just one individual. In fact, Ah An is not mentioned until the last third of the document. The report begins with a broad geopolitical analysis of the revolutionary situation, which is followed by a "running historical account"—exactly the kind that Jin Zhimang warned his writers against—of battle, siege, the difficulties of jungle warfare, hunger, poisonous weeds that result in the deaths of many soldiers, and so on. With brutal honesty, He An admits in the report that he fleetingly thought about surrendering to the enemy, because it seemed to him at the time to be the only way to preserve the lives of the remaining soldiers after hardship and battles had led to several losses. He called a meeting and asked his comrades to consider the option of surrendering, but they disagreed with this proposition, so the unit persevered, eventually breaking out of the siege.

Nonfictional realist narratives such as the diary and the report set Hai Fan's novel apart from the socialist realist stories we see in *Ten Years* or in Jin Zhimang's novel. This report had a functional purpose in the army—it was most likely filed at the request of He An's superiors as a form of confession to his failed leadership of his unit. Unlike a typical work of realist fiction, in which the third-person narrator mediates the representation of reality mostly from the background, here the report foregrounds the perspective of the writer, who has minimal analytic command over the experience detailed in it. In other words, there is no expectation that a report (or a diary) will convey the artistically processed truth of a socialist realist fiction; the report is nonfictional but also partial, privileging the participant's perspective while also aimed at its own functional goal. But exactly because the nature of a report is nonfictional, this report is in fact even more direct than a realist fictional work in terms of narrative mediation of reality.

The incorporation into the novel of nonfictional elements such as this report and the soldier's diary makes the history of the CPM's struggles less legible or coherent as a single narrative. Here the partial reality that is understood and represented by individual soldiers is deemed at least as valid as a holistic view of truth. At the same time, Hai Fan's novel bears certain similarities to the *Ten Years* project, particularly in terms of its emphasis that the novel is about and for a collective. The report, as we notice, is interrupted in several places by comments from another character, Hai Ling. Hai Fan's privileging of fragmented reality and partial views makes this experimentation with realism veer in the direction of postmodernism.

III. Realism Against Its Ethnic Binding

Earlier I discussed how Mahua literary critics reformulated the modernism-versus-realism debate to open up new polemical topics on translation (how Mahua Sinophone literature relates to literatures in other languages and other parts of the world in a literary polysystem) or national literature (how Mahua literature stages a critique of the ethnic and cultural policies of Malaysia). Contemporary Magong realism contributes to this reformulation by exploring how recounting the Magong history can lead to an alternative imagination of interethnic relations.

Despite stereotypical perceptions, participants in the CPM-led armed struggles were not solely ethnic Chinese from Malaysia and Singapore, and CPM-related revolutionary culture was not solely Sinophone or monolingual. The radio transcripts of the Voice of the Malayan Revolution, for instance, show that programs in Chinese, Malay, Tamil, and English—and in multiple Chinese dialects—were broadcast from the station's overseas location in Hunan, China, from 1969 to 1981.[47] Scholars interested in taking the discourse of the CPM (or, more broadly defined, the Malayan Left) outside the ethnic Chinese framework can find inspiration in recent non-Chinese cultural productions (that is, written neither in Chinese nor by Chinese cultural workers) that exemplify the potential for border crossing. For instance, Amir Muhammad, a contemporary Malaysian filmmaker, articulates "a longing that transcends the racial and religious divides that confront Malaysia" in his documentary *The Last Communist* (2006).[48] Amir's "cosmopolitan sentiments," according to film scholar Gaik Cheng Khoo, are reflected in his willingness to "collaborate across ethnic boundaries" and to "represent characters who do not share [his] own ethnic background," and have proven to be a contemporary iteration of "the

anticolonial, proletariat, internationalist outlook of this old generation of revolutionaries."[49] Yet *The Last Communist*'s attempt to renarrate the history of the CPM's struggles exhibits strong nonrealist or even antirealist tendencies in its cognitive stance, if we understand realism as a belief in the independent existence of a reality beyond language and representation.

In Matthew Beaumont's carefully phrased definition, realism implies "the assumption that it is possible, through the act of representation, in one semiotic code or another, to provide cognitive as well as imaginative access to a material, historical reality that, though irreducibly mediated by human consciousness, and of course by language, is nonetheless independent of it."[50] *The Last Communist* deviates from this definition, as we can see from Khoo's description of Amir's documentary, which underscores the film's postmodernist assemblage in lieu of a realistic representation of the CPM general secretary Chin Peng:

> Amir eschews the use of archival footage. Instead, on his road trip tracing Chin Peng's footsteps, he focuses on the present-day people he meets in the small towns: working-class Indians (an *ais kacang* [ice dessert] seller, two friends who sell *petai* beans, some women who work spraying pesticide), a Chinese charcoal-factory owner who explains the charcoal process in English, a hardworking *Orang Asli* (indigenous Malaysian) petty trader, a local historian who explains the folklore behind the lotus bun of Taiping, Capt. Philip Rivers, a former riot squad member in Singapore, Malaysians who had survived the Japanese Occupation, and, eventually, when the crew reaches Thailand, veteran CPM members. The interviewed subjects who have no memory or little awareness of the past talk about their everyday lives, defining their identities very specifically in terms of their towns and of localities embodied in local fruit and different types of food and industries.[51]

In an interview, Amir emphasizes that he did not set out to represent Chin Peng as a political figure: "Chin Peng lives in exile in Thailand, and therefore, he is physically and 'hermeneutically' discouraged from being part of the Malaysian experience." Rather, he was inspired by Chin's memoir to "visit the small towns he talks about," producing a "road movie" that combines "the use of very visible, 'physical' roads and towns with this very invisible person and narration." Chin Peng and the CPM history with which he was associated are something that the documentary "aims at" but "can never find, because it is invisible."[52]

In considering Amir's *Last Communist* along the lines of postmodernism, rather than realism, I am not exclusively focused on the film's documentary style, nor do I evaluate it simply by the conventionally perceived trademarks of documentarian realism, such as the aesthetics of cinema verité or direct cinema. Rather, the absence of what George Levine calls "a commitment to register the external real"—the "real" pertaining to the history of the CPM or the biography of Chin Peng—is what defines the film's epistemological approach to this history.[53] It is not that Amir does not consider the CPM's history to be real, but he is more interested in representing what Carlo Bonura calls "an *image* of the contemporary of a communist past," referring to the documentary's nonlinear narrative structure.[54] Although realist narratives are also known for producing *images* of reality, in *The Last Communist* those images are not exclusively related to the CPM's past. Bonura's succinct description of one sequence in the film illustrates this disconnection effectively: "The film states that Chin Peng joined 'several student clubs where the ideology of communism was spread,' and immediately the image shifts to students in common dress practicing walking in formation. It is unclear what the marching is for, although it could be the practice for the SMJK Nan Hwa academic college marching band."[55]

Of *Village People Radio Show* (2007), a de facto sequel to *The Last Communist*, the director said, "Of all the things I have done, this is the closest to something made to document and preserve something before it disappears." He added, "I wanted the film to be very linear, quiet, uneventful."[56] *Village People Radio Show* is based on interviews with several surviving members of the Tenth Regiment—the Malay contingent of the CPM—who were settled in a Malay kampong in Thailand after the signing of the peace agreement. This linear representation, though, is frequently interrupted by "disjuncture" (a radio play of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* in a Thai-language rendition is broadcast throughout the film) and "digression."[57] For instance, interspersed with Pak Kassim's largely linear narrative about his individual political formation and life as a guerrilla fighter in the jungles are empty shots of an army of ants moving across a tree limb.

If Amir's documentaries provide an effective model for engaging with the CPM's "absence" in contemporary Malaysian life (*The Last Communist* was banned by the Malaysian government), does that mean that the postmodernist strategies exemplified by the two documentaries, such as hybridity, nonlinearity, and the mixing of languages and cultures, are the only aesthetic means for representing the history of the CPM in a way that confronts its ethnic binding? In his analysis of *The Last Communist*, Ng

Kim Chew expresses his envy of the documentary form's "linguistic pluralism and hybridization, along with its capability for sound and image to present direct and effective representations," referring to it as something that "a literary work could not even dream of achieving."[58] Can we infer from this statement that both the linguistic medium of the Sinophone and the form of literary realism are trapped in their boundedness of language, ethnicity, and a dated genre when it comes to representing the history of the CPM?

These questions are implicitly addressed in two works by the Malaysian Taiwanese director Lau Kek Huat—the documentary *Absent Without Leave* (2016) and the feature film *Boluomi* (2019). Together they show that in narrating Magong histories visually, one need not eschew some of the conventional strategies that are associated with literary realism in order to engage with Magong's "absence," understood both as state repression of this memory and as historical distance from the contemporary situation—two issues that are central to Amir's works as well. Although realism as a cinematic practice has its own unique visual qualities, Lau's films about the CPM also exhibit formal features that overlap with literary realism in the genre of Magong stories discussed earlier, for instance, the centrality of a family narrative and a linear narrative structure. Therefore, it is not entirely far-fetched to consider these works as examples of the contemporary practice of realism in general, including literary realism.

Absent Without Leave largely begins from the same premise as *The Last Communist*—the absence of CPM history from contemporary Malaysia—but by implanting this history within an intergenerational family narrative, the film adopts a realist cognitive stance toward this history, depicting it as recoverable, even part of a continuum, since it is passed down in the family across a generational span. The documentary opens with the trope of family trauma: at the beginning of the film, a heartwarming home video depicting a child playing with two turtles in a family pool while a father figure sprays water on the child introduces the theme of absence, as the narrator tells us how much he has wished that this video could be his own memory of home. In contrast, a photo on display that shows the only family outing the narrator can remember draws our attention to the absent-minded look on the father's face. In voice-over, the narrator explains that his father has been a nonparticipant in the life of his family, as a result of which they have long been estranged. "Could this be because of [the nonpresence of] his own father?" the narrator asks. "Who was his father? What was their relationship like?" The film thus sets up the search for absent fathers—the

grandfather's physical absence rendering the father absent psychologically from family life—as a narrative impetus for its exploration of the history of the CPM. Simultaneously historical and psychological, the search incorporates the collective history of the CPM into this family's history across the generations. This treatment is not intended to emphasize that the history of the CPM overlaps exclusively with the history of the ethnic Chinese; instead, it positions the Chinese family as the historical locus that bears the consequences of the imposed amnesia across its generations.

The film supplements the scanty information we are given about the absent grandfather with stories about other revolutionary figures, among them several exiled CPM members who now live in Hong Kong or Guangzhou, China, and former guerrilla fighters who have lived in the peace villages in southern Thailand since the CPM armed forces disbanded. The formal features of literary and filmic realism—including a linear storyline, the commonly used documentary technique of interviews supplemented by voice-over narration, and a dedicated focus on the interview subjects' account of CPM history—make *Absent Without Leave* a more conventional "Magong story" than Amir's film essay. As it references some tried-and-true realist narrative strategies, it simultaneously marks a significant difference from them. For instance, it deviates from the socialist realist convention in terms of the relationship between the individual and the collective, even as it employs this narrative convention in some segments: on the one hand, the limited information about the grandfather forces the director to search the stories of other CPM soldiers, thus elevating the grandfather from an individual into a character type; on the other hand, the exploration of this collective history is internalized (and justified on the narrative level) as a private catharsis. It appears as though the director's sense of alienation from his own father has fueled his desire to escape *toward* history. In contrast to the socialist realist narratives from *Ten Years* that are discussed in earlier sections, the translation between the individual and the collective goes in both directions.

If the presentation of CPM history in *The Last Communist* is ensconced in the chronotope of the past and a foreign place of exile, largely justified by Chin Peng's absence from contemporary Malaysia, here Lau desires to revive the spirit of the Communist grandfather through family memories and rituals of ancestral worship. The film takes pains to reconstruct the scene of the grandfather's murder and the trauma recalled by his wife and children through interviews with other family members. It seeks to reverse the family's sustained reluctance to reclaim the grandfather as a family

member by depicting their visit to their old home, showing them paying respects to their ancestors, including those who joined the Communist struggles. In several scenes of familial and community commemoration, the deceased ancestors being presented with offerings from their descendants constitute a countermemory to the CPM's absence in the contemporary period. The film also posits the grandfather as an intended addressee of the documentary. As the camera captures scenes of a reunion of former guerrilla members in Thailand, the narrator imagines his absent grandfather to be an interlocutor: "Grandpa, before this journey, you were the grandfather I never knew. Through this journey, it seems that I have found you in many other people" (1:22:26). This last sentence underscores the process of sublimation from "you" as a concrete individual to "you" as a set of abstractions necessary for the creation of a literary type in socialist realist narratives. The focus on the history of the CPM as the embodied memory of a Chinese family captures the director's commitment to the real, although this commitment is not based on a presumption of reality as objective and commonly shared.

Does the strategy of reviving the ghost of CPM history through family history reproduce the biased view that "CPM has invariably been 'ethnicised' as a Chinese party"?[59] Much like Amir's films, Lau's film engages with issues of linguistic pluralism and interethnic crossing, not as a contemporary situation, but as an integral aspect of the historical reality of the CPM. *Absent Without Leave* includes an interview with a Malay CPM member, Awang Bin Yakup, who tells Lau, "We have a common enemy—the colonial government. British colonialism was a huge imperial system. If the Chinese had fought alone, would we have been successful? If the Malays had not joined the fight, we wouldn't have succeeded. If only the Malays had fought, we wouldn't have succeeded. It had to be a joint effort by all races, the Chinese, Malays, and Indians, together" (44:00). Bin Yakup's interview illustrates what Khoo has described as "the anticolonial, proletariat, internationalist outlook of this old generation of revolutionaries."[60] Toward the end of the film, Lau shows a reunion of former CPM soldiers, where Chinese and Malay soldiers hug each other, and a Chinese woman enthusiastically introduces to the camera some younger Malay women who had joined the guerrillas as children. The director later admitted that while recording these intimate exchanges in the peace villages in Thailand, he felt that the scene was somewhat "unreal" and could not help but reflect on how to make sense of the historical distance between the past and the present.[61]

Lau Kek Huat's first feature film, *Boluomi* (Jackfruit), builds on *Absent Without Leave* by embedding the history of a CPM descendant into a fictional narrative about a contemporary Malaysian young man in the diasporic location of Taiwan. The film moves on from the rediscovered history of the CPM—the subject of *Absent Without Leave*—to speculate about an alternative trajectory if the party had not been rendered absent from contemporary Malaysia's social and political life. This film does not explore the possibility of a Communist victory in Malaysia or Southeast Asia per se, but it invites us to imagine how interracial and class relations would be differently conceived if the CPM's legacy had been allowed to materialize not just in Malaysia, but also in other parts of Asia. That this film was also banned from public screening in Malaysia confirms that the CPM's absence from public life is a reality in contemporary Malaysia, not just a textual construction or matter of fictional fabulation.

Boluomi represents the history of the CPM as embodied by fictional characters across three generations. The first storyline focuses on the past—the father's childhood and the life of the CPM soldier grandparents—as told in a linear narrative from an omniscient point of view (that is, not filtered through the grandson's perspective or presented as if it were the third generation's dream). A second storyline revolves around the grandson, Wu Yi-Fan, focusing on his disappointment with his father and with Malaysia's racial policies, his desperate attempt to settle down in Taiwan (through a self-inflicted injury), and his friendship with a Filipino migrant worker named Laila. The two storylines intersect with and parallel each other; with the exception of a slightly faded color tone for the parts about the older generations, it is hard to identify a distinct temporal gap between the storyline concerning the father and the grandfather and that concerning Yi-Fan. As a result of this collapsed temporality, we have an illusion that the past directly lives on in the present moment.

The narrative demands a quick synopsis here. Shortly after Yi-Fan's father's birth in the jungle, his revolutionary parents are forced to give him away. They place the baby in a giant jackfruit (*boluomi* in Chinese), then wait nearby until a Malay man finds the jackfruit and takes the baby away. The boy is then raised by a Malay couple until he is ten years old, at which time his Chinese mother suddenly shows up, asking to have him back, in part because she needs him as a cover for her new role as an undercover agent outside the jungle. The boy gradually adjusts to his new life with his biological mother in the de facto concentration camp of the New Village, occasionally accompanying her to carry out some political tasks, at which

point he is always advised to address various male soldiers as "Father" so as to pass through the security checks. Tragedy ultimately ensues when his mother is betrayed and then fatally shot by a British soldier, leaving him abandoned once again.

The narration of this story of the father's childhood is largely linear although intermittent, since it is interrupted frequently by storyline focusing on Yi-Fan's experience in Taiwan. Although the father's childhood story is likely to have taken place in the 1940s and 1950s, and logically would not have had much impact on his son's life in twenty-first-century Taiwan, the film's crosscutting between the two storylines obfuscates this temporal gap, creating an illusion that these narratives either are one and the same or are happening simultaneously. In fact, in the first hour of the film, we are strongly encouraged to mistake Yi-Fan for the child abandoned by the Communist guerrilla couple, and to believe that he, not his father, is the one being raised by a kindhearted Malay couple. This illusion is not cleared up until midway through the film, in a photo-sharing scene in which several group photos of CPM guerrilla soldiers are projected onto a sheet waving in the wind, as if the ghosts had come alive.

LAILA: Are those your grandparents?
YI-FAN: I don't know. I have never seen them. I know they joined the war. They could be anyone you see in the photo here. But the country denied them.
LAILA: So your father didn't tell you anything about them?
YI-FAN: When he was still a baby, he was sent out from the jungle. These are all things in the past. (1:02:00)

The adult father makes only a cameo appearance; having grown up poor and dejected, he has developed a gambling addiction. The narrative about the middle generation in this family has been largely skipped or is made to feel replaceable or insignificant. This invites questions based on a number of what-ifs: What if the middle generation had not been skipped? Would Yi-Fan's life be different? More broadly, would the life of the ethnic Chinese be different if they were not marginalized, not just by racism but because of their association with the history of the CPM? What if the Communist history had not been silenced in this part of Southeast Asia? Would an open discussion of this Communist history be curative with respect to the traumatized Chinese community and in turn repair the severed links between the different ethnic groups in postcolonial Malaysia? Inviting us to specu-

late about an alternative outcome had CPM history not been rendered absent, the film stakes its hope on the restorability of the past as a desire and promise for the future. The implied cognitive stance toward history, which I would describe in terms of realism, is quite different from a postmodernist emphasis on the textualization of history and the concomitant hermeneutics of suspicion toward objectivity and grand narratives.

Boluomi can serve as an illustration of what Jed Esty and Colleen Lye have termed "peripheral realisms now," with an emphasis both on the "peripheries of the twentieth-century literary world-system," and on the temporality of "now," when we are "forced to reckon with the obsolescence of the concept of the Third World."[62] In the earlier film *Absent Without Leave*, the worldview of interethnic and international collaboration with a common goal of anti-imperialist nation-building is upheld by those CPM soldiers who were directly involved in the struggles. In the contemporary period, those conditions are not met. The characters in *Boluomi* are aware of their situatedness in an age in which the socialist ideal of the CPM has faded, and the meaning and possibility of interethnic bonding can only be realized in the crisscrossing of diasporas in Taiwan, a regional center for migrant labor flows from Southeast Asia and a cultural center—as an outcome of the Cold War confrontation of the "two Chinas"—for the ethnic Chinese from Malaysia. The film suggests that interethnic bonding in the form of "a project of 'cultural revolution'" after the fading of Third Worldism (as "state-oriented politics") has to rely greatly on translation to establish new social relations and transform existing social relations and class segregation.[63]

Yi-Fan's Malaysian background earns him trust from Laila, who is an undocumented immigrant from the Philippines and works as a cleaner at a massage center in Taiwan. His competence in Malay comes in handy later in the narrative, allowing him to provide assistance to some undocumented immigrants from Indonesia. These instances of intentional interracial bonding based on Yi-Fan's privileged access to multiple cultures in his upbringing in Malaysia are a nod to the father's accidental interracial crossing due to having spent his childhood in a Malay household and having grown up with a natural familiarity with both Islamic and Chinese cultures. But other forms of translation, linguistic and beyond, are also staged in the film. Interracial and interlingual exchanges between Laila and a Vietnamese woman, Xue Er, complicate the idea of translation, extending the concept to include not just linguistic exchange across interlingual gaps, but also communication in a more affective sense, with the goal of finding commonality. Laila's

communication with Xue Er is quite different from her interactions with Yi-Fan. In one scene, when Xue Er is talking to Laila about her life story, she relates that she came to Taiwan using her sister's identity as the bride of a Taiwanese man (39:20). Since Xue Er could not afford to pay the man for maintaining this fake identity, she has lost her legal status in Taiwan. Xue Er delivers this monologue in Chinese, possibly because she is Vietnamese of Chinese descent. She is never assured that Laila, who has limited Chinese competence, can fully understand her story. In this instance, the success of this interlingual communication cannot be realistically guaranteed, but we are encouraged to believe in it nonetheless: since the narrative goes on to show their growing empathy and support for each other, we can assume that they have understood each other.

If we view this scene of intercultural communication as unrealistic because it does not mimetically reproduce an actual situation of interlingual translation, that is only because we have forgotten that translation need not be solely linguistic; the subjective intention to find commonality between locutionary parties can push them to find a different sort of common language. Yi-Fan's interaction with Laila is also not based on cultural or linguistic exchange alone. In contrast to Laila's communication with Xue Er, she and Yi-Fan communicate with each other by using all the languages they know—English, Chinese, Malay, Tagalog—instead of relying only on Chinese, the native language of Taiwan. They become acquainted with each other when Yi-Fan offers to help Laila fill out a form in English at the post office. After this brief encounter using English—a language that neither of them could claim to speak natively—they meet again when Laila arrives to pick up some medicine for Xue Er at the hospital where Yi-Fan is still recovering after accidentally severing a finger. This time, Yi-Fan first asks Laila in English, "Is that good to eat?" referring to her ice cream bar (47:20). Yi-Fan then continues in Chinese: "That's a lot of medicine you have picked up!" and "You told me earlier that you worked at a massage center" (47:46). Laila responds to these comments with either silence or a short answer, indicating a mixture of nonunderstanding and half-understanding. This interaction prompts Yi-Fan to introduce himself in Chinese: "You must be Filipino! I am Malaysian," to which Laila responds with surprise, "Oh, Malaysian! So you are . . ." (48:03).

This brief conversation suggests that their common identity as foreigners in Taiwan—despite their differences in terms of gender and class—is the basis of their communication. Interlingual communication does not necessarily issue from a position in which either of them is a native speaker, nor

does it depend on the finding of a common language as its sole aim; rather, it is an interaction between two foreigners and foreign speakers, using whatever language or cultural symbols they can come up with in order to establish a basis for understanding.

The film thus describes a language class conducted between two foreigners, aiming not so much at enhancing a foreigner's native language competence and acculturating her into the host society, but instead seeking the common roots between disparate languages and cultures. Yi-Fan says in Chinese, "You don't seem to know much Chinese." After getting some confirmation from Laila, he proceeds, mixing English with Chinese: "You speak Tagalog in the Philippines, right? Just like Malaysians [speak] Malay." "I can teach you some words [of Chinese]" (48:29). To carry out this language lesson, Yi-Fan relies on a translation between Malay and Chinese: "satu, dua, tiga," "yi, er, san" ("one, two, three" in English). He then says, *batu* and *shi tou*, to which Laila exclaims excitedly, "Stone, yeah! In Tagalog!" The two then enunciate more words that Malay and Tagalog have in common, including *angin* (wind) and *bulan* (moon). This sequence suggests that while the ostensible goal of this language lesson is to teach Laila Chinese, her acquisition of this foreign language needs the mediation of other languages—Malay and Tagalog. All these languages are equivalent; no privileged status is given to Chinese as a native language for Taiwan. Finally, the two enunciate a word that requires no mediation, *boluomi*, which as a loan word from Sanskrit has already gone through the mediation of translation.

By depicting a language lesson that does not fulfill its aim to teach Chinese to a foreigner, *Boluomi* refuses to flaunt a cultural insider's privilege, from which there is a danger of representing Chineseness from an ethnocentric position. The film makes a consistent attempt to unsettle the designation of the "local" or the "native" in terms of culture and racial identity, as can be seen in a memorable scene at its beginning. In this scene, a professor at Yi-Fan's college gives a lecture about the history of "those 'Taiwan fruits' such as guava, banana, pineapple, and mango," which he declares "are not actually indigenous to Taiwan. These species were brought to Taiwan by the Dutch, the Japanese, and the Han Chinese" (10:32). Echoing this deconstructive approach to "Taiwanness" is the recurrent trope of a transplanted *boluomi* plant that Yi-Fan has created by grafting a branch from a Malaysian tree onto a Taiwanese jackfruit tree. Much to his surprise, Yi-Fan discovers that the portion of this plant that he has presented to Laila as a gift has survived, although he has already destroyed his own

plant. The theme of transplantation and rebirth, rather than assimilation and acculturation, is emphasized throughout the film.

Undoing the centeredness of Chinese in a predominantly Chinese society such as Taiwan, the film shows that Malay—and conceivably other Southeast Asian languages as well—can be a working language in Taiwan just as successfully as Chinese can. Toward the end of the film, Yi-Fan uses Malay to communicate with some undocumented Indonesian immigrants who have been abandoned by local employers. Malay also offers the comfort of home when he tries to calm an upset Indonesian boy by announcing, "I speak Malay." Through an emphasis on Sanskrit as the origin of several Southeast Asian languages (the title of this film is written in a Sanskrit script), the film charts a Southeast Asian cultural "common" that challenges the exclusive privileging of Chinese, in all its varieties, as national, native, or ethnic language.

The "now" of this practice of "peripheral realism" is both contingent and utopian. In an interview, Lau Kek Huat explained that he is not the kind of film director who comes to a production with a finished script and expects the actors to actualize it, as if "in a factory where the actors manufacture something according to plan." Rather, "filmmaking is more like growing a plant, its development not entirely under your control." His film narrative in turn embodies an indexical relationship to the extradiegetic "real." For instance, the Filipino actor who plays Laila comes from a Muslim background. Upon learning this detail, Lau added a scene of Laila praying in the film, thus enabling the fictional narrative to mimetically capture the "real" of the creative team that worked on the film.[64] In terms of both the filmmaking process described by Lau and the fictional depiction of social bonding among Southeast Asian immigrants in *Boluomi*, Lau's approach to realism can be considered as utopian in Fredric Jameson's sense.

In his close reading of the American TV series *The Wire*, Jameson describes as "utopian" several characters' ability, using a method "much closer to handicraft than to abstract deduction," to construct a picture of how the capitalist system works by exploring the complexities in the real world.[65] For Jameson, *The Wire*'s practice of realism does not aim "to replicate a static reality or to be 'realist' in the traditional mimetic and replicative sense." Rather, its meticulous reconstruction of society "on microlevels of various dimensions" leaves open the possibility for transformation, since the social system is represented not as the product of "the forces of gravity of habit and tradition," but as an outcome of human endeavors.[66]

Boluomi's depiction of the interactions between Yi-Fan and the Filipino migrant worker Laila similarly leaves the future open, by playing up human initiatives to seek commonality with each other. That this film ties this contemplation of an open future to Magong's history demonstrates a utopian reenactment of the Communist legacy in the contemporary moment.

IV. Conclusion

This chapter beckons the reader to take a closer look at the practice of literary realism in Sinophone literature and culture, because as we can see from the Magong stories, the variety of realisms examined here—the more recent examples of which are quite open to the cognitive stance and formal penchant of modernism and postmodernism—demonstrate that stereotypical assumptions about literary realism's naivete, artlessness, and static reproduction of some dogmatic truth handed down from the top are simply not borne out. This revisionist understanding applies not just to those instances of "modernism's realism," but also to socialist realism, which in the context of Sinophone literary history in Singapore and Malaysia is often made to bear the brunt of criticism directed toward realism. While defending literary realism as both relevant to the contemporary era and worthy of our scholarly attention, this chapter also emphasizes that the practices of realism are varied and flexible enough to accommodate partial and fragmentary views of reality from subjective perspectives. Taking multifarious practices of literary realism seriously will force us to rethink the CPM-led armed struggles. Rather than being a tightly sealed historical episode stamped "failure," this history should be viewed as a fertile epistemological field of discovery, as a platform for literary innovation, and as a political resource and legacy, the specter of which still haunts our contemporary sociopolitical life.

Part III

Language

In his memoir *Child Rubber Tapper and Dictionary*, the eminent Singapore translator and scholar of Malay-Chinese cultural exchange Yang Quee Yee 楊貴誼 gives the following account of his language experience in plurilingual Malaya:

> The Chinese who were new arrivals [*xin ke*] [in my hometown] belonged to a variety of regional groups: they were Fukienese, Cantonese, Teochewnese, Hainanese, or Hakka. Each group has its own dialect, and when we talked to one another, we would choose a common language that we both could understand, like Fukienese or Mandarin. We used Malay when we spoke to Malay people, but we could not be considered to have mastery of Malay, since we often needed to mix in some Chinese dialect phrases.[1]

Yang's description here throws into sharp relief the heterogeneity of Chinese language use, which makes us question whether we can see it as a single unified language. The perception of Chinese and Malay as distinct language units with clear boundaries between them is also overthrown. To accomplish the goal of communicating with speakers of other Chinese dialects, Yang and his friends found a lingua franca that did not necessarily have to be just Mandarin or *putonghua*. When they spoke with Malay speakers, they relied on their imperfect Malay with Chinese phrases mixed in. In these scenarios of plurilingual communication, it is implied that a foreign speaker is not necessarily external to Chinese as a language unit, but can be internal as well, and that in terms of failure of communication, interlingual communication between Chinese and Malay is not necessar-

ily different from when a speaker of one Chinese dialect addresses someone from another dialect group. This raises certain questions: Where do we draw linguistic boundaries? If there are boundaries between dialects as much as between languages, why do we usually put more stock in interlingual boundaries? And on what basis do we assume that different dialects ("Fukienese, Cantonese, Teochewnese, Hainanese, or Hakka") can be subsumed under one language unit (Chinese) while being entirely separate from another language unit (Malay)?

The fact that languages such as English and French or Chinese and Malay are distinct from each other is seemingly uncontroversial, although people might disagree about the proximity of or distance between any pair of languages. Recent discussions of the Sinophone have questioned linguistic hierarchy within Chinese, calling for us to ascribe to "dialect" an independent status of language,[2] but a central argument in part III is that making dialect into language, or arguing for the pluralification of national or official languages, will not in itself eliminate the ideology of monolingualism. We must instead examine the notion of language in our struggles for language rights and group identity. I propose an examination of linguistic boundaries and bordering in order to understand how to account for the dynamic inter- and intralingual exchanges in plurilingual societies, such as the one described by Yang at the beginning of this introduction.

