

**Un/Becoming Chinese:  
Huaqiao, the Non-Perishable Sojourner Reinvented, and Alterity of Chineseness**

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**Abstract**

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Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

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This dissertation explores the construction of “huaqiao” (“Chinese sojourner” 華僑) and its representation in modern Chinese literature. By interrogating and problematizing the concepts of Chineseness and huaqiao, this project argues that “huaqiao” is essentially a misnomer warranting further examination at various levels. While unpacking and decoding the term “huaqiao” and simultaneously delineating its historical inception and configurations, it critiques how “huaqiao,” as a product of the Chineseness discourse, has become *the* unifying category used to label “overseas Chinese.” Since the term was originally created, and is still being used to disseminate, reinforce, and perpetuate, a monolithic and essentialist Chinese identity, one cannot overlook or underestimate its entanglement with the construction and articulations of Chineseness. However, as this whole project contends, even though huaqiao has been construed as a displaced Chinese subject, at its inception it is already an identity in alterity. The sojourner’s trajectories across times and places have acquired various definitions and meanings, making huaqiao as much a

contested category as that of “Chineseness.” Chapter One examines the discourse of Chineseness and how it has spawned the term “huaqiao” at different historical junctures and cultural spaces. It further engages in debates with various scholars to seek alternatives for critical interventions. Chapter Two explores a body of Nanyang (the South Seas) narratives produced by modern Chinese writers who sojourned in Nanyang between the 1920s and 1940s. It demonstrates how these writers, through travelogues, essays, memoirs, and fictions, construct Nanyang (and) huaqiao vis-à-vis the discourses of Chineseness, colonialism, and tropicity. Chapter Three examines mainly Eileen Chang’s essays and novellas by focusing on an aspect rarely explored before, namely, how Chang uses the figures of (Nanyang) huaqiao to explore the construction of racial and cultural identities pertaining to notions of Chineseness. Chapter Four explores how the concept of racial and ethnic degeneration is projected onto the Nanyang huaqiao in Ding Ling’s “Miss Sophia’s Diary.” It argues that the construction of native Chinese female subjectivity is foremost predicated upon the construction of a Nanyang huaqiao body conceived as deviant and pathological.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my grandparents and their generations.

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## Introduction

This dissertation explores the construction of “*huaqiao*” (華僑) and its representation in modern Chinese literature by interrogating and problematizing the concepts of Chineseness and “*huaqiao*.” It argues that “*huaqiao*” is essentially a misnomer warranting further examination at various levels. In ethnic, area, and literary / cultural studies, for instance, *huaqiao* seems to be defined more by its absence or elusion, or in most cases, simply and conveniently, as “Chinese overseas,” “overseas Chinese,” and the more recent “Chinese diaspora.” *Huaqiao*, literally means “the Chinese sojourner,” should not be confused with all the aforementioned terms for it embodies specific historical, political, and cultural meanings. In the hope to shed some light into the “politics of entanglement” involved, this project further questions how *huaqiao* has been used, on quotidian basis and “global” levels, as an all-encompassing category to address and label almost any so-called “overseas Chinese / compatriots.” The fact that *huaqiao* as a multifarious designation is still widely circulated and used by the regimes of both ROC (Republic of China) and PRC (People’s Republic of China), and especially within China, Taiwan, or even Hong Kong and Macao to some extent, attests to the most predominant constitutive aspect of being “Chinese,” one strictly defined by its singularity and uniformity, which warrants further examination.

While this project is not an attempt at theorizing “*huaqiao*” per se, it demands that we be aware of how “*huaqiao*” vis-à-vis the production of “Chineseness” has been historicized and politicized in various contexts across space and time. To re-position *huaqiao* within the framework of “Chineseness” is not to subsume *huaqiao* under its tyranny but to examine it from multiple points of departure that questions and goes beyond its essentialist reference and Sino-

centric framework. In this sense, instead of confining it within the perimeters of various definitive points of reference such as that of nation-state and the homeland, this dissertation argues that the confines of such have already been circumscribed with nuances of alterity as implied in the “qiao” from its inception. While this project aims to examine and problematize the conceptualization of “huaqiao” it simultaneously highlights the importance to reinsert the “missing link” into the equation, that is, how and why the “Chinese sojourner” has become synonymous with “overseas Chinese,” while the “qiao” in the process has been missing / under erasure.

While unpacking and decoding the term “huaqiao” and simultaneously delineating its historical inception and configurations, it critiques how, as a product of the Chineseness discourse, it is still being used to disseminate, reinforce, and perpetuate a monolithic and essentialist Chinese identity. The challenge and predicament of framing or even theorizing the huaqiao (or “oversea Chinese” for that matter) lies in the age-old assumption that huaqiao, precisely because of its non-identity as reified by the notion and material condition of being “a sojourner” is eternally bound by, and inscribed in, an affective economy privileging the sentimental, that of (be)longings, yearnings, displacement, loss, thus capable of eluding logic. Under such circumstances, can we possibly articulate and speak of a huaqiao subjectivity without denying its absence as such? How to articulate and resist “Chineseness” has become, it seems, the somewhat oxymoronic concern, that is, how does one articulate and resist at the same time without jeopardizing one’s integrity, without falling (back) into a teleological framework which further reifies “obsession with China / Chineseness” or a “China-centered” / “Chinese-centered” mindset?

In official historical and nationalist narratives, huaqiao as a collective has generally been construed as an (almost) idealized Chinese subject: they are exalted for their loyalty, patriotism, and devotion to the homeland. In late Qing and Republican era China huaqiao were also configured as (successful) colonialists or emblematic founder figures of colonial resistance. In this sense huaqiao can be regarded as an illuminating prototype in the construction and articulations of Chineseness. By drawing historical and cultural analogy between the construction of huaqiao and that of Chineseness as evinced in the works of several canonized modern Chinese writers, this project argues that the emergence and incorporation of huaqiao in modern Chinese literature underlies the fraught relationship between identity politics and representations of Chineseness. This mode of inquiry will further prompt us to question the constructedness of such an identity: an idealized or displaced Chinese subject. In this light the issues of authenticity and preservation of “Chineseness” have become attached to the huaqiao figures. Furthermore, they are usually portrayed as inauthentic / corrupted Chinese, or Westernized Chinese, who seek re-sinicization as the way to become “authentic Chinese.” What surfaces predominantly in these texts is the representation of essentialist “Chineseness”—as it can further be fetishized and become a symbolic cultural capital. The employment of the huaqiao thus underscores the construction of Chineseness that has preoccupied Chinese literary and cultural studies. However, in spite of their relevance to Chinese identity construction, the huaqiao figures in modern Chinese literary historiography hardly receive any critical attention. As such, this dissertation calls attention to literary representations of the huaqiao as means of critical intervention.

Chapter One gives an overview of huaqiao, tracing and historicizing its inception since the 1890s during the late Qing dynasty and how it has evolved into a ubiquitous identity marker

pertaining to the notions of “Chineseness” shared by certain kind of “Chinese.” It highlights how huaqiao were constructed as what Prasenjit Duara calls “transnational nationalists” by various parties especially the late Qing dynasty, the Reformers, and the Revolutionaries. As such, huaqiao were construed mainly based on the claims of common “roots” and shared “bloodline,” one further entwined in the formulations and contestations of Chinese nationalist discourses.

However, as Chapter One argues, if huaqiao have been portrayed as the “role model” of “colonial heroism” and altering the diasporic frontier into an extension of China, as well as in preserving and passing their so-called Chinese heritage and legacy, it has already been abstracted into an (almost) idealized Chinese subject through an ongoing process of subjugation and appropriation, one that has been deeply entrenched in various discourses such as those of nationalism and cultural / biological essentialism. However, this aspect of the huaqiao / Chineseness zeroes in exclusively on a Han identity and identification. In this sense the huaqiao can be homogenized and fully incorporated into a Han Chinese identity: national, racial, and cultural in particular. Meanwhile, huaqiao’s presumed and “questionable” “Chineseness,” however, can be fetishized and objectified and further appropriated and invoked in various rhetorics, especially in the meta-narratives of nationalist imperatives and propagandas by various parties.

In the construction of huaqiao and Chineseness, it should be noted though, China / zhongguo / 中國 / Middle Kingdom, is not the sole proprietor and perpetrator of this form of “primordial Chineseness.” Huaqiao can be a contested category for identity formation based on the rivalry between Taiwan and China in their self-anointed promotion of everything “authentically Chinese.” This chapter simultaneously examines huaqiao’s configurations and the

discourse of Chineseness through different times, for instance: late Imperial Qing vs. Republican, before and after 1949, the Cultural Revolution era, and spaces: the Middle Kingdom, China, Nanyang, Taiwan, and others. This chapter further offers a theoretical overview of the discourse of Chineseness and engages in critical debates with scholars including Ien Ang, Wang Gungwu, Rey Chow, Shu-mei Shih, Prasenjit Duara, Allen Chun, Tu Wei-ming, Aiwah Ong, Kim Tong Tee, Ng Kim Chew, among others.

Chapter Two explores a body of Nanyang narratives produced by modern Chinese writers who sojourned in Nanyang between the 1920s and 1940s. It examines works by Lao She (老舍), Liang Shaowen (梁紹文), and Yu Dafu (郁達夫). Through various genres such as travelogues, essays, memoirs, and fictions, it analyzes how these writers construct Nanyang (and) huaqiao vis-à-vis the discourses of Chineseness, colonialism, and tropicity. It further investigates how these discourses are used to articulate or subjugate huaqiao identities in the context of Nanyang literary imaginations. These writer's imaginary tropical Nanyang is deemed to be barbaric (*manhuang* 蠻荒), primitive (*yuanshi* 原始), and sterile (*bumaozhidi* 不毛之地), a vision not too different from the European's. While they admittedly suffers the "colonial gaze" of the imperialistic European powers, these writers cannot help but appropriate such a stance when it comes to rewriting Nanyang as a primarily Chinese frontier.

In Lao She and Liang's case for instance, their imaginary Nanyang eerily coincides with the European view of the tropics at the time, which is spawned by the discourse of tropicity in addition to colonial practice. They both construe the Nanyang frontier as a barbarous and disease-stricken space and can thus be deterrent to the huaqiao's colonizing effort. However, in Lao She's formulation of the tropics, he particularly singles out the huaqiao for their superior

physique and endurance, as well as their exceptional resistive powers to tropical diseases. As he notes, unlike the Europeans who have failed to withstand unsavory tropical climate and conditions, huaqiao have nevertheless managed to overcome and conquer the adverse and perilous nature of Nanyang and have insulated themselves from the deleterious effects of tropical residence. Both Lao She and Liang stress the racial difference between the Europeans and the huaqiao / Chinese and maintain this dichotomy between the two. They thus construct the Nanyang frontier as the land of opportunity for economic exploitation for Chinese pioneers and settlers. By stressing huaqiao's contribution to and achievements in the Nanyang frontier, these writers further configure the huaqiao pioneers as agents of Chinese colonial mission.

Chapter Three examines mainly Eileen Chang's (張愛玲) essays and novellas by focusing on an aspect rarely explored before, namely, how Chang uses the figures of (Nanyang) huaqiao to explore the construction of racial and cultural identities pertaining to notions of Chineseness. Chang's portrayals of (Nanyang) huaqiao and zhongguoren ("people of the Middle Kingdom"; 中國人) offer insightful comparative frameworks through which the line between huaqiