The aim of this series is to publish original, high-quality work by both new
and established scholars in the West and the East, on all aspects of media,
culture and social change in Asia.

Hong Kong Film, Hollywood and the New Global Cinema
No film is an island

Edited by
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Contents

Characters in the film try to survive by adjusting to the 'chi [*qi*] of New York City' without losing their identities or sanity. The film offers a way to think about difference in diasporic identities and experiences, but is particularly critical of (as are most of the Hong Kong films I've studied) American Born Chinese characters – particularly men – who are essentialised as lacking something – in this case a 'real' sense of historical identity. As Chu Yingchi notes, Thomas, a Chinese American Chinese husband married to a Mainland woman, does not understand his wife's wish to bring her mother to New York because he lacks a deep understanding of how history has wounded both mother and daughter. (As movie critic Paul Fonoroff notes, this is particularly incongruous because Thomas actually speaks fluent Mandarin.[29]) Another critique of American men generally is, as Chu observes, present in the subplot between Huang (Taiwanese actress Sylvia Chang) and the men in her New York City existence. Chu notes, '[W]ith her American boyfriend, Huang's conversation is about who owns what (earrings and a few books). With the Taiwanese man, her conversation revolves around family members, their past in Taiwan, their present in New York, and their passion for Chinese culture'.[30]

A distinct impression left by several of these films is that the immigrant existence in New York brings with it the danger of mental instability or psychosis. *Full Moon in New York*, *Comrades*, and *An Autumn's Tale* are more hopeful narratives than *Farewell China* and *Crossings*. Audrey Yue has written about *Farewell China* as a psychodrama not only showing the dark side of New York but exposing how national crisis in both the United States and China take a toll on children of the diaspora. Yue sees the film as portraying 'the unspoken reality of mental illness which afflicts many Chinese students struggling overseas'.[31]

Conclusion

I have offered a few ideas about how to read Hong Kong films as they connect with US history, culture, and identity. Flipping the script on Hollywood paves the way for a consideration of how the United States (and its people and culture) appear from the perspective of other national and quasi-national cinemas. Hong Kong films exercise a form of 'soft power', to use Joseph Nye's term, in their ability to cajole movie-going Americans into taking a look at themselves in a different light. As these films address American people, places, modes of exceptionalism, culture, and history, they offer important albeit often marginalised perspectives that merit closer and more sustained consideration.

4 Hong Kong television in Chinatown

Translocal context(s) and transnational social formations

Amy Lee

Chinatown and racialisation

Chinatown has long been a complex and prototypical site for the study of Asian American racialisation in Asian American Studies. In literary and cultural studies, the racialised character of Chinatown manifests itself most poignantly in representations of Chinatown as Orientalist spectacles,[1] and in the form of stereotypical images of the Chinese, as figures of the mysterious and unknown. In her study on Vancouver's Chinatown, Kay Anderson argues quite forcefully that Chinatown is a discursive construction, an idea of place that is coterminous with ideas of race. The idea of Chinatown, like ideas of race, relies on representations, cultural assumptions and institutions (as well as the complicity of the community) that give these ideas legitimacy. Moreover, these ideas are for the most part a 'European creation':[2] 'Chinatown is a social construction with a cultural history and a tradition of imagery and institutional practice that has given it a cognitive and material reality in and for the West.'[3] White Europeans used Chinatown to produce, reproduce and manage popular notions of the Chinese. And because racialisation (the making of racial categories) and place formation are mutually constitutive and enforcing acts, 'Chinese' and 'Chinatown' became interchangeable terms in the popular imaginary.

Of particular interest to scholars is to explain the reasons for and stakes in the production of these racialised images. Lisa Lowe offers a compelling explication of the project of Asian American racialisation. She argues that Asian American racialisation allows the US to work through the contradictions between its desire for a homogenous and abstract citizenry and its needs for cheap, exploitable labour. The racialisation of the Chinese, along with other groups, serves as the basis for the consolidation of US national culture through the apparatus of exclusion. At the same time, racialisation allows for the maximisation of capitalist accumulation through the exploitation of racialised labour. Hence, 'Asian immigrants and Asian Americans have been neither "abstract labour" nor "abstract citizens," but have been historically formed in contradiction to both the economic and the political

spheres'.[4] By extension, Chinatown, as a racialised spatial category, can be posited in contradiction to the US national and economic spheres through its abjection from national space and as the location where exploited labour takes place. Studies on racialisation, in effect, define Chinatown primarily in relation to the national sphere in which it is located and to the Western imaginary.

More and more, recent studies on Chinatown situate it in relation to transnational processes and global structures. In Jan Lin's study on New York's Chinatown, he observes how the informal sector (i.e. vending) and advanced transnational sector (i.e. banking) sit in 'direct juxtaposition'.[5] This has led Laguerre to call Chinatown an 'informal capital city', a centre built on informal institutions, linked to satellite clusters, 'reinforced by its global relations' and the institutions and global relations of the formal city (i.e. New York, San Francisco).[6] In Asia, a number of factors such as the accumulation of trade surpluses, political uncertainty and favourable trading provisions have caused many investors to divert their investments to the US.[7] Because most of the overseas Chinese investments follow Chinese settlements in the US, many of these investments are funnelled through Chinatowns.[8] Many cities in the US, like New York City, also actively woo these overseas investors in order to finance urban development projects. As a result, the influx of foreign investment from Asia has played a significant role in redeveloping Chinatown and at the same time exacerbating its class contradictions.[9] In these studies, the issue of racialisation is no longer the primary concern in understanding constructions of Chinatown.

In light of these recent discussions on Chinatown and its imbrication in global capitalist structures, how might we understand the ways in which the racial character of this spatial category has not been elided but re-constituted? This is an important question given the 'denationalising' trends in recent formulations of Asian American Studies.[10] Denationalisation has paved the way for us to conceptualise Chinatown's horizontal relationship with a wider Chinese diaspora and Asia, specifically Hong Kong,[11] thus revising long-standing understandings of Chinatown as situated primarily in a hierarchical relationship with the US nation-state. Ensuing these globalising trends is a seeming diffusion of the centrality of race in the constitution of Chinatown. For instance, Aihwa Ong and Donald Nonini understand race, or rather cultural identity, as a strategic tool that can be manipulated by *racialised subjects* in the interests of capitalist accumulation. They describe Chinese cultural identity as a *flexible* relation 'of persons and groups to forces and processes associated with global capitalism and its modernities'.[12] Trans-national Chinese publics develop flexible strategies of accumulating capital by colluding with state structures at times and transgressing them at others.[13] In a similar vein, Kwai-Cheung Lo argues that in contemporary Hong Kong diasporic cinema, the diaspora is no longer based on 'a hierarchical relationship between the Chinese cultural core and the peripheral status of

the dispersed Chinese communities' (Lo calls this the 'Middle Kingdom complex'), or for that matter on any essentialist notion of 'Chineseness'. These films aim instead to transnationalise the local, in other words to 'remake or dislocate a given space' in order to better facilitate cultural and economic flows. Hence, he observes: 'the local stands for the transnational Chinese'.[14] For example, in Hong Kong films, Chinatown is a popular shooting location for films about migration and the Chinese diaspora but other than serving as a disengaged backdrop, Chinatown receives little in-depth exploration.[15] Rather, it seems that by de-localising Hong Kong, it is possible to replicate it everywhere. At the same time, other diasporic spaces such as Chinatown are made porous for transnational flows. I am interested in how racialisation, which appears to be placed under erasure in a global world more interested in economic and cultural flows than race or ethnicity,[16] take place. Just like diasporic forms, racial forms also change according to cultural and capitalist needs, which are more and more informed by the transnational. The goal of this essay is to elucidate an understanding of racial formation in Chinatown, as it intersects with gender and class formations, that takes into consideration the relationship between trans-nationalising forces and the persistent claims of US racism, which far from being alleviated are further exacerbated by transnational processes. The transnational processes I am interested in exploring are those associated with diasporic movements, colonialism and late capital.

Chinatown serves as a buffer zone, enabling the entry of much-needed capital while containing its excesses through its abjection from the nation-state. Likewise, Asia is able to prevent its own excesses from undoing its capitalist success story by channelling them through Chinatown both formally and informally (i.e. as in the case of money laundering). Whereas Asia alleges cultural proximity to Chinatown, the US alleges cultural distance; these dual processes in Chinatown expose the collusion of Asian and American capitalist interests. Peter Kwong specifically explores the relationship between Hong Kong and Chinatown in his article, 'New York is Not Chinatown', in which he argues that the influx of Hong Kong migrants, capital and industrial know-how to the US and the concomitant economic boom in New York City's Chinatown paved the way for Chinatown to develop into a replica of Hong Kong. However, capitalist speculation, US Dickensian business practices and racism created instead a backwards ethnic ghetto, thus eliminating all possibilities for modernisation.[17] Hong Kong, therefore, may be culturally similar but in the end, proves superior, thus rationalising its speculative actions in Chinatown. The figure of Chinatown as backwards and ghettoised is effected through Chinatown's disjunctive relationship with Asia and America, a figuration that alleviates as much as it threatens to expose the contradictions of US and Asian capital.

Hong Kong television and the mediation of transnational racial formations

This essay explores the transnational racial, class and gender formations constituting Chinatown with particular reference to its relationship with Hong Kong, as mediated through the circulation of Hong Kong television serials. While political, economic and social structures all play a crucial role in racialising Chinatown, the racial character of Chinatown comes through most forcefully in cultural representation, probably because culture plays the most important role in producing and reproducing our ideas of Chinatown. It is for this reason that I choose a cultural site, i.e. television, as the object of my study. Yet, exploring the racial character of Chinatown simply through representations of Chinatown says little about the transnational nature of racial formations. This is because representations of Chinatown, for the most part, do not address the complexity of its transnational relationships. The task at hand is to find a new way of thinking about Chinatown – not as a stable define-able object, which then appears in representation – as a location that is, in Appadurai's terms, 'primarily relational and contextual rather than as scalar or spatial'.[18] How does this concept of locality relate to the 'actual' and 'reproducible' forms of locality such as the 'neighbourhood'?[19] Neighbourhoods, according to Appadurai, emerge out of specific historical circumstances, out of certain contexts.[20] Yet, in a world where different contexts and localities inform people's allegiances, the neighbourhood risks the dangers of 'corrosion'.[21] In other words, our sense of locality as being in a neighbourhood has been complicated by a sense of locality that crosses multiple sites. Furthermore, what is distinctive about our changing sense of locality in today's world is the impact of 'mass mediated discourses and practices'.[22] Our sense of locality in Chinatown is one that has been eroded and mediated by mass media, i.e. the global circulation of Hong Kong television serials. Might this cultural imaginary constituted by transnational media relations say something about race in a transnational framework that Chinatown as a representative object does not?

Such an inquiry would require that we consider the ways in which circulation (i.e. the circulation of Hong Kong TV) is in itself a 'cultural phenomenon'.[23] The circulation and consumption of mass media in Chinatown may constitute meanings in ways that differ from those that have been produced within Asian American culture traditionally. If, as Lee and LiPuma posit, 'the (post)modern transformation of social imaginaries is being accompanied by the emergence of inter-translatable transnational forms',[24] then we need to examine how these forms translate in and transform the Chinatown social imaginary.[25] Of course, this is not to say that representations do not matter; in fact, this essay is for the most part an analysis of TV representations, but that context(s) (i.e. the manner of circulation) delimit and inform the ways in which we read these representations. Hong Kong

TV's *circulation* to US Chinatowns provides a context for analyzing these televisual representations as constitutive of Chinese American subjectivities and for asking how these representations *speak to* Chinatown, a relationship that cannot be founded in representation alone. Although Hong Kong TV may be an alternative site of culture (i.e. alternative to the US), whether or not it functions as a *counterculture* in a subversive way is an open question. After all, global mass media has often been associated with hegemonising and homogenising strategies. Perhaps we should think of TV as a site for witnessing and elucidating different cultures of modernity, giving rise to what Grewal and Kaplan call 'scattered hegemonies'.[26]

In recent Hong Kong diasporic films,[27] the transnationalised space of Hong Kong is easily mapped onto the space of Chinatown like a spatial palimpsest, which invites us to consider how each of these spaces are constructed through the other. Though Hong Kong TV representations do not re-create this spatial palimpsest, I argue that they nonetheless perform an allegorical function that mediates the relationship between Hong Kong and Chinatown, similar to the work of the palimpsest. My understanding of allegory is borrowed from Lisa Lowe, who argues: '[T]he concept of allegory presumes that social and historical processes are not transparent, taking place through what Benjamin calls "correspondences" rather than through figures that represent or reflect a given totality.'[28] By employing the use of allegory, I understand the relationship between Hong Kong and Chinatown as one that is not based on analogy or resemblance but on 'displaced, mediated connections'.[29] The figurations of colonialism, postcoloniality, globalism and modernity within Hong Kong TV do not *reflect* the processes of racialisation and globalisation in Chinatown per se, but in pointing out their contradictions and excesses, I show how they illuminate a *different* sense of globalism and racialisation in Chinatown from the stereotypical one. Furthermore, the circulation of HK TV elucidates the *disjunctures* between Asian identity and Asian American identity, postcolonial and multicultural discourses, Asian modernity and American capitalism and melodramatic excess and working class politics. What is *not shown* in the figures of American and Asian American representations of Chinatown may in a paradoxical way show up in the figures of Hong Kong television. My concern in this essay, therefore, is not in how Chinatown is represented on Hong Kong TV but how its absence from the text directs us to other ways it may be *figured*, through abstract social relations in a globalising economy, into the televisual text.[30] Far from seeing Chinatown as an isolated ghetto, this essay attempts to situate it in a global network, vis-à-vis Hong Kong and its television culture.

In this essay, I analyse the treatment of domesticity and its excesses in a popular Hong Kong TV serial, *Looking Back in Anger* (義不容情, TVB, 1987).[31] I argue that its representation of domesticity and its excesses allegorises and critiques the racialised and gendered logic of modernity. Most importantly, I consider the ways in which Chinatown is implicated in

the complex race, class and gender relations that layer this narrative. By exploring the nature of the Hong Kong – Chinatown relationship produced through the circulation of this TV text, this essay seeks to contribute to our understandings of race, gender and class in a transnational framework.

Looking Back in Anger tells the story of two brothers over a period of 30 to 40 years. The narrative begins with the execution of their mother for a murder she did not commit. They are both adopted into a family of orphans, who are all raised by a surrogate mother, Wan Yi. The bulk of the narrative takes place in the 1980s amidst talks of Hong Kong's return to China. While Hong aims to become rich and powerful by all means necessary, including murder, his older brother Geen is much more concerned with keeping his promise to this mother to take care of the family. For Geen, being a good son, brother and friend is far more important than acquiring social status or material wealth.

Colonial inequalities and the birth of the Hong Kong family empire

Looking Back in Anger begins by foregrounding the gendered nature and class biases of the colonial government, as embodied in its legal system. The year is 1961 and Geen's mother, married to a hopeless and penniless husband, steals a wallet in a fit of desperation. It turns out the wallet was originally stolen from a man who had been murdered. She is caught by the police but instead of charging her with theft, they charge her with the murder she did not commit based on faulty evidence and presumptions. The key witness in the case, himself facing rape charges, never saw the actual crime but lies in order to convict the woman. In exchange, he wants the court to lift the rape charges against him. The court, obviously more interested in prosecuting a murder case than a rape case, complies. The colonial court system, therefore, actively reproduces gender norms and practices that make it easy to both criminalise women and belittle the crimes against them.

While inequalities are staged in the courtroom, colonial institutions nonetheless offer sites where these inequalities are actively contested, such as universities. The prosecutor repeats Geen's mother's case in a university lecture at Hong Kong University (Hong Kong's oldest tertiary institution) many years later, which Geen happens to overhear. He challenges him, asserting his mother's innocence. He tells the lecturer that they were hiding at home at the time of the murder because they did not have any red envelopes to give out on Chinese New Year. The lecturer laughs and calls the excuse preposterous; he claims that anyone, no matter how poor, could surely afford to pack some red envelopes. Geen responds, 'When you're poor, you're poor. You have nothing'. Geen intervenes at this very important site of knowledge production in colonial history and reverses the erasure of class and gender politics that made it possible to wrongfully execute a poor Chinese woman. Though colonial structures, as exemplified by the

Hong Kong television in Chinatown 69

legal system and university, produce inequalities through difference, their presumed 'democratic' practices also provide a site that encourages contestation. This dramatisation of contention, in turn, accentuates colonialism's reliance on patriarchy, capitalism and racism and their material consequences. Yet, in the end, Geen's intervention has no actual material consequences. Geen resorts to his family as a site where he can make change by loyally providing support and improving their circumstances. Even Hong, whose dream is to become a lawyer, gives up for fear that the handover would overturn the Commonwealth legal system, dashing his hopes of ever practicing. He turns to the market instead, determined to come out successful and rich. The dual structures of the family and the market, in short, eclipse the significance of the colonial regime in the Hong Kong imaginary.

If the colonial administration forms the central structures of dominance in Hong Kong in the 1960s, it is quickly superseded by the family empire, built on family-run corporations, in the 1980s. The family empire is typically run by the patriarch of the family, who is also the CEO of his family's corporation which wields its power through capitalist accumulation. In fact, the family empires stand in for the colonial structures, and the predominance of their patriarchal rule over the household and the corporation eclipses the signs of British colonialism. On the surface level, their rule is of a more innocuous kind, one that relies on familial love and loyalty. When one of the family corporations in *Looking Back in Anger*, Ngai Si, is in danger of getting bought out by a rival corporation, the CEO breaks down in tears over the prospect of losing a business built up by four generations of his family. He sees the corporation as an object of affection to be absorbed into the family structure. Running the corporation becomes naturalised as familial duty and rite of passage for men. The corporate fantasy merges with the patriarchal family romance, which together supersedes colonial narratives of self and 'other'.

It is not surprising that the family-corporate drama would be such a popular TV genre given that the colonial government's strategy of economic development and governance had aimed to promote laissez-faire economic policies, while at the same time avoiding the creation of mechanisms for civic and political participation and the provision of social services. This resulted in a society structured around familialism and individualism.[32] According to Eliza Lee, the ideology of utilitarian familialism and economic individualism fostered 'an instrumental view toward society and the state: society and the state exist merely to advance the material interest of individuals and their family members' and the belief that 'their life chances are largely determined by their individual efforts'.[33] It is for these reasons that the familial and the corporate would come to represent both the private and public/political lives of Hong Kong people on Hong Kong TV dramas, while thwarting any possibility for national consciousness.[34]

Allegories of modernity

Looking Back in Anger allegorises for Chinatown viewers the experiences of racial discrimination, and class and gender inequalities under British rule. Yet, this narrative is quickly superseded by the birth of the Hong Kong family empire, which offers the fantasy of overcoming the inequalities perpetuated by the colonialism through the promises of unrivalled capitalist opportunities made possible only by eclipsing the role of the colonial government and replacing it with the family and its sense of economic individualism. Since state apparatuses have taken quite a visible role in Chinatown's sense of oppression, this is a fantasy certainly worth having.[35] In a way, this fantasy mirrors the Model Minority myth that defines Asian American racialisation; that is, Asian Americans unlike other racialised minorities have been able to overcome inequalities and become 'successful Americans'. Chinatown has in its own way taken up the ideologies of familialism, ethnic solidarity and economic individualism in order to overcome the obstacles set up by the US nation-state. Both the Model Minority Myth and the myth of the Hong Kong family empire occlude the role of the state. Yet, as *Looking Back in Anger* illustrates, capitalist success achieved through ethnic solidarity and familialism is dependent on the reproduction of social inequalities. Primarily a working class community, Chinatown sees in the family empire the faces of their own oppressors. Chinatown is by no means a unified community; some of the worst injustices that people in Chinatown face are suffered at the hands of their co-ethnic employers and landlords. In this sense, the circulation of Hong Kong TV drama serials, far from forging a unified diasporic imaginary, works instead to highlight the contradictions of uneven global relations that underwrite diasporic visions, capitalist modernity and their intersections with state discourses. Hence, the fantasy of individualism and familialism does not offer a viable alternative to racism; it is merely symptomatic of the racist nature of the state.

Though full of contradictions, *Looking Back in Anger* does attempt to develop a shared diasporic imaginary and identity through its treatment of history. Perhaps it is no accident that *Looking Back in Anger* begins its narrative with the early history of Hong Kong, usually from the 1960s onwards, given the fact that many Chinatown residents started migrating from Hong Kong in the late 1960s after the passing of the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act. This historical narrative not only interpellates Hong Kong subjects into a televisual version of history but through its global reach also interpellates Chinatown subjects, many of whom have migrated from Hong Kong and can therefore make claims on Hong Kong history. History is important in Hong Kong TV narratives not only because it helps to solidify a sense of Hong Kong identity but also in order to ensure the popularity of these serials overseas, by drawing in audiences that share this sense of history. In short, the globalisation of Hong Kong popular media promises the development of a Hong Kong diasporic identity, one based in the representation of popular history.

The narrative trajectory of *Looking Back in Anger* is for the most part an account of a family's progression from rags to riches. By virtue of the narrative's investment in the notion of 'starting from scratch', it ensures a wide audience across a Chinese diaspora familiar with experiences of displacement and relocation. It appeals to Chinese immigrants in US Chinatowns not necessarily because it helps to forge a discursive identification with a prior homeland but because narratives of immigration, building a home and Asian modernity lend themselves easily to transnationalisation.[36] How Chinatown understands its relationship to building a home in the United States is largely informed through its encounter with fantasies of modernisation brought there through Hong Kong TV. In other words, Hong Kong TV narratives are not necessarily rooted in a diasporic culture, which invokes Chinatown viewers to articulate a relationship with Chineseness as an essentialist identity but are instead rooted in a form of immigrant culture, which by transnationalising the local through the trope of immigration and assimilation, produces an image of migration and settlement thoroughly mediated by global changes brought on by Asian modernity.

By forging a sense of intimacy between viewers and the grandiose families of TV melodramas, TV also forges a sense of intimacy between viewers and the histories that interpenetrate the familial. The family feud in *Looking Back in Anger* is intricately embedded in colonial politics (a legal injustice that one lawyer helps to perpetuate is remembered and invoked by the family of the victim years later), thus illuminating the ways in which colonial modernity has through and through intervened in traditional forms of intimacy. As the case of *Looking Back in Anger* reveals, sites of intimacy very often mediate what we understand to be diasporic, political, economic and historical.

There is another sense of the historical that I want to invoke here – though a tentative formulation at the moment – that surfaces from the nature of TV's circulation. For the Chinatown that took part in Hong Kong history but never became Hong Kong, Hong Kong popular culture is also perhaps a signifier of its lack of modernisation and its time-lag vis-à-vis Hong Kong. Indeed, what is popular in Chinatown is almost always guaranteed by its popularity in Hong Kong, a trace of Chinatown's enduring relationship with Hong Kong rather than an independent cultural phenomenon. In other words, Chinatown is always on the receiving end of Hong Kong culture. The popular becomes a marker of temporal (and I would also say class) difference and it is this difference along with the lack of Chinatown representations on TV dramas that signifies the historical processes of uneven development in modernity and solidifies Chinatown's alterity to US and Asian modernities.[37]

The crisis of capital: contradictions of class, race and gender

Although the family romance obscures the significance of colonialism in Hong Kong in the 1980s, the impending crisis of 1997 unleashes middle-class

anxieties about the end of capitalism and family empires. Hong, like many others, tries to profit from the Sino-British talks by capitalising on the talks' impact on the market. Soon, talk of the end quickly dissipates and post-colonial discourse becomes merely another excuse to play it big. The crisis of colonialism, therefore, becomes the motivator behind the fervour of capitalist activity in *Looking Back in Anger*.

This fervour is probably no better exemplified than by Hong. Not only does he play the market rigorously, he schemes to marry the daughter of the CEO of one of Hong Kong's most prominent corporations in order to pave his road to the top. He sees his marriage as purely an economic transaction and while this is a defining characteristic of the family empire, Hong makes no pretences about the romance of family and love. As such, Hong unmistak-ably exposes the contradictions of the family romance and its function in naturalising and depoliticising the ideology of capitalism.

In *Looking Back in Anger*, Hong's turn towards evil comes full circle not in Hong Kong but in Malaysia. He kills both his ex-girlfriend and foster mother there and freely returns to Hong Kong. Malaysia is represented as a place unlike Hong Kong. It is a place where murder is possible, where generals can invoke great fear in ordinary people, where little Indian boys steal and sell the goods they find on dead bodies and where brown men are savagely killed by the police near crowded train stations. In one provocative scene, Geen's ex-girlfriend[38] screams hysterically as a police officer kills a Malaysian man. This man is de-humanised and portrayed as nothing more than a dispensable, bloody and scary body women should fear. The mon-strosity characterised by Hong is displaced onto the racialised body in Malaysia. Colonial biases and hierarchies are further revealed when efforts to extradite Hong to Malaysia, where he killed both his ex-girlfriend and foster mother, fails because the Malaysian police could not guarantee that the translations into English of key witness accounts would be accurate. Although the court trial was conducted in Cantonese, English was still centralised as the official medium of communication, which works to marginalise non-English speakers and non-English speaking nations.

This much-used trope of using other places, usually in Southeast Asia, to extend the reach of Hong Kong modernity is a way to map the geopolitics of the region. Hong Kong must be able to envision and position itself in the Asian region if it is to become a financial superpower, a central component of its identity. Furthermore, these places are needed to absorb the excesses of capitalism in order to prevent the system from collapsing on itself when the excesses become too much to handle. The 'popular's' role in Chinatown, in this sense, works in the same way to position Hong Kong in relation to Asian regions in the West. Hong Kong is a super-modern city that produces cultural meanings whereas those in Chinatown merely absorb these mean-ings, and always with a temporal delay. The role of Hong Kong in Asia is often centralised in relation to the marginalisation of poorer nations such as Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines and the racialised peoples who live

there. In this sense, the deployment of race in Hong Kong TV family melo-dramas not only positions Chinese immigrants in the United States in relation to their Hong Kong compatriots, it also shapes the way Chinese Americans imagine themselves in relation to other racialised groups in the United States and beyond. Global geopolitical relationships, therefore, also inform domestic racial relations.

As masculinity takes a destructive turn, women are also almost invariably sacrificed in its path of rampage. The anxieties of masculinity are projected onto the bodies of women, and more specifically maternal bodies, in *Look-ing Back in Anger*. When Hong's ex-girlfriend finds out she is pregnant and wants Hong to marry her, he decides to kill her instead. Hong is wooing his boss's daughter and does not want anything or anyone to get in his way. When his ex-girlfriend persists, he decides the best solution is to get rid of her permanently.[39] Her desire to have a family and be a mother is seen as a threat to Hong. He also kills his foster mother when she finds out what he has done. Mothers threaten male subjectivity and must be destroyed in order to privilege male subject formation. Whereas abject masculinity in *Looking Back in Anger* offers a mirror into the society that has created these monstrous men, women offer another kind of critique, one that shows how masculinity makes its claims on and through women's bodies.

In *Looking Back in Anger*, although Hong is executed in the end, we are left wondering if there will indeed be a peaceful and desirable society. The abject figure is rejected and presumably social order is restored. Geen is left as the heroic figure, a romanticised father-figure, who loves his brother and does everything he could for him but in the end finds out that Hong killed his son.[40] Geen finally realises that his younger brother is irredeemable and colludes with the Malaysian state to capture and execute Hong. Geen plays the father-figure here, always offering love but sometimes dispensing punishment. He holds on to the old-world logic of the importance of frater-nal loyalty. In fact, his fraternal loyalties to his ex-prison mates offer an alternative rags-to-riches narrative to the one Hong tells.[41] He is only able to succeed as a businessman because of his reliance on this fraternal network. At face value, it seems that Geen is the ideal masculine subject to be emulated.

However, his wife, Guan, offers a very significant critique of his paternal role, which problematises notions of 'good' patriarchy. She refuses to forgive Geen for the death of their son and believes that Hong is really a product of her husband's doing, who out of family loyalty, Geen has always helped Hong out, including helping him escape punishment for his wrongdoings (until Hong pulls the last straw when he kills Geen's son). She critiques the romanticisation of the good father as remedy for the violence of masculinity. For the figure of the good father continues to perpetuate the logic of patri-archy, which depends on violence against women. By questioning patriarchy, his wife destabilises his sense of himself. When she leaves him, Geen refuses to believe her and promises to wait for her, believing that fate will bring

them back together on the tenth anniversary of their marriage. Geen, holding onto this faith, continues to successfully manage his personal relationships and business. In the very last scene, he is in the church waiting for Guan to show up. In a fit of desperation, he breaks the clock in the church hoping to stop time. The logic of modernity, of time and progress, dissolves into acts of fate and faith. Someone does show up eventually while he's sleeping and slips him a note that reads, 'Guan is dead. Please forget'. It is unclear who the woman is, whether she's Guan or someone else. Geen runs out of the Church shouting Guan's name. In this last scene, the world represented by *Looking Back in Anger* is characterised by uncertainty. It is not the uncertainty of 1997 first introduced in the serial; the crisis of postcolonialism has come and gone with no major consequences for Geen. Rather, it is the uncertainty of Geen's sense of self, the uncertainty of patriarchy and modernity, that lingers on and that marks the future of Hong Kong. Perhaps, if we are on an optimistic note, this uncertainty will activate some creative alternatives and possibilities.

Women end up being the ghosts of the televisual text, reminders of the patriarchal violence of modernity and global capitalism. The feminine, long associated with the domestic, however is in the figure of Guan associated with the fleeting. Women, instead of men, are the ones who are able to leave home. The moment they leave is when men begin to regret the choices they've made and develop a guilty conscience. The act of leaving, therefore, however unknowingly, works in a way to discipline men into the new modern bourgeois subject whose aspirations must never exceed the bounds of his family, an argument I develop below. The domestic, therefore, is at once the private sphere of bourgeois society and takes on transnational, and ephemeral, dimensions. In this way, the local becomes a palimpsest of the familial and the transnational while bypassing questions of nation and state-hood altogether. Women become bearers of an emerging transnational consciousness that enacts the cosmopolitan middle-class politics desired for postcolonial Hong Kong.

If abjection is a fundamental element of racialisation[42] and national iden-tity formation,[43] the presence of the abject works to expose the underlying mechanisms of subject formation and the relationship of abjection with broader processes of nation-building and economic modernisation. Yet, abjection and loss are also, as Eng and Kazanjian suggest, 'laden with creative political potential'.[44] The containment of the abject (i.e. Hong) does not in the end entail the restoration of a healthy and content society. What the repression of the abject male brings into view are haunted female figures. Unlike her male counterparts who cannot escape the capitalist fervour of Hong Kong, the obsession over class mobility and the ownership of property, Guan demonstrates her capability to give it all up, including those she love, and moves abroad. She represents the possibilities of straddling both domestic and transnational identities and practices. Most importantly, as an object of desire, she points to something yet unfulfilled.

Looking Back in Anger ends with Geen expressing his willingness to give up his fraternal and filial loyalties and successful business to be with the love of his life. He wants only to live a simple, happy life with his lover. As such, Guan represents a kind of bourgeois, middle-class lifestyle unburdened by the whims of the economy and the demands of politics. What is aimed for, in other words, is the wilful forgetting and occlusion of the politics of colonialism, postcolonialism and Asian modernity. Yet, Guan never returns; this haunts the text by disallowing the fulfilment of a fantasy of romance, family and reunion. Perhaps, the uncertainty that Guan inscribes at the end of the serial opens up room for imagining new, as yet unarticulated possi-bilities, in faraway places.[45]

For the Chinatown viewer, this serial offers the fantasy of class mobility, and hence a way to escape the poverty and racial abjection that inscribe their experiences. Yet, the presence of the wounded woman and the uncertain ending buffer, in a sense, identification with either the protagonist (the hero) or the antagonist (the abject) and lead us to identify with a different, yet unnamed, future (the female figure). The fantasy of class mobility that the serial builds up collapses in the end, thus inculcating a sense of despair in the face of bourgeois wealth. What we desire is the return of the fleeting woman, which will resolve the contradictions and excesses of capital and fulfil the serial's dream for a future bourgeois existence devoid of politics. Yet she never returns and becomes instead the abject of this fantasy. And in the desire to 'look' for her, we may end up with a new vision, one that must exceed the limits of our location.

Conclusion

In this essay, I treat Hong Kong TV as a kind of chronotope, a concept that Ong and Nonini borrow from Bakhtin to describe 'time-bound, irreversible paths or itineraries of connection between places that are spanned by imag-ined and remembered narratives of Chinese transnational practices and discourses'.[46] Hong Kong TV permeates the path between Hong Kong and Chinatown and upon reaching Chinatown becomes a part of Asian American culture. On the one hand, I am interested in a critical reading and analysis of Hong Kong TV representations of domesticity, race, class and gender. On the other hand, because of the circulatory nature of these TV texts, it is impossible to analyse these representations as self-contained within the text. In this essay, I have employed critical and cultural theories to explore the ways in which televisual content interanimate with different cultural con-cerns and contexts (i.e. Hong Kong and Chinatown). In other words, televisual meanings are not constructed out of individual encounters with the televisual text but rather gain legibility through the cultural milieu they travel through and in a sense, emblematise.[47] The disjunctures that arise between reception context(s) in the different ways that televisual texts are given meaning provide a point of departure for understanding transnational

social formations as *displaced connections*. Popular culture, specifically television, offers specific strategies of forming a transnational diasporic imaginary, strategies that complement and problematise the institutional and human networks that traverse the path between Hong Kong and China-town. I choose to explore the specific relationship between Hong Kong and Chinatown because I see it as a kind of spatial palimpsest paradigmatic of changing forms of globalism and diaspora. It is also my hope that this study provides new ways of thinking about Asian American studies in a trans-national framework, which does not take America and Asia as separate categories. Furthermore, this essay asks that we destabilise the notion of Chinatown as an (Orientalist) object and isolated ghetto and to see China-town as figured in other ways through its lived relations (and globalised social formations) and popular practices (i.e. TV-viewing). A fruitful exten-sion of this project might be to pursue some of the more sociological and anthropological issues involved in a transnational study of race, gender and class in the particular contexts of Hong Kong and Chinatown.

5 Thailand in the Hong Kong cinematic imagination

Adam Knee

In the effort to more fully understand Hong Kong cinema's global context – and to avoid an over-reliance on sometimes problematic East/West oppo-sitions in doing so – it is particularly productive to examine that cinema's connections to Thailand. Thailand's relationship is especially strong in that the country has long been a significant market for Hong Kong film, in that numerous Hong Kong-Thailand co-productions have been mounted over the years, in that Hong Kong has wielded a strong stylistic influence over Thai cinema, and, perhaps most strikingly, in that Thailand has long been a favourite location for the filming of Hong Kong productions.[1] The import-ance of Thailand as an overseas market is not surprising considering both its proximity and its substantial population of Chinese descent, a largely urban population responsible, as in other Southeast Asian countries, for a disproportionate amount of the country's economic activity.[2] Indeed, the Hong Kong-Thailand cinematic connection, both in terms of film distri-bution and co-production, is fostered in part by Sino-Thai involvement in the film business; for example, Sahamongkol Film, one of Thailand's most important distribution and production companies, and the main distributor of Hong Kong films in Thailand, is run by a Sino-Thai family. A number of filmmakers have in fact significantly blurred Hong Kong–Thailand cine-matic boundaries with lives and films which straddle both places: Hong Kong-based producer-director Peter Chan, who lived in Thailand as a child, has been involved with a number of high-profile Thai–Hong Kong co-productions through his Applause Pictures, while the Hong Kong-born twins Danny and Oxide Pang are filmmakers whose careers have likewise moved fluidly between Hong Kong and Thailand, as they work on a range of films from each industry, as well as co-productions.

The existence of a strong Sino-Thai community and the ease of movement for film professionals between Hong Kong and Thailand do not, however, go very far toward explaining the prevalence of Thailand location shooting for Hong Kong films. Law Kar and Frank Bren report such location shoots (along with co-production) picking up steam during the 1950s.[3] Indeed, in Cathay's 1959 film *Air Hostess*, an incidental dialogue exchange suggests that Thai locations are by that point already commonplace (an actress en

University Press, 2000. See Law Kar's article in the last volume, 'The American Connection in Early Hong Kong Cinema', for links between Hong Kong and the US film industries in the early twentieth century. Other works that engage more recent transnational flows include: Y. C. Chu, *Hong Kong Cinema: Coloniser, Motherland and Self*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003; and E. C. M. Yau (ed.), *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

2 L. Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996, p. 101.

3 Ibid.

4 Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*, p. 126.

5 Of course, the migration melodrama was represented by Hong Kong born director Wayne Wang before and during this period. Although I do not discuss his films here because they do not take place in New York City, they are important examples of this genre. While Wang is best-known for films such as *The Joy Luck Club* (1993) and *Chinese Box* (1997), many of his early films engage the same themes as the New York melodramas I discuss here from a Hong Kong/West Coast perspective. See *Chan is Missing* (1982); *Dim Sum: a Little Bit of Heart* (1985); *Eat a Bowl of Tea* (1989); and, for a representation of an American man in Hong Kong, see *Life is Cheap ... but Toilet Paper is Expensive* (1989).

6 H. Yu, 'How Tiger Woods Lost his Stripes: Post-Nationalist American Studies as a History of Race, Migration, and the Commodification of Culture', in J. C. Rowe (ed.), *Post-Nationalist American Studies*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000, p. 224.

7 Ester C. M. Yau, 'Introduction: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World', in Yau (ed.), *At Full Speed*, p. 2.

8 Ibid., p. 5.

9 Chu, *Hong Kong Cinema*, p. 42.

10 Ibid., p. 51.

11 Law Kar, 'The American Connection in Early Hong Kong Cinema', and David Desser, 'The Kung Fu Craze: Hong Kong Cinema's First American Reception', in Fu and Desser (eds), *The Cinema of Hong Kong*, 19. Yingchi Chu also discusses links between Hollywood and Hong Kong at various stages of the twentieth century in *Hong Kong Cinema*.

12 C. Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945–1961*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003.

13 Lowe, 'Preface', *Immigrant Acts*.

14 S. Fore, 'Life Imitates Entertainment: Home and Dislocation in the Films of Jackie Chan', in Yau (ed.), *At Full Speed*, p. 116.

15 See: www.boxoffice.com/scripts (accessed 1 August 2005).

16 Fore, 'Life Imitates Entertainment', p. 124.

17 S. Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema: the Extra Dimensions*, London: British Film Institute, 1997, p. 148.

18 Stokes and Hoover, *City on Fire*, pp. 97–98.

19 Ibid., p. 98.

20 Ibid., p. 97.

21 Chu, *Hong Kong Cinema*, p. 105.

22 Ibid., pp. 106–7.

23 G. Marchetti, 'Buying American, Consuming Hong Kong', in Fu and Desser (ed.), *The Cinema of Hong Kong*, pp. 308–9.

24 Cui S.Q., 'Stanley Kwan's *Center Stage*: The (Im)Possible Engagement Between Feminism and Postmodernism', in Cheung and Chu (eds), *Between Home and World*, pp. 487–88.

25 G. Marchetti, 'Transnational Exchanges, Questions of Culture, and Global

Cinema: Defining the Dynamics of Changing Relationships', in Yau (ed.), *At Full Speed*, p. 258.

26 Ibid.

27 Stokes and Hoover, *City on Fire*, p. 154.

28 Chu, *Hong Kong Cinema*, p. 106.

29 P. Fonoroff, *At the Hong Kong Movies: 600 Reviews from 1988 till the Handover*, Hong Kong, Film Biweekly, 1998, p. 73.

30 Chu, *Hong Kong Cinema*, p. 108.

31 A. Yue, 'Migration-as-Transition: Pre-Post-1997 Hong Kong Culture in Clara Law's *Autumn Moon*', in Cheung and Chu (eds), *Between Home and World*, p. 230.

4 Hong Kong television in Chinatown: translocal context(s) and transnational social formations

1 Classic examples include Roman Polanski's *Chinatown* (1974), where Chinatown figures most prominently in the film's famous last words, 'Forget it, Jake, it's Chinatown', uttered in the face of an unsolvable mystery. Another example is Michael Cimino's *Year of the Dragon* (1985), which depicts Chinatown as a world of crime and vice. See Ford's essay, Chapter 3, this volume.

2 K. Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada 1875–1980*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991, p. 9.

3 K. Anderson, 'The Idea of Chinatown: the Power of Place and Institutional Practice in the Making of a Racial Category', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 77.4, 1987, p. 581.

4 L. Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996, pp. 27–28.

5 J. Lin, *Reconstructing Chinatown: Ethnic Enclave, Global Change*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1998, p. 15.

6 M. Laguerre, *The Global Ethnopolis: Chinatown, Japantown and Manilatown in American Society*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000, p. 31.

7 Lin, *Reconstructing Chinatown*, p. 17.

8 Ibid., p. 86.

9 D. Palumbo-Liu, *Asia/America: Historical Crossings of the Racial Frontier*, Stanford, CT: Stanford University Press, 1999, pp. 255–79.

10 Sau-Ling Wong characterises denationalisation as (1) 'an easing of cultural nationalist concerns'; (2) a 'growing permeability between "Asian" and "Asian American"'; and (3) a 'shift from a domestic to a diasporic perspective'. See S. L. Wong, 'Denationalization Reconsidered: Asian American Cultural Criticism at a Theoretical Crossroads', in A. Singh and P. Schmidt (eds), *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race, Ethnicity, and Literature*, Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2000, pp. 126–32.

11 Hong Kong has long been a privileged site in the Chinese diaspora as a cultural centre responsible for disseminating information and 'Chinese' culture (i.e. news, films, television serials, magazines, etc.) to Chinese communities throughout the world. Hong Kong culture mediates, in a sense, our notions of the Chinese diaspora or what is otherwise known as Greater China.

12 A. Ong and D. Nonini, 'Introduction: Chinese Transnationalism as an Alternative Modernity', in A. Ong and D. Nonini (eds), *Ungrounded Empires: the Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Transnationalism*, New York: Routledge, 1997, p. 4.

13 Ibid., p. 20.

14 K. C. Lo, 'Transnationalization of the Local in Hong Kong Cinema of the 1990s', in E. C. M. Yau (ed.), *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2001, pp. 265–66.

15 See, for example, *Comrades, Almost a Love Story* (dir. Peter Chan, 1996), *An Autumn's Tale* (dir. Mabel Cheung, 1987), *Full Moon in New York* (dir. Stanley Kwan, 1989), *Farewell China* (dir. Clara Law, 1990), and *Wedding Banquet* (dir. Ang Lee, 1993). Elsewhere, Chu has argued that in Hong Kong films about the diaspora, the adopted country functions merely a backdrop for Hong Kongers to recreate Hong Kong in a new abode. See Y. W. Chu, 'Introduction: the Politics of Home, Memory, and Diaspora', in E. M. K. Cheung and Y. W. Chu (eds), *Between Home and World: A Reader in Hong Kong Cinema*, Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 112–26. On the flipside, in the context of the United States, Stringer has argued that these films 'signify Asian American identities in the process of formation' (p. 302). See J. Stringer, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora in Contemporary Hong Kong Cinema', in D. Y. Hamamoto and S. Liu (eds), *Countervisions: Asian American Film Criticism*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000, pp. 298–312.

16 It is important to note that race and ethnicity are generally studied and understood within national frameworks. In the context of the transnational, race and ethnicity become even more unwieldy and obscured. It is easy, therefore, to assert that these terms no longer matter but I think it is more likely the case that we need new methods in order to think about race transnationally.

17 P. Kwong, 'New York is not Hong Kong: the Little Hong Kong that never was', in R. Skeldon (ed.), *Reluctant Exiles?: Migration from Hong Kong and the New Overseas Chinese*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1994, pp. 256–68.

18 A. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, p. 178.

19 Ibid., p. 179.

20 Ibid., pp. 182–84.

21 Ibid., p. 198.

22 Ibid., p.199.

23 B. Lee and E. LiPuma, 'Cultures of Circulation: the Imaginations of Modernity', *Public Culture* 14, 2002, p. 192.

24 Ibid., p. 209.

25 Here, I am speaking specifically about both the melodramatic form of Hong Kong televisual serials and the televisual form itself. However, for the sake of space, I will not elucidate their formal qualities in this paper.

26 I. Grewal and C. Kaplan, 'Introduction: Transnational Feminist Practices and Questions of Postmodernity', in I. Grewal and C. Kaplan (eds), *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994, p. 7.

27 See note [15].

28 Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*, p. 35.

29 Ibid.

30 I am borrowing this framework from Colleen Lye's work on Asiatic form. According to Lye, American literary naturalism, whose primary interest was in exposing the evils of capitalism, aimed to represent the abstractions of capital through the creation of paradigmatic social figures. The stereotype of the Asian, therefore, marked naturalism's attempts at *figuring* American capitalism, at representing the unrepresentable. Studying representations of the Asian 'provide[s] a way of recovering the trace of the social relations that race marks' (p. 8). These primarily economic tropes of the Asiatic racial form 'help to explain the primarily economic themes of Asian American racial representation' (p. 11). C. Lye, *America's Asia: Racial Form and American Literature, 1893–1945*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.

31 There is a discrepancy in meaning between the English and Chinese titles. The Chinese title translates roughly as 'Justice does not tolerate feelings (or sentiment)', implying that justice is not compatible with sentimentality.

32 E. Lee, *Gender and Change in Hong Kong: Globalization, Postcolonialism, and Chinese Patriarchy*, Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 2003.

33 Ibid., p. 7.

34 It is also important to note that Hong Kong was never and could never aspire to be a nation. Therefore, national consciousness was never a constitutive part of the Hong Kong imaginary despite the fact that many have expressed patriotic feelings towards China.

35 Here, I am drawing an analogy between the colonial apparatuses used in governing Hong Kong and the state apparatuses at work in Chinatown.

36 Cf., Lo, op. cit.

37 That is, the relationship between Hong Kong and Chinatown is grounded in their different relationship to modernity, as understood teleologically. Hong Kong's successful modernization becomes the standard against which Chinatown's is measured. Certainly, while a popular sentiment, to frame modernity in terms of progress and teleology occludes the other ways in which Hong Kong and Chinatown might interpret their relationship (i.e. as transnational public sphere, diasporic community, a part of Greater China, or bound through cultural nationalism, etc.). Furthermore, whether or not this temporal gap actually exists is highly debatable and would require more empirical research to fully develop. Nevertheless, by amplifying Hong Kong and Chinatown's disjunctive modernities (though understood teleologically), the circulation of Hong Kong culture tells us this: that the diaspora is not a unified whole as it is often represented but always internally fractured. This calls for more comparative work to be done within the diaspora (i.e. internal relationships and how they have changed over time in different locations). Since the diaspora is often located within the cusp of the national and global, this kind of study also promises to provide insights into the changing terms of their relationship.

38 Geen's ex-girlfriend is Wan Yi's niece who lived with them for a period. They date for a short time before he gets together with Guan. They break up after Geen goes to jail for a crime his brother commits. As a dutiful brother, he bails Hong out for what he says would be the last time. When Wan Yi disappears during a trip to Malaysia, Geen goes looking for her and elicits his ex-girlfriend's help. This scene occurs as she goes looking for him at the train station.

39 He could not simply break her heart and leave her because he wants to maintain his appearance as a gentleman.

40 Guan and Geen finally marry and have a baby son together. Geen runs a very successful restaurant business and later inherits Guan's family business after her father passed away. For a period, they lead a very happy and comfortable life together.

41 Geen goes to jail for a crime his brother commits (running a man over with a car). After he is released, he gets together with his ex-prison-mates and opens up a very successful restaurant, which he later expands.

42 R. Chow, 'The Secrets of Ethnic Abjection', in M. Morris and B. de Bary (eds), *'Race' Panic and the Memory of Migration*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2001, pp. 53–77.

43 K. Shimakawa, *National Abjection: the Asian American Body Onstage*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002.

44 D. Eng and D. Kazanjian, 'Introduction', in D. Eng and D. Kazanjian (eds), *Loss: the Politics of Mourning*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003, p. 2.

45 However, it is important we do not romanticise the ghostliness of the women for the text also gestures towards the material conditions that render women invisible in the first place. As such, we must always think about the ephemeral dimensions as well as the materiality of the ghost and of the work it does.

46 Ong and Nonini, op. cit., p. 17.

47 This is not to minimise the complexity of the ways in which individuals receive and interpret televisual representations. Reception contexts are never homogenous and individual accounts will certainly complicate and nuance any of the generalisations put forth in this essay. I leave this aside as my focus is not about the ethnographic but the textual.

5 Thailand in the Hong Kong cinematic imagination

1 On the varied fortunes of Hong Kong films in Thailand, see Pimpaka Towira, 'Kung Fu Crisis', *The Nation* (Thailand) (23 February 1999) and Sa-nguan Khumrungroj, 'Chinatown Star Fades as Film Hub', *The Nation* (Thailand) (30 January 2000).
2 On the Chinese in Thailand, see, for example, J. Rigg, 'Exclusion and Embeddedness: the Chinese in Thailand and Vietnam', in L. J. C. Ma and C. Cartier (eds), *The Chinese Diaspora: Space, Place, Mobility, and Identity*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003, pp. 97–115.
3 Law Kar and F. Bren, *Hong Kong Cinema: a Cross-Cultural View*, Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2004, pp. 207–08.
4 *Horoscope 2: The Woman from Hell, another Hong Kong Movie Page*: www.kowloonside.com/movies/horoscope2.html (accessed 19 January 2004).
5 *The Hong Kong Happy Man, another Hong Kong Movie Page*: www.kowloonside.com/movies/thehongkonghappyman.html (accessed 31 March 2004).
6 S. Hammond, *Hollywood East: Hong Kong Movies and the People who Make them*, Chicago, IL: Contemporary Books, 2000, pp. 106–07.
7 While the majority of films to be discussed here are purely Hong Kong-financed productions, several Hong Kong co-productions in which there is clearly substantial creative and administrative input from Hong Kong personnel will be discussed as well.
8 In a sequel, *The Angry Guest* (1972), this Bangkok-Hong Kong opposition still obtains, but with Tokyo added as a third city, figured as more modern still than Hong Kong.
9 For a classic study of the aquatic roots of Thai culture, see Sumet Jumsai, *Naga: Cultural Origins in Siam and the West Pacific*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.
10 These two surprisingly gay-friendly 2004 films have quite a number of striking similarities, which space precludes from exploring more fully here. In both films, familial obligations and mistaken identities precipitate paralleled negotiations and redefinitions across boundaries of nation, gender, and sexuality.
11 To extend this allegory further: If there are 'real' Thai ghosts here, they are the ghosts of unseen Thai personnel (along with unseen settings and equipment), invisible figures the traces of whom may hardly be detectable in the completed films. This is perhaps most strongly the case for those Hong Kong films that are shot in part in Thailand with Thai labour, but which include no character or space recognisable as Thai within their narrative discourse: for example, the recent Hong Kong-Hollywood co-production *The Medallion* (2003). In the instance of that film, these Thai people (and settings) interestingly make their spectral return on the DVD, where, in 40 minutes of behind-the-scenes footage, they can be seen meeting the needs of their Hong Kong employers.

6 Hong Kong-Australian imaginaries: Three Australian films by Clara Law

1 T. O'Regan, *Australian National Cinema*, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 330.
2 M. Roxburgh, 'Clara Law's *Floating Life* and Australian Identity', *Metro* 110, 1997, pp. 3–6.

3 R. Siemienowicz, 'Globalisation and Home Values in New Australian Cinema', *Journal of Australian Studies*, December 1999, pp. 49–56.
4 F. Collins, 'Bringing the Ancestors Home', in D. Verhoeven (ed.), *Twin Peeks: Australian and New Zealand Feature Films*, Melbourne: Damned, 1999, pp. 112, 114, 115.
5 D. Eng, 'Melancholia/Postcoloniality: Loss in *The Floating Life* (sic)', *Qui Parle* 11.2, 1999, pp. 137–50, 161–64.
6 T. Mitchell, 'Boxing the 'Roo: Clara Law's *Floating Life* and Transnational Hong Kong-Australian Identities', *UTS Review* 6.2, November 2000, pp. 103–14; T. Mitchell, 'Clara Law's *Floating Life* and Hong-Kong Australian "Flexible Citizenship"', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 26.2, March 2003, pp. 278–300.
7 D. Pettman, 'The Floating Life of Fallen Angels: Unsettled Communities and Hong Kong Cinema', *Postcolonial Studies* 3.1, 2000, p. 75.
8 A. Yue, 'Asian Australian Cinema, Asian-Australian Modernity', in Helen Gilbert *et al.* (eds), *Diaspora: Negotiating Asian-Australia*, Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2000, pp. 195–96.
9 K. Louie, '*Floating Life*: Nostalgia for the Confucian Way in Suburban Sydney', in C. Berry (ed.), *Chinese Films in Focus*, London: British Film Institute, 2003, pp. 97–103.
10 R. Jones, 'Framing Strategies: Floating Life and the Limits of "Australian Cinema"', in L. French (ed.), *Womenvison: Women and the Moving Image in Australia*, Melbourne: Danmed, 2003, pp. 254, 255.
11 L. Ma, 'Reconciliation between Generations and Cultures: Clara Law's Film *Floating Life*', in Wenche Ommundsen (ed.), *Bastard Moon: Essays on Chinese-Australian Writing, Otherland Literary Journal* 7, July 2001, pp. 57–68.
12 C. Law, *Director's Statement, Pardo Film Festival* (1996): www.pardo.ch/1996/festival96/floatingreg.html (accessed 14 May 1998).
13 A. Appadurai, 'Full Attachment', *Public Culture* 10.2, Winter 1998, p. 449.
14 See, for example, D. Stratton, *Review of Floating Life* (1998): www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/film, and A. Fung, *Review of Floating Life* (1998): www.ncf.carleton.ca (both accessed 14 May 1998).
15 H. Wang and T. Mitchell, *Interview with Clara Law and Eddie Fong* (Melbourne), 30 June 2000, p. 12.
16 Pettman, 'The Floating Life of Fallen Angels', p. 76.
17 Yue, 'Asian Australian Cinema, Asian-Australian Modernity', p. 195.
18 See T. Mitchell, 'Migration, Memory, and Transitional Identities in Clara Law's *Autumn Moon*', *Cultural Studies Review* 9.1, May 2003, pp. 139–60.
19 S. Teo, '*Floating Life*: the Heaviness of Moving', *Senses of Cinema* 12 (February–March 2001): www.sensesofcinema.com/contents.01/12/floating.html (accessed 19 January 2004).
20 S. Kraicer, *Review of Floating Life at the 1996 Toronto International Film Festival*: www.geocities.com/Tokyo/5170/floating.html (accessed 14 May 1998).
21 Louie, '*Floating Life*', p. 102.
22 Hu X. C., 'From *Floating Life* to *Comrades: Almost a Love Story*: Here or there, Home and Homesickness', *Film Appreciation Journal* (Taipei) 6, 1997, p. 45 (trans. Hai Yan Wang).
23 Li Y. M., 'Review of *Floating Life*', *Imagekeeper* (Taipei) 1, 1997, p.68 (trans. Hai Yan Wang).
24 F. Dannen and B. Long, *Hong Kong Babylon: an Insider's Guide to the Hollywood of the East*, London: Faber and Faber, 1997, p. 109.
25 C. Law, 'Diary Entry' 3 (2003): www.letterstoali.com/diary.html (accessed 8 June 2005).
26 In Wang and Mitchell, 'Interview with Clara Law and Eddie Fong'.
27 Pettman, 'The Floating Life of Fallen Angels', p. 75.