To start off, we should ask whether linguistic boundaries exist independently of and prior to language contact or as a result of it. If a language is defined by its distinctness from another language, how does that distinction (or boundary) come about in the first place? Taking border theories into the realm of linguistic communication and translation, the cultural theorist Naoki Sakai argues counterintuitively that it is not that disparate language units (English, French, Chinese, etc.) exist first and we then ask the translator to bridge the gap between them; on the contrary, translation (or more broadly, all interlingual and intercultural contact) can be "also and preliminarily an act of drawing a border, of bordering," as it claims to be "border crossing" between languages. Translation is "poietic" in this respect because it produces the concept of a unitary language.[3] When translation is conceptualized as a bridge between two "clearly circumscribed language communities," it is implied that there is no issue of miscomprehension within a language community and that miscomprehension occurs only between disparate language units. In other words, each language community is supposed to be homogeneous, and the *foreigner* is always on the outside, belonging to the community across the border

from the one to which "we" supposedly belong.[4] Sakai further argues that this conceptualization of language boundaries and translation as border crossing articulates a certain worldview: "No doubt this conception of translation is a schematization of the globally shared and abstractly idealized commonsensical vision of the international world, consisting of basic units—nations—segmented by national borders into territories."[5]

The state and its language planners can be seen as the archetypal "translator" described by Sakai, with national language policies geared toward defining and defending the uniqueness of nationhood globally while determining interethnic and intercultural relations domestically. Yet vernacular multiculturalism and vernacular translation consistently exceed the strictures defined by state multicultural policies, and in turn challenge the ideological linkage among language, race, nation, and territory. Part III considers language and racial boundaries against a background of dynamic languaging practices, and examines the entanglement of racial, linguistic, and cultural divisions in the sociopolitical history of the Cold War, postcolonial nation-building, and anticolonial movements in Singapore, Malaysia, and Hong Kong. A key concept that orients my discussion in this part is that of "languaging," which comes from the sociolinguist A. L. Becker, who stated in 1991 that "there is no such thing as Language, only continual languaging, an activity of human beings in the world."[6] Specifically, this part returns to the historical scene of several language movements, with the goal of reflecting on how Sinophone intellectuals' languaging experience and their historical engagement with the dominant sociopolitical structures of the Cold War and postcolonial nation-state have engendered new conceptualizations of both "Chinese" and "language," the key concepts underpinning the notion of the "Sinophone."

Language bordering as well as the crossing of linguistic boundaries can come from both the top down and the bottom up. In contemporary Singapore, racial and linguistic bordering starts with dividing the population into the four "mono-racial/cultural silos" of CMIO: Chinese, Malay, Indian, and Others.[7] In Chua Beng Huat's critical analysis, Singapore's state policy of multiracialism, since the state gained independence in 1965, has operated by "foregrounding the 'cultures' of the three races" in the service of economic imperatives of development. "Through it, race is essentialized as an unchanging feature of the population so as to ground various specific ways of disciplining the social body."[8] In the process of constituting the multiracial population, "differences among the population are radically reduced."[9] The multiple languages that the Chinese population uses in

everyday life are demoted to "dialect," ceding primacy to Mandarin Chinese or *huayu*. Similarly, Malay identity encapsulates a variety of groups, including Javanese, Minangkabau, Boyanese, Bugis, and Peninsula Malays, supported by a single linguistic category, modern Malay.

If in contemporary Singapore, the state plays the role of "a 'neutral' umpire in adjudicating without discriminating or privileging any individual or group," contemporary Malaysia's national language policies exhibit a much lesser degree of "neutrality."[10] Following a practice of what Robert Hefner calls "asymmetrically differentiated citizenship," postindependence Mala(si)ya allows Chinese and Indians to acquire citizenship "in exchange for accepting Malay dominance in politics and culture."[11] Rachel Lowe further shows in her study of the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP), or House of Language and Literature, that the postcolonial state ideology of monolingualism was established not just through shutting down contemporaneous proposals of multilingualism and linguistic equality, but also by policing the boundary of the national language, Malay. "The DBP sought to propagate a *bahasa Melayu tulen* (unadulterated Malay) or *Melayu halus* (refined Malay) as the national language, to be scrupulously distinguished from what it called an impure, *kacukan* (mixed) Malay: Bahasa pasar or 'bazaar Malay.'"[12] These "internal frontiers" (Lowe's term) were further inscribed in racial terms through the state's perpetuation of the notion that the impure form of Malay was spoken by non-native groups and corrupted by elements from Chinese and Tamil. By aligning linguistic boundaries with racial boundaries, Malaysia's language policy exhibited a similar kind of racial and segregationist thinking as in Singapore, despite their apparent difference of monolinguism and multilinguism in terms of state policy. Lowe thus describes the ideal scenario that the Malaysian state intended to engender through its language policies: "Chinese-speakers were Chinese, Tamil-speakers were Indian, Malay-speakers were Malay, and never the thrain shall meet: certainly not if they spoke English; perhaps not even when they spoke the same 'national' language."[13] Both Chua and Lowe suggest that the ideology of monolingualism encompasses more than a limitation on the number of officially recognized languages. Underpinning it is a specific conceptualization of language and the practice of language bordering, aimed at standardizing and regulating the dynamic plurilingual interactions within and across racial divisions. The sociolinguist Lionel Wee traces the roots of the ideology of monolingualism to the notion of languages as "delimitable linguistic systems . . . assumed to each

have their own internal integrity." "The maintenance of this integrity is therefore dependent on each system being kept separate from the others. The names we give to different varieties ('English,' 'Spanish,' 'Tamil'), and even sub-varieties ('standard English,' 'American English,' 'Australian English'), all reflect this assumption."[14] The historical experience of languaging in Singapore and Malaysia posed dynamic challenges to such a reified notion of language.

How does the examination of plurilingual societies in Southeast Asia inform our understanding of Chinese language uses and policies in places outside this region? Hong Kong is a predominantly Chinese society whose colonial rule did not end until 1997, unlike in Malaysia and Singapore that underwent a formal decolonization process in earlier decades. While the colonial government did not have to face pressure from non-Chinese racial groups, it needed to contend with the political regimes of the PRC and the ROC in the Cold War era. To ward off the influence of Beijing and Taipei, the colonial state incorporated Chinese education into the school curricula and instituted the mechanism of "denationalization" in order to distance Hong Kong students from Chinese politics.[15]

In contemporary Hong Kong, the official education policy of "Biliteracy [Chinese and English] and Trilingualism [Putonghua, Cantonese, and English]," adopted after the handover, faces much the same issue as in Malaysia and Singapore: the reification of Chinese as a "delimited linguistic system" with "internal integrity" (Wee's terms). A recent, hotly debated article posted to the website of the Education Bureau of Hong Kong stated that Cantonese is "Chinese dialect, which is not a statutory language." This statement illustrates the privileging of certain linguistic differentiation, interlingual boundaries, over other intralingual boundaries.[16] Here the terms "interlingual" and "intralingual" are used tentatively, following Roman Jakobson's categorization, only to be questioned in the course of chapter 6. Although the three localities have different institutional structures that manage their multiethnic and plurilingual populations, a consideration of the three together allows us to situate the Sinophone at the borders of language units, as defined by state power or intuitively grasped by ordinary language users. The Sinophone should thus be understood not as a language or a "delimitable linguistic system" (Wee's term), but rather as a critical perspective on the differentiation and bordering between such linguistic systems. By zooming in to view the crevices or fault lines within and outside a language unit and by reviewing how their different narrations

were incorporated into specific political discourses, part III thus locates Chinese within the space of multiple ethnicities and a sea of languages, as exemplified by the specific geographies of Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia.

There are complicated entanglements between claims of group rights and language rights. Given the history of interethnic tension and riots in Singapore and Malaysia in the 1950s and 1960s, any race-based claim of group rights risks being branded as "racial chauvinism." Chinese intellectuals, many of whom were left-leaning, were frequently subjected to such racist stereotyping in the history of nation-building in these localities. My goal of discussing Chinese-involved or -initiated language movements in part III goes beyond contesting such a stereotypical portrayal. It is important to rectify the image of Chinese cultural workers as inclined toward pluralism, but we should also inquire into the geopolitically reproduced relations of power that engendered such stereotypical assertions in the first place, as well as the practices of multiculturalism and interlingual translation that counteracted them.

The conventional historical trajectory predicates political claims of minority rights and cultural diversity on the installation of liberal democracy following the Western model. By returning to the scene of Cold War and postcolonial nation-building, part III describes a more complex scenario, different from what a liberal pluralist notion of identity politics can encompass. A liberalist notion of individual identity does not describe the experience of much of postcolonial Asia, as Chua Beng Huat points out; in Singapore, for instance, the postcolonial state's "disavowal" of liberalism of the Western kind was rooted in its desire to unify its multiracial population by rallying them around the singular goal of economic development against the alleged threats from the Left.[17] As Jini Kim Watson shows, the Cold War had a significant impact on the development of illiberalism in Asia while proffering what was a "spurious" opposition between the liberal West and Communist authoritarianism.[18] Petrus Liu goes further, showing that it is precisely the Cold War system of division—whose manifestation in the Chinese context is encapsulated by the standoff between "two Chinas"—that substantiates the liberal pluralist notion of identity politics when it comes to issues of queer rights. In contradistinction to liberal pluralism, Marxism is a theoretical resource shared by queer activists and scholars from both sides of the Cold War divide.[19]

Similar to these scholars, by returning to the heyday of the Cold War

and nation-building, I invite the reader to take seriously the sociopolitical agendas that were an integral part of the practice of multiculturalism and multilingualism among Sinophone intellectuals and translators. The Malay as National Language movement examined in chapter 5 cannot be interpreted simply as a form of identity politics on behalf of one racial group. Rather, it articulated an alternative discourse of an independent Malayan nation based on social equality and interethnic solidarity.[20] While the Singapore Left, to which this multicultural history is partly related, is deemed as having been on the wrong side of history, we need to think against historical inevitability to examine its legacy, which still informs contemporary practices of vernacular translation and cosmopolitanism.

The Chinese language movement in Hong Kong, particularly the group that revolved around the journal *70's Biweekly*, which is examined in chapter 6, also does not fit easily into contemporary discourses of local consciousness and identity. For one thing, the activists were more concerned with the interlingual disparity between English and Chinese, rather than the intralingual differentiation between Mandarin and Cantonese. "The fight for the official status of Chinese in these two waves [in the early and late 1970s] can be seen as anti-colonial movements. Interestingly, though, the status of 'Chinese' was left ambiguous," Yiu-wai Chu states.[21] Yet, I suggest that we read the activists' cultural argument about language issues alongside their broad considerations of social and political inequality and injustice in Hong Kong. Drawing on a mixture of theoretical resources from antiauthoritarian liberalism, anarchism, and Marxism, and in turn blurring the Cold War divide between the West and the Communist world, the Chinese language movement had a lasting impact in both cultural and sociopolitical terms. This impact can only be evaluated through an examination of the multiple iterations of the movement, along with its resonance in multiple genres of cultural output (from sociopolitical treatise to imaginative theatrical production to filmic representation) and in more than a single medium (bridging print, oral, and visual forms). Only through examining this capacious archive can we locate precisely the contemporary cultural and political ramifications of the activists' claims, and understand how their engagement with the local context engendered an arena of open-ended sociality that invited the question posed by Chu several decades later: "Who speaks for the Lion Rock?"[22]

As in Singapore and Malaya, Hong Kong's Chinese language movement was never just about language, but it managed to situate Hong Kong in a

network of relations comprising not just the British colonial power and Beijing's political center, but the Third World as a whole. These scenes of mobilization around the question of the Chinese language at the critical juncture of anticolonialism, decolonization, and the Cold War remind us of the dynamic vitality of the diverse Chinese expressions, allowing us to understand the prefix "sino" in the Sinophone from border to bridge.

5

Malay as a Chinese Language

At the Asian-African Students' Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia, in 1956, a member of the Malayan student delegation, after a brief introduction in English, chose to express the delegates' gratitude to the host in Malay, on the grounds that "the languages of Indonesia and Malaya are of one origin, but history has tended to divorce them and now Malaya hopes that the present differences will be removed by closer contact and cooperation, and a happy remarriage soon consumated [*sic*] between these two languages."[1] Citing a Malay folk *pantun* poem to convey their thanks, he then switched back to English and spoke about the "neglect of national language and culture" in Malaya as an example of the "more direct effects of colonialism on students." "In the field of education Malayan students give their full support to the aim and efforts to elevate the national language, Malaya or Bahasa Melayu," the delegate declared. He closed his speech by calling for "equal treatment to all communities, Malay, Chinese and Indian."[2]

In the political performance by the Malayan delegation at the Asian-African Students' Conference, the Malay language played a symbolic role: it was used not just as a symbol of alliance of nations undergoing decolonization, but as a specific form of inter-Asian alliance. Speaking in Malay symbolized the remembrance of the ancient cultural and historical ties that constituted Nusantara, the Malay world. Most importantly, the national culture as imagined by the Malayan delegation would be constructed on the basis of interethnic equality in the plurilingual and multiracial society of Malaya. This point reinforced in the last statement quoted above was reflected in the multiracial composition of the delegation, whose seven-member team was made up primarily of Malay and Chinese students, with

the larger group of observers also including a number of Indian students. Since some members of this delegation were involved in organizing middle school student movements, and several would stand for election in the coming years on the ballots of the leftist party Barisan Sosialis (the Socialist Front) in Singapore, we can argue that embracing Malay as the national language while emphasizing interethnic equality was a cultural agenda for the Singaporean and Malayan Left from the late 1950s to the 1960s.[3]

The Malayan delegation to the Asian-African Students' Conference in 1956 included a small group of students from Nanyang University, a self-funded Chinese university in Singapore. Among that delegation's members and observers were Lim Huan Boon, Chen Mong Tse, and Yang Quee Yee. These names are significant because as publishers, editors, translators, and scholars, they would continue to play important roles in Chinese-Malay exchange for several decades after the conference. Chen Mong Tse's family owned the Chinese publishing company Shanghai Books, which had started life as the Shanghai Bookstore, established in the 1920s by Chen Yueshu, who had moved to Singapore from China. During Chen Mong Tse's tenure as the lead manager of daily operations in the 1960s, Shanghai Books expanded its Malay list, which it had launched in 1957, the year Malaya declared independence. The company recruited Lim Huan Boon to compile a concise Chinese–Malay dictionary, and shortly thereafter it published a more comprehensive dictionary, which was compiled by another member of the Chen family, Linda Chen (b. Chen Mong Hock), along with three other scholars. Among Shanghai Books' Malay publications was *Guo Yu Yue Kan* (National language monthly; *Bulanan Bahasa Kebangsaan* in Malay), which featured Chinese translations of Malay articles, focusing mostly on news and social topics, as well as language notes aimed at Chinese students of Malay.

Another Chinese publisher, World Books, offered an even more extensive Malay-language book list in the 1950s, with its influential magazine *Malaiyu Yuekan* (Malay monthly; *Matallah Bahasa Kebangsaan* in Malay) posing strong competition to Shanghai Books' *Guo Yu Yue Kan*. This network of students, publishers, translators, and social activists who advocated Malay as national language may not have formed a coherent social movement, but with its expansive scope covering most of Malaya and crossing the divide between Chinese- and English-language institutions, it was indicative of a distinct momentum in the Chinese communities toward promoting Malay language studies among Chinese students and embracing Malay as the national language at the moment when Malaya was seeking independence from British colonial rule.

Going beyond classical postcolonial theory's privileged attention to the suppression of subaltern language by metropolitan or colonial language, this chapter explores language bordering and border crossing in an interethnic setting in Singapore and Malay(si)a of the 1950s and 1960s. As I explained in the introduction to part III, linguistic border crossing does not automatically undo the ideology of monolingualism: assuming that the languages involved in the exchange are preformed, and any risk of miscomprehension is presumed by "our" community to be only external, then this ideology is upheld. Contemporary Singapore's practice of multiracialism, which is based on turning each racial group into a "mono-racial/cultural silo" (Chua Beng Huat's term), is a good example of how racial and cultural boundaries are simultaneously reinforced and relativized.[4] Yet we must realize that plurilanguaging in multiethnic societies always disrupts the race-language-territory linkage.

The concept of "languaging," which encourages us to move away from language as a fetishized object with a capital *L*, has been taken up by the postcolonial theorist Walter Mignolo, who considered the possibilities for the language practices of transnational communities to question colonialist and nationalist ideologies that pin languages to population and territory. A memorable aspect of Mignolo's discussion has to do with the reflexive nature of languaging—specifically how social interactions via linguistic mediation produce the meaning of language itself. He refers to this process as "languaging in language," which he says "allows us to describe ourselves interacting as well as to describe the descriptions of our interactions."[5] This chapter begins with an examination of political mobilizations around the question of language as a practice of metalinguistic languaging as described by Mignolo, and I explore in particular how these language movements allow us to reflect on the meaning of the Sinophone in interlingual and intercultural exchanges with Malay language and literature. I then consider literary translations between Malay and Chinese by cultural circles that were not directly involved in left-leaning political movements. Literary translation usefully reveals another aspect of plurilanguaging—how intercultural exchange shaped the articulation of the Sinophone Mahua or Sinhua subject expressed in Sinophone literature in Malaysia and Singapore. "Languaging" or "plurilanguaging" orients our thinking about language by moving away from language as "a fact (e.g., a system of syntactic, semantic, and phonetic rules)" and toward the thick of "social domains of interaction."[6] It thus opens up the possibility of a reconceptualization of language borders and bordering practices: instead of defining the limits that circumscribe a homogeneous community, a border can become a conduit

toward knowing others and oneself in relation to others. Turning to the earlier decades of the Cold War and postcolonial nation-building is necessary, as I argue in this chapter, because activists and cultural practitioners who have come to be considered passé and irrelevant nevertheless have some useful lessons to impart about how to think about Chinese within the sea of languages in the contemporary era.

I. The Language Question and the Cold War State

Promotion of Malay as the national language meant more than just advocacy for racial and cultural mixing; it was also a broad social movement aimed at remaking the social structure of a postcolonial state. A leading voice in this movement was the Socialist Club at the University of Malaya. Among the club's members was Linda Chen, the daughter of the owner of Shanghai Books. Three years after the Asian-African Students' Conference, Chen, who at the time was a master's student at the university, co-organized a National Language Seminar with Abdullah Majid for the Socialist Club. In an article published in the organization's official publication, *Fajar*, in July 1959, she recalled that President Sukarno of Indonesia had tried to speak Malay to a visiting group of students from Malaya, but upon finding them unable to converse in Malay, he had switched to English. "It is in relation to this incident that I am making an appeal to ALL the students in the University to study Malay," Chen stated.[7] This article, titled simply "Let's Learn the National Language," was an advertisement for the upcoming seminar, which as *Fajar* reported in its August 1959 issue was "designed for the English-educated section of the community" and focused on four topics: the use of Malay as "the lingua-franca of the country," "as the medium of instruction in secondary schools," "as a possible medium of higher learning," and "as the language of the Judiciary."[8] One month later, in a report on this language seminar, *Fajar* pointed out that "it may be ironical that the discussion of the seminar was carried out in English, but it must be remembered that the aim of the seminar was to get the English educated of this country to discuss our National Language."[9]

The seminar was aimed at dismantling the linguistic hierarchy installed under colonialism while reconnecting the English-educated population with Malayan society at large. "Prior to the colonial domination of Malaya," stated the *Fajar* report, "the Malay language was used as a medium of communication, by various races in Malaya. Under the colonial rule, the English educated used English as a means of communication among them-

selves. Many have not been aware of the actual position of the Malay language." Thus, according to the magazine's editors, "the Malay language issue" should be understood not just as "a Malay issue," but also as "a national issue": the language seminar signified a "a step forward" in cultivating "the feeling of national and Malayan consciousness."[10]

Fajar's coverage of this seminar shows that the journal was aware of the ongoing efforts to modernize Malay so as to make it an adequate medium for the new nation. Faced with questions about its inadequacy for technical and medical education at the university level, for instance, the *Fajar* editors advocated for a "determined effort to translate technical and medical terms to Malay" and cited the success of other Asian languages (including Chinese) in creating new technical vocabulary. *Fajar* also reported that the seminar participants had unanimously endorsed the use of Rumi script (the Latin alphabet) rather than Jawi script (close to Arabic) for everyday use, although they wanted to retain Jawi for specialized Malay studies and Islamic studies.

The question of using Malay as the national language in Malaya aroused a great deal of controversy among the participants. According to *Fajar*, some people argued from the floor that "it is unrealistic to impose Malay from above especially in Singapore where the majority of the population is Chinese." The organizers responded that Malay was already the lingua franca in this part of Southeast Asia, since "it is understood by 80% of the people of Singapore and the Federation" and thus "is not politically imposed from above." Significantly, as the article pointed out, the landslide victory by the People's Action Party (PAP), led by Lee Kuan Yew, in the 1959 election in Singapore showed that "the Chinese accepted Malay as the national language."[11] The Socialist Club's promotion of Malay was in line with the PAP government's cultural policy and cohered with the party's desire to seek Singapore's merger with the peninsula, where the Alliance government, led by the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), had already adopted this policy.

The Socialist Club's proposal for making Malay the national language must be understood in conjunction with the organization's social and political agendas, which overall manifested a socialist orientation in anticolonial nation-building endeavors. In the club's "Founding Declaration on Communalism," the organizers called for "the real unity of the country" and the overcoming of a past history of "communal hatred." In the same statement, they proudly claimed to "accept the Socialism of economic equality and the social ownership of wealth as the fundamental need of a sovereign nation."

Prior to the National Language Seminar, as shown by Loh Kah Seng and his coauthors in a monograph titled *The University Socialist Club and the Contest for Malaya*, the organization assisted the left-leaning PAP with its election campaigns, even as it took the party to task for its failure to put genuinely socialist policies in place. Through formal and informal channels, the club joined hands with activists in various trade union movements. The club presented itself as a mouthpiece for the "many stifled Malayans" and advocated for a united Malayan national identity that would cut across the divisions of class, race, and language.[12]

Left-leaning activism was perceived as a threat by both the colonial and postcolonial states in Singapore and Malaya under different regimes, including the PAP under Lee Kuan Yew's leadership, even though this party had collaborated with the Left to win the general election in 1959. As early as 1954, several of *Fajar*'s editors were themselves charged by the colonial state for publishing an article titled "Aggression in Asia" that protested the formation of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization as a symptom of Western aggression. Later, three years prior to the National Language Seminar, in a purge of leftist activists in Singapore carried out by the Singaporean government of Chief Minister Lim Yew Hock, Linda Chen, who at the time was the president of a Singaporean women's organization, was arrested along with several other Chinese middle school union leaders. Her organization was subsequently deregistered on the suspicion that it had been infiltrated by Communist elements. She was imprisoned for over two years, during which time she taught herself Malay. It was also during her detention that she compiled the Chinese–Malay dictionary for Shanghai Books, with the three scholars who helped her doing their work from outside the prison. Chen continued her advocacy of Malay studies and Malay education after her prison term ended, and she joined the leadership of Shanghai Books. She would go on to publish a Chinese translation of *Hikayat Tun Perak* (*Dun Pi Li Zhuan*), which is a history of the Malacca Sultanate drawn from the *Malay Annals*, and compile a Malay grammar handbook for Chinese learners. Chen's experience was by no means atypical. Lim Chin Joo, a union activist, recalled learning Malay while he was serving a prison sentence by building on the language competence he had already acquired "growing up in a kampong [village] in a federation state [identified earlier as Pontian]." As he recounted, "I had a pretty good foundation in Malay, so it was an easy ride for me (this time) to acquire Malay fluency."[13] These anecdotal accounts confirm that leftist activism had a significant cultural dimension in terms of facilitating interethnic communication through Malay language acquisition.

From a contemporary perspective, the political agendas of the *Fajar* group might seem self-contradictory and overly idealistic in some respects. Loh and his coauthors are particularly critical of the organization's national language initiative. They fault the organizers for their elitism and disconnection from the multiracial reality of Malayan society: "Essentially, as a socialist elite, the socialist club had organized a discussion, in the English medium, on the use of Malay as the national language, targeted at the general English-educated community in Singapore."[14] Not only did the Socialist Club's "simple nationalist belief that English was a 'colonial' language" risk alienating the English-educated sectors, particularly those who engaged in anticolonial political struggles despite their privileged background, but the club's national language project, as Loh and his coauthors assert, could not provide a remedy for the inequality between the races and the resulting interethnic strife. For instance, whereas Chinese-educated students in Singapore were disadvantaged in the job market due to the lack of official recognition of the vernacular schools, "in the Federation, the Malay peasantry was seriously indebted to the Chinese capitalist class."[15] "In a nutshell, . . . in a plural society like Malaya," the authors claim, "whether Malay, English or any other language was chosen as the national language, the choice would not be natural but would be superimposed on a significant part of the citizenry from above."[16] In the end, Loh and his coauthors find that the club's efforts to speak for "different groups of 'stifled Malayans'" were less effective in comparison with programs that "pressed for specifically ethnic accommodations to their own problems."[17]

But Loh and colleagues' favoring of "specifically ethnic accommodations" and associated claim of a supposedly "natural" language choice are worth pondering. If we follow Mignolo's provocative phrase "languaging in language," the languaging experience of some of the National Language Seminar proponents—including Linda Chen—shows that their advocacy of Malay as the national language was less about imposing the language of one ethnic group over others, and more about troubling the division of racial groups by language and ethnicity. The fact that an organization at an English institution promoted the study of Malay in a seminar for which one of the leaders was Chinese suggests that the organizers would have been the first ones to take exception to the idea of a certain linguistic choice being "natural" for a specific ethnic group. The goal of the seminar was precisely to delink language from race.

Fajar was keenly aware of the English-educated population as "the privileged class" and beckoned this class to face the reality of postcolonial society.[18] At the same time, the journal was supportive of vernacular edu-

cation, as shown in an article from 1961 that took a critical stance toward the federation government's increasing restrictions on Chinese schools.[19] This kind of evidence supports historian Huang Jianli's later critique of the binaristic account of Chinese-educated versus English-educated students in Singapore's political history, a divide that is evident in Lee Kuan Yew's influential memoir *The Singapore Story*. Lee's elevation of Chinese school activists over their counterparts in English-medium schools in fact implies the same logic of a specific language choice being "natural" for some ethnic speakers. At the same time, the positing of English as "the only acceptable neutral language" to be shared by the entire nation implies that these "natural" languages bound to specific races can be transcended only by English.[20] These assertions further reinforce the boundaries between languages by centering on the figure of the native speaker—for if choosing either Malay, Chinese, or English to be the national language is "natural" for those who are its native speakers, then it can only ever be "unnatural" for all those ethnic groups who are not its native speakers.

In the end, there is nothing "natural" about Chen's advocacy of Malay as the national language, not only because, on an abstract level, a national language, like the nation itself, is never "natural," but more specifically because she was also deeply embedded in the Sinophone cultural network formed around Shanghai Books. Here we must perceive the advocacy of Malay as something broader than the National Language Seminar organized by the Socialist Club; if the persistent yet scattered articulations could be thought of as a coherent movement at all, then a variety of Chinese cultural institutions and practitioners of different political persuasions were involved in it, so that it transformed into something like a zeitgeist of the 1950s and 1960s within the Chinese communities.

Tracking the advocacy of Malay as the national language beyond *Fajar* and the Socialist Club complicates a typical postcolonial scenario as depicted by Loh and his coauthors—a few English-speaking progressive intellectuals discussing the use of a subaltern language shortly after Malaya's independence. The binary opposition between a metropolitan culture and a subaltern culture was rendered more complex by interethnic dynamics in a multiracial society with a significant immigrant population. Although the question of linguistic or social hierarchy between Chinese and Malay, or indeed between all working languages in this place, remained unresolved with this movement, it marked a historical rupture where the boundaries of language underwritten by racial segregation were challenged.

The promise and practice of multiculturalism were borne out by Chinese

cultural institutions such as Shanghai Books, which drew on talent from the Chinese university Nantah (Nanyang University). Originally a distributor of books published in China that were mostly about modern Chinese culture and literature, the Chen family's Shanghai Bookstore had grown within a few decades to become the Shanghai Books Corporation, a publisher based in Nanyang with shops and branches in Singapore, Malaya, Indonesia, and later Hong Kong. Chen's career as a political activist was further eclipsed by a second arrest and imprisonment in 1963, after she fell victim to Operation Coldstore, signaling the separation of the PAP under the leadership of Lee Kuan Yew from its left-leaning faction. After she was released from prison, she assumed an increasingly major role in managing the family business. According to Shanghai Books' records, under Linda Chen's leadership, the company published dictionaries, children's literature, textbooks, and supplementary readings in Chinese, Malay, and English.[21]

Internal documents from Shanghai Books indicate that the publisher was operating in a context of widespread interest in publications on Malay language and culture. In an internal meeting memo from December 1961, Chen Yueshu indicated that the company's objective in launching *Guo Yu Yue Kan* was to compete with World Books, whose influential serial publication *Malaiyu Yuekan* had experienced a setback due to the untimely death of its editor, the well-known poet and essayist Lu Baiye.[22] Chen Yueshu's note casts light on the group of Chinese–Malay translators and writers whose work revolved around World Books. With respect to its Malay-language list, according to Yang Quee Yee, World Books surpassed every other Chinese publisher, Shanghai Books included, in terms of not just the number of titles it produced, but also the length of some of its serial publications. Whereas most other Chinese publishers shuttered their Malay sections at the beginning of the 1970s, World Books persevered, despite a considerable downsizing of its Malay-language publications department. *Malaiyu Yuekan* lasted for eleven years (1960–70), whereas the monthly *Guo Yu Yue Kan* lasted only three years (1961–64).[23] Two significant contributors to World Books' Malay publications were Yang Quee Yee and Chan Maw Wah 陳妙華, both of whom had participated in the Asian-African Students' Conference—the former as a participant from Nanyang University, the latter as a middle school student observer. After graduating from Nanyang University in the 1950s, Yang accepted a teaching position in the school's Malay Studies Department and then undertook Malay–Chinese literary translation and dictionary compilation while simultaneously engaging in scholarly research on the history of this intercultural

exchange. Chan, on the other hand, assumed the editorship of *Malaiyu Yuekan* in the 1960s and is still practicing literary translation between Malay and Chinese today.

The promotion of the Malay language by Chinese intellectuals and writers in the 1950s and 1960s subjected them to political repercussions for their work, even if they were not directly involved in the leftist movement. That many of those who took part in the Asian-African Students' Conference experienced political persecution illustrates the entanglement of Cold War politics, postcolonial nation-building, and interethnic and intercultural exchange. Yang Quee Yee, for instance, had been arrested in 1950 during a raid of Zhong Zheng High School after some Communist pamphlets were found on campus. As a student at the school, he was charged with the crime of possessing Chinese literature, including the literary works of Lu Xun. Later his appointment as a Malay instructor at Nanyang University was terminated on the basis of his alleged affiliation with the left wing of the PAP. Chan Maw Wah was suspended by Nanyang High School because she was a member of the Middleschool Students' Union, which was deemed to be a Communist front in the 1950s. In these instances, promoting the study of Malay was not the direct cause of their political persecution, but negotiating interlingual borders, whether between English and Malay or Malay and Chinese, brought them face to face with political divisions, as Communist pamphlets, Chinese authors such as Lu Xun, and Malay language acquisition were seen as a symbolic threat to the Cold War state. Their experience shows that language issues were part and parcel of the overall political battles at the intersection of the Cold War and decolonization.

II. History Beyond the Language Movement

Malay as National Language movement was not as well known within the Chinese community as the simultaneous Chinese education movement, which was a fight for the rightful place of Chinese vernacular schools in late colonial and early postcolonial Singapore and Malaysia. This is understandable since postcolonial nation-building in Malaya presented a gradual installation of what Nandita Sharma calls "the postcolonial new world order"—that is, it follows a national model built upon autochthonous claims that separate the national-native from the migrant, and further pins national belonging to a population's native belonging to a place.[24] Under such a condition, it is easy to value the defensive stance of the Chinese, the language of the migrant rather than native population.[25] But in fact the two

movements shared a common stance of anticolonialism as well as a similar attempt to confront the boundaries of the "national," which according to Naoki Sakai is a schema, meaning that it was "a regulative idea" that "cannot be given in experience." [26] "Nationality," as Sakai explains, "is a matter not simply of the inside and outside of the national community, but also of prescription and manipulation. . . . One is offered the choice of national inclusion and exclusion in the conditional: if you conduct yourself in such and such a manner, then you will be entitled to belong to the nation or ethnicity; but if you do not, you will deserve to be discriminated against. It is a threat, but it is given as a modality of conduct."[27]

The Chinese education movement defended Chinese education while seeking to incorporate it into a national framework conducive to racial harmony and intercultural dialogue. The general perception of it as a defense of Chinese culture and civilization for a subordinated group, with its leader, Lim Lian Geok, hailed as *zu hun* (the soul of the race) by the ethnic Chinese in Malaya, is not sufficient to account for the complexity of the political struggle. In fact, the critics of this movement also saw it largely in culturalist terms: they criticized it as "communal"—another way of saying ethnocentric—and disruptive to Malaya's national unity.[28] But by Lim's logic, there was no contradiction between defending education in any one vernacular language and upholding national unity. In fact, the Chinese educationists decided to embrace Malay as the national language in 1956; around the same time, they also launched a campaign for Chinese to be recognized as one of the two other official languages, along with English. Speaking to the Malay newspaper *Utusan Melayu* (Malaysian tribune) about this issue, Lim addressed the question of whether such a demand was necessary, since "many Chinese already know Malay." Lim replied, "That's a good thing. And let me tell you that many Malay people can speak Chinese as well. When Chinese becomes an official language, [more] Chinese people will learn to read and write in Malay. [Correspondingly, more] Malay people will learn to read and write in Chinese. Doesn't this make the two races feel closer to each other? Isn't this better for collaboration for Malaya's nation-building?"[29] Although the campaign ended in failure, the fact that Lim led a movement aimed at contesting the dominant national schema in Malaya gave a specific inflection to the oft-used rhetoric of "preserving Chinese culture" or "imparting Chinese civilization to the younger generation" in association with this historical figure.

Although these language movements belong to a particular moment in history, the resonance of these histories of activism is not restricted to

a single time and place. Thus, when, in the 1980s, Yang Quee Yee turned his attention to the long history of Malay–Chinese cultural exchange, we can think of this research as a resounding echo of the social movements of the 1950s and 1960s and the Chinese community's fervor for Malay language acquisition. His research highlights a variety of ingenious ways by which interlingual equivalence and communication were established, thereby presenting plurilanguaging as a way of life in a multicultural society and challenging the ideological underpinnings of "one language–one culture–one nation" in the official language policies of the postcolonial Malay(si)an state.

Yang uncovered a history of Malay–Chinese cultural exchange of the *longue durée* spanning over six centuries, with artifacts as diverse as a fifteenth-century Chinese dictionary of Malay phrases that may have aided the Ming Dynasty maritime explorer Zheng He's expedition to Malacca, nineteenth-century translations of Chinese vernacular novels by Peranakan writers such as Chan Kim Boon, and twentieth-century Chinese translations of Malay *pantun* folk poetry by both Peranakan and immigrant intellectuals and writers. His historical research unveiled innovative strategies used to navigate the interlingual space of "discontinuity" (to borrow Naoki Sakai's term), not so much the rigid border or gap, between Malay and Chinese, delineating a terrain of heterogeneous forms of linguistic signification exceeding "Chinese" or "Malay" as delimited linguistic systems.

With his sizable collection of Malay-Chinese dictionaries and literary translations, Yang demonstrates that interlingual and intralingual exchange could be carried out in versatile ways that disrespect the hierarchy of standard versus nonstandard language use while challenging the differentiation between the *inter-* and the *intra-* with regard to the conceptualization of linguistic boundaries. He tells us that some Malay–Chinese dictionaries compiled in the late nineteenth century indicate the sound of Malay words using Chinese characters pronounced according to dialect conventions (e.g., Cantonese, Fukienese, and Hakka), not Mandarin. In some of these dictionaries, the transcription system is in the Latin alphabet; in others, sounds are indicated with Chinese characters. With sound and script, Chinese characters and the Latin alphabet, and official speech (*guan hua* or Mandarin) and dialect all making an appearance in these dictionaries, the difference between these linguistic categories is simultaneously marked and rendered insignificant. What matters is the ingenuity of the dictionary compiler as a cultural translator who was keen to facilitate an interlingual exchange by using whatever technology available and that made sense. In

China of the early twentieth century, when enlightened Chinese intellectuals tried to make Chinese into a national language, there were endless discussions about how to navigate the distance between script and sound, and whether the Latin alphabet or Chinese writing was the better transcription system. These debates cannot begin to capture the fluidity and innovativeness that came from the rich history of interlingual communication in Chinese migrant communities as recorded by Yang.

Yang also considered Chinese classical prose fiction rendered into romanized Baba Malay by Peranakan intellectuals in the nineteenth century. Some, including Chan Kim Boon, had such a strong command of literary Chinese that their poems had a comparable degree of sophistication to those written by new immigrants from China. In other cases, translation was completed in a collaborative fashion by a Malay speaker working with someone with Chinese competence, in much the same way that the famed Chinese translator Lin Shu, without knowing any Western language, rendered Western popular fiction into classical Chinese. An important takeaway from Yang's research and archival collection has to do with the persistent reality of the nonalignment of race, culture, and language, or, within a language, the lack of coordination between sound and script, dialect and Mandarin. The dictionaries and literary collections document languaging experiences in which a cultural or racial identity could (but need not) be connected to a variety of linguistic signs, spoken or written, standard or nonstandard. "Sino" or "Chinese" as a sign could be placed anywhere, and its different placements might convey contradictory meanings. The fluidity in plurilingual societies thus undoes the naturalized ideological connection between language and ethnicity, or a territorial placement of both within the colonial, national, or postcolonial mapping.

III. Neighborly Bonds

Not all literary translation offers a critical reflection on the instrumental role of language as a social symbol of a cultural community. The rich output of Chinese translations of Malay modern literature in the 1950s and 1960s, in the view of contemporary Malaysian cultural critics Chong Fah Hing and Goh Siew Poh 吳小保, approached translation mostly "a means of intercultural communication" (*wenhua jiaoliu*), carrying the important function of "knowing each other," "finding common ground," or "building a friendship" and connoting an acquiescence, if only tacitly, toward the nation-state's racial and cultural order.[30] This is understandable, since

at a time when a new political identity of Malay(si)an Chinese was being articulated, the priority had to be finding an intelligible framework for this identity, and translation facilitated this process. But at the same time, the question of whether translation serves the sole function of intercultural communication is related to how we evaluate translational practices: if translation studies means simply tabulating output by title, genre, and year of publication, there is not much one can expect from these studies in terms of providing other than data points about the volume of intercultural exchange. Yet the kind of intercultural sociality engendered by translation is usually more complex than what a communication model can describe. There is no better way to demonstrate this complexity than by giving attention to literary languaging in translation practices. A close reading of one issue of a literary journal, as I show below, can tell us about the conceptualization of interlingual exchange beyond language's instrumental functions.

Even though I have indicated above a disfavor toward approaching translation as information gathering about the size or speed of intercultural exchange, some broadly stroked description of the scene of Malay–Chinese literary exchange in the wake of the Malay as National Language movement is in order here. From Yang Quee Yee's detailed account, we can surmise that Chinese renditions of modern Malay literature, which far and away outnumber translations in the other direction, appeared in a variety of serial publications, many put out by student groups at Nanyang University, across the political divide throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Government organs such as Malaysia's Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP, House of Language and Literature) or Singapore's government-affiliated publications also played a significant role in facilitating this exchange; as a result, Chinese renditions of literary works and criticism that had been published in influential state-sponsored Malay-language journals frequently appeared soon thereafter in Chinese newspapers and periodicals.[31] It was not uncommon to find the same names and titles in journals of different political leanings, with both sides showing a clear preference for realist authors, particularly the ASAS '50 literary association (Generation of the Writers of the '50s), with Usman Awang (a.k.a. Tongkat Warrant) and Keris Mas as prime representatives.[32]

This widespread interest in Malay to Chinese translation had cooled by the 1970s, possibly because a greater percentage of the Chinese population had begun to acquire competence in Malay. But whether translation is still necessary when linguistic division is lessened is then called into question. As Yang Quee Yee remembered, the prominent Malay writer Keris Mas

once claimed that reading Sinophone Malaysian literature rendered into Malay had opened his eyes, for it made him realize that "Chinese Malaysian literature and Malay literature are little different in terms of content, but only in language." He subsequently told Yang that although he was highly in favor of Malay translations of Sinophone Malaysian literature, he would not encourage translation in the other direction, that is, rendering Malay literature into Chinese, because "that would encourage many Chinese to further neglect studying Malay."[33] He was apparently not the only author to hold this position. As Goh tells us, another influential figure, Ismail Ahmad, argued in an article in 1960 that "translation is the contact zone between Mahua culture and Malay culture. But being an intersection of sentiments, thoughts, and perspectives for the Chinese and Malay communities who are citizens of this independent nation, [translation] is not our ultimate goal. . . . Our literary works and cultures will soon no longer see the division between the Chinese and Malay languages."[34] These articulations confirm once again that translation is not automatically an antidote to the monolingualism of national language and national culture—a point that Naoki Sakai has taken pains to articulate in theoretical terms in various contexts.[35] But beyond mitigating the distance between two languages, how else should we conceptualize translation? Is translation doomed to be secondary to national language and culture, assigned to the role of incorporating the non-native speaker into the folds of national language? Is translation a necessary but transitional step toward cultural and racial integration within and between nations? Given that minority writers live in translation, when they are called on to translate themselves and the cultures they supposedly represent, how do they articulate their subjectivity through translation?

With these questions in mind, I turn again to the modernist journal *Chao Foon*, discussed in chapters 1 and 3, this time focusing on its construction of neighborly bonds with Malay authors from Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia through translation, literary criticism, and interviews. The editors' interest in Malay culture was evident from the beginning, as it was consistent with the magazine's overall agenda of promoting Malayanization, a theme discussed in chapter 1. The contemporary literary critic Lim Choon Bee holds that "as a magazine devoted to Chinese-language literature, *Chao Foon* apparently designated an 'excessive' number of pages for articles that were not written in Chinese or creative writing," since articles dealing with aspects of Malay culture and customs could be found in almost every issue in the 1950s.[36] But in its new iteration after August

1969, *Chao Foon* projected a different outlook in terms of its engagement with Malay literature.

It was no longer content with retelling Malay myths, translating folk poetry, or representing only the established authors of the 1950s generation, namely Tongkat Warrant, Keris Mas, and Masuri S. N.; it began to feature younger writers, particularly experimental writers, presenting them as the Malay counterparts of Sinophone modernism. It took the same journalistic approach to the representation of Malay literature and authors as it did to Western authors, publishing interviews with authors and translating critical commentary on individual authors from Malay-language periodicals, but it also conveyed a stronger sense of proximity and immediacy when it "covered" Malay writers than it did with Western authors. I propose, through examining a special issue of *Chao Foon* on Malay literature, published in April 1971 (no. 220), that translation was considered by the editors not in instrumental terms as facilitating intercultural communication toward forging national unity, or assimilating minority authors and their works into the establishment of national culture. Rather, *Chao Foon*'s special issue, it seems to me, models the kind of literary translation that did not try to predetermine, let alone control, the outcome of intercultural and interlingual encounters in a top-down manner.

Before delving into this special issue, we need to backtrack to the February 1971 issue (no. 218), which included a call for submissions and a behind-the-scenes description of the preparations for this special issue, drawn from the correspondence between editors stationed in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. In their letters, the editors sounded anxious about the short deadline and exchanged information about how to contact writers and translators by taking advantage of their travels between the two cities. They also planned to tap into the network of cultural magazines edited by Malay writers and publish a selection of critical essays from those publications in *Chao Foon*. These details reveal a tightly woven network of Sinophone and Malay literary circles approximating an "intranational" arena (despite the fact that Singapore had already established its independent nationhood by 1971), unlike the "international" connections forged with modernist writers in the West or other places in the Sinosphere. The editors had a variety of ways to contact their counterparts in the Malay literary circles, including traveling to conduct face-to-face meetings or, as one editor proposed, utilizing the Nanyang University alumni network to approach a Malay critic who was a graduate there. They did not have to rely solely on Western newspapers and magazines as their source for topics. The letters

also discussed a Malay literary magazine's daring plan to publish Malay renditions of eight modernist poems by Sinophone Mahua authors. One editor mentioned that Tongkat Warrant had commissioned translations of these poems for his own magazine, *Dewan Masharakat*, but that they could not be published there due to the race riot of May 13, 1969—this was arguably the only time that May 13 was mentioned directly in *Chao Foon*—and also because the editor thought the Chinese poems might be too modern for the readers. The other *Chao Foon* editor was intrigued by this failed initiative and suggested that the Malay translations of Mahua poems be published in *Chao Foon*, although he sounded this caution in his letter, "we need to consider whether there would be an issue to publish texts in Malay in a Chinese-language magazine such as *Chao Foon*."[37] In reply, the addressee of this letter welcomed the proposal with open arms, stating that it would be even better to publish the Chinese originals alongside the translations.

The proposal ultimately did not pan out, but several conclusions can be drawn here. First, this discussion reveals that there was a reciprocal, if unbalanced, exchange between Sinophone and Malay writers sharing a common cultural space in the same or adjacent nation-states. Second, the political situation in Malaysia at this time—vastly different from conditions in the 1950s and 1960s—witnessed an increasing emphasis on Malay cultural nationalism and monolingualism, culminating in the implementation of the National Cultural Policy in 1971. The degree to which this political context conditioned *Chao Foon*'s decision to publish a special issue on Malay literature is unclear, although it is hard to imagine interethnic literary translation not being affected by the changed political situation. Third, to echo Eric Bulson in *Little Magazine, World Form*, "little magazines" plug into a global network not just through their content, but also through their typographic style and design, to which we could add multilingual textuality as an aspect of typographic style.[38] For the editors to ponder the possibility of printing Malay texts in a mostly Sinophone magazine conveys not just their openness to other languages, but visually an openness to other typographic forms.

Communicating through the linguistic medium as well as the visual medium became a more prominent aspect of *Chao Foon*'s modernism after Tan Swie Hian, a visual artist and creative writer, joined the editorial team. Although Malay translations of Sinophone modernist poems did not make their way into the special issue on Malay literature in the end, multilingual typesetting and the mixture of print and handwriting did appear there.

These typographic features, I suggest, are also a form of translation, since the incorporation of Malay words into a Chinese text without the mediation of linguistic translation conveys the editors' intercultural interpretation of Malay literature as well.

Moving on to the main text of the special issue, one gets a distinct sense of both comprehensive coverage and targeted appropriation from the first two sections. The first section, on "the current state of Malay literature and its development," features four essays that provide a broad overview of Malay "New Literature," a focused discussion of Malay novels, and a reflection on the future of Indonesian literature and literary production in Sarawak. These articles either were direct translations of critical essays published in Malay magazines or were compiled from materials from those periodicals. If this section gives the sense of a crash course by conveying an overwhelming amount of information about Malay language and literature, the second section doubles down on this pedagogical mode in its inclusion of long lists of "significant literary works in Malay" and "postwar literary publications." The publication of a list of Malay authors with similar names, headed by a humorous note beckoning the reader not to confuse them, harks back to the Malay–Chinese dictionaries so popular in the 1950s and 1960s. Yet this all-inclusive approach does not imply a lack of personal judgment. The section ends with a short essay titled "My Impressions of the Malay Literary World," in which the novelist Liang Yuan 梁園 expresses his admiration for Malay writers, comparing the '50s generation to China's May Fourth movement. He celebrates their nationalism and their perception that "language and arts are the soul of the race." But he also expresses reservations about overpoliticization and the tendency of "turning literature into an instrument for social reform," resulting in "more or less the loss of literariness," although this criticism is followed by his observation that this is a common tendency in developing countries, a point that he elaborates in a footnote endorsing Malay writers' urgent sense of social mission.[39] Liang's comment brings to mind *Chao Foon*'s memorable debate concerning the "art for society" versus "art for art's sake" approaches that anchored the journal's modernist identity. Comments like these indicate the subtle imprint of an individual lens toward translation and intercultural exchange.

Liang's calibrated response to the Malay literary world has set the tone for the entire special issue, in that it tries to be both inclusive and driven by its own literary judgment. Despite the privileged attention garnered by contemporary and modernist writers, the special issue continues to rep-

resent an older generation of Malay writers. A special section on Tongkat Warrant, one of the founders of ASAS '50, includes translations of three of his poems and a critical essay about him; an interview with him appears in a different section.[40] At the same time, the issue also features writers from the younger generation, most notably Shahnon Ahmad, whose representative novel *Rentong* (Burned to ashes, 1965) depicts the struggles of Malay peasants on the path to modernization and development, and Yahya Ismail, a budding literary critic in the 1960s, along with some writers who exhibited experimental tendencies and were new talents in the early 1970s, particularly Latiff Mohidin. A small section features two critical commentaries on Achdiat Karta Mihardja, an important Indonesian writer and the founder of Lekra, a left-leaning literary organization. The focus of one of these articles, by the Chinese writer Liu Chuan 流川, is Mihardja's short story "Coconut Tree." Liu calls it an "absurdist" story, one "that used the expressive techniques of a 'modern story,'" referring to its extensive psychological depictions of the characters, which prompted Liu's comparison of Mihardja to James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and André Gide.[41] Another commentary is a translated article on Mihardja's controversial novel *The Atheist* (1949), a bildungsroman that follows the main character, Hasan, as he comes into contact with different political camps, finding his religious worldviews altered by Marxism-Leninism and anarchism. The special issue thus presents an eclectic representation of Malay literature, not constrained by either the division between realism and modernism or the political division of Left versus Right.

The common vernacular of modernism mediates the linguistic division between Chinese and Malay: Sometimes modernism overrides linguistic division; at other times, linguistic and cultural specificity anchors the practice of modernism to a particular time and place. The Malay writer who received the most attention from the editors at *Chao Foon* was Latiff Mohidin, a painter and poet who had studied at the Berlin Academy of Arts, and who in the 1970s was on the way to becoming "one of the most well-known contemporary poets" in Malaysia, according to a later assessment by the Malaysian literary critic Muhammad Haji Salleh.[42] This was not Latiff's first appearance in *Chao Foon*. Two of his poems had been published in the September 1969 issue (no. 203), translated by Tan Swie Hian using the pen name Mu Ling Nu. Latiff and Tan have much in common: they are both poets and visual artists, and they share a similar cosmopolitan penchant, a point that was emphasized in the magazine's interview with Latiff. The representation in this special issue of this arguably most favored

Malay author (his poems were given repeated translations by writers affiliated with *Chao Foon* through several decades of its history) encompasses translation of various forms, from linguistic to typographic and visual, combining analysis with introduction. The case of Latiff's works rendered into Chinese fully demonstrates that translation necessarily incorporates interpretation and thus matters both to people of the same linguistic community and to those from different communities.

Latiff Mohidin's travels were not limited to Berlin or to Europe more broadly; they also included the rest of Southeast Asia. It was these latter journeys that inspired his *Pago Pago* series, completed in the 1960s, which sought to work the aesthetics of German expressionism into depictions of Southeast Asian nature, objects, and scenes of everyday life. Unsurprisingly, his interview with Gu Ming 孤鳴 for this special issue starts with a description of his most recent travels to East Asia, South Asia, and the Arab world. It then moves to a discussion about the relationship between a poet's language and race, at which point Latiff states that he only writes poetry in Malay, but denies that there is any association between this linguistic choice and a person's ethnic background: "I never thought about racial consciousness as an issue. I have some Chinese friends, and I sometimes forget that they are Chinese."[43] Latiff declares that he does not think that poets should display political consciousness in their works, and that he is interested in depicting only those subjects familiar to him. For instance, he would not know what to say about something as distant as the Vietnam War unless he had experienced it himself, but "wars and death can take a variety of forms."[44] Commenting on Malay literature, Latiff laments that "as of now there is no such thing as 'modern poetry' in Malay literary circles. 'Modern' means fresh and untraditional. Most Malay poetry is lacking in experimentalism. In terms of form, 'modern' poetry could be either romanticist or realist, but [regardless of form] the poem must strike the reader as fresh as a creative work."[45] This interview brought Latiff closer to the *Chao Foon* circle by enfolding him in modernist aesthetics and politics of the same kind as championed by the journal.

Compared to Latiff's first appearance in *Chao Foon*—the September 1969 issue, in which his most famous poem, "Sungai Mekong" (The River Mekong), rendered into Chinese, was printed in its entirety—here he is given special typographic treatment, a gesture that reminds us that modernist circles worldwide communicate not just through common sensibility or aesthetic ideology, but through similar modes of visual representation as well. This special issue includes six of Latiff's poems, translated by Mu

Ling Nu and Qiu Rui He 邱瑞河 and printed in both Chinese and Malay. Experimental typographic style or page design, such as a collage of handwritten notes on printed texts, was not uncommon for *Chao Foon* by the late 1960s. In this issue, a handwritten page of a poem by another writer, Masuri, is appended to an interview with him. The section on Latiff's poems is dotted with doodles both at the beginning and the end, the most eye-catching of which is the one that directly precedes Latiff's interview (figure 3), where we see, in Picasso-esque fashion, the outline of a human figure, with its arms flailing and its feet stretched out, the image echoing several lines from Latiff's poem "The River Mekong": "i shall plunge my breast / down to your bed / my right leg to the moon / my left leg to the sun."[46] Modernism communicates through abstraction: the doodle depicts a human figure with no discernable facial features; likewise, Latiff's poem "The River Mekong" has all the realistic details redacted. We don't know what brought the speaker to visit Vietnam and the Mekong; we are not told the story about the mother whose "voice calls forth / for the voice of a lost son" or details about "bleeding buds / wounded pebbles" on the bottom of the riverbed. Abstraction thus creates resonance and enables comparison. At the same time, though, the reader's interpretation of modernist abstraction is always issued from a specific location. In the Chinese translation of a Malay critic's review of Latiff's poetry included in this special issue, the author, M. Balfas, is quick to pick up on the meaning of the line "tonight / a storm from the north shall come" as referring to Communists.[47] Although this critic does not specify whether he was thinking about the Communists in North Vietnam or the northern part of the Malay Peninsula, the abstract allusion to Communism must have resonated with the readers of *Chao Foon* as well. At the same time, though, the common vernacular of modernism barely hides the discontinuity signaled by the juxtaposition of Malay and Chinese. Translation here is thus a fluid negotiation of commonality and discontinuity, distance and proximity, registered as linguistic, semiotic, and visual.

My close reading in this chapter of one special issue of *Chao Foon* is not meant to suggest that this journal exemplifies the most commendable practice of intercultural translation in a way that we cannot find elsewhere. Rather, this example shows that intercultural communication can happen in a variety of registers, not necessarily through the single channel of language-culture-race. For one thing, it's clear that this issue built on decades of literary translation from Malay to Chinese published in both this journal and other places. By the early 1970s, the editorial group, con-

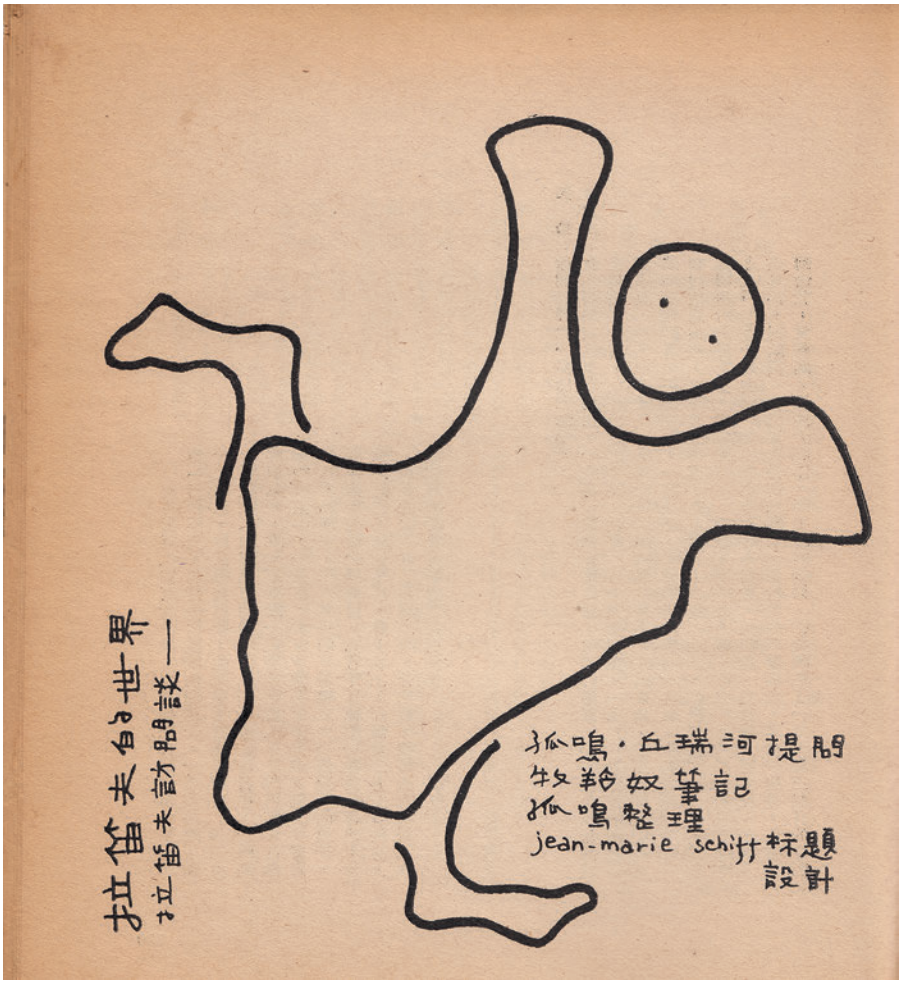


Fig. 3. Drawing associated with Latiff Mohidin's poem "Sungai Mekong" [The River Mekong]. (Reproduced from *Chao Foon* [September 1969].)

sisting of writers indigenous to the multiracial societies in Southeast Asia as well as recent émigrés from Hong Kong, must have felt that an ethnographic impulse to know other cultures was no longer needed; they also did not want to adhere to the canon of Malay literature; instead, they felt compelled to make selections with a goal of looking for counterparts who shared their aesthetic and social sensibilities. As Bai Yao puts it in his edito-

rial notes at the end of this issue, "Living on this corner of earth, we really have no reason not to see an ethnic literature that is so close to us."[48] Bai's choice of the word "close," as I see it, conveys an image of a cultural tapestry where no clear boundaries regulated the unevenness, discontinuity, or distancing of the various units. This is antithetical to a national mapping of territoriality with clear demarcations by language, race, or territory. The special issue thus imparts a sense of a neighborly bond in portraying a Malay literary world that overlapped with, paralleled, and intersected that of the Sinophone.

IV. Conclusion

Contemporary Malaysian Chinese critics' objection to the instrumentalization of translation as "a means of intercultural communication" (*wenhua jiaoliu*), with a goal of "knowing each other" or "finding common ground," has to do with the fact that the default assumption of language-culture-territory often consigns minority subjects that do not fit into this schema to oblivion. By Chong Fah Hing's calculation, 55.8 percent of the Chinese works translated into Malay from 1961 to 2001 were Chinese literature from China, and 45.1 percent were local Chinese-language literature by ethnic Chinese Malaysian writers.[49] If there is no attempt to appreciate the differentiation and diversity of expressions of Chineseness, then the extent to which the Malaysian Chinese or Mahua subject is given its due recognition becomes questionable. Chong states, "Most contemporary Malaysian Chinese translators still lean heavily toward Chinese classical philosophy, historical novels, [and] works by contemporary writers from China [when rendering these works into Malay]." In contrast to this recognizable "other," "the locally born Malaysian Chinese (Mahua) writer . . . is truly 'othered.'"[50]

The cultural meaning of publishing Malay renditions of literary works by Sinophone writers based in Singapore and Malaysia is different from translations of Chinese classics or Chinese writers from China or Taiwan. But what is the preferred language of the "locally born Mahua writer"? Does such a writer need to speak in Chinese? Does *hua* refer to race or language or both? Where does linguistic differentiation take place: at the scale of the interlingual (between Chinese and Malay for instance), the intralingual (between different dialects), or through typographic or other visual forms (for instance, between different scripts or between script and sound)? Chong Fah Hing was among the first to get into the creases of the

race-language-nationality-territory fold, looking for openings that could lead to a more inclusive take on Mahua culture. This can be seen from the various translation projects that he and other Mahua critics undertook, including in recent decades a coedited collection of literature by writers of Chinese descent using Chinese, English, and Malay, and the bilingual (Chinese and Malay) publications he coordinated.[51] He proposed to the Sinophone Mahua community self-translation and bilingual writing, arguing that they should resort to translation as a political means of self-representation toward seeking recognition or resisting racism.[52] It seems to me that Chong's arguments connote a gesture of holding on to *hua*—as race or language or culture—and use it as a pivot to force open the category so that literature written in other languages beyond the Sinophone can be included. For instance, in the recent volume *Huidao Malaiya: Hua Ma Xiaoshuo Qishi Nian* (Return to Malaya: Stories by Chinese Malaysian writers), Tee Kim Tong, Ng Kim Chew, and Chong Fah Hing coined the term *hua ma* (referring to Malaysian Chinese) instead of the more conventional *ma hua* (referring to Sinophone Malaysian), suggesting that *hua* can be held as a racial category while making it more inclusive for other languages than just Chinese. At the same time, *hua* as a linguistic category could also create a different form of opening. Chong Fah Hing, for one, frequently wrote in Chinese-language newspapers and websites, introducing to Sinophone readers the polemical debates about Malay versus Anglophone literature, thus involving Chinese readers in conversations that did not explicitly address "their" literature.[53] The polemical drive behind these variegated intercultural practices by Mahua critics implies that whereas the Sinophone could be viewed as a border that frames a lifeworld and offers a window onto an ethnic community—a border that is hardened at critical junctures of struggle against inequality or injustice—it can also become a bridge, a language of the commons, where cultural expressions and polemics are shared. This does not mean that the Sinophone commons would automatically resolve the inequality of major versus minor languages or dominant versus subaltern cultures, and there is no guarantee that Sinophone commons would be exempt from some of the historical pitfalls of the global Anglophone or Francophone—but perhaps some of these inequalities can be revealed if the Sinophone is treated as a critical forum of "languaging in language." The potentiality of the Sinophone, I would thus insist, depends first on our recognition that the inscription of *hua* can exist in various forms at different sites. That is a given for migrant people with a long history and rich experience of intercultural exchange.

6

Languaging in Hong Kong Languages

The Chinese language movement in Hong Kong entailed a series of organized protests and debates that involved university students, local politicians, and various community organizations from the late 1960s to the early 1970s. Starting from 1967, in the wake of labor strikes and anti-imperialist demonstrations organized by the labor unions in Hong Kong, student organizations and community groups demanded that the British colonial government recognize Chinese as an official language, along with English. The movement was initially defined by student publications, such as *Xue Yuan* (Undergrad), the official publication of the student union at the University of Hong Kong, as a strategy to "bridge the distance between the government and the public, implement social reform, and enhance the sense of belonging and responsibility that local residents feel toward Hong Kong."[1] In fact, this statement might have produced the common perception of this movement as essentially a "reform movement" (*gai liang yun dong*) that largely "pertained to cultural issues," specifically "Chinese intellectuals' cultural belonging" (*wen hua gui chong gan*), but did not fundamentally change the social structure in Hong Kong.[2]

This assessment fits with the standard account of Hong Kong's history after the turbulence in 1966–67, when leftist trade unions organized a series of demonstrations, in some cases resulting in violence, that were aimed at dismantling the colonial structure of the city. According to the historian Steve Tsang, "The riots of 1966 revealed the existence of considerable social discontent. They were caused by a mixture of dissatisfaction towards the gap between the government and the people; the arrogant, overbearing and corrupt behavior of a majority of government functionaries, who were normally the only officials the local Chinese residents dealt

with on a daily basis; and the social injustice that existed between the rich and the poor and between the expatriate and the local communities."[3] It is often argued that the reform projects following the riots, starting with the move to make Chinese an official language and culminating with the establishment of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, were instrumental in winning over the public's support for the government and solidifying ordinary citizens' identification with Hong Kong rather than Maoist China. These reforms enabled Hong Kong residents to embrace the government as "'their' government" for the first time in history, historian J. D. Young stated.[4]

For the most part, Hong Kong's Chinese language movement had a successful outcome, to the extent that in 1971 the government appointed a committee "to examine the use of Chinese in official business and to advise on practicable ways and means by which the use of Chinese might be further extended in the interest of good administration and for the convenience of the public."[5] The committee produced four reports in 1971, in which it considered such technical issues as the feasibility and costs of providing separate interpreters and translators in courts and making government forms bilingual, as well as the translatability of laws and ordinances from English to Chinese. It concluded its final report by recommending to the government "that Chinese and English be declared to have equal status," with a caveat that "equal status does not necessarily imply equal use in every single instance."[6] We can see from the reports of the Chinese Language Committee that it went to great lengths to find practical solutions to what the student activists identified as the structural problems with the colonial condition.

A closer look at the student publications covering this movement, however, reveals a more complicated picture—for one thing, student activists were rather critical toward Hong Kong's political structure, in direct opposition to Tsang's assessment that the Hong Kong government from the 1970s onward was on its way to becoming "the best possible government in the Chinese political tradition," one that was "efficient, effective, conscientious, fair, honest and responsive to public opinion."[7] Furthermore, the student writers in Hong Kong, much like those involved with the social movements in Malaya, did not view the issue of Chinese language as an end in itself; rather, the language question gave them a starting point from which to engage with the social conditions of their times. Whereas government officials discouraged students from engaging in activism, contending that democracy was not really in line with the Chinese political tradition,

which had always put more stock in "benevolent despotism,"[8] these student leaders and writers moved forward anyway. One writer, Pan Mu 潘牧, suggested in an article written for the *Chung Chi Biweekly* that students should "reflect on the social condition of Hong Kong" because its political system, which "looks on the surface like a democratic system, is deep down an authoritarian state."[9] The authors of an article published in the October 9, 1970, issue of the *Student Press Chung Chi College* contradicted the government's preoccupation with technicalities, such as issues of providing translation at court or making Chinese available for use in certain government affairs, arguing instead that "making Chinese an official language is the first step toward defending human rights."[10] As another student publication, the *Catholic Post-Secondary*, put it in 1974, "Whether Chinese is made an official language is a secondary issue. A more significant issue (often ignored by most university students) is how to eliminate inequality in the colonial social structure, and how to launch a revolution against the colonial government."[11]

That Chinese was declared to be an official language along with English in 1974 can be regarded as only a partial successful outcome of the earlier language movement, since the student activists' agenda of social reform—despite the movement's focus on Chinese language—was more fundamental and capacious than the reforms implemented by the Hong Kong government. This chapter examines this language movement as a moment of rupture that reveals an instance of what Walter Mignolo has called "languaging in language." That means instead of seeing language merely as an instrument to combat social issues such as social and cultural inequality, we can understand the language use of various kinds in this movement as a metalinguistic practice that allows us to come to terms with the meaning of language itself. In this respect, the Chinese language movement's implication for literary and cultural studies far exceeds the historical moment of its unfolding and is in fact rather similar to the language movements in Malaya examined in the previous chapter: that is, it offers us an opportunity to reflect on the meanings of both "Chinese" and "language" in specific contexts. The key question that this chapter addresses is thus: What does "languaging in Hong Kong languages" mean for these activists and in terms of the movement's cultural legacy?

Furthermore, the Chinese language movement in the time of colonial rule reveals the Cold War's mediation of Hong Kong's colonialism (see chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion of this topic). The history of this movement compels us to reflect on the activists' negotiation with existing

discourses of nationalism in order to find a local solution to Hong Kong's colonial situation. Their reliance on Marxism and Third Worldism as anticolonial resources confounded the cartographic divide of the Cold War, which simplistically equated Marxism with the ideology of the socialist state of China. The archive of the Chinese language movement in the early 1970s consists mostly of articles and magazines written in standard Chinese with some English mixed in. It is easy to conclude based on this evidence that although the proponents articulated their clear demands for making Chinese an official language with the same status as English, they were more ambiguous as to how to address the multilingualism and hierarchies within the Chinese language. Yet the preposition *within* demands a second look. The linguist Roman Jakobson proposes a hierarchical division of translation into three categories: interlingual translation refers to the interpretation of verbal signs from one language to another, intralingual translation refers to the rewording of verbal signs using those from the same language, and intersemiotic translation describes the interpretation of verbal signs using nonverbal signs.[12] The hierarchy of these three categories is such that interlingual translation for him is translation *proper*; the other two kinds, as I understand it, are to be considered translation *metaphoric*. This hierarchy of translation names nonequivalent relationships within and outside a language unit only by holding stable the concept of language and, by extension, the linguistic. When what counts as a language is destabilized, the hierarchy crumbles: an interlingual exchange bleeds into the intralingual realm, and all acts of translation are intersemiotic, since interpretation and meaning making often involve the decoding of a semiotic sign. This means that to contest linguistic hierarchy and conceptualize multilingualism, we must start by questioning the notion of language itself.

In the context of Hong Kong, which involves the confluence of multiple languages (Cantonese, Mandarin, and English, as well as other languages or "dialects") and multiple modes of transmission, it is not so clear that such a hierarchical arrangement of the interlingual, intralingual, and intersemiotic is strictly adhered to in the actual experience of languaging. But just like Jakobson, language planners tend to favor certain language relations over others in order to preserve the centrality of a predetermined notion of standard language. School education, as Rey Chow reminds us, is the first step toward imparting the skill to conduct unequal transactions between the language *proper* and languages *improper*. Chow writes, "For the schoolchild in Hong Kong, where Cantonese is usually spoken at home, the relation with Chinese, the so-called native language and culture,

is much more an experience in self-alienation from the get-go. To write in simple prose, the Hong Kong schoolchild must memorize not only the composition of the written characters (which exist in an order independent of speech), but also the way things are said in standard written Chinese (the grammar of which corresponds to speech in Mandarin/Putonghua rather than to speech in Cantonese)."[13] In other words, behind each instance of standard prose lies the memory of a translation across the uneven divides of language, sublanguage, and nonlanguage.

The legacy of the Chinese language movement in Hong Kong encapsulates such crossings, thereby encoding nonequivalent power relations in textual forms. This becomes evident when we look at the texts of multiple systems of transmission, from print culture to theater performance to film, that are related to this movement. In other words, the legacy of the movement is both an "archive" and a "repertoire," to quote Diana Taylor, its boundaries confined neither to the timeline of the movement itself nor to the mode of transmission or recording in the documents directly related to this movement. "The strain between what I call the archive and the repertoire," Taylor explains, "has often been constructed as existing between written and spoken language. The archive includes, but is not limited to, written texts. The repertoire contains verbal performances—songs, prayers, speeches—as well as nonverbal practices."[14] Taylor urges us to go beyond the dominant genres of writing as well as the written form ("archive") to consider the continuous production of meaning through embodied performance ("repertoire"). Colonialism institutionalized a hierarchical relationship between written culture and embodied culture, giving more power to writing over other epistemic and mnemonic systems. Despite this sociopolitical history, Hong Kong culture, even in the print form, has habitually crossed over the divides of the written and the oral, standard Mandarin and "dialect," with each instance of crossing prompting us to question once again what counts as a language proper.

Through reading modernist little magazines, plays, documentary film, and feature-length film, which together constitute an archive of "languaging in Hong Kong languages," I argue that the question of "Chinese language" as viewed from the vantage point of Hong Kong is a social agenda as well as cultural practice across multiple media forms and temporal divides. From this perspective, this movement can be considered as a response to the persistence of linguistic hierarchies through a sustained focus on what counts as a proper language in the contemporary moment. For instance, Hong Kong's Education Bureau posted on its website in Janu-

ary 2014 a statement that Cantonese is "a Chinese dialect which is not a statutory language."[15] The Chinese language movement responds to such an understanding of "statutory language" and the language policies formulated around it not so much by issuing a straightforward defense of the rightful status of Cantonese as a language, but by encoding the structural inequality within its languaging practices. Languaging in Hong Kong languages is therefore more fundamental than the use or nonuse of a specific language form. It has to do with the social relationality that language practices allow us to create with one another.

I. A Little Magazine: The *70's Biweekly*

The *70's Biweekly* was an independent publication produced by a group of young people who were not affiliated with the universities. It began publishing in January 1970 and continued for several years, coming out at irregular intervals toward the end.

The publication looks like a "little magazine" in terms of both content and design. Printed in newspaper format, it does not have the appearance of a big-budget magazine, but it is obvious that some thought went into its design: the articles are mainly in Chinese, with occasional pieces in English; some issues are printed in bold colors like orange or green; and the covers have a decidedly counterculture feel in terms of graphics and language. The cover of the October 6, 1970, issue, for example, features a bust of Jesus in red, under a headline in English and Chinese promising a "reward for information leading to the apprehension of . . . Jesus Christ" (with the name written out in Chinese). The list of "crimes," as indicated in Chinese, includes "inciting riots, spreading anarchist thoughts, vagabonding, and conspiring to overthrow government." This tongue-in-cheek indictment of Jesus was nothing more than an advertisement of the editorial group's political position, which the scholar Jessica Wai-yee Yeung likens to anarchism. According to Yeung, the *Biweekly* was

> a publication of the anarchist comrades (in Hong Kong). It published articles both in English and in Chinese, with content covering many diverse fields, propagating values that were all consistent with the anarchist spirit. The most common topics ranged from social criticism of contemporary issues, introduction of leftist theories, and discussions of topics related to the Vietnam War and workers' and women's conditions. This seems to have been the general direction of every issue of the

> magazine, from the first to the last. The magazine paid equal attention to covering cultural topics and following closely the latest developments in foreign literature, film, and music. Its team of organizers, editors, writers, and illustrators were all "avant-gardist" youth and followers of global progressive trends. This thin little book—a social and political journal and a literary and cultural publication combined into one—was quite influential among young people in its time.[16]

In addition to the topics that Yeung has listed here, the *70's Biweekly* was an active participant in discussions about the Chinese language movement. This can be seen from the cover of the same issue, where, prominently displayed at the bottom of the page, is a declaration in both English and Chinese: "If interpretation is in dispute, Chinese is official."

As we have seen with the Malay as National Language movement in Malaya, the legacy of a social movement does not lie only in the question of whether its immediate goals are achieved; we should also consider what discourses or patterns of thinking have been engendered. It is exactly for this reason that Law Wing Sang felt compelled to revisit the archive of the Chinese language movement in the wake of Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement, the protest movement that demanded universal suffrage in 2014. Interested in delineating a "space for the decolonial activism that was opened up by the Chinese language movement," Law carefully combed through the publications produced by various student organizations from 1968 to 1971 and mapped out a complex Cold War force field that cannot be summed up by the dualism of colonial versus nationalist.[17] As it turned out, the *70's Biweekly* group was particularly adept at navigating this force field, pushing back against criticism from the Left and the Right in search of a locally rooted path of decolonization. The binarism of pro- and anti-Communism, a familiar anchor in Cold War discourses here inscribed onto anticolonial politics, narrowed down the options to either defending colonialism or returning to China. The *70's Biweekly* group instead wanted to find what Yeung refers to as a "third way."[18]

The activists in the Chinese language movement had to engage with both Guomindang-affiliated (KMT) nationalist groups and the leftist factions in Hong Kong. While the nationalist faction claimed that this movement had been hijacked by some "outsider group" and characterized the movement's agenda as the usual leftist concerns,[19] the leftist factions affiliated with Mainland China thought that the movement was conciliatory toward imperialism, "a rotten decoration in colonialism's showcase of 'democ-

racy,'" as indicated in an article published in the Communist newspaper *Wen Hui Bao* on August 22, 1970.[20] The *70's Biweekly* reprinted this article and issued a rebuttal in its September 1, 1970, issue. The group's position on the Chinese language movement was clearly spelled out in this issue, in the form of an open letter to the government arguing that the question of Chinese as official language was not a question of "communication technology" but "a matter of principle in the area of policy." At that time the government had not yet formed the Chinese Language Committee to evaluate this concern. On page 3 of the same issue, the magazine published a lengthy article titled "The Dawn of the Chinese Language Movement" by Ng Chung Yin 吳仲賢, written under the pen name Hu Wenmin 胡文敏. While the author clarified the meaning of the Chinese language movement as "laying a foundation for an anticolonial revolution" in Hong Kong, he also presented a clear picture of Hong Kong's specific colonial condition in a way that responded to the leftist newspaper's critique of the movement.[21] "From the point of view of people who have a strong anticolonial consciousness," he stated,

> whether we struggle for Chinese to be recognized as an official language or demand some reforms at the Urban Council, at the Legislative Council, or in the areas of education in colonial Hong Kong, they think we are just trimming the branches without fixing the roots, or aiming for small fixes while avoiding big issues. This criticism makes sense to a certain extent. All the problems of inequality have to be traced to the exploitative and oppressive structure of colonialism. The ultimate solution [from their perspective] would be to launch an anticolonial revolution. However, Hong Kong is not an independent land, but rather part of Chinese territory. Therefore, the question is not so much whether to overturn the Hong Kong government; it all comes down to the relationship between China and Hong Kong.[22]

Reframing the language movement as a situation caught between the empire and the Chinese nation, Ng Chung Yin and his colleagues tried to connect the movement in Hong Kong to similar social and cultural movements elsewhere, giving particular attention to student movements in Europe and North America, as well as political movements in the Third World. As Ng claimed in the January 1, 1971, issue, "All youth movements, whatever the outcome, could identify some close interconnectedness with events in the Third World."[23] This self-positioning was evident even in the

trial issue of the magazine, before its official launch on January 15, 1970, where the table of contents demonstrates a cross-referencing of the local movement with that of the German Red Army and the social movements in Malaysia and Spain, capped with a piece detailing new statistics on strikes around the world.[24] But the *70's Biweekly* group was not content with covering revolutions elsewhere; it was in itself an activist organization. It played a major role in the Protect the Diaoyu Islands movement, a transnational student movement aimed at claiming the Diaoyu Islands as Chinese territory, both organizing and participating in demonstrations. The group organized a mass meeting in Victoria Park on July 7, 1971, the date chosen to commemorate China's conquest by the Japanese invading army in 1931. That event was violently suppressed by the police.

The extent to which the *70's Biweekly* cohort was unified by a singular anarchist position is questionable. Certainly, there are indications of a conscious attempt by the cohort to position themselves within the genealogy of anarchism. For instance, the bookstores established by this group reprinted anarchist classics such as works by Emma Goldman and Benjamin Tucker; the Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin's *God and the State* in English translation; the Chinese edition of Peter Kropotkin's *The Conquest of Bread*, translated in the 1940s by the famous writer Ba Jin; and an article in English by Stuart Christie titled "Chinese Anarchists," which appeared in the October 1971 issue. But they were influenced by other radical thought as well, beyond the realm of anarchism. The *Biweekly* published articles with titles such as "Marxism in China" and articles that focused on Leon Trotsky and Trotskyism, as well as discussions about Vladimir Lenin and Che Guevara and a review of the American Communist thinker George Novack's book *Humanism and Socialism*. Given the wide variety of political thought represented here, it is perhaps apt to describe this group as unified more by a sense of discontent with the status quo under colonial conditions in Hong Kong. As an English-language editorial published on August 1, 1970, argues,

> The rising generation in Hong Kong is living in a world of alienation. In factories, the young people are alienated from the products and the process of industrial production. They are simply cogs in the production machine. At schools, they are not guided toward the liberation of the individual and society; they are simply treated as raw materials, and the knowledge factories produce graduates and certificate holders who will be led silently into the vast, devastating, and corrupting commercial

> world to form part of the mega-machine where all values are computed in terms of a common denominator, viz., money.[25]

The existentialist crisis expressed here was nothing new for the younger generation in Hong Kong in the 1970s, since other more conservative publications such as the *Chinese Student Weekly* had organized extensive discussions with readers about Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism in the late 1960s, but the *70's Biweekly* was distinguished from these cultural forums by its activism-oriented politics, both in terms of representation and practice.

A key founding member of the *70's Biweekly* group was Ng Chung Yin, whose complicated career as an activist and untimely death from cancer in 1994 turned him, in the eyes of his comrades, into a hero "with great ambitions unfulfilled."[26] In addition to the article "The Dawn of the Chinese Language Movement," which captures the gist of his critical assessment of the prospect of Hong Kong's decolonization, Ng's other articles published around the same time were targeted toward the complicity of educational institutions and their curriculum with the colonial political structure. He called for a "students' revolution" in the January 1, 1971, issue, claiming that "the ideal university for students does not function like an instrument of brainwashing for the sovereign power (as colonial education does), or a 'service station' that caters to [the needs of] contemporary social and economic development, but rather is an institution with a deep connection to politics and society, a connection that should be both critical and inspirational."[27] Throughout these articles, we can see that Ng pursued a tortuous political path in seeking to transcend the binary option of anticolonialism versus nationalism. If nationalism meant "return to China," as it did for some factions of the Protect the Diaoyu Islands movement, Ng made it clear that this was not an option for him. In an article titled "A Third Revolution," published in the October 1971 issue of the *70's Biweekly*, he denounced British colonialism before vowing to lead a revolution against both Taiwan and China.[28] Targeting existing states on both sides of the Cold War divide, he outlined a revolutionary vision along anarchist lines: "In the new era, there will be no segregation by race or nation. . . . We are in control of our own awakening, not the Xinhua News Agency, and not GIS. Down with governments!"[29]

A distinctive aspect of this self-published "little magazine," which in appearance and content can be likened to early twentieth-century European avant-garde serial publications, is the integration of political discussions with cultural topics, the coverage of both reflecting the same global out-

look. When we read the *70's Biweekly* as a cultural text, we can see that each issue devoted a significant number of pages to literature in translation, in juxtaposition with works by local writers as well as critical analysis of both. A partial list of world literature in translation published in the magazine indicates a preference for contemporary literature related to social movements and literature by writers who can be broadly construed as on the Left. For instance, the first issue of the magazine (January 15, 1970) included an excerpt from the Black Panther leader Eldridge Cleaver's memoir *Soul on Ice*, a text he had written in prison and that had been published in the United States only two years earlier. The first issue also contained a review of three novels from the 1950s and 1960s by the Eurasian writer Han Suyin. These novels—*A Many-Splendored Thing*, *And the Rain My Drink*, and *The Mountain Is Young*—all depict significant historical transitions related to the Cold War and decolonization: the first is focused on Hong Kong on the eve of the founding of the PRC and the impending Korean War, the second on the Malayan Emergency, and the third on anticolonial struggles in India and Nepal. Han was outspoken about her identification with the PRC and had visited China frequently after 1956. She left Singapore in 1964 after openly criticizing Singapore's merger with Malaysia.

The *70's Biweekly* also featured timely discussions of emerging cultural trends in the Anglophone world, publishing essays on rock and roll icons such as Jimi Hendrix, Mick Jagger, and Joan Baez, and on music festivals such as Woodstock. The editors' interest in and knowledge of contemporary counterculture in the West was partly informed by foreign magazines circulated in Hong Kong, as evidenced by the inclusion in this Chinese magazine of interviews and commentary that had already appeared in English and French periodicals. Influential Western cultural figures such as the Greek director Costa-Gavras and the American Beat Generation poet Allen Ginsberg also made their appearance in this Hong Kong magazine. For instance, a Chinese translation of an interview with Ginsberg was published in the March 1971 issue under the title "Yi Shu wei You" (Befriending trees), accompanied by the English text of "Police State Blues," a poem by Ginsberg dated March 15, 1970. The interview had been conducted in Detroit after a poetry reading by Ginsberg at Macomb Community College for a demonstration against the Vietnam War, and it opened with questions about poetry's relationship to social movements. Ginsberg unexpectedly addressed that question from an ecological standpoint, relating the word "movement" to the growth of trees, the feeding of cows, and the revolu-

tions of the planets. Alluding to Gary Snyder's *Smokey the Bear Sutra*, Ginsberg argued that the social and political movements in Cuba, China, the Soviet Union, and the United States needed to be supplemented by a broader ecological perspective, one that would pay attention to the devastation bought on other species and the earth by the materialist avarice of humans. Ginsberg's ecological criticism represents one of the seemingly rare occasions when the magazine delved into topics related to the environment, although my assessment is limited by the lack of a complete archive of this magazine. At the same time, his emphasis on the poet's independence, his adamant refusal to have the poet serve as "the voice of the people" and "be held accountable to the Central Committee," appears consistent with the individualist stance that was strongly reflected in the *70's Biweekly*, particularly in the cultural pages.[30]

Despite the privileged status still accorded to the languages and cultures of the Global North, the magazine also strove to publish articles on literature from the Global South, either in English or in Chinese translation (usually translated via English). Some examples include poems by the African writers Léopold Sédar Senghor and David Diop, as well as translations of Pablo Neruda's blackbird poems. The *Biweekly* distanced itself from the cultural nationalist rhetoric found in some student publications promoting the Chinese language movement (or the idea that the Chinese language should be defended as a cultural heritage). Rather, the magazine consistently advocated for experimental approaches to language as well as to cultural issues, regarding itself as a vehicle for reenergizing the Chinese language in a way that would allow it to represent new political and social experiences in the local context while also placing Hong Kong in the cultural milieu of the "Global Sixties." The magazine's edginess, its experimental flair, and its political engagement prepared the ground for the modernist voices of local writers and artists who would come of age in the second half of the 1970s.

II. Reenacting the Movement in Multimedia

The *70's Biweekly* and the Chinese language movement were not just an "archive"; they were also a "repertoire," if we recall Diana Taylor's distinction between written history and "embodied practice/knowledge (i.e., spoken language, dance, sports, ritual)."[31] Their status as both allows us to hear the resonance of these time-stamped events across a longer historical span, tracking their reenactment in more recent moments, often

across different media forms. Literature and arts revolving around these movements—functioning not just as their archival documentation, but also as their repeated performance or repertoire—bring into view new dimensions of the language question not anticipated by those direct participants. These literary productions and discussions are therefore instances of languaging in themselves, taking the question of language to new sites and generating new polemical discussions about Sinophone literary and cultural criticism of the contemporary era.

Writing from Paris for the September 1971 issue of the *70's Biweekly*, Ng Chung Yin reflected on a comment made by his friend and coeditor Mok Chiu Yu 莫昭如: "Life is like theater. No one can be a bystander." Consistent with his persona as a political avant-gardist, Ng was less interested in the relationship between a performance and its audience, and more in that between the actor and the script. He imagined two scenarios in which the framework of the theater would not hold up: (1) an act that was too real to be incorporated into theater ("if an actor stops portraying suicide and actually ends his life, then he is out of character"); and (2) an instance of going off script, such as when an actor "does not read the lines he is given, or act in the way he is supposed to," at which point "he would no longer be acting, but performing the real self."[32] He added that actors who go off script are considered "rebels" because they flout the director's expectations for how they should act in real life. Ng's statement perhaps betrays his own self-assessment; a rebel he certainly was. He chose not to engage the question raised by Mok's comment directly: How does a "rebel" or a rebel group motivate "bystanders" to join the performance?

That the *70's Biweekly* group remained avant-gardist both politically and culturally over the course of their short history is evident in their neglect of the issues that confronted other writers of Cantonese prose, mainly the question of the spoken language and popular form. The magazine was bilingual, although there were significantly more articles in Chinese than in English. Its introduction of counterculture and activist literature from other parts of the world created a worldly context for thinking about Hong Kong, but the writers for the magazine were not as interested in popular or folk forms rooted in the local dialect culture. As much as this group, like most other activist groups involved in the Chinese language movement, repeatedly claimed that Chinese was used by 90 percent of the population in Hong Kong, the question of "Which Chinese language?" was not given much attention, suggesting their distancing both from everyday life and from the majority of this population. Other publications, such as

the *Undergrad* and the *Chung Chi Biweekly*, exhibit a similar tendency; most of their articles, including those that address the Chinese language question, are in Mandarin Chinese, with only occasional articles in English. None of the Chinese articles reflect language use outside formal settings by incorporating any dialect inflections or idiomatic expressions. This would not catch our attention if we were to approach language simply as an instrument for articulating social concerns, but reading these print texts as language performance raises the question of how to address the social and linguistic disjunctions.

Yet the history of the *70's Biweekly* is not an archive that was closed with its termination. In reflecting over the following two decades on the relevance of the group's activism to each later moment, several of its members, most notably Mok Chiu Yu, enriched their earlier considerations of "Chinese language" by closely examining its relationality to the audience in ways that go beyond the singularity of the print medium, in effect rethinking the hierarchy of written literacy and oral storytelling. They found a way to articulate the group's political goals of democracy and equality with a consideration of the linguistic medium and artistic form. In fact, performance that was reliant on a multimedia mode of transmission was embedded in the culture and activism of the *70's Biweekly* group from the beginning. For instance, Mok, who had become a member after graduating from an Australian university, made documentaries about the group's activities and demonstrations in the 1970s. According to Jessica Yeung, the *70's Biweekly* collective challenged the boundary between theater and activism as far back as the early 1970s. During the Protect the Diaoyu Islands protest on July 7, 1971, Hong Kong police, operating under an order from the government, beat up the protesters. At their trial, some members of the *70's Biweekly* collective wrapped bandages around their heads to call the public's attention to police brutality.[33] Performance and the pluralized medium of transmission enabled different embodied practices—writing, orality, visuality—to become entangled with one another while connecting culture to politics.

Mok and his collaborators later reflected on this connection:

> Some of us observed and experienced in the 1960s and '70s many instances of inequality and injustice in Hong Kong. We opposed the establishment, colonialism, capitalism, and the authoritarianism of the Communist Party through political activism, via methods such as writing articles, publishing magazines, distributing pamphlets, and organizing

> meetings and protests—those were methods we were excited about and knew how to do. Then, starting from the '80s, we adopted other methods: theater, music . . . and even film. . . . Theater has since become our political action—this was a bit more innovative than demonstration and thus satisfied the creative urges we've always had.[34]

This "innovative" form of "political action" for Mok refers to his street theater practice from the late 1970s through the 1980s and into the 1990s, an artistic form based on his belief that "theater that depicts issues of concern to the people should be practiced among the masses." He further clarified that "by people, we do not mean everyone. The targeted audience for our theater was poor people, workers, the socially disadvantaged groups and oppressed people, plus some college students." Since these people would not have bought tickets to watch a play at a cultural center, "we performed on the playgrounds of the factories, on the streets, for university clubs and student organizations, middle schools, and youth and community centers."[35]

The Third Worldist perspectives of the *70's Biweekly* live on, although there is more emphasis now on inter-Asian connections. In the 1990s, Mok connected with political theater troupes in the United States (such as the San Francisco Mime Troupe) and other parts of Asia (including Japan's Black Tent Theatre and the Philippine Educational Theater Association). He organized three Asian People's Theatre Festivals in Hong Kong during that decade, coordinating the writing and production of plays that engaged with social and political topics related not just to Hong Kong but also to other parts of Asia. One work for the Asian People's Theatre Festival in 1997 was a play coproduced by Mok and the Indian director Probir Guha titled *Yours Most Obediently* (*Ya Pei Zhi Lü*). It depicted the similar but also different experiences of colonialism by India and Hong Kong. The play toured to many places in Asia in 1997. Another work created by the group was the *Big Wind* project (*Da Feng Chui*), which brought together theater workers from various parts of Asia (including Hong Kong, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Thailand, and Taiwan) and the United States to produce a play about the situation of migrant workers in global economic development.

Perhaps the theatrical work that shows a most deliberate attempt to reflect on the legacy of the *70's Biweekly* group is Mok's one-man play titled *The Life and Times of Ng Chung Yin*. When it premiered in 1997 in Hong Kong, Ng Chung Yin had been dead for several years. In 2003, the filmmaker Evans Chan released a documentary under the same title, in

which Chan did not just passively record Mok's play, but in fact restaged it by mixing in footage from films by members of the *70's Biweekly* collective. Around the same time, the director Ann Hui 許鞍華, in her film *Qian Yan Wan Yu* (Ordinary heroes, 1999), also sought to encode the legacy of the political activism of the 1970s in a fictional representation of social movements in the 1980s and 1990s. These creative reenactments of the *70's Biweekly*'s political and cultural performance in new contexts and multimedia forms constitute a repertoire of languaging that significantly enriches the meaning of "Chinese language" as originally conceived by the proponents of the Chinese language movement in Hong Kong. In trying to think beyond the temporal binding of a social movement as well as language as only a social agenda, these cultural workers managed to confront the questions that Ng had sidestepped in his response to Mok in the 1970s, namely: How should we understand the relationship between the performer and the audience? And what is the language of political theater?

III. Playback Theater

It takes more than the "natural" mediating qualities of the visual and the oral to bridge the distance between the producer and the viewer. What is needed is a complete rethinking of the artistic mode of production. *The Life and Times of Ng Chung Yin* embodies in both theme and form the tension between the lone and misunderstood revolutionary hero and other collectives (be they Ng's comrades, the audience in the theater, or society as a whole). Mok's play presents Ng's political career chronologically, addressing with brutal honesty the controversial moments after he left the magazine that he had cofounded.[36] Mok captures the extent to which Ng's political idealism alienated him from his comrades, the masses that he hoped to bring into the movement, and, on a more fundamental level, the capitalist media culture in Hong Kong, whose development escalated after the mid-1970s. In terms of theatrical form, this tension is encapsulated by the play's presentation as a "one-man show" and the collective mode of its creation. (The production was not strictly a "one-man show," since several mimes also participated.)[37] A member of the creative team, Wan Chi Hong 尹志康, recalled that the creative process started with the older generation of activists, including Mok, telling stories about their political experience. The younger generation, relying on their interpretations of Ng's collected essays, then used the collaborative approach of "playback theater" to relate history and politics to their own experience:

> We had used the method of "playback theater" in the past to share memories, stories, and feelings about many "common people." We would then reenact those stories in the form of an improvised short play. This time we employed that method to share stories about Ah Mok, Foo Lo Bing, and Ng Chung Yin. . . . Although these stories pertain to many significant historical incidents and ideological or partisan struggles, some of them may touch on one's choice of political direction or challenges to one's personal integrity and courage. . . . Most actors [of the younger generation] understood these stories as the experience of ordinary people; sometimes they injected their own feelings into a story if they were touched by some aspects of it, at other times adding some comedic flavor and slapstick humor at specific moments. In this way, the memories of the storytellers became our memories. "Historical" experience was transformed into our own real-life experience.[38]

Playback theater was introduced into Hong Kong in 1996 by Veronica Needa and the Asian People's Theatre Society, with whom Mok worked closely. Mok and his collaborators rendered the English term into Chinese as "theater of one person, one story," a translation that, intentionally or not, deemphasizes the technical mediation implied in the word "playback." As described by Li Rusi 李如斯, "'Theater of one person, one story' is an improvisational practice in which members of the audience relate some of their own real-life experience and stories, and the actors instantly perform these stories using various methods. This kind of improvisational performance is an artistic representation: it turns the audience's stories into material for artistic creation. While it affirms the right of expression by each storyteller, it also facilitates the audience's communication with the actor. This is not just a performance, but a means of serving the community."[39]

The stage production of *The Life and Times of Ng Chung Yin*, at least the version recorded in Chan's documentary, is not in the mode of playback theater as depicted by Li Rusi. But the written record of the play's premiere in Hong Kong shows that there was a second part following the performance, which included former activists' storytelling and the performers' enactment of these stories onstage in the mode of playback theater.[40] In Mok's play, which he called a "commemoration of a comrade," "playback" can be understood as the dialogues between members of the *70's Biweekly* collective including Mok, and the younger generation, as described by Wan Chi Hong earlier, as well as between the performance team and the audience. Playback theater thus conveys an approach that

views the legacy of the social movement in terms of resonance across the divide of time, place, and generation.

At the outset of the play, as documented by Evans Chan, Mok relates the following account about Ng Chung Yin:

> Once upon a time, after the British had arrived in India and fucked up so many people's lives, the last remaining member of a certain royal line, whose kingdom had been totally destroyed by the British, sought the advice of a wise guru. He was told to go to the foothills of the Fishtail Peak in the Himalayas, where he would find a cave in which lay the secrets of how to counter the British. So he traveled for forty days and nights, finally arriving at the foot of the Fishtail Peak in the Himalayas. And sure enough, there was a cave. After using all his strength to pry open the crevice, he heard a loud rumbling sound, and lo and behold, a wisp of white smoke came out. As it ascended to the sky, it was transformed into rays of golden light. Wow! This last remaining member of a certain royal line had loosed 108 fearless men [*hao han*]! "Who are these fearless men?" you ask. Let me list them for you, one by one. . . .
>
> Let's see . . . [among them are] Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky, Mao Zedong, Chen Duxiu, Peng Shuzhi, Jiang Qing, Wang Hongwen, Zhang Chunqiao—Ah! They are all heroes with high ambitions unfulfilled. But wait a minute, No. 107 is a really kind-looking guy. Chan Yuk-cheung? There must be a mistake here. Didn't Chan Yuk-cheung have his wish fulfilled? Oh, but when we look closer . . . it is you, Ng Chung Yin! Brother Ng Chung Yin! How are you?[41]

In Chan's documentary film, Mok's enactment of this passage during his performance does not follow the written script word for word; he occasionally uses colloquial Cantonese phrases to replace some literary terms in the script. In the performance, Mok, white haired, dressed in a long gown, wearing dark glasses, and waving a fan, appears to be a comical rendition of a traditional storyteller at a teahouse. The passage alludes to classical vernacular narratives such as *The Water Margin*, which depicts 108 rebels gathered at the Liangshan marshes in a revolt against the Song emperor in the twelfth century. This passage further underscores the convention of vernacular storytelling tradition by using phrases such as "once upon a time" (*hua shuo*) and the introductory sentence "Let me tell the story in time" (*qie ting wo manman dao lai*). If storytellers have a knack for delivering

surprises to the audience, the unexpected twists here come with the framing of the classical tale of the "108 fearless men" (compounded by subtle hints of the Buddhist monk Tripitaka's journey to India in search of truth, as recorded in another classical vernacular narrative, *Journey to the West*) within the contemporary political context, as indicated by the motley crew of revolutionaries and counterrevolutionaries (depending on one's historical perspective) named at the end of the passage. This list consists of more than just theorists, activists, and politicians; it is a mix of historical and contemporary figures, foreign, Chinese, with two from Hong Kong—the local Hong Kong hero Chan Yuk-cheung, an activist who drowned at sea while trying to swim to the Diaoyu Islands during the Protect the Diaoyu Islands movement, and Ng Chung Yin. This list suggests the making of a postmodern legend in Mok's account of Ng Chung Yin, such that historical antinomies are called into question, with the heroes of past and present, regardless of which side of history they stand on, all being men with "high ambitions unfulfilled," their stories thus deserving the attention of the contemporary audience.

Radical theater groups throughout Asia have frequently drawn on traditional forms of performance in their depictions of contemporary topics, be it the folk rituals of Nepal, the traditional dance of Thailand, or the dance of Indigenous people in the Philippines. This trend was on full display at the First Asian People's Theatre Festival, according to Jessica Yeung.[42] In this context, Mok's appropriation of the Chinese storytelling convention was more than an indication of his Chinese cultural affinity; it was also a choice in keeping with the artistic conventions of Asian political theater. Storytelling captures the essence of theater as a shared experience in the community, as it depends on the "playback" of the listeners' perspectives and their everyday lives. In his influential essay "The Storyteller," Walter Benjamin uses as an example the ancient storyteller Herodotus, who in *Histories* gives the "driest" treatment of the Egyptian king Psammenitus's differing reactions toward his daughter's, son's, and servant's humiliations after he is defeated and captured. For Benjamin, this concise treatment captures "the true nature of storytelling," in that it shows the difference between a story and information. A story "does not expend itself. It preserves and concentrates its strength and is capable of releasing it even after a long time," whereas information not only lives for the moment but is predigested. Therefore, storytelling calls for a collaboration between the storyteller and the listener. Its meaning is realized and refreshed in every

instance of repetition through telling and listening, like "the seeds of grain which have lain for centuries in the chambers of the pyramids shut up airtight and have retained their germinative power to this day."[43]

Mok's opening passage uses the concise art of storytelling to the utmost dramatic effect. Not only does it leave us guessing as to what it means for Ng Chung Yin to be listed alongside such luminaries as Marx and Mao, but the assessment delivered at the end of this passage, that these are all heroes with "high ambitions unfulfilled," is largely ambiguous, inviting the listener to ask, "In what sense?" As we follow along with Mok's recounting of the most important episodes in Ng's political career—his founding of the *70's Biweekly*, his organization of and participation in various political demonstrations, the formation of the Revolutionary Marxist Union, his arrest in China followed by his alleged "betrayal" and expulsion from his own revolutionary organization—we realize that what the phrase "high ambitions unfulfilled" calls for from listeners is not so much an objective historical judgment as an affective relationship to the character. In other words, the play is set up in such a way that the most important questions asked of us are not just "Why is Ng considered a man with unrealized dreams?" or "What prevented Ng from 'fulfilling' his revolutionary dreams—his untimeliness, personal failure, or something else?" but also "How are we supposed to relate to such a man's 'high ambitions' or big dreams?" and "How do we feel about this man, who is a so-called 'failure'?" The play addresses the audience—all of us situated in the post-'70s and postrevolutionary present—from a historical distance: without attempting to close the gap of historical time and shifting values, the passage nonetheless invites us to respond to this character with empathy, identifying with his anguished protest against an oppressive society, his idealistic search for an adequate political theory, and his eventual abandonment by the revolutionary cause he helped launch, even though we do not necessarily share his political views or occupy his same camp. The story of Ng, which Mok presents here from multiple positions in the duration of the performance—sometimes telling it from a third-person perspective, at other times portraying Ng Chung Yin as conversing with Mok himself—is not meant to propagate Ng's revolutionary thought, or to create a historically accurate image of Ng. Rather, what we are to take from the performance is the resonance of the political and cultural dynamism of the *70's Biweekly* group—Ng's youthful presence exuding idealism and passion, as captured in cameo footage that was included in Evans Chan's documentary—through the artist Mok Chiu Yu, who went on to incorporate this momentum into other cultural practices.[44]

IV. Resonances Across Time

Mok Chiu Yu's performance in *The Life and Times of Ng Chung Yin* is shown several times in Ann Hui's feature film *Ordinary Heroes*, but it is not until the last thirty minutes of the film, as the camera pans out to show the surroundings, that we realize, just as Mok indicates in his essays, that it has been presented as street theater, with the audience standing around a simple stage, some mattresses and makeshift furniture representing the precarious state of living for this community of squatters, who are often referred to as "boat people." The depiction of the context is significant, for it indicates Hui's attempt to frame Mok's performance with double realistic narratives: one a story about a certain community's life and struggles, and the second a story about social activism on the streets. Hui's film thus returns to the set of questions either explicitly raised or anticipated by the Chinese language movement and the *70's Biweekly* project: How does languaging relate to Hong Kong? What form of sociality does political activism, conceived as a languaging practice, foster? How does the question of "Chinese language" relate to language uses in print culture, oral and visual performances?

Hui's film supplements Mok's theatrical text and Chan's documentary film by anchoring the narrative on the borders, both social and territorial, of Hong Kong. It foregrounds the perspectives of fictional characters subsisting on the fringes of a capitalist society—characters such as Ah Sow, the daughter of a boat squatter family, or Ah Tung, the son of an illegal immigrant from the mainland. At the same time, the film places Hong Kong's radical culture in the liminal moment between the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984, which determined Hong Kong's impending handover to China, and the outbreak of the student movement at Tiananmen in June 1989. Hong Kong in Hui's film is a quintessential border zone, a place inhabited by disenfranchised groups and disabled bodies, along with activists whose politics have been informed by a variety of religious and social thought, including Catholicism, socialism, and Marxism. The film's temporal setting is the 1980s, when economic development had catapulted Hong Kong to its status as one of the most prosperous cities in the world. These marginal characters living between land and sea, at the edge of the official Hong Kong territory, seem extremely out of place, as some of the activists' ideologies appear hopelessly passé. But it is from such places, as the film suggests, that new forms of intimacy can be conceptualized.

The film is based on an actual episode of social history involving the

struggle to resettle boat squatters off the shore of Yau Ma Tei beginning in the late 1970s. As Christopher Airriess explains, the boat squatters in 1950s and 1960s Hong Kong were former fishing households who had been forced out of the fishing industry due to a lack of funding to mechanize their vessels.[45] The Hong Kong government's depiction of this group succinctly captured their spatial and social liminality: they were defined as "fringe dwellers of our modern society, formerly seagoing boat people who now live in squatter boats which, strictly speaking, are often neither land or water. Though it is always dangerous to generalise, these persons have tended to be human flotsam and jetsam, more or less neglected by the authorities for either element—except when we wish to move them."[46] This squatter community lived on boats parked at typhoon shelters, which were themselves liminal spaces in at least two senses, according to Airriess: one, typhoon shelters were often "targets of land reclamation and thus territorialized for development purposes in a process from which government earned substantial revenue"; and two, they were also "liminal jurisdictional space," since "unlike Crown land where government possessed a legal right to appropriate the spaces and houses of land squatters, no such legal right was afforded to government beyond foreshore space; there was no such thing, in a sense, as Crown water."[47] Because of the government's ambiguous jurisdiction over the sea, the boat dwellers were not originally included in the government's resettlement plans as were some homeless people on land.

While documenting the hazardous living conditions of the boat dwellers, the film shows that their status as undocumented immigrants makes living on water much less restrictive than living on land. This precarious community thus becomes a locale of "intimacy," the term denoting, according to Ara Wilson, "modes of relatedness associated loosely with personal feelings or identifications, in contrast, at least officially, to formal interactions within governments, markets, or modern institutions."[48] Some intimate relationships have sown the seed for the characters' political awakening. For instance, using her experience as a member of the boat dwellers' community, Ah Sow grows up to be an activist and joins the struggle to obtain citizenship for the mainland wives who married Hong Kong fishermen while they were out at sea. Forbidden to set foot on the shore, these women are now confined to the boats, unable to take their children to school or partake in the urban amenities that Hong Kong has to offer.

In one instance, Ah Sow visits a mainland wife who is pregnant with her second child. Curious about what lies beyond the tall buildings abutting

the shoreline, the mother is informed by her son that there is a McDonald's onshore. In response to his nagging, the woman agrees to leave the boat with Ah Sow and eat at the McDonald's that her son has been coveting. Throughout this short trip, she is constantly worried about running into a policeman who might stop her and request to see her papers. This sequence shows that Hong Kong's coastline as a border is further inscribed onto the body of the undocumented immigrant: even after the mother has trespassed the border and entered into Hong Kong, she remains fearful that her status might be detected at any moment. Liminality as a social and psychological state of transience and uncertainty accompanies the boat squatters' community, regardless of their legal status.

Ah Sow's friendship with the mainland wife is indicative of an alternative community of intimacy formed in this liminal space. At the center of the group of activists is Ah Gam, a character who is based on a real person, a Catholic priest from Italy named Franco Mella. Neither the fictional Ah Gam nor his real-life inspiration Mella viewed Hong Kong as their final destination; rather, they always intended to cross the border to go to the mainland, and they finally managed to do so both in the film and in actuality. Yet, in the temporary state of sojourning—a form of liminality itself—Ah Gam dedicated over three decades of his life to engaging in various protests, even hunger strikes, in defense of the rights of underprivileged groups in Hong Kong. In the film, Ah Gam's political views are informed by Catholicism, Maoism, and Marxism all rolled into one. Singing "L'Internationale" in Chinese at a public demonstration and vowing to follow in the footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi during a hunger strike, Ah Gam is but an "ordinary hero," as the title suggests, forming a sharp contrast with Mok's characterization of Ng Chung Yin as a man with "high ambitions unfulfilled." Indeed, the film takes pains to depict Ah Gam as a real person, fleshing out the details of his everyday life: we get to see his living quarters on a boat, observe him giving English lessons and guitar lessons to local children, and watch as he explodes with anger when he discovers that Ah Tung has been acting irresponsibly and has neglected to care for the child of an undocumented mainland mother who has been placed under arrest by the government. We are even made to feel his unceasing toothache.

In an interview, Hui insisted that *Ordinary Heroes* is not a "political film," even though it depicts individuals "who engage in politics, or bring their political attitudes into their own lives."[49] This explains why the affective connections that the charismatic leader Ah Gam forges with the community of boat dwellers are complex, often mixing empathy with

nonidentification and misunderstanding. For instance, when Ah Tung's mother comes to Ah Gam to seek advice on how to communicate with her estranged son, the accidental revelation that she makes her living as a sex worker prompts an uncomfortable moment of silence between them. Much as Ah Gam does not know what to say about sexual exploitation, Tung's mother cannot totally accept Ah Gam's Maoist politics. When he hands her a copy of Mao's Little Red Book, she abruptly pushes his hand away, hastily explaining that she "swam" to Hong Kong, implying that she witnessed and was possibly a victim of the violence during the Cultural Revolution at an earlier time. The uselessness of Ah Gam's Little Red Book for her and others like her mirrors the disuse that Ah Tung or Ah Sow makes of Christianity. Indeed, the collective formed around the various social causes that have affected the boat dwellers' community is intrinsically heterogeneous; its members are not bound by a single set of established political beliefs. They do not share the same background, nationality, or language, and they have arrived in the Hong Kong of the 1980s with different, although similarly Cold War–inflected, structures of feeling.

Unlike Mok, Hui was not keen on representing how internal divisions and betrayals split up a revolutionary collective such as the *70's Biweekly* group or the subsequent Revolutionary Marxist Alliance. In her film, she presents a gendered, indeed feminist, interpretation of political alliance, where betrayal is shown to be inscribed on the body and affects the intimate bonds formed around the female protagonist, Ah Sow. Her love triangle with Ah Tung and Ah Kuan is the most immediate cause for her feeling of camaraderie, as well as betrayal, but this intimate feeling is not just a private affair; it has deep connections to the political landscape depicted in the film. Ah Kuan is a university student whose eloquence and political wisdom have elevated him into a natural leader in the protest movements. When he runs for election as a district councilman, he predictably wages a successful campaign. Sow, who is deeply in love with Kuan, opts to carry on an extramarital relationship with him, which leaves her pregnant and forced to travel into China to have an illegal abortion. Intimacy in this context implies a transgressive love affair outside the normative heterosexual family. Tung, who accidentally discovers Kuan and Sow's illicit affair, chooses to suppress his own feelings for Sow and instead plays the role of a loyal companion for her, consoling her and caring for her during several hardships she is made to endure. Tung's love for Sow similarly exists outside a heterosexual relationship or the normative structure of family. Yet, intimacy here is not just a love story that exceeds the bindings of a normative

family; it also refers to political affinity across racial difference, territorial borders, and geopolitical divisions.

The affection that Ah Tung has for the priest, who is a father figure for him as well as a mentor and comrade, eventually inspires Tung to follow in Ah Gam's footsteps and work on behalf of disadvantaged social groups. Given this group's intimate connection with new immigrants from China, Sow's betrayal by Kuan can be likened to the complex feelings of disappointment, disillusionment, and betrayal, but also compassion, demonstrated by many Hong Kong people during the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989. These emotions had been accentuated by the time the film was made in 1999, barely two years after Hong Kong's return to China. Hui's film includes documentary footage of large gatherings in Hong Kong supporting the student activists and commemorating the victims of the crackdown. Love, in other words, is not solely private; nor is it restricted to the private sphere of romance. Rather, it refers broadly to social care, class solidarity, camaraderie among fellow travelers, and translocal support forged among activist groups across the Hong Kong–China border. Anchored in the social margins of Hong Kong, this emotionality nonetheless charts a broader sphere of affinity beyond the borders of the city.

V. Conclusion

How does considering the Chinese language movement as an instance of languaging in the specific social conditions of Hong Kong shape our understanding of the Sinophone? In *Ordinary Heroes*, the centrality of the language question is already indicated in the film's Chinese title, *Qian Yan Wan Yu* 千言万语, which is also the title of a pop song by the Taiwanese singer Teresa Teng. Wildly popular in all Chinese-speaking communities from the late 1970s on, this song, like the majority of Teng's repertoire, is about the sense of melancholy and loss associated with an unfulfilled love affair. The title of course alludes to vows of love (*qian yan wan yu*) that may have been uttered but forgotten, never materialized but remembered still. A section of the lyric goes like this: "I don't know why / I am surrounded by melancholy / I pray every day / that this forlorn love will be chased away / Ever since the day that you promised / to love me forever / Countless words and utterances have gone with the passing clouds."[50] This Mandarin Chinese song is replayed three times at key moments in the film; its immediate relevance to the narrative has to do with Ah Sow's sadness about Ah Kuan's unfulfilled promises to her. It is surrounded by the other songs in

various music genres that make up the film's soundtrack—which, in addition to Mandarin pop, features traditional Chinese string music, rock and roll, revolutionary songs such as "I'Internationale," and the Chinese song "Bloodstained Glory," a patriotic song that was originally composed to commemorate the soldiers' sacrifice during China's war with Vietnam but later became associated with the fallen students at Tiananmen Square.

This polyphonic and multilingual soundscape has a cosmopolitan feel to it; that the phrase *qian yan wan yu* could indicate many languages or tongues supports this interpretation. But that is not my main point when it comes to the practice of languaging in this film. If we dig deeper into the classical Chinese origin of *yan* 言 and *yu* 语, we find that although they are often used interchangeably in modern Chinese, there is a difference between them: the former generally refers to speech about and addressed to oneself, more like "enunciation" or "utterance" in English; the latter usually means speaking to someone else. The precise meaning of *qian yan wan yu* thus is more like "thousands of words spoken to oneself and each other." This song, in other words, describes a dialogic exchange across the boundaries of language, geography, and politics. It also connotes a strong theme of recursive temporality: dialoguing here means performing a speech act with a promise about the future, but also remembering the past and words associated with the promise. Language ("countless words and utterances") in this case becomes simultaneously a means of addressing the future, a medium of memory ("gone with the passing clouds"), and an object of retrieval in itself (love equates to the promise of love).

The interlocutory scenarios depicted by Ann Hui's film translate the history of political activism into the memories of it kept alive through real-life situations of dialoguing and intimacy. Cultural productions such as Mok's performance and Hui's film are not footnotes to the Chinese language movement and the related political movements in Hong Kong; they are actually an extension to social activism, with the same aim of creating openings for us to rethink social relations and political structures. In proposing that we think in connected terms about the various language movements in Hong Kong and in Singapore and Malay(si)a, I have drawn attention to the specific modes of relationality of the Sinophone and the ethnic Chinese with other languages and ethnicities. The dialogue and interlocution were important for the formation of the Sinophone subject in the geographies examined this book. Language movements are bounded events whose meanings are manifested only through social languaging before and after those events. It is for this reason that we must consider the supple-

mentation of these social movements by cultural and literary articulations. Together, this Sinophone archive and repertoire demonstrate Chinese languages' entangled relationality with social and political histories of the Cold War, decolonization, migration, and settlement. The cultural and literary languaging undoes the temporal boundedness of language movements, reminding us that language is often utilized as an instrument of political struggle or a social agenda, but always exceeds that utilization. It is through continual performance, often at the so-called peripheries, that the Chinese language acquires its placedness and plurality while the memory of these social movements is relived and renewed.

Coda

History Is Not Enough

As I wrap up this book in the summer of 2025, major news outlets and public commentators alike are trying to come to grips with an emerging new world order initiated largely by the United States' redefinition of its role in a global space that it has dominated since World War II. Indeed, the recent tsunami of executive orders from the second Trump administration have threatened to upend international trade relations with new tariffs demanded by the United States. By ending several think tanks and international aid programs and reneging on its obligations to many United Nations–related organizations, the United States is revising its playbook of hard control and soft hegemony over the rest of the world. The current administration's fluctuating positions on the United States' role in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and on Russia and Ukraine have prompted many critics to decry the end of the liberal internationalism that the United States has brandished as both a carrot and a stick for decades.

Meanwhile, at the Shanghai Cooperation Summit held in Tianjin, China, in September 2025, Chinese President Xi Jinping seized the current moment to announce his own Global Governance Initiative, one that, in concert with his Global Security and Global Civilization Initiatives from a few years earlier, outlines an alternative world order that would mark the end of US dominance. According to Xi, "the Cold War mentality, hegemonism, and protectionism" have moved the world into "a new period of turbulence and transformation." His solutions to these challenges include adherence to "sovereign equality" and multilateralism.[1] Is Xi's alternative world order a signal that "the future belongs to China"?[2] Is it enough to

overcome the "Cold War mentality" that it critiques, or is it a symptomatic unfolding of a new round of Cold War competition, manifested only in part in the rapidly escalating trade war between the United States and China?

Relating my historical study of Sinophone cultures formed under the conditions of the earlier Cold War to the contemporary moment, I emphasize that it is not enough to assess the world's situation only from the points of view of the United States and China. In fact, the assumption that only the "Great Powers" matter in defining the world order is itself a manifestation of the "Cold War mentality," and it would not be "multilateralism" in any sense of the word without recognizing that human diversity has persisted despite the domination of superpowers and the standardization of the nation form since the mid-twentieth century. In this book I have examined the cultural manifestations of such diversity in places that some have erroneously labeled as the "peripheries" of the Sinosphere, showing that the cultures of these Cold War "hot spots" are uniquely positioned to teach us how to think beyond polarization, demonization of the Other, and the instrumentalization of culture for mere political power play.

Sinophone studies as a method for China studies has disrespected the territorial borders of China. This book investigates the bordering effect of the Cold War in connection to the control and management of the mobile societies of the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia and Hong Kong. It suggests that we should build on the lessons from history about how to navigate boundaries and divisions so that the transnationalism we propose for today's world will not dwindle into a presentist celebration of easy flows of people, and will not quash the diverse social and cultural ecologies in the name of some dominant interpretation of national or global culture.

In contemporary China under the current political climate, open discussions of the Cold War are frowned on by the authorities, particularly if the conversation turns from a detached study of a foreign country's experience during the Cold War to China itself—in other words, how the Cold War can be employed as a critical method to rethink the Chinese experience since the mid-twentieth century is forbidden territory for scholars within China. Countering this tendency, I will bring this study of Sinophone culture outside China to bear on China itself by thinking about socialist culture beyond what John Agnew has called the "territorial trap"—the perception that the "territorial state" is the only legitimate actor in international relations and that society's only function is to fill the empty container of the state.[3] In the contemporary period, the "territorial trap" is often consciously or unconsciously evoked to contain the Cold War as a discourse within certain spaces with clearly predefined borders. In the past few years,

for instance, the Chinese Foreign Ministry's critique of the United States' and NATO's "Cold War mentality" (*Leng zhan si wei*) has set an externalizing tone that makes it more difficult to critically reflect on China's role in the Cold War both historically and at present.

In contradistinction to the government's call for the West to leave its "Cold War mentality" behind, the Chinese feminist scholar Dai Jinhua considers how the Cold War created Chinese history. For her, the mid-twentieth century was not just a time of polarization that left us with parallel worlds with their own time and space. She views the Cold War as creating disjunctive time and space, with its purported ending in 1989 engendering a time warp for the zigzagging process of China's unfolding from socialism to globalization. China's integration into the world was not a process that proved the triumph of the West in what Francis Fukuyama has called "the end of history." Rather, Dai explains, as China was enveloped by "the post–Cold War atmosphere," it became "a dynamic zone within the global capitalist map and remained caught in bizarre cultural-political circumstances." The "Chinese government continued to use . . . the ideological discourse of socialism" to shore up its own legitimacy, hammering it home so often that the "endless repetition" of such "vacuous soliloquies" now "obscures the meaning of these enormous contemporary transformations."[4] In this post-socialist time and space, the censoring of what would otherwise be a deeply contentious discussion over the nature of Chinese society makes it impossible to recover China's socialist legacy as an alternative to Western global capitalism. China, in Dai's view, is thus situated in a post–Cold War cold war, split internally while also separating itself from the capitalist West.

For me, Dai's critique implores us to reflect on China's socialist history critically beyond the various forms of mythification and spectacularization that it was subject to by popular culture representations of recent decades. Compelling as it is, Dai's critique is internal to Chinese state socialism and remains to be confined by the bindings of the nation form. Like the concept of Cold War, China's socialism also calls for a retelling from its "tail end . . . of transmissions, movements, and events," following Odd Arne Westad's injunction.[5] Other Chinese scholars have tried to do that. Historian Jodie Sun, for one, has approached China's socialist legacy from the perspective of international relations pertaining particularly to the African states of Kenya and Zambia. She calls out the reliance on the "unproblematic past deployed in public rhetoric" in the discourse of "anti-imperialist nostalgia" that overrules contemporary China's engagement with Africa. Although this nostalgically evoked "Third World" keeps the future of the anti-imperialist project open, it has "backfired in the everyday encounters

between Chinese and Africans."[6] China's history of state socialism, in other words, cannot adequately respond to contemporary challenges even if rescued tout court without sufficient reflections on its ramifications in both domestic and international contexts.

Sun's critical perspective on the discourse of "anti-imperialist nostalgia" represents an attempt to come to terms with the bindings of the nation form in the experience of Chinese socialism. It remains to be fully recognized that historically, socialist China's championing of a Third World alliance, while acting on the momentum of the Non-Aligned Movement, did not automatically guarantee its transcendence of Cold War geopolitical divisions or its own fetishization of the nation form. In Rossen Djagalov's study of the Afro-Asian Writers Association, he observes: "That the Association was organized in a national framework and many countries' delegates acted as state representatives tied its fortunes to the vicissitudes of interstate relations." One example of geopolitical boundedness can be found when, "at the insistence of the Chinese writers, their Taiwanese colleagues could not qualify for Afro-Asian status," a policy that duplicated the Cold War structure instead of critiquing it.[7] To the extent that the global alliances of nonaligned nations remain to be read from a statist perspective that privileges the membership of the nation-state, people who could not become national subjects or who belonged to a minority group whose culture was considered to be unrepresentative of the national culture are naturally excluded from the official histories of these alliances.

This is where the comparative methods of Sinophone studies could be supplementary to our understandings of China today. Several chapters of this book delineate a circulatory history of socialism that does necessarily result in the formation of a socialist state in the end.[8] For instance, in the recent novel *Wo de Youli Xing Yiwang* (My dissociative memories), the Singapore writer Chia Joo Ming tackles the question of how to narrate Singapore's history from the perspective of the repressed Left—alleged members of the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) who were either imprisoned without trial under Singapore's Internal Security Act or exiled. The protagonist in the novel is the son of a leftist who disappeared one day, possibly to join the CPM guerrillas in the jungles. The son thus embarks on a quest, both intellectual and physical, for the history of the Left and for his father's whereabouts—a search that he undertakes while writing a master's thesis, which he has titled "The Sons of the Rubber Plantation." The narrative is episodic and fragmentary, "dissociative" in the author's words, suggesting a separation between the speaker and the leftist activ-

ists he has interviewed, and between Singapore's present and its Cold War past. Those affective and historical gaps are not meant to be closed in this narrative. If we read these activists' accounts in relation to literature on Chinese revolution or similar accounts of Communist revolutions within a comparative framework, we immediately notice how much this narrative departs from the logic of international revolution, and how, instead of championing the "hot" war of armed struggle, the leftists fought mostly a "cold war" of ideological struggle and cultural warfare. In this respect, Chia's novel can be considered as writing against the genre of the Magong (CPM) memoir, which I discussed in chapter 4.

The novelist is both nostalgic and critical toward the leftist history in Singapore. For one thing, the leftists featured in the fictional interviews in this novel speak more eloquently about their commitment to anticolonial struggles than about world revolution because they know that decolonization was a contested process and no one should monopolize the narrative about what form a nation should take after decolonization. Furthermore, they trace their radical genealogy more to the circulation of progressive culture, mostly from China: these leftist activists are identified as "the sons of Lu Xun" (*Lu Xun zhi Zi*) in the novel, and the writer makes it clear that as much as reciting the poetry of Lu Xun sustained the leftists through a brutal imprisonment, this did not address the issue of rootedness in their native land. In the interviews, the former activists approach their history self-critically, revealing "dissociation" of various kinds: of urban modernity from the rural way of life, of intellectuals from the laboring class, and of culture from its material base. Issuing this self-reflection in a postsocialist time and space, the former activists imply that this "dissociation" of multiple forms cannot be remedied through political campaigns. Outside the context of the interview, Chia's protagonist proposes an answer to these forms of "dissociation," relying on sifting through textual and material archives of the city à la Walter Benjamin. He locates the traces of the city's colonial modernity in neighborhoods that have been transformed into glitzy and standardized shopping malls. He also manages to find some "realist works of that era" depicting the laboring masses along the Singapore River, counteracting the prevailing trend among the leftists of following the developments of China's Cultural Revolution in a lockstep manner.[9]

To be sure, the history of these leftist activists should not be regarded as an extension of China's revolution or of world revolution as a China-initiated political project; it rather reveals Singapore's national history as a contested history. The historian Sunil Amrith depicts Singapore's history in the 1950s and 1960s as caught between two opposing discourses

of internationalism: one championed global citizenship and rights based on "a common struggle" of "the recent and current victims of racism and colonialism"; the other gave primacy to the development state and emphasized its mediatory role through international organs such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.[10] The Singapore Left, Amrith argues, was defeated in the late colonial and early postcolonial state's strategic manipulation of the second discourse of internationalism, which can also be traced to the complicated legacy of the Bandung Conference.

Chia's novel is an attempt at rewriting the dominant narrative of national history by opening up the island nation's hidden record of curtailing civil liberties, violating human rights, and oppressing political dissension, and by reminding us of pluralistic imaginations of the postcolonial nation at the time of decolonization. These former activists in their postsocialist era are all relegated to the social margins because of their prison records or experience of exile. Their being on the wrong side of history implies that they cannot be compared to the revolutionaries in China, where socialism has been incorporated into state institutions. But the postsocialist legacy in China also means it has become increasingly difficult to speak openly in China about the issues raised by Chia's novel—the curtailing of civil liberties, the violation of human rights, the oppression of political dissension, among others. Given that Chinese policymakers in recent decades have uniformly looked on Singapore as a successful model of spectacular capitalistic modernity in combination with neo-authoritarian one-party rule, the attempt of rewriting Singapore history in a novel such as *My Dissociative Memories* is not entirely irrelevant to the rethinking of the Chinese socialist legacy.

Chia's novel issues a counternarrative to China's discourse of "anti-imperialist nostalgia" by keeping open the possibility that socialism does not necessarily have to be accompanied by authoritarianism, and that censoring the discussion of difficult topics such as human rights or the Cultural Revolution is not endemic to socialism as theory and practice. The Sinophone intervention that this book demands is that we critically examine the "boundedness" (Djagalov's term) of historical networks of solidarity rather than approach this history nostalgically. It also requires that we identify lines of connection beyond Cold War divisions and the discrete separation of different Sinophone societies. Rethinking China's state socialist history from such a global and comparative perspective is crucial for holding on to socialism's promise of future justice against the global capitalist system.

Notes

Introduction

1. See Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson, *Border as Method, or The Multiplication of Labor* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

2. Leung Ping-kwan [Ye Si, pseud.], "A Wall Crumbles and Another Wall Comes Up," in *Travelling with a Bitter Melon: Selected Poems (1973–1998)*, ed. and trans. Martha Y. Cheung (Hong Kong: Asia 2000), 192–94.

3. Ye Si, "Weiqiang hou de Youling" [Ghosts behind the wall], in *Yuejie de Xingcheng* [Journeys across borders] (Hong Kong: Ming Bao Yue Kan Chuban She, 2009), 212.

4. Ye Si, "Weiqiang hou de Youling," 212.

5. Ye Si, "Weiqiang hou de Youling," 211, 214.

6. Ye Si, "Weiqiang hou de Youling," 213.

7. Ye Si, "Weiqiang hou de Youling," 214.

8. Ye Si, "Weiqiang hou de Youling," 223.

9. Ye Si, "Weiqiang hou de Youling," 220.

10. Ye Si, "Weiqiang hou de Youling," 221.

11. Ye Si, "Weiqiang hou de Youling," 223.

12. Ye Si, "Weiqiang hou de Youling," 223.

13. Ye Si, "Weiqiang hou de Youling," 222.

14. Gordon Johnston, "Revisiting the Cultural Cold War," *Social History* 35, no. 3 (August 2010): 294.

15. Johnston, "Revisiting the Cultural Cold War," 294.

16. Monthly Report to the Board of Trustees, November 1961, box 2, folder 14, Robert Blum Papers (MS 87), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, CT.

17. Monthly Report, November 1961, 2.

18. Monthly Report, November 1961, 4.

19. David H. Price, *Cold War Deceptions: The Asia Foundation and the CIA* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2024). See especially the section "Blum's Travels" in chap. 9, "Asia Foundation Reports as Active and Passive Intelligence."

20. Heonik Kwon, *The Other Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 18.

21. Odd Arne Westad, "Exploring the Histories of the Cold War: A Pluralist Approach," in *Uncertain Empire: American History and the Idea of the Cold War*, ed. Joel Isaac and Duncan Bell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 58.

22. Christopher E. Goscha and Christian F. Ostermann issued a call to examine decolonization and the Cold War as concurrent and intersecting histories in their edited volume *Connecting Histories: Decolonization and Cold War in Southeast Asia, 1945–1962* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

23. Kwon differentiates between the Cold War experience in Western and non-Western societies "either as an imaginary war or as other than imaginary" and "either without or with large-scale violence and human suffering." Kwon, *The Other Cold War*, 18.

24. The abundant scholarship on border studies by scholars in political geography, anthropology, philosophy, and literary and cultural studies is too vast to enumerate here in entirety. In addition to Mezzadra and Neilson's *Border as Method*, I have mainly drawn on Henk van Houtum et al., eds., *B/ordering Space* (London: Routledge, 2005); and Johan Schimanski and Stephen F. Wolfe, eds., *Border Aesthetics: Concepts and Intersections* (New York: Berghahn, 2017).

25. Étienne Balibar, "What Is a Border?," in *Politics and the Other Scene* (London: Verso, 2002), 79 (original emphasis).

26. Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish International, 2015).

27. See Chen Kuan-hsing, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), esp. chap. 3, "De–Cold War: The Im/possibility of 'Great Reconciliation.'"

28. Henk van Houtum, et al., *B/ordering Space*, 3. See the authors' prologue for a discussion of the concept of "b/ordering."

29. Shelly Chan, *Diaspora's Homeland: Modern China in the Age of Migration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 8.

30. "Linda—The Girl Who Is Still in Search of a Country," *Straits Times*, April 25, 1957, 11. The article quotes Chen's father, Chen Yueshu 陳岳書, the owner of the Chinese publishing house Shanghai Books in Singapore, as claiming that he would "send her anywhere but China," but his plea on her behalf to the British government for asylum was denied. The article spells Chen's father's name as Chen Yeh Shoo.

31. "It's Back to Red China for 120 Detainees," *Singapore Standard*, April 4, 1958, 1.

32. "Teacher Under Banishment Order Now Faces a One-Way Trip to Red China," *Straits Times*, February 9, 1951, 1.

33. In literary and cultural studies, we can find different positions on this question in the work of Andrew Rubin, Peter J. Kalliney, and Jini Kim Watson, among others. Rubin views the cultural projects sponsored by US Cold War organizations as "iterations of militarized Orientalism" in his book *Archives of Authority: Empire, Culture, and the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 7. Kalliney, on the other hand, questions the validity of the neocolonial argument as

it pertains to African literature, stating that "Edward Said, the foremost scholar of postcolonial studies, pushed the consensus view that the United States inherited the mantle of British imperialism. This may be true in terms of geopolitical history, broadly speaking, but does not explain the cultural and literary history of the twentieth century very well." Kalliney, *The Aesthetic Cold War: Decolonization and Global Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022), 247. Watson holds that in much of Asia, "decolonization unfolded *through and as* the Cold War," and thus "illiberal Asian states" had more responsibility than "the unrelenting political and moral dominance of the West" for the perpetuation of authoritarianism in much of postcolonial Asia. Watson, *Cold War Reckonings: Authoritarianism and the Genres of Decolonization* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2021), 3 (original emphasis).

34. Chen, *Asia as Method*, 1.

35. Petrus Liu, "Cold War Aesthetics in East Asia," in *Beyond Imperial Aesthetics: Culture and Politics in East Asia*, ed. Mayumo Inoue and Steve Choe (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2019), 53–54 (original emphasis). For an explication of the "quandary of two Chinas," see Liu, *Queer Marxism in Two Chinas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 16–21.

36. Prasenjit Duara, "The Cold War and Imperialism of Nation-States," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, ed. Richard H. Immerman and Petra Goedde (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 97 (original emphasis).

37. Duara, "The Cold War and Imperialism," 96–97.

38. Monica Popescu proposes a "redefinition of postcolonial studies" to "address diachronically overlapping and synchronically interweaving forms of (neo) colonial domination" in Cold War Africa. She further encourages students of African literature to move beyond the "visible forms of domination exercised by the West" to account for the "interplay and competition between Western and Eastern Bloc forms of imperialism." This point is well taken, but if our "redefinition of postcolonial studies" focuses only on "the USA and the USSR as the main imperial powers," that would leave out other, less well studied empires and the mediating role of the postcolonial nation-states in the installation of the complicated structures of hegemony during and after the Cold War. Popescu, *At Penpoint: African Literatures, Postcolonial Studies, and the Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 13, 15, 16, 18.

39. Chong Fah Hing, "Lengzhan Qianqi de Xin Ma Huawen Jinshu Qingkuang" [Banning of Chinese books in Singapore and Malaya in the early decades of the Cold War], *Dang Jin Da Ma* [Malaysiakini], November 14, 2018, updated December 1, 2018, https://www.malaysiakini.com/columns/451815. See also Jeremy E. Taylor's discussion of the late colonial Malayan state's mitigation of "the China Threat" through banning cultural imports from Hong Kong to Malaya in his article "'Not a Particularly Happy Expression': 'Malayanization' and the China Threat in Britain's Late-Colonial Southeast Asian Territories," *Journal of Asian Studies* 78, no. 4 (November 2019): 789–808.

40. Ya Li, "Jinshu yu Minzhu" [Book banning and democracy], *Nanyang Siang Pau*, January 22, 1957, 8.

41. Prasenjit Duara, "Hong Kong and the New Imperialism in East Asia, 1941–

66," in *Twentieth-Century Colonialism and China: Localities, the Everyday, and the World*, ed. Bryna Goodman and David S. G. Goodman (New York: Routledge, 2012).

42. Lui Tai-lok, "Decolonization? What Decolonization? Hong Kong's Political Transition," in *Siting Postcoloniality*, ed. Pheng Cheah and Caroline S. Hau (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022), 129.

43. Chen, *Asia as Method*, 120.

44. Law Wing Sang, "Xianggang Zhimin Zhuyi (qu)Zhengzhi yu Wenhua Lengzhan" [The (de-)politics of Hong Kong colonialism and the cultural Cold War], in *Zhimin Wujian Dao* [Retheorizing colonial power] (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2007), 79.

45. Law, "Xianggang Zhimin Zhuyi," 75–76.

46. Quoted by Madeline Y. Hsu, *The Good Immigrants: How the Yellow Peril Became the Model Minority* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 172.

47. See Li Yinghui, *Huaqiao Zhengce yu Haiwai Minzu Zhuyi: 1912–1949* [Overseas Chinese policies and overseas nationalism, 1912–1949] (Taipei: Guoshi Guan, 2018), for an authoritative account of the Guomindang's treatment of overseas Chinese affairs.

48. Li Yinghui, "Shuxie 'Dongnanya Huaren': Zhongguo Zhengju xia de Duo Chong Biaoshu" [Writing the "Southeast Asian overseas Chinese": Multiple articulations in the context of China politics], *Zhongyang Yanjiu Yuan Jindai Shi Jikan* [Publication of the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica] 121 (September 2023): 166.

49. Anthony Reid, *Sojourners and Settlers: Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese*, 2nd ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001).

50. Wang Gungwu's terms appear in various writings. Quoted by Huang Jianli in "Conceptualizing Chinese Migration and Chinese Overseas: The Contribution of Wang Gungwu," *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 6, no. 1 (2010): 7.

51. See Laurent Malvezin's conversation with Wang Gungwu. Malvezin, "The Problem with (Chinese) Diaspora," in *Diasporic Chinese Ventures: The Life and Work of Wang Gungwu*, ed. Gregor Benton and Hong Liu (London: Routledge, 2004), 51.

52. Ien Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between Asia and the West* (London: Routledge, 2001), chap. 3, "Indonesia on My Mind: Diaspora, the Internet, and the Struggle for Hybridity."

53. Shu-mei Shih, "Against Diaspora: The Sinophone as Places of Cultural Production," in *Sinophone Studies: A Critical Reader*, ed. Shu-mei Shih et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

54. Chan, *Diaspora's Homeland*, 8.

55. See Wang Gungwu, "The Chinese Revolution and the Overseas Chinese," in Benton and Liu, *Diasporic Chinese Ventures*, 198.

56. "Cofiguration" refers to the coproduction of two concepts or categories based on their equivalence and opposition to each other. See Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity: On "Japan" and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), chap. 2.

57. Gao Xin, *Zhonghua Minguo zhi Huaqiao yu Qiaowu* [The overseas Chinese

and overseas community affairs of the Republic of China] (Taipei: Zhongzheng Shuju, 1989), 65–66.

58. For a representative set of remembrances of Malaysian overseas students' experience in Taiwan, see Ng Kim Chew et al., eds., *Women Liu Tai Naxie Nian* [The years we studied overseas in Taiwan] (Kuala Lumpur: Got One, 2014). Tee Kim Tong's preface, to this volume, titled "Slow Boat to Taiwan," gives a useful historical account of different generations of overseas students in Taiwan.

59. Prasenjit Duara, "The Ernest Gellner Nationalist Lecture: Nationalism and the Crisis of Global Modernity," *Nations and Nationalism* 27, no. 3 (2021): 612.

60. There are too many recent works in different languages that seek to rethink Singapore history to enumerate here. The Singapore writer Chia Joo Ming's nonfiction work *Bu Queding de Guojia: Li Guangyao yu Xin Jia Po* [The uncertain republic: Lee Kuan Yew and Singapore] (Singapore: Shibao Wenhua Chuban Gongsi, 2023) can be considered representative.

61. See Nandita Sharma, *Home Rule: National Sovereignty and the Separation of Natives and Migrants* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), chap. 1.

62. Show Ying Xin, "Lunzhan, Xianshi, yu Mahua Geming Wenxue: Jin Zhimang de 'Ci Shi Ci Di' Shijian" [Polemic, reality, and Chinese Malayan revolutionary literature: Jin Zhimang and his practice of "here and now"], *Wenhua Yanjiu* [Router: A Journal of Cultural Studies] 32 (Spring 2021): 12.

63. Shu-mei Shih, *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations Across the Pacific* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 4.

64. Shu-mei Shih, "The Concept of the Sinophone," *PMLA* 126, no. 3 (May 2011): 711. For a discussion of the Sinophone as history versus theory, see Shih, "Foreword: The Sinophone as History and the Sinophone as Theory," *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 6, no. 1 (2012): 5–7.

65. Recent scholarship in Sinophone studies shows that this debate about the location of the Sinophone *inside* or *outside* China has already been surpassed. See Howard Chiang and Shu-mei Shih, eds., *Sinophone Studies across Disciplings: A Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2024).

66. Shih, "The Concept of the Sinophone," 711.

67. Shih, "Foreword," 7.

68. Shih, "The Concept of the Sinophone," 717.

69. See Shih, "Foreword," 7, for a discussion of Sinophone politics.

70. Chia Joo Ming, *Wo de Youli Xing Yiwang* [My dissociative memories] (Taipei: Shibao Chuban, 2024), 51.

71. Shih, "Against Diaspora."

72. Tang Junyi, *Shuo Zhonghua Minzu zhi Huaguo Piaoling* [On the scattering of flowers and seeds for the Chinese nation] (Taipei: Sanmin Shuju, 1974), 3.

73. Shih, "Against Diaspora," 32, 33.

74. Law Wing Sang, *Collaborative Colonial Power: The Making of the Hong Kong Chinese* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), 140, 141. Law's use of the term "Neo-Confucianists" to refer to the Confucianist scholars in Hong Kong of the 1950s is unconventional. They are usually referred to as proponents of "New Confucianism."

75. Ng Kim Chew, "Zhongguoxing yu Biaoyan Xing: Lun Mahua Wenxue yu

Wenhua de Xiandu" [Performativity and Chineseness: On the limits of Mahua literature and culture], in *Mahua Wenxue yu Zhongguo Xing* [Mahua literature and Chineseness] (Taipei: Maitain, 2012), 54.

Introduction to Part I

1. Law Wing Sang, "Jiedu Xianggang Wodi Dianying de Qingxu Jiegou he Bianqian" [An analysis of the structure of feeling and evolution of Hong Kong films about undercover agents], in *Zhimin Wujian Dao* [Retheorizing colonial power] (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2007), 8.
2. Law, "Jiedu Xianggang Wodi Dianying," 26.
3. Law, "Jiedu Xianggang Wodi Dianying," 27.
4. Gearóid Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space* (London: Routledge, 1996), 51.
5. Martin Müller, "Text, Discourse, Affect and Things," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Critical Geopolitics*, ed. Klaus Dodds et al. (London: Routledge, 2013), 50.
6. Müller, "Text, Discourse, Affect," 51.
7. It can be inferred from the foregoing discussion of "con-textuality" that my approach is different from the method used in the largely sociological studies or historical surveys that dominate historical studies of the Cold War cultural field. The very use of the term betrays the influence of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the literary field. For discussions of the literary field as historical context for Chinese literary studies, see Michel Hockx, "The Literary Field and the Field of Power: The Case of Modern China," *Paragraph* 35, no. 1 (March 2012): 49–65.
8. Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, 46.
9. Brian Larkin, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42 (2013): 328.
10. Penny Harvey et al., "Introduction: Infrastructural Complications," in *Infrastructure and Social Complexity: A Companion*, ed. Penny Harvey et al. (New York: Routledge, 2016), 12.
11. Penny Harvey, introduction to "Attention to Infrastructure Offers a Welcome Reconfiguration of Anthropological Approaches to the Political," by Soumhya Venkatesan et al., *Critique of Anthropology* 38, no. 1 (2018): 5–6.
12. Ye Si, "Xianggang de Gushi: Weishenmo Namo Nanshuo?" [Hong Kong stories: Why is it so difficult to tell them?], in *Xianggang Wenxue @ Wenhua Yanjiu* [Hong Kong literature as/and cultural studies] (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2002), 12.
13. Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, 46.
14. Law Wing Sang, "Xianggang Zhimin Zhuyi (qu)Zhengzhi yu Wenhua Lengzhan" [The (de-)politics of Hong Kong colonialism and the cultural Cold War], in *Zhimin Wujian Dao*, 88.
15. Law, "Xianggang Zhimin Zhuyi," 82–83.
16. See Wong Chung Ming's discussion of the political novel (*zhengzhi xiaoshuo*) in "Dao Yan" [Introduction], in *Xianggang Wenxue Da Xi 1950–1969, Tongsu Wenxue Juan Yi* [Compendium of Hong Kong literature, 1950–1969: Popular

literature, vol. 1], ed. Wong Chung Ming (Hong Kong: Education University of Hong Kong, 2023), esp. 46–49.

17. Michael Wood, "Distraction Theory: How to Read While Thinking of Something Else," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 48, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 582.

Chapter 1

1. Memorandum for the Record, "Visit to Singapore, November 18–23, 1960," 1–2, box 2, folder 26, Robert Blum Papers (MS 87), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, CT. This chapter draws in part on my article "Empire of Information: The Asia Foundation's Network and Chinese-Language Cultural Production in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia," *American Quarterly* 69, no. 3 (September 2017): 589–610. That content has been significantly revised and adapted here.

2. Monthly Report to the Board of Trustees, November 1961, box 2, folder 14, Robert Blum Papers.

3. Blum to Field Representatives, August 25, 1953, 1–2, box 1, folder 8, Robert Blum Papers.

4. Blum to Field Representatives, August 25, 1953, 1–2. Clara Geddes discusses Blum's controversial approach to "psychological warfare" in her article "Portrait of a Psychological Warrior: The Challenges Facing Robert Blum and the Asia Foundation in Establishing a U.S. Public Diplomacy Program," *Yale Review of International Studies*, October 6, 2020, https://yris.yira.org/global-issue/portrait-of-a-psychological-warrior-the-challenges-facing-robert-blum-and-the-asia-foundation-in-establishing-a-u-s-public-diplomacy-program/

5. Blum to Field Representatives, August 25, 1953.

6. See David Price, *Cold War Deceptions: The Asia Foundation and the CIA* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2024), particularly the chapter on "Funding Fronts and the Roots of the Committee for a Free Asia," for a detailed discussion of the exposure of the CIA's role in funding private foundation.

7. Robert Blum, "The Asia Foundation: Purposes and Program," *United Asia* 11, no. 5 (1959): 4, box 3, folder 42, Robert Blum Papers.

8. Irene Alexander, "'Asian Image of U.S.' Analyzed by Speaker," *Monterey Peninsula Herald*, March 17, 1956, box 4, folder 44, Robert Blum Papers.

9. Soumhya Venkatesan et al., "Attention to Infrastructure Offers a Welcome Reconfiguration of Anthropological Approaches to the Political," *Critique of Anthropology* 38, no. 1 (2018): 3–52.

10. Susan Leigh Star, "The Ethnography of Infrastructure," *American Behavioral Scientist* 43, no. 3 (1999): 380.

11. While Wang Gungwu's term "Chinese overseas" is now the preferred nomenclature, I follow the archives of the government organizations and American foundations at that time, which used "overseas Chinese." See Gregor Benton and Hong Liu, eds., *Diasporic Chinese Ventures: The Life and Work of Wang Gungwu* (London: Routledge, 2004).

12. On Bowker and Star's "infrastructural inversion," see Penny Harvey, introduction to "Attention to Infrastructure Offers a Welcome Reconfiguration of An-

thropological Approaches to the Political," by Soumhya Venkatesan et al., *Critique of Anthropology* 38, no. 1 (2018): 5–6.

13. Law Wing Sang, *Collaborative Colonial Power: The Making of the Hong Kong Chinese* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), 135.

14. Law Wing Sang attributes the first point of view to Joseph Man Chan et al., *Hong Kong Journalists in Transition* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, 1996); see Law, *Collaborative Colonial Power*, 135. For the second point of view, see Ye Si, "Jie Du yige Shenhua: Shi Tan 'Zhongguo Xuesheng Zhou Bao'" [Unpacking a Myth: Thoughts on the *Chinese Student Weekly*], *Bo Yi Yue Kan* [Bo Yi Monthly] 14 (1988): 103–9. The third perspective comes from Law himself; see *Collaborative Colonial Power*, chap. 5.

15. See, e.g., Tee Kim Tong et al., ed., *Leng Zhan, Bentu Xing yu Xiandai Xing: "Chao Foon" Yanjiu Lunwen Ji* [The Cold War, localism, and modernity: Critical essays on *Chao Foon*] (Kaohsiung, Taiwan: Center for the Humanities, National Sun Yat-sen University, 2022).

16. For interviews with former UP staff, see Lu Weiluan and Xiong Zhiqin, eds., *Xianggang Wenhua Zhong Sheng Dao* [The cultural voices of Hong Kong], vol. 1 (Hong Kong: Sanlian, 2014).

17. James Ivy to Yu Tak-Foon, November 20, 1952, file "Media, Publications, Chinese Student 1957," box P-57, Hong Kong Files (HK), Asia Foundation Records (AFR), Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

18. See the UP's proposal to the CFA: memorandum, October 21, 1951, 4, file "Media, Publications, Chinese Student 1957," box P-57, HK, AFR.

19. YUDC secretary Yien Yuen to James T. Ivy, May 4, 1952, 3, file "Media, Publications, Chinese Student 1957," box P-57, HK, AFR.

20. James Ivy to James Stewart, June 2, 1952, file "Media, Publications, Chinese Student 1957," box P-57, HK, AFR.

21. Although TAF claimed to be a private foundation, it worked closely with the American overseas bureaucratic network, including the consulates and the USIS offices. American embassies helped top TAF staff members establish and maintain the foundation's extensive network of contacts in Asia. In the detailed notes that Blum kept about his trips to Asia in the 1950s and 1960s, his itineraries include conversations with US ambassadors or consulate members and meetings with Asian state leaders, local intellectuals, and politicians, with the latter meetings often set up by American embassies.

22. Foreign Service Dispatch, "USIS–Hong Kong Country Plan," August 27, 1959, box 3, folder "Hong Kong 1959," East Asia and Pacific Country Files, 1948–1960, entry 61, Records of the US Information Agency (RG 306), National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD.

23. Quoted by Madeline Y. Hsu, *The Good Immigrants: How the Yellow Peril Became the Model Minority* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 171.

24. Executive Committee Report, May 5, 1954, 1, box 1, folder 9, Robert Blum Papers.

25. James Stewart to CFA president Ray Maddocks, March 30, 1953, file "Media, Distribution, Overseas Distribution Co. 1952/54," box P-58, HK, AFR.

26. Thomas Scott, Memorandum to All Field Representatives, "Non-Communist

Chinese Material," April 1, 1953, file "Media, Distribution, Overseas Distribution Co. 1952/54," box P-58, HK, AFR.

27. In a memorandum to Harold L. Amoss, dated February 4, 1954, and titled "The Sheeks Memorandum on 'Commercial Distribution' of Chinese Publications," Colin D. Edwards wrote, "Not only might it play an important part in influencing public opinion among overseas Chinese, but—if we can show that distributing anti-communist literature can be a commercially successful venture—it might also persuade the two publishing concerns, which presently dominate the market, to overcome their fears and get in on the act. That would multiply our success and cumulatively 'turn the tide' in all forms of media." File "Media, Distribution, Overseas Distribution Co. 1952/54," box P-58, HK, AFR.

28. Quoted by Heather Mellquist Lehto in "Grafting Missionary Infrastructures: Korean Missions to Cambodia in an IT Age," *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 25, no. 3 (2021): 394.

29. Lehto, "Grafting Missionary Infrastructures," 394.

30. General Committee Quarterly Report, April 9, 1954, box 1, folder 9, Robert Blum Papers.

31. Committee for Free Asia [Asia Foundation], "Background Information," July 1, 1953, New York Public Library.

32. Brian Larkin, "Promising Forms: The Political Aesthetics of Infrastructure," in *The Promise of Infrastructure*, ed. Nikhil Anand et al. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 176.

33. Price, *Cold War Deceptions*, 180.

34. Robert Blum, "Introduction: The Flow of People and Ideas," in *Cultural Affairs and Foreign Relations*, ed. Robert Blum (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963), 4.

35. Blum, "Introduction," 3.

36. Harvey, introduction to "Attention to Infrastructure," 5–6.

37. For discussion of TAF staff's exploratory trip to northeastern Afghanistan, see Harold L. Amoss Jr., "Report on Recent Trip to Northeastern Afghanistan," February 16, 1955, box 1, folder 10, Robert Blum Papers. For discussion of foundation work in Borneo and the Ryukyus, see Monthly Report to the Board of Trustees, March 11, 1959, box 2, folder 14, Robert Blum Papers.

38. Monthly Report to the Board of Trustees, September 3, 1958, box 2, folder 14, Robert Blum Papers.

39. Penny Harvey et al., "Introduction: Infrastructural Complications," in *Infrastructure and Social Complexity: A Companion*, ed. Penny Harvey et al. (New York: Routledge, 2016), 8.

40. Meredith Oyen, "Communism, Containment and the Chinese Overseas," in *The Cold War in Asia: The Battle for Hearts and Minds*, ed. Zheng Yangwen et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 65.

41. See Wang Gungwu, "A Single Chinese Diaspora?," in Benton and Liu, *Diasporic Chinese Ventures*.

42. Memorandum for the Record, "Visit to Kuala Lumpur, Malaya, September 12–14, 1961, and to Singapore 15, 1961," September 12, 1962, 2, box 2, folder 28, Robert Blum Papers.

43. Memorandum, "Visit to Kuala Lumpur," 2.

44. Ernest Goh, *Singapore Stories* (Amherst, MA: Cambria Press, 2010), 84–85.

45. Pat Judge to James Ivy, January 29, 1955, file "Media, Publications, Chinese Student 1957," box P-57, HK, AFR.

46. Craig Calhoun et al., "*Poiesis* Means Making," *Public Culture* 25, no. 2 (2013): 198.

47. Memorandum, "Grant to Chinese Student Weekly Society for Purchase of Quarters for Hong Kong Island Center," May 4, 1961, 5, file "Media, Publications, Chinese Student Weekly 1958–1960–61–6/62," box P-172, HK, AFR.

48. Memorandum, "Grant to Chinese Student Weekly Society," 5.

49. Memorandum by Representative, Malaya/Singapore, to TAF President, "Attacks on the Union Press," March 31, 1959, file "Media, Publishers, Union Press General 1958/59," box P-172, HK, AFR.

50. For scholarship on Chinese cultural diplomacy projects, see Lanjun Xu, "The Southern Film Corporation, Opera Films, and the PRC's Cultural Diplomacy in Cold War Asia, 1950s and 1960s," *MCLC* 29, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 239–81. A classic text that examines the influence of Chinese literary works on Malayan Chinese left-wing literature is Cheah See Kian, *Zhongguo Geming Wenxue Yingxiang xia de Mahua Zuoyi Wenxue (1926–1976)* [Malayan Chinese left-wing literature: Its influence by China's revolutionary literature (1926–1976)] (Penang: Han Chiang College, 2009).

51. Harvey et al., "Introduction," 13 (original emphasis).

52. Harvey et al., "Introduction," 13 (original emphasis).

53. Maria Yen, *The Umbrella Garden: A Picture of Student Life in Red China* (New York: MacMillan, 1954).

54. L. Z. Yuan to TAF Representative, Hong Kong, Malaya/Singapore, February 17, 1958; New York representative Ernest Howell to Hong Kong Program Officer, February 11, 1958; both item in file "Hong Kong, Individuals, YEN Maria," box P-169, HK, AFR.

55. Maria Yen to Robert Clarke, USIS, June 5, 1958, file "Hong Kong, Individuals, YEN Maria," box P-169, HK, AFR.

56. Maria Yen, "Rich Heritage," Glass Curtain, no. 2 (typescript, approx. 1958), 1. I am using the translation that was arranged by the USIS. This and subsequently cited articles by Yen in the Glass Curtain series are collected in file "Hong Kong, Individuals, YEN Maria," box P-169, HK, AFR.

57. Yen, "Rich Heritage," 3.

58. Maria Yen, "The Color Line Sharply Drawn," Glass Curtain, no. 5 (typescript, approx. 1958), 1. The phrase "stateless orphan" comes from "Two Planets," Glass Curtain, no. 7 (typescript, approx. 1958), 1.

59. Maria Yen, "Chinese Language," Glass Curtain, no. 9 (typescript, approx. 1958), 2.

60. Yuan to TAF Representative, February 17, 1958.

61. Memorandum for the Record by Pat Judge, Hong Kong Representative, "Interview with Maria Yen," August 20, 1958, file "Hong Kong, Individuals, YEN Maria," box P-169, HK, AFR.

62. Harvey et al., "Introduction," 13 (original emphasis).

63. James Beniger, *The Control Revolution: Technological and Economic Origins of the Information Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 15.

64. See the following report, released soon after the magazine was first published: Memorandum by P. C. Liu, Chinese Relations Section, to James Stewart, Director of Asian Operations, "Evaluation of the *Chinese Student Weekly*," July 30, 1952, file "Media, Publications, Chinese Student 1957," box P-57, HK, AFR. Liu's report includes only brief descriptions of select articles in a certain *CWS* issue, with one article, for instance, identified only by its title: "Newbury College, South Carolina, welcomes Chinese students." The Chinese article in contrast depicts a more complex picture: it mentions a history of racism against Chinese students in some American universities, ending with a reassurance that this history has largely been overcome by now.

65. Harvey et al., "Introduction," 12.

66. Harvey et al., "Introduction," 13.

67. Agreement with the Union Press, June 29, 1955, file "Media, Publications, Chiao Feng (Chao Foon) (Union Press), Student Garden Fortnightly," box P-135, Malaya/Singapore Files (M/SF), AFR.

68. Agreement with the Union Press (original emphasis).

69. Agreement with the Union Press.

70. Field Report for Period Ending November 30, 1959, file "Media, Publications, Chiao Feng (Chao Foon) (Union Press), Student Garden Fortnightly," box P-135, M/SF, AFR.

71. See Yang Yi, "Nanda dui Malai Yuwen suo Ying Fu Qi de Renwu" [A necessary task of Malay-language education that Nanyang University must undertake], *Daxue Luntan*, no. 9 (June 23, 1959): 4.

72. Jiang Shang Lin, "Huazu Yuwen zai Guojia zhong de Shiming" [The missions of Chinese literary education in the nation], *Daxue Luntan*, no. 11 (September 30, 1959): 11.

73. "Jiao Feng Chui Bian Lü Zhou: Fa Kan Ci" [Opening Speech at the Launch: A Banana Leaf Breeze Coursing Through the Verdant Terrain], *Chao Foon*, no. 1 (November 10, 1955): 2.

74. Li Ting, "Ci Shi Ci Di de Wenxue" [Literature of the here and now], *Chao Foon*, no. 2 (November 25, 1955): 2–3.

75. Field Report for Period Ending November 30, 1959, file "Media, Publications, Chiao Feng (Chao Foon) (Union Press), Student Garden Fortnightly," box P-135, M/SF, AFR. By 1959, Singapore was set apart from the rest of the Federation of Malaya in a state of self-government.

76. Fang Tian, *Lan Ni He de Wuye* [Sobbing of a muddy river] (Singapore: Chao Foon, 1957), 143.

77. Agreement with the Union Press, June 29, 1955.

78. Hui Jian, "Malaiya Hua Shi Shenmo?" [What does Malayanization mean?], *Chao Foon*, no. 16 (c. June 1956): 6.

79. Hui Jian, quoted in Ma Moxi, "Malaiya Hua Wenti" [Malayanization as a question], *Chao Foon*, no. 18 (July 25, 1956): 2.

80. Ma, "Malaiya Hua Wenti," 3.

81. J. Norman Parmer, "Constitutional Change in Malaya's Plural Society," *Far Eastern Survey* 26, no. 10 (October 1957): 145–52.
82. Parmer, "Constitutional Change," 148.
83. Xin Sheng [Fang Tian], "Yi Ge Da Wenti" [A big question], *Chao Foon*, no. 12 (April 25, 1956): 3–7.
84. Xin, "Yi Ge Da Wenti," 5.
85. Xin, "Yi Ge Da Wenti," 4–5.
86. Xin, "Yi Ge Da Wenti," 3.
87. Xin, "Yi Ge Da Wenti," 6.
88. Brian Larkin, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42 (2013): 334.
89. Memorandum for the Record, "Visit to Singapore, November 18–23, 1960," 1–2.
90. Lim Choon Bee, *Jiao Feng: Fei Zuoyi de Mahua Wen Xue* [*Chao Foon* and non-leftist Mahua literature] (Taipei: Shibao, 2021), 58–59.

Chapter 2

1. Memorandum by Robert Clark of USIS HK, "Publication of First Issue of Locally-Produced Rival to USIS Hong Kong Subsidized *Story Paper*," October 8, 1956, container 2, Country Files for Hong Kong, entry P380, Records of the US Information Agency (RG 306), National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD.
2. Wang Mei-Hsiang, "Mei Yuan Wenyi Tizhi xia de Tai, Gang, Mahua Wenxue Changyu: Yi Yishu Jihua *Xiaoshuo bao* Wei Li" [The literary field in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Malaysia under the USAID literary institution: A case study of the book publication program of the *Story Paper*], *Taiwan shehui kexue yanjiu jikan* [Taiwan: A radical quarterly in social studies], no. 102 (2016), 22. This article is widely cited as its discussion of the background of this publication.
3. Laura Doyle, *Inter-Imperiality: Vying Empires, Gendered Labor, and the Literary Arts of Alliance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 15.
4. Memorandum, USIS Hong Kong to USIS Washington, August 23, 1956, folder "Hong Kong, July–December 10, 1956," box 2, East Asia and Pacific Country Files, 1948–1960, entry 61, RG 306, National Archives.
5. Liu Yichang, "Xu" [Introduction], in *Xianggang Duanpian Xiaoshuo Xuan, Wushi Niandai* [Selected Hong Kong short stories, 1950s], ed. Liu Yichang (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 1997), 2–3.
6. Gearóid Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space* (London: Routledge, 1996), 47.
7. Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, 51 (original emphasis).
8. For recent discussions of martial arts fiction from Hong Kong, see Petrus Liu, *Stateless Subjects: Chinese Martial Arts Literature and Postcolonial History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012); and John Christopher Hamm, *Paper Swordsmen: Jin Yong and the Modern Chinese Martial Arts Novel* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006).

9. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 82.

10. Michael Denning, *Cover Stories: Narrative and Ideology in the British Spy Thriller* (New York: Routledge, 1987), 2.

11. Denning, *Cover Stories*, 3.

12. Denning, *Cover Stories*, 117 (added emphasis).

13. Denning, *Cover Stories*, 116–17.

14. Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, "Surface Reading: An Introduction," *Representations* 108 (Fall 2009): 6.

15. Best and Marcus, "Surface Reading," 16, 10.

16. Law Wing Sang, "Jiedu Xianggang Wodi Dianying de Qingxu Jiegou he Bianqian" [An analysis of the structure of feeling and evolution of Hong Kong films about undercover agents], in *Zhimin Wujian Dao* [Retheorizing colonial power] (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2007), 8.

17. The term "horizontal reading" has been used by Michel Hockx to describe how reading paratextual elements of a literary magazine engenders a new understanding of literary style. Hockx, *Questions of Style: Literary Societies and Literary Journals in Modern China, 1911–1937* (Leiden: Brill, 2003). My use of the term "distractive reading" emphasizes negotiating with different messages; it thus is different from Hockx's concept.

18. Michael Wood, "Distraction Theory: How to Read While Thinking of Something Else," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 48, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 579.

19. Natalie M. Phillips, *Distraction: Problems of Attention in Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), 4.

20. Tan See Kam, "Shaw Brothers' *bangpian*: Global Bondmania, Cosmopolitan Dreaming and Cultural Nationalism," *Screen* 56, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 208–9.

21. Tan, "Shaw Brothers' *bangpian*," 208.

22. Brecht used these terms to describe the effect of bourgeois theater on the audience. Quoted by Howard Eiland in "Reception in Distraction," *boundary 2* 30, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 55.

23. Eiland, "Reception in Distraction," 60.

24. Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 76.

25. Wood, "Distraction Theory," 579.

26. Best and Marcus, "Surface Reading," 11.

27. Quoted in Zhao Xifang, "Wushi Niandai de Meiyuan Wenhua yu Xianggang Xiaoshuo" [The culture of American funding and Hong Kong novels of the 1950s], *Ershiyi Shiji* [Twenty-first century] 98 (December 2016): 89.

28. Wong Chung Ming, "Dao Yan" [Introduction], in *Xianggang Wenxue Da Xi 1950–1969, Tongsu Wenxue Juan Yi* [Compendium of Hong Kong literature, 1950–1969: Popular literature, vol. 1], ed. Wong Chung Ming (Hong Kong: Education University of Hong Kong, 2023), esp. 46–49.

29. Zhao Zifan, *Ban Shangliu Shehui* [Society of the halfway up] (Taipei: Yingzhou Chubanshe, 2002), 107.

30. Jadwiga E. Pieper Mooney and Fabio Lanza, "Introduction: De-Centering Cold War History," in *De-Centering Cold War History: Local and Global Change*, ed. Jadwiga E. Pieper Mooney and Fabio Lanza (New York: Routledge, 2013), 2.

31. Pieper Mooney and Lanza, "Introduction," 3.

32. Monthly Report to the Board of Trustees, November 1961, Robert Blum Papers (MS 87), box 2, folder 14, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, CT.

33. Monthly Report, November 1961; Pieper Mooney and Lanza, "Introduction," 3.

34. Law, "Jiedu Xianggang Wodi Dianying," 8.

35. Law Wing Sang, "Xianggang Zhimin Zhuyi (qu)Zhengzhi yu Wenhua Lengzhan" [The (de-)politics of Hong Kong colonialism and the cultural Cold War], in *Zhimin Wujian Dao*, 76–77.

36. Laura Doyle, "Modernist Studies and Inter-Imperiality in the Longue Durée," in *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*, ed. Mark Wollaeger and Matt Eatough (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 672.

37. Laura Doyle, "Inter-Imperiality: Dialectics in a Postcolonial World History," *Interventions* 16, no. 2 (2014): 163.

38. Hong Kong scholar Xu Dingming provides one of the few existing discussions of Qiu Zhang in his book *Cong Shuying Kan Xianggang Wenxue* [Shadows of Hong Kong literature] (Taipei: Chuwen Chubanshe, 2019).

39. Qiu Zhang, *Xianggang Jiandie Zhan* [War of espionage in Hong Kong] (n.p.: Tiefeng Chubanshe, n.d.), 1–2.

40. Qiu, *Xianggang Jiandie Zhan*, 1.

41. Doyle, *Inter-Imperiality*, 4.

42. Qiu, *Xianggang Jiandie Zhan*, 6.

43. Qiu, *Xianggang Jiandie Zhan*, 46.

44. Qiu, *Xianggang Jiandie Zhan*, 53.

45. Tan, "Shaw Brothers' *bangpian*," 198.

46. Qiu Zhang, "Liang Tiao Haian Xian" [Parallel coastlines], in *Wu Sheng de Shou Yinji* [Silent radio] (Guangzhou: Dazhong Shuju, n.d.), 20.

47. Qiu, "Liang Tiao Haian Xian," 22.

48. Sorin Radu Cucu and Roland Végső, "*Moby-Dick* and Perpetual War," in *Handsomely Done: Aesthetics, Politics, and Media After Melville*, ed. Daniel Hoffman-Schwartz (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2019), 19.

49. Jun Ren, "Dongjing Jiandie Wang" [The spy ring in Tokyo], *Xiao Shuo Bao* [Story paper] 27 (1956).

50. Roland Végső, *The Naked Communist: Cold War Modernism and the Politics of Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012), 141.

51. *Story Paper* authorization form, June 19, 1956, box 6, Hong Kong 1950–1955, Classified General Records of the USIS, 1951–1963, Records of Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State (RG 84), National Archives.

52. *Story Paper* authorization form, June 19, 1956.

53. Memorandum, USIS Hong Kong, August 23, 1956.

54. Memorandum, USIS Hong Kong, August 23, 1956.

55. Law, "Jiedu Xianggang Wodi Dianying," 8.

56. Quoted by Zhao Xifang, *Baokan Xianggang: Lishi Yujing yu Wenhua Chang Yu* [Hong Kong in newspapers and serial publications: Historical context and cultural field] (Hong Kong: Sanlian Shudian, 2019), 392.

57. Ruan Lang, *Xiang Gang Feng Qing* [Hong Kong flavor] (Beijing: Beijing Chubanshe, 1981), 259–60.

58. Tao Ben (a.k.a. Ruan Lang), *Xiang Gang Wuyan Xia* [Hong Kong under the roofs] (Guangzhou: Guangdong Renmin Chubanshe, 1958).

59. Ruan Lang, "Wu Hui" [Misunderstanding], in *Shinian Yi Jiao Xianggang Meng* [Ten years in Hong Kong in a flash] (Nanning: Guangxi Renmin Chuban She, 1992), 148.

60. Ruan, "Wu Hui," 149.

61. Ruan Lang, "She Ya" [Fangs], in *Haishui de Xingwei: Ruan Lang Wenji* [Seawater with a fishy smell: Collected works by Ruan Lang] (Hong Kong: Joint, 2019).

62. For a discussion of this case, see Michael Share, *When Empires Collided: Russian and Soviet Relations in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macao* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2007), esp. 149–63.

63. Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 82.

64. Lu Weiluan et al., "San Ren Tan" [A conversation among three people], in *Xianggang Xin Wenxue Nian Biao, 1950–1969* [A chronicle of Hong Kong new literature, 1950–1969] (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 2000), 21.

65. Lu et al., "San Ren Tan," 19.

66. Quoted by Zhang Yongmei in *Bianyuan yu Zhongxin: Lun Xianggang Zuoyi Xiaoshuo Zhong de "Xianggang" (1950–67)* [The periphery and the center: On "Hong Kong" as represented by leftist novels in Hong Kong, 1950–67] (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 2003), 59.

67. Anne Anlin Cheng, "Skin, Tattoos, and Susceptibility," *Representations* 108 (2010): 101.

68. Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, 51.

69. Law, "Jiedu Xianggang Wodi Dianying," 8.

70. Qiu Zhang, *Taiwan Jiandie Zhan Shi Lu: Lou Wang* [True records of the war of espionage in Taiwan: Slipping through the net] (Hong Kong: Hui Tong Tushu Gongsi, 1951).

Introduction to Part II

1. Joe Cleary, "Realism After Modernism and the Literary World-System," *Modern Language Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (September 2012): 262–63.

2. Frances Stoner Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: New Press, 2000). Greg Barnhisel refers to this type of scholarship as the "revisionist" school, which he argues could be "oversimplified and conspiratorial" and "lacked a sufficiently nuanced understanding of the workings of the US government or other cultural institutions." Barnhisel, *Cold War Modernists: Art, Literature, and American Cultural Diplomacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 8.

3. For representative scholarship that examines postcolonial cultural institutions under American patronage, see Andrew Rubin, *Archives of Authority: Empire, Culture, and the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012); Peter J. Kalliney, *The Aesthetic Cold War: Decolonization and Global Literature* (Prince-

ton: Princeton University Press, 2022); and Elizabeth M. Holt, "'Bread or Freedom': The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the CIA, and the Arabic Literary Journal *Hiwār* (1962–1967)," *Journal of Arabic Studies* 44 (2013): 83–102.

4. See Rossen Djagalov, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism: Literature and Cinema Between the Second and the Third Worlds* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020).

5. See advertisements in *Lang Hua* [Waves] 20 (1967): 12–13.

6. Fredric Jameson, "Antinomies of the Realism-Modernism Debate," *Modern Language Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (September 2012): 483 (original emphasis).

7. Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson, *Border as Method, or The Multiplication of Labor* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 30.

8. Henk van Houtum et al., eds., *B/ordering Space* (London: Routledge, 2005), 3 (original emphasis).

9. Ng Kim Chew, "A World Republic of Southern Letters," in *New World Orderings: China and the Global South*, ed. Lisa Rofel and Carlos Rojas (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022), 89. See also Chan Cheow Thia's analysis of Ng Kim Chew's theorization of world literature in the introduction to *Malaysian Crossings: Place and Language in the Worlding of Modern Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2023), esp. 9–16.

10. Ng, "A World Republic of Southern Letters," 91.

11. Houtum et al., *B/ordering Space*, 3.

12. Ng, "A World Republic of Southern Letters," 90.

13. See Bai Yao, "Xing guo de bi Liu Henji" [Tracks from our journeys], in *Women Liu Tai Naxie Nian* [The years we studied overseas in Taiwan], ed. Ng Kim Chew et al. (Kuala Lumpur: Got One, 2014).

14. Nail, "Introduction: Moving Borders," in *Theory of the Border* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 6.

15. Chiara Brambilla, "Exploring the Critical Potential of the Borderscapes Concept," *Geopolitics* 20 (2015): 23.

16. Brambilla, "Exploring the Critical Potential," 23, 24.

17. Zhou Rong [Jin Zhimang], "Tan Mahua Wenyi" [On Mahua literary arts], *Zhanyou Bao*, December 26, 1947, 4.

18. Zhou, "Tan Mahua Wenyi," 4.

19. Jameson, "Antinomies of the Realism-Modernism Debate," 479, 476.

20. Liang Mingguang, "Liu Ba Nian Di Yi Sheng Ji Ti de Shihou" [When the rooster crows for the first time in 1968], quoted in Liw Pei Kien, "Xinhua Wenxue zhong de Xiandai Zhuyi, 1965–2000" [A study of modernism in Singapore Chinese literature, 1965–2000] (PhD diss., Nanyang Technological University, 2014), 90.

Chapter 3

1. Editor's afterword, *Wenyi Xinchao* [New currents in literature and the arts] 1, no. 7 (November 1956): 43.

2. Laura Doyle, "Modernist Studies and Inter-Imperiality in the Longue Durée," in *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*, ed. Mark Wollaeger and Matt Eatough (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 685. "Geomodernism"

is a term that Doyle used in the coedited volume with Laura Winkel, *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

3. Ji Xian's manifesto, titled "Xiandaipai Xintiao Shiyi" [Explanations of a modernist doctrine], was published in the February 1956 issue of *Xiandai Shi* [Modern poetry].

4. Bai Yao, "Xing guo de bi Liu Henji" [Tracks from our journeys], in *Women Liu Tai Naxie Nian* [The years we studied overseas in Taiwan], ed. Ng Kim Chew et al. (Kuala Lumpur: Got One, 2014), 24.

5. Eric Bulson, *Little Magazine, World Form* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

6. Peter J. Kalliney, "Modernism, African Literature, and the Cold War," *Modern Language Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (2015): 334.

7. Kalliney, "Modernism, African Literature," 337.

8. Kalliney, "Modernism, African Literature," 341.

9. Kalliney, "Modernism, African Literature," 346.

10. The best example in this case is *Free China* (Zhiyou Zhongguo), a cultural journal whose liberalist stance caused the Guomindang regime to arrest its editor, Lei Zhen, in 1960. The journal had an influential literary supplement that nurtured close relationships with the writers who would later launch the modernist movement. See Chen Fang Ming, *Taiwan Xin Wenxue Shi* [A history of modern Taiwanese literature] (Taipei: Wenxun Chubanshe, 2021), vol. 1, chap. 13.

11. Agreement with the Union Press, June 29, 1955, file "Media, Publications, Chiao Feng (Chao Foon) (Union Press), Student Garden Fortnightly," box P-135, Malaya/Singapore Files, Asia Foundation Records (AFR), Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

12. In TAF files, I found an article published on December 23, 1958, in the Communist newspaper *Ta Kung Pao* in Hong Kong, along with its English translation. In it, the writer called out the connection between the UP and TAF (and the covert connection to CIA funding), saying that the UP was "an intelligence office covered by a publishing business." Memorandum by Representative, Malaya/Singapore, to TAF President, "Attacks on the Union Press," March 31, 1959, file "Media, Publishers, Union Press General 1958/59," box P-172, Hong Kong Files (HK), AFR. In the case of the African literary magazines, the revelation of the CCF's connection to the CIA by investigative journalists at the *New York Times* and *Ramparts* in 1966 and 1967 in effect shuttered these magazines by alienating many local writers from these institutions. No such development can be observed with the Union Press publications.

13. Monica Popescu, *At Penpoint: African Literatures, Postcolonial Studies, and the Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020). From an article that appeared in the Nanyang University student association journal *Daxue Qingnian* (University youth) in 1960, we can roughly discern the terms of opposition in this cultural "line struggle." The author, using the pen name Du Kang, criticized what he perceived to be a prevailing tendency in Malayan literary circles to "approach literature as high-class entertainment or an emotional outlet." His criticism was voiced in the context of a positive review of a monograph titled *On the Social Value of Art*, suggesting that the divided literary sphere was aligned with the different

approaches to literary value. Championing the "unification of art's aesthetic value with its social value," Du Kang singled out "a certain publication by a 'certain outfit'" as a counterexample, arguing that this publication "served the interest of the bourgeois class with its artistic garbage." Du Kang didn't want to name his target of criticism explicitly; his readers would have known that "a 'certain outfit'" meant the literary magazine *Chao Foon*. Du Kang, "Lun Yishu de Shehui Jiazhi de Jiazhi" [The Value of *On the Social Value of Art*], *Daxue Qingnian*, no. 3 (1960): 3.

14. Chong Fah Hing, "Lengzhan Shiqi de Mahua Wenxue Bizhan" [Battles at penpoint in Mahua literature during the Cold War], *Dang Jin Da Ma* [Malaysiakini], December 6, 2019, updated December 10, 2019, https://www.malaysiakini.com/columns/502669

15. Stephen Spender, "The Modernist Movement Is Dead," *New York Times*, August 3, 1952, BR1, https://www.nytimes.com/1952/08/03/archives/the-modernist-movement-is-dead-success-and-conformity-says-spender.html; translated by Yun Fu [Ma Lang] as "Xiandai Zhuyi Pai Yundong de Xiaochen," *Wenyi Xinchao* 1, no. 2 (April 18, 1956): 2–5.

16. Yun Fu, "Xiandai Zhuyi Pai Yundong de Xiaochen," 2.

17. Spender, "The Modernist Movement Is Dead."

18. Yun Fu, "Xiandai Zhuyi Pai Yundong de Xiaochen," 2.

19. John M. Carroll, "Contested Colony: Hong Kong, the 1949 Revolution, and the 'Taiwan Problem,'" in *Critical Zone 3: A Forum of Chinese and Western Knowledge*, ed. Douglas Kerr et al. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008), 91.

20. Ma Lang, "Taiyang xia de Jie" [Streets under the sun], *Wenyi Xinchao* 1, no. 7 (November 25, 1956): 3–10. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from this story are taken from the version at the online Hong Kong Literature Database at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, which does not have the same pagination as the print version: https://hklit.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/journals1-index/

21. Du Jiaqi and Ma Lang, "Weishenmo shi Xiandai Zhuyi?—Du Jiaqi Ma Lang Dui Tan" [Why modernism? A conversation between Du Jiaqi and Ma Lang], *Xianggang Wenxue* [Hong Kong literature] 224 (August 1, 2003): 23.

22. Ma Lang used the Chinese word for depression, *xiaochen*, in place of "dead" in his translation of the title of Spender's essay. *Xiaochen* could refer both to an objective assessment of the waning of modernism as an external situation and to a psychological response. Spender's title is closer to the former.

23. Xin Chao She, "Renlei Linghun de Gongchengshi: Dao Women de Qi Xia lai!" [Come join us, engineers of the human spirit!], *Wenyi Xinchao* 1, no. 1 (February 18, 1956): 2.

24. Du Jiaqi and Ma Lang, "Weishenmo shi Xiandai Zhuyi?," 31.

25. K. K. Leonard Chan, "Wenxue yu Wenxue Shi de Duanlie yu Gengxu: 'Xianggang Wenxue da Xi 1950–1969' Zong Xu" [Disruption and continuity of literature and literary history: Volume preface to *Compendium of Hong Kong Literature, 1950–1969*], *Taiwan Wenxue Yanjiu Congkan* [NTU Studies in Taiwan Literature] 23 (February 2020): 6.

26. K. K. Leonard Chan, "Xianggang Wuliushi Niandai Xiandai Zhuyi Yundong yu Li Yinghao de Wenxue Piping" [The Hong Kong modernist movement in the

'50s and '60s and Li Yinghao's literary criticism], *Zhongwai Wenxue* [Chung Wai Literary] 34, no. 10 (March 2006): 30.

27. Ye Si, "Cong Mianhuai de Shengyin Zhong Zhujian Xiangxian le Xiandai de Shengyin: Shilun Ma Lang Zaoqi Shizuo" [Modern sounds that arose from remembrances: On the early poetry of Ma Lang], *Suye Wenxue* [Suye Literature] 5 (January 1982): 30.

28. Fredric Jameson, "Antinomies of the Realism-Modernism Debate," *Modern Language Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (September 2012): 483.

29. Liang Mingguang, "Liu Ba Nian Di Yi Sheng Ji Ti de Shihou" [When the rooster crows for the first time in 1968], quoted in Liw Pei Kien, "Xinhua Wenxue zhong de Xiandai Zhuyi, 1965–2000" [A study of modernism in Singapore Chinese literature, 1965–2000] (PhD diss., Nanyang Technological University, 2014), 90.

30. Bai Yao includes an account of his 1959 article in his memoir *Lü Yun Qian Shu* [Remembrance of years past] (Kuala Lumpur: Got One, 2016), 2:367–70; see also Ji Xian, "Xiandaipai Xintiao Shiyi."

31. Bai, *Lü Yun Qian Shu*, 2:367–70.

32. Ji Xian, "Xiandaipai Xintiao Shiyi."

33. Bai, *Lü Yun Qian Shu*, 2:368–69.

34. Bai, *Lü Yun Qian Shu*, 2:367.

35. Liang Zongdai, "Chun Shi Lun" [On pure poetry], quoted in Bai, *Lü Yun Qian Shu*, 2:233.

36. See David Der-wei Wang, "Chinese Literary Thought in Modern Times," in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Chinese Literatures*, ed. Carlos Rojas and Andrea Bachner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 603–5, for a discussion of Liang's adaptation of *xing* in his commentary on French symbolism.

37. Bai, *Lü Yun Qian Shu*, 2:382.

38. Bai, *Lü Yun Qian Shu*, 2:230.

39. Ho Sok Fong, "Jiaofeng Chuangkan Chuqi (1955–1960) de Wenxue Guan Dibian" [The evolution of literary views in the early years of *Chao Foon* (1955–1960)] (PhD diss., Nanyang Technological University, 2017), 221.

40. Bai, *Lü Yun Qian Shu*, 2:368.

41. Bai, *Lü Yun Qian Shu*, 1:208–9.

42. Bai, *Lü Yun Qian Shu*, 1:211.

43. Bai, *Lü Yun Qian Shu*, 1:282.

44. Law Wing Sang, *Collaborative Colonial Power: The Making of the Hong Kong Chinese* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), 139–40.

45. Bai, *Lü Yun Qian Shu*, 1:254–58.

46. Bai, *Lü Yun Qian Shu*, 1:280.

47. David Der-wei Wang, "Sinophone Geopoetics: From Postcolonialism to Postloyalism," in *Siting Postcoloniality*, ed. Pheng Cheah and Caroline S. Hau (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022), 213–31; Bai Yao, *Lü Yun Qiyu Lü Cao* [Green grass comes from clouds] (Kuala Lumpur: Got One, 2007), 25.

48. Bai, *Lü Yun Qiyu Lü Cao*, 25.

49. Wang, "Sinophone Geopoetics," 222.

50. Bai Yao mentions that the name of this Chinese princess has had different spellings in the Latin alphabet, including Hang Liu, Hong Lipo, and Hang Lipo. Bai, *Lü Yun Qiyu Lü Cao*, 337n1.

51. *Malay Annals*, trans. John Leyden (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1821).

52. Bai, *Lü Yun Qiyu Lü Cao*, 337n1.

53. Leon Comber, *13 May 1969: The Darkest Day in Malaysian History* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish International, 2009).

54. Teik-Huat Khor, "Jieyan Shiqe de Baozhang Biaoshu yu Richang Shenghuo: Zhong Wu Baozhang zhong de 'Wu Yi San' Xushi yu Guanfang Lunshu de Xing Su" [Newspaper reports and daily life under martial law: The narration of the May 13 Incident in Chinese and Malay newspapers and the construction of the official narrative], *Si Xiang* [Si Xiang] 43 (September 2021): 211–40.

55. *Malay Annals*, 181.

56. *Malay Annals*, 181.

57. Ruzy Suliza Hashim et al., "Circulating Women as Objects of Trade in Malay Historical Texts," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 40, no. 1 (2012): 44–45.

58. Hashim et al., "Circulating Women as Objects of Trade," 45.

59. Bai Yao, *Han Li Bao*, in *Lü Yun Qiyu Lü Cao*, 349.

60. Bai, *Han Li Bao*, 368.

61. Grace V. S. Chin, "Performance and Translation: Hang Li Po and the Politics of History," in *Translational Politics in Southeast Asian Literatures: Contesting Race, Gender, and Sexuality*, ed. Grace V. S. Chin (London: Routledge, 2021), 48.

62. Chin cites Kong Yuanzhi's count of performances between the 1960s and the 1990s. Chin, "Performance and Translation," 50.

63. Liang Mingguang's manifesto "Shall We Open a Window and Take a Look at the World Outside?" is unavailable to me. I am relying on the discussion given by Liw Pei Kien in "Xinhua Wenxue zhong de Xiandai Zhuyi, 1965–2000" [A study of modernism in Singapore Chinese literature, 1965–2000] (PhD diss., Nanyang Technological University, 2014).

64. Phoon Kwee Hian, "Xin Jia Po Huawen Xiandai Zhuyi Wenxue Yundong Yanjiu [A study of the Singapore Chinese modernist literary movement] (PhD diss., Xiamen University, 2009).

65. Bulson, *Little Magazine, World Form*, 21, 22 (original emphasis).

66. See Phoon, "Xin Jia Po Huawen Xiandai Zhuyi," chap. 9, sec. 3, for a discussion of the literary translations in *Chao Foon* from 1969 to 1974.

67. See a recent discussion of *World Today* by Shan Te-Hsing 單德興 in *Cong Wenhua Lengzhang dao Lengzhan Wenhua: Jinri Shijie de Wenxue Chuanbo yu Wenhua Zhengzhi* [Cold War to Cold War culture: The literary communication and cultural politics of *World Today*] (Taipei: Shulin Chuban She, 2022).

68. Meng Zhong Ji, "Lun Shi de Xiandai Hua" [On the modernization of poetry], *Chao Foon*, no. 205 (November 1969): 52.

69. Tee Kim Tong, "Xiangxiang Yi Ge Qianwei de Gongtongti: Tan Swie Hian yu Mahua Xiandai Wenxue Yundong 2.0" [Imagining an avant-garde community: Tan Swie Hian and the Mahua modern literary movement 2.0], in *Leng Zhan, Bentu Xing yu Xiandai Xing: "Chao Foon" Yanjiu Lunwen Ji* [The Cold War, localism, and modernity: Critical essays on *Chao Foon*], ed. Tee Kim Tong et al. (Kaohsiung, Taiwan: Center for the Humanities, National Sun Yat-sen University, 2022), 185–200.

70. Bulson, *Little Magazine, World Form*, 203.

71. Tan Swie Hian, "The Porcupine," in *Reunion and Other Stories*, ed. and trans. Ly Singko (Singapore: Heinemann Education Books, 1980), 171–72. The quote comes from Ly Singko's 1980 English translation, which reads as smoother and more error free than the 1967 translation produced by Tan Swie Hian himself. Tan's English version is more faithful to the images and metaphors of the Chinese original.

72. Tan Swie Hian, "The Porcupine," 172.

73. Mu Ling Nu [Tan Swie Hian], "Zhen Yan" [The porcupine], in *Mu Ling Nu Xiao Shuo Ji* [Short stories of Mu Ling Nu] (Singapore: Wuyue Chu Banshe, 1969), ii. Tan's English translation, titled "The porcupine," is printed at the end of the Chinese story collection, i–vii.

74. Tan, "The Porcupine," 177.

Chapter 4

1. Chong Fah Hing, "Cun er Bu Zai de Mahua Zuoyi Zuojia—Jin Zhimang" [Existing but not present: The leftist Mahua author Jin Zhimang], *Contemporary Review*, October 9, 2021, https://contemporary-review.com.my/2021/10/09/1-401/. Jin Zhimang was one of several pen names used by Zhou Shuying (1912–88).

2. The debate over Mahua literature and arts was started in 1947 by a group of writers and critics based in Singapore. For a detailed account of this debate, see Miao Xiu, "Dao Lun" [Introduction], in *Xin Ma Huawen Wenxue Daxi* [Compendium of Chinese-language literature in Singapore and Malaya], vol. 1, *Li Lun* [Theory] (Singapore: Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 1972), 6–24.

3. Ng Kim Chew, "Yi yi Feng, Yin yi Yu: Mahua Wenxue yu Ma Gong Xiaoshuo" [Clothed by the wind, quenched by the rain: Mahua literature and the Magong novel], in *Huawen Xiao Wenxue de Ma Lai Xi Ya Ge An* [Minor Literature] (Taipei: Maitian, 2015), 340.

4. Michael Löwy, "The Current of Critical Irrealism: 'A Moonlit Enchanted Night,'" in *Adventures in Realism*, ed. Matthew Beaumont (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 193–206, quoted in WReC (Warwick Research Collective), *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 83.

5. Li Zishu, "Shan Wen" [Mountain god of plague], in *Shan Wen* [Mountain god of plague] (Taipei: Maitian, 2001), 99–122.

6. In reference, for example, to Tuo Ling, the author of *Jimo Xinzhe* [Lone walker] and several other titles depicting the CPM's struggles in the jungles, Ng said: "When scholars critique his works for falling short of historical authenticity, he claims that they are just fiction, not history; yet when they critique his works from a literary standpoint, he defends his works by pointing to their historicity." Ng, "Yi yi Feng, Yin yi Yu," 412.

7. Chin Peng, *Wo Fang de Lishi* [My side of history] (Singapore: Media Masters, 2004).

8. See Colleen Lye, "Afterword: Realism's Futures," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 49, no. 2 (2016): 343–57.

9. WReC, *Combined and Uneven Development*, 67.
10. WReC, *Combined and Uneven Development*, 67, 66.
11. Lye, "Afterword," 345.
12. WReC, *Combined and Uneven Development*, 51.
13. Lauren Goodlad, "Introduction: Worlding Realisms Now," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 49, no. 2 (2016): 189–90.
14. Ngoi Guat Peng, "The Historical Discourse on the Malay Communists and Its Limitation," in *Revisiting Malaya: Uncovering Historical and Political Thoughts in Nusantara*, ed. Show Ying Xin and Ngoi Guat Peng (Petaling Jaya, Malaysia: Strategic Information and Research Development Center, 2020), 288.
15. Show Ying Xin, "Jinya zhi hou: Xinma Zuoyi Lishi de Jiyi Zhengzhi yu Dangdai Lengzhan Xushi" [After silencing: Politics of memory and contemporary Cold War narrative of the Left in Singapore and Malaysia], *Taiwan Dongnanya Xuekan* [Taiwan Journal of Southeast Asian Studies] 15, no. 2 (2020): 114.
16. Ngoi, "The Historical Discourse on the Malay Communists," 307.
17. Jin Zhimang, ed., *Shi Nian: Kang Ying Gushi Ji* [Ten years: Collected stories about the anti-British struggles] (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Abad Dua Puluh Satu, 2013), ser. 9, 3:233.
18. Jin, "Bian Hou" [Afterword], in Jin, *Shi Nian*, ser. 1, 1:69.
19. Jin, "Bian Hou," in Jin, *Shi Nian*, ser. 2, 1:165.
20. Jin, "Bian Hou," in Jin, *Shi Nian*, ser. 4, 2:90–91.
21. Jin, "Bian Hou," in Jin, *Shi Nian*, ser. 4, 2:90.
22. Jin, "Bian Hou," in Jin, *Shi Nian*, ser. 6, 2:251.
23. Brandon Taylor, "Socialist Realism: 'To Depict Reality in Its Revolutionary Development,'" in Beaumont, *Adventures in Realism*, 143.
24. Li Li, "How to Tell a Story of Imprisonment: Ideology, Truth, and Melodramatic Body in the Making of *Red Crag*," in *The Making and Remaking of China's "Red Classics": Politics, Aesthetics, and Mass Culture*, ed. Rosemary Roberts and Li Li (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 47.
25. Li, "How to Tell a Story of Imprisonment," 48.
26. Li, "How to Tell a Story of Imprisonment," 46.
27. Jin Zhimang, "Qian Yan" [Preface], in Jin, *Shi Nian*, ser. 1, 1:4 (emphasis added).
28. Mary Louise Pratt, "Transculturation and Autoethnography: Peru, 1615/1980," in *Colonial Discourse / Postcolonial Theory*, ed. Francis Barker et al. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 28 (original emphasis).
29. Fan Ping, "Zai Chi Bu Bao de Rizi Li" [In the days of hunger], in Jin, *Shi Nian*, ser. 4, 2:76.
30. Fan, "Zai Chi Bu Bao de Rizi Li," 77.
31. Jin, *Shi Nian*, ser. 1, 1:36.
32. Ng Kim Chew, "Zuihou de Zhanyi—Lun Jin Zhimang de *Ji E*" [The last battle: On *Hunger* by Jin Zhimang], in *Huawen Xiao Wenxue de Ma Lai Xi Ya Ge An*, 319, 325.
33. Jin Zhimang, *Ji E: Kang Ying Minzu Jiefang Zhanzheng Changpian Xiaoshuo* [Hunger: A novel of the Anti-British National Liberation War] (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Abad Dua Puluh Satu, 2008), 198, 178.

34. Jin, *Ji E*, 159.

35. Katerina Clark, "Socialist Realism *with* Shores: The Conventions for the Positive Hero," in *Socialist Realism Without Shores*, ed. Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 28.

36. Clark, "Socialist Realism *with* Shores," 47.

37. Clark, "Socialist Realism *with* Shores," 43.

38. Jin Zhimang, "Qian Yan", ser. 1, 1:4 (emphasis added).

39. Ng Kim Chew, "Why Does a Failed Revolution Also Need Fiction? On the Mahua Genre of Failed Revolutionary Historical Fiction," *Prism: Theory and Modern Chinese Literature* 19, no. 2 (2022): 424.

40. M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 16.

41. Ng Kim Chew, "Dang Women Shuxie Magong" [As we narrate about Magong] in *Xiyang zhi Ge: Magong Xiaoshuo Xuan* [Songs at the setting sun: A collection of Magong stories], ed. Ng Kim Chew and Tee Kim Tong (Kuala Lumpur: Got One, 2023), 11.

42. Hai Fan, *Yulin Gaosu Ni: Youji Shantou, Heping Cunli* [Thus spoke the rainforest: On mountaintops and in peace villages] (Kuala Lumpur: Gerakbudaya Enterprise, 2014).

43. Boris Groys, "A Style and a Half: Socialist Realism between Modernism and Postmodernism," in Lahusen and Dobrenko, *Socialist Realism without Shores*, 78–79.

44. Hai Fan, *Yulin de Beiying: Changpian Xiaoshuo* [The back views of the rainforest: A novel] (Kuala Lumpur: Got One, 2023).

45. Hai, *Yulin de Beiying*, 204.

46. Hai, *Yulin de Beiying*, 177–98.

47. I base this information on the radio transcripts of this CPM radio station archived in the Center for Malayasian Chinese Studies in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. It is unclear whether recordings of the actual broadcasts still exist.

48. Gaik Cheng Khoo, "Filling the Gaps of History: Independent Documentaries Re-Present the Malayan Left," in *Cultures at War: The Cold War and Cultural Expression in Southeast Asia*, ed. Tony Day and Maya H. T. Liem (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 258.

49. Khoo, "Filling the Gaps of History," 258.

50. Matthew Beaumont, "Introduction: Reclaiming Realism," in Beaumont, *Adventures in Realism*, 2.

51. Khoo, "Filling the Gaps of History," 262.

52. Davide Cazzaro, "The Page and the (Video) Camera: Conversation with Amir Muhammad," in *Southeast Asian Independent Cinema*, ed. Tilman Baumgärtel (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), 238.

53. George Levine, "Literary Realism Reconsidered," in Beaumont, *Adventures in Realism*, 16.

54. Carlo Bonura, "The What-Has-Been and the Now of a Communist Past in Malaya in the Films of Amir Muhammad," *positions: asia critique* 29, no. 1 (2021): 50 (original emphasis).

55. Bonura, "The What-Has-Been and the Now of a Communist Past," 54.
56. Cazzaro, "The Page and the (Video) Camera," 240.
57. Cazzaro, "The Page and the (Video) Camera," 240, 235.
58. Ng Kim Chew, "Nagaruka: Lü Tai yu Magong" [Nagaruka: Sojourning in Taiwan and Magong], in *Huawen Xiao Wenxue de Ma Lai Xi Ya Ge An*, 303.
59. Ngoi, "The Historical Discourse on the Malay Communists," 288.
60. Khoo, "Filling the Gaps of History," 258.
61. Deng Wanqing, "Liao Kefa: Women Xuyao Henduo Henduo Jilupian lai Chuli Lishi" [Lao Kek Huat: We need many, many documentaries to delve into history"], *Dang Jin Da Ma* [Malaysiakini], June 10, 2018, updated January 28, 2019, https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/429095
62. Jed Esty and Colleen Lye, "Peripheral Realisms Now," *Modern Language Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (September 2012): 269.
63. Esty and Lye, "Peripheral Realisms Now," 270.
64. Lau Kek Huat, interview by C. K. Tan, streamed live October 7, 2020, on the Singapore Chinese Film Festival channel, YouTube, 1:10:36, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WcmcNSFpudA
65. Fredric Jameson, "Realism and Utopia in *The Wire*," *Criticism* 52, nos. 3–4 (Summer/Fall 2010): 363.
66. Jameson, "Realism and Utopia in *The Wire*," 365.

Introduction to Part III

1. Yang Quee Yee, *Yang Gui Yi Huiyi Lu: Jiaotong yu Zidian* [Yang Quee Yee's memoir: Child rubber tapper and dictionary] (Singapore: Nanda Education and Research Foundation, 2006), 11.
2. The concept of "topolect," which rejects the hierarchy of dialect versus Mandarin, was proposed by Victor H. Mair in "What Is a Chinese 'Dialect/Topolect'? Reflections on Some Key Sino-English Linguistic Terms," *Sino-Platonic Papers*, no. 29 (September 1991): 1–31, https://sino-platonic.org/complete/spp029_chinese_dialect.pdf
3. Naoki Sakai, "How Do We Count a Language? Translation and Discontinuity," *Translation Studies* 2, no. 1 (2009): 84, 83.
4. Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity: On "Japan" and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 6.
5. Naoki Sakai, "Translation," *Theory, Culture and Society* 23, nos. 2–3 (2006): 73.
6. A. L. Becker, "Language and Languaging," *Language and Communication* 11, no. 1/2 (1991): 34.
7. Chua Beng Huat, *Liberalism Disavowed: Communitarianism and State Capitalism in Singapore* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2017), 149.
8. Chua Beng Huat, "Racial Singaporeans: Absence After the Hyphen," in *Southeast Asian Identities: Culture and the Politics of Representation in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand*, ed. Joel S. Kahn (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1998), 34.
9. Chua, "Racial Singaporeans," 35.
10. Chua, *Liberalism Disavowed*, 44.

11. Robert W. Hefner, "Introduction: Multiculturalism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia," in *The Politics of Multiculturalism: Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia*, ed. Robert W. Hefner (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 29.

12. Rachel Lowe, *Taming Babel: Language in the Making of Malaysia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 206.

13. Lowe, *Taming Babel*, 211.

14. Lionel Wee, "Language Policy Mistakes in Singapore: Governance, Expertise and the Deliberation of Language Ideologies," *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 21, no. 2 (2011): 211–12.

15. See Ting-Hong Wong, *Hegemonies Compared: State Formation and Chinese School Politics in Postwar Singapore and Hong Kong* (New York: Routledge, 2002), chap. 7.

16. This was reported by Yiu-wai Chu in *Found in Transition: Hong Kong Studies in the Age of China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2018), 100.

17. Chua, *Liberalism Disavowed*, chap. 3.

18. Jini Kim Watson, *Cold War Reckonings: Authoritarianism and the Genres of Decolonization* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2021), 6.

19. Petrus Liu, *Queer Marxism in Two Chinas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

20. See Quah Sy Ren's discussion of multiculturalism before independence in "Imagining Malaya, Practising Multiculturalism: The Malayan Consciousness of Singapore Chinese Intellectuals in the 1950s," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 16, no. 1 (2015): 96–112.

21. Chu, *Found in Transition*, 96.

22. Chu, *Found in Transition*, chap. 3.

Chapter 5

1. *The Asian-African Students' Conference* (Bandung: Indonesian National Preparatory Committee for the Asian-African Students' Conference, 1956), 107.

2. *The Asian-African Students' Conference*, 108–9.

3. Lysa Hong links the same history to the leftist factions and political detainees in Singapore. See Hong, "Revisiting Malaya: Malayan Dream or Singapore Nightmare," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 16, no. 1 (2015): 24–34.

4. Chua Beng Huat, *Liberalism Disavowed: Communitarianism and State Capitalism in Singapore* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2017), 149.

5. Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledge, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 254.

6. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, 226.

7. Linda Chen Mong Hock, "Let's Learn the National Language," *Fajar: Monthly Organ of the University Socialist Club* 2, no. 1 (July 1959): 3.

8. "Seminar on the National Language," *Fajar* 2, no. 2 (August 1959): 7.

9. "The National Language Seminar," *Fajar* 2, no. 3 (September 1959): "Seminar Supplement," i.

10. "The National Language Seminar," i.

11. "The National Language Seminar," iii.

12. The term "stifled Malayans" comes from a December 1954 article published in *Fajar*, according to Loh Kah Seng and his coauthors. See Loh et al., *The University Socialist Club and the Contest for Malaya: Tangled Strands of Modernity* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2013), 83. See also chap. 4 for a discussion of the club's socialist activities in the mid-1950s.

13. Lim Chin Joo, *Wode Hei Bai Qingchun* [My youth in black and white] (Singapore: Library @ The Garrett, 2014), 200.

14. Loh et al., *The University Socialist Club*, 102.

15. Loh et al., *The University Socialist Club*, 104.

16. Loh et al., *The University Socialist Club*, 103.

17. Loh et al., *The University Socialist Club*, 103–4.

18. "Whither English-Educated?," *Fajar* 2, no. 1 (July 1959): 2.

19. "The Chinese Schools," *Fajar* 3, no. 8 (1961): 1–2.

20. Huang Jianli, "Positioning the Student Political Activism in Singapore: Articulation, Contestation and Omission," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 7, no. 3 (2006): 406; see also Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish International, 2015).

21. *Zhong Tu Shanghai Shu Ju Bashi Zhounian Jinian Kan* [Shanghai Books Eightieth Anniversary Special Issue] (Singapore: Shanghai Books [CNPIEC], 2005), 58.

22. Meeting memo, Shanghai Books, November 9, 1961, Shanghai Shu Ju Zhen Cang: Ganbu Huiyi ji Tongren Dahui Jilu Bu, 1945–1983 [Shanghai Books archive: Staff and board meeting records, 1945–1983], Lee Kong Chian Reference Library, Singapore.

23. Yang Quee Yee, "Shijie Shuju dui Malai Yuwen de Gongxian" [The contributions of World Books to Malay language and culture], in *Hua Ma Wenhua Luncong* [Collection of articles on Chinese-Malay cultural exchange], by Yang Quee Yee (Kuala Lumpur: Center for Malaysian Chinese Studies, 2014), 341–49.

24. For a discussion of "national autochthonies," see Sharma, *Home Rule*, 7–14.

25. The Chinese education movement in Malaya has been meticulously documented in Tay Lian Soo's four-volume *Malaixiya Huawen Jiaoyu Fazhan Shi* [*History of the Development of Chinese Education in Malaysia*] (Kuala Lumpur: United Chinese School Teachers' Association of Malaysia, 2003), and various collections of the public writings of the leader Lim Lian Geok. A representative volume is *Lin Lian Yu Xiansheng Yanlun Ji* [Collected speeches of Mr. Lim Lian Geok], ed. Tay Lian Soo (Kuala Lumpur: LLG Cultural Development Center, 2003).

26. Naoki Sakai, "How Do We Count a Language? Translation and Discontinuity," *Translation Studies* 2, no. 1 (2009): 73.

27. Sakai, "How Do We Count a Language?," 74–75.

28. See Tay Lian Soo's discussion of Malaysia state media's coverage of the formation of the National Language Action Front Committee in 1964, which portrays the latter as promoting an "an inappropriate model" of nationhood. Tay, *Malaixiya Huawen Jiaoyu Fazhan Shi* [*History of the Development of Chinese Education in Malaysia*] 4:119.

29. Tay, *Lin Lian Yu Xiansheng Yanlun Ji*, 82.

30. Goh Siew Poh, "Fanyi Mahua de Zhengzhi Xing" [The politics of translating Mahua], in *Sixiang Mo Luo Liu: Hua Ma Wenshi Sanlun* [Roaming thoughts of a Mara rebel: On Chinese Malaysian culture and history], by Goh Siew Poh (Kuala Lumpur: Gerakbudaya Enterprise, 2021), 146.

31. Yang Quee Yee, "Mahua Wenxue Zhong de Malai Yuwen Fanyi Zuopin" [Malaysian Chinese literature and literary translations from Malay], in Yang, *Hua Ma Wenhua Luncong*, 108–29.

32. One example is *Daxue Qingnian* [University youth], published by the Chinese Literature Research Society of Nanyang University beginning in September 1959. Translations of and critical essays about Malay writers belonging to ASAS '50, such as Usman Awang and Keris Mas, as well as a short story by the Indonesian writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer and articles on Malay literature, were published during the short history of this magazine, which had its final issue in 1962. *Daxue Qingnian* also organized a critical session on *Chao Foon* for its modernist penchant. ASAS '50's motto, "Art for Society," matched well with the socialist realist aesthetics promoted by the magazine. But *Chao Foon* also published some of the same authors from the ASAS '50 group, albeit a few years later.

33. Yang Quee Yee, "Guoqi de Fangtan" [An overdue interview], in Yang, *Hua Ma Wenhua Luncong*, 384.

34. Goh Siew Poh, "Wu San Yi Wenxue Yundong: Fanyi, Guoyu yu Tuanjie" [The May 31 literary movement: Translation, national language, and unity], in Goh, *Sixiang Mo Luo Liu*, 153.

35. See Sakai's discussion of translation in "How Do We Count a Language? Translation and Discontinuity" and *Translation and Subjectivity: On "Japan" and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

36. Lim Choon Bee, *Jiao Feng: Fei Zuoyi de Mahua Wen Xue* [*Chao Foon* and non-leftist Mahua literature] (Taipei: Shibao, 2021). See the chapter on "Duli Qian zhi Jiaofeng yu Malaiya zhi Guozu Xiangxiang" [*Chao Foon* before independence and its national imagination of Malaya], esp. 80–82.

37. Letter to the editor, *Chao Foon*, no. 218 (February 1971): 8.

38. Eric Bulson, *Little Magazine, World Form* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

39. Liang Yuan, "Wo Yinxiang zhong de Malai Wentan" [My impressions of the Malay literary world], *Chao Foon*, no. 220 (April/May 1971): 40, 41.

40. Goh Siew Poh demonstrates how translations of works by Usman Awang (a.k.a. Tongkat Warrant) punctuate significant moments in Sinophone Malaysian cultural history and reveal its underlying political divisions. Goh, "Mahua Wenhua Zhong Wu Si Man A Wang Xianxiang de Yanbian, 1955–2021" [The Usman Awang phenomenon in Mahua culture, 1955 to 2021], in *Kua Yu Yue Du: Mahua Wenxue Lun Ji* [Crossing boundaries: Essays on Sinophone Malaysian literature], ed. Tee Kim Tong et al. (Gao Xiong, Taiwan: Guo Li Zhongshan Daxue Wanwen Xi Fanyi yu Wenxue Yanjiu Shi, 2024), 229–70.

41. Liu Chuan, "Ping A La Di·Ka Da Mi Ha Ja de 'Ye Zi Shu'" [On "Coconut Tree" by Achdiat Karta Mihardja], *Chao Foon*, no. 220 (April/May 1971): 103–12.

42. Muhammad Haji Salleh, *An Introduction to Modern Malaysian Literature* (Kuala Lumpur: Institut Terjemahan Negara Malaysia Berhad, 2009), 75.

43. Gu Ming and Qiu Rui He, "La Ti Fu de Shijie—La Ti Fu Fangwen Tan" [Latiff's world: An interview], *Chao Foon*, no. 220 (April/May 1971): 222.

44. Gu and Qiu, "La Ti Fu de Shijie," 223.

45. Gu and Qiu, "La Ti Fu de Shijie," 225.

46. Here I am citing Mansor Ahmad Saman's English translation of Latiff's poem. See *Sungai Mekong, Mekong River* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka, 1981), 3.

47. M. Balfas, "La Ti Fu yu Mei Gong He" [Latiff and Mekong River], trans. by Mei Shuzhen, *Chao Foon*, no. 220 (April/May 1971): 190.

48. Bai Yao, editorial notes, *Chao Foon*, no. 220 (April/May 1971): 249.

49. I am relying on Goh Siew Poh's account of Chong's research here. See Goh, "Fanyi Mahua de zhengzhixing," 148. The figures Chong provides seem to be slightly off.

50. Goh, "Fanyi Mahua de zhengzhixing," 148.

51. Two edited volumes are worthy of attention: Tee Kim Tong et al., eds., *Huidao Malaiya: Hua Ma Xiaoshuo Qishi Nian* [Return to Malaya: Stories by Chinese Malaysian writers, 1937–2007] (Kuala Lumpur: Mentor, 2008); and Chong Fah Hing and Tee Kim Tong, eds., *Perjalanan Malam: Kumpulan Cerpen Pilihan Taiwan-Malaysia* [Ye Xing: Tai Ma Xiaoshuo Xuan Yi; Night Journeys: Selected Taiwan-Malaysian Fiction in Translation] (Tainan: National Museum of Taiwan Literature, 2017).

52. For Chong Fah Hing's discussion about self-translation for Mahua writers, see Chong, *Guojia Wenxue—Zaizhi yu Huiying* [National literature: Hegemony and response], ed. Chong Fah Hing (Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Shing An Selangor Dan Wilayah Persekutuan, 2006).

53. See the articles included in Chong's *Guojia Wenxue—Zaizhi yu Huiying* on the debate between Malay and Anglophone literature. Chong's Chinese renditions were first published in local newspapers such as *Nanyang Siang Pau*.

Chapter 6

1. "Zhongwen ying yu Yingwen bing lie wei Guanfang Yuyan" [Chinese should be counted as an official language like English], *Xue Yuan* [Undergrad], no. 14 (November 1, 1967): 1.

2. Xianggang Zhuan Shang Xuesheng Lianhui, *Xianggang Xuesheng Yundong Huigu* [A recollection of student movements in Hong Kong] (Hong Kong: Guangjiaojing Chubanshe, 1983), 14.

3. Steve Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 189.

4. Quoted in Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong*, 190.

5. *The First Report of the Chinese Language Committee* (Hong Kong: Government Printer, February 1971), 1.

6. *The Fourth (and Final) Report of the Chinese Language Committee* (Hong Kong: Government Printer, July 1971), 9.

7. Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong*, 206.

8. This comment was made by the Secretariat for Chinese Affairs officer Xu Jiaxiang 徐家祥 in an in-depth interview conducted for the University of Hong Kong

student publication, in which he went to great lengths to downplay the significance of the movement, suggesting that traditional Chinese culture or authentic Chinese language was not suitable for a modern city like Hong Kong. See "Yu Huamin Zhengwu Si Xu Jiaxiang Xiansheng Tan Zhong Ying Wen Bing Lie Wei Fading Yuyan Wenti" [A conversation with Mr. Xu Jiaxiang of the Secretariat for Chinese Affairs on the question of "making Chinese an official language along with English"], *Xue Yuan*, December 16, 1967, 1.

9. Pan Mu, "Zhimindi de Fa Ding Yuyan" [Official language of a colony], *Chung Ji Xuesheng Shuang Zhou Bao* [Chung Chi Biweekly], August 20, 1967, 5.

10. "Zhongwen Fa Ding, Min Quan zhi Shi" [Making Chinese an official language is the first step toward defending human rights], *Student Press Chung Chi College*, October 9, 1970, 2.

11. Quoted by Law Wing Sang, "Leng Zhan zhong de Jie Zhi: Xianggang 'Zhengqu Zhongwen Chengwei Fading Yuwen Yundong' Pingxi" [Decolonization in the era of the Cold War: An analysis of Hong Kong's "Chinese language movement"], *Thinking Hong Kong* 6 (March 2015): 19, https://www.thinkinghk.org/v602

12. Roman Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," in *On Translation*, ed. Reuben Arthur Brower (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 232–39.

13. Rey Chow, *Not like a Native Speaker: On Languaging as a Postcolonial Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 45.

14. Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 24.

15. Yiu-wai Chu, *Found in Transition: Hong Kong Studies in the Age of China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2018), 106.

16. Jessica Wai-yee Yeung, *Xianggang de Di San Tiao Daolu: Mo Zhao Ru de An Na Qi Minzhong Xiju* [The third way for Hong Kong: Mok Chiu Yu's anarchist people's theater] (Hong Kong: Typesetter, 2019), 69.

17. Law, "Leng Zhan zhong de Jie Zhi," 19.

18. See Yeung, *Xianggang de Di San Tiao Daolu*.

19. See the English article "The Nationalists in Hong Kong and Hong Kong Students" by the *Undergrad* editors, *Xue Yuan*, February 1, 1968, 7.

20. According to Law Wing Sang, the author of the China-affiliated *Wen Hui Bao* article held that "Hong Kong is part of Chinese inviolable territory, and over 90 percent of Hong Kong residents are Chinese"; "that Chinese is naturally Hong Kong's major language goes without saying." Thus it was self-deprecating for activists to demand that Chinese be officially acknowledged as equal, as if they were "looking for approval from the colonialists." Law, "Leng Zhan zhong de Jie Zhi," 15.

21. Hu Wenmin [Ng Chung Yin], "Zhongwen Yundong de Shuguang" [The dawn of the Chinese Language Movement], reprinted in *Da Zhi Wei Jing* [Dreams unfulfilled], by Wu Zhongxian (Hong Kong: Wu Ye Li Rong, 1997), 141.

22. Hu, "Zhongwen Yundong de Shuguang," 141.

23. Ng Chung Yin, "Xuesheng de Geming" [Students' revolution], reprinted in Wu, *Da Zhi Wei Jing*, 154.

24. For information about titles published in the *70's Biweekly*, I rely on the tables of contents provided by Jessica Yeung at "'Xianggang de Di San Tiao Daolu: Mo Zhao Ru de An Na Qi Minzhong Xiju' Fulu" [Appendix to "The third way for Hong Kong: Mok Chiu Yu's anarchist people's theater"], Typesetter Publishing, accessed March 10, 2026, https://typesetter.hk/mokbiblio/

25. Editorial, *Qi Ling Niandai Shuang Zhou Kan* [*70's Biweekly*], no. 20 (August 1, 1970): 11.

26. This phrase comes from a play about Ng by Mok Chiu Yu, which I discuss in the next section of this chapter. It was later used as the title of a collection of Ng's essays.

27. Ng, "Xuesheng de Geming," 156.

28. Ng Chung Yin, "Di San Ci Geming" [A third revolution], reprinted in Wu, *Da Zhi Wei Jing*, 178–79.

29. Ng, "Di San Ci Geming," 177–78. The reference for "GIS" is unknown.

30. Allen Ginsberg, "Befriending Trees," interview, *Qi Ling Niandai Shuang Zhou Kan*, March 1971, 16–17.

31. Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 19.

32. Ng Chung Yin, "Ba Yue de Zha Ji" [Notes from August], reprinted in Wu, *Da Zhi Wei Jing*, 162.

33. See Yeung's account of this incident in *Xianggang de Di San Tiao Daolu*, 121.

34. Mok Chiu Yu et al., Untitled opening remarks, in *Da Feng Chui Qi Shi* [When the big wind blows: Four plays of Asian People's Theatre], ed. Mok Chiu Yu et al. (Hong Kong: Asian People's Theatre Festival Society, 1999), n.p.

35. Mok Chiu Yu, "Xunzhao Minzhong Xiju Zhi Er" [In search of the people's theater, part 2]. In *Huozhe Yishi, Huozhe Geming: Mo Zhao Ru de Yishu Shizhan* [Maybe art? Maybe action? The matter of acts of Mok Chiu Yu], ed. Vivian Leong and tomcatt (Hong Kong: International Association of Theatre Critics, 2004), 43.

36. As it turns out, Ng's political thinking took a Trotskyist turn in the early 1970s, when he visited Paris, where he met and was influenced by the first-generation Chinese Trotskyist revolutionary Peng Shuzhi. Upon returning to Hong Kong, he learned that the other editors of the *70's Biweekly* were not amenable to incorporating their activist collective into the Fourth International, the global Trotskyist organization led by Ernest Mandel. He subsequently parted ways with the magazine and founded a separate organization, the Revolutionary Marxist Union. In the late 1970s, Ng articulated his support for the activists involved with China's Democracy Wall movement, some of whom had been imprisoned by the Chinese government. He was arrested by the Chinese police in the late 1970s during a secret trip to China to liaise with democracy activists in Beijing. He finally managed to return to Hong Kong, but only after agreeing to collaborate with the Chinese government as a condition of his release. He was in turn suspected by his Marxist comrades in Hong Kong of being a traitor and was subsequently expelled from the organization. For the rest of his life, until his death in 1994, Ng served in various positions in mass media in order to make a living, including a stint as an editor of the Hong Kong edition of *Playboy* magazine.

37. A New Yorker, "*The Life and Times of Ng Chung Yin* (a Hong Kong Story)," in Mok et al., *Da Feng Chui Qi Shi*, 109.

38. Colin Wan Chi Hong, "Women de Lü Cheng" [Our journey], in Mok et al., *Da Feng Chui Qi Shi*, 143.

39. Li Rusi, "Xianggang de Yi Ren Yi Gushi Jucang" [Playback theater in Hong Kong], in Leong and tomcat, *Huozhe Yishi, Huozhe Geming*, 72.

40. "Performances at the Hong Kong Arts Center," in Mok et al., *Da Feng Chui Qi Shi*, 112.

41. Asian People's Theatre, *Wu Zhong Xian de Gushi* [The life and times of Ng Chung Yin], in Mok et al., *Da Feng Chui Qi Shi*, 114. The quoted passage is based on the English subtitles of Evans Chan's 2003 documentary of the same name. The Chinese script of the play, along with its English translation, is included in the book *When the Big Wind Blows*, but the two versions are quite different. The quoted passage, for instance, is not included in the English translation of the play, which also served as the script for the play's 1998 New York production. The omission is likely because the passage contains culturally specific information that might be considered difficult to understand for American audiences.

42. Yeung notes that at the first Asian People's Theatre Festival, "the contrast of the Hong Kong theater groups that used mainly Western and contemporary forms . . . [was] noticeable." *Xianggang de Di San Tiao Daolu*, 165–66.

43. Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 90.

44. Throughout the play, Mok's performance is dynamic. He hops up and down on a bench, waves a flag, and breaks into a dance, all the while helped along by a silent actor whose role changes from scene to scene. Sometimes the second actor's dance-like movements illustrate the rather abstract statement enunciated by Mok; at other times, he serves as a silent interlocutor for Mok, who plays Ng Chung Yin.

45. Christopher A. Airriess, "Spatial Liminality as Moral Hazard and Boat Squatter Toleration in Post–World War Two Hong Kong," *Habitat International* 44 (2014): 124.

46. Airriess, "Spatial Liminality as Moral Hazard," 124, quoting a 1966 memo from the secretary of Chinese Affairs to the colonial secretary.

47. Airriess, "Spatial Liminality as Moral Hazard," 124.

48. Ara Wilson, "Intimacy: A Useful Category of Transnational Analysis," in *The Global and the Intimate: Feminism in Our Time*, ed. Victoria Rosner and Geraldine Pratt (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 32.

49. Xu Anhua [Ann Hui] and Kuang Baowei, *Xu Anhua Shuo Xu Anhua* [Ann Hui on Ann Hui] (Shanghai: Fudan Daxue Chubanshe, 2010), 94.

50. The original Chinese lyrics are as follows: "不知道为了什么 / 忧愁它围绕著我 / 我每天都在祈祷/快赶走爱的寂寞 / 那天起你对我说 / 永远的爱著我 / 千言和万语随浮云掠过."

Coda

1. Xi Jinping, "Pooling the Strength of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to Improve Global Governance," speech delivered to the State Council of the People's Republic of China, September 1, 2025, https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202509/01/content_WS68b584acc6d0868f4e8f53c8.html

2. Ross Douthat, "Does the Future Belong to China?," *New York Times*, September 4, 2025, https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/04/opinion/china-global-superpower-dan-wang.html

3. John Agnew, "The Territorial Trap: The Territorial Assumptions of International Relations Theory," *Review of International Political Economy* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 53–80.

4. Dai Jinhua, "Introduction," trans. Jie Li, in *After the Post–Cold War: The Future of Chinese History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 6.

5. Odd Arne Westad, "Exploring the Histories of the Cold War: A Pluralist Approach," in *Uncertain Empire: American History and the Idea of the Cold War*, ed. Joel Isaac and Duncan Bell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 58.

6. Jodie Yuzhou Sun, *Kenya's and Zambia's Relations with China 1949–2019* (Woodbridge, UK: James Currey, 2023), 186, 185.

7. Rossen Djagalov, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism: Literature and Cinema Between the Second and the Third Worlds* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020), 82.

8. See Prasenjit Duara, *The Crisis of Global Modernity: Asian Traditions and a Sustainable Future* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), especially chap. 2. By "circulatory history," Duara means to emphasize that "the historical profile of a community is crisscrossed and shaped . . . by numerous scales of interactions with circulatory networks and forces" (54).

9. Chia Joo Ming, *Wo de Youli Xing Yiwang* [My dissociative memories] (Taipei: Shibao Chuban, 2024), 95–96.

10. Sunil S. Amrith, "Asian Internationalism: Bandung's Echo in a Colonial Metropolis," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 6, no. 4 (2005): 557–69.

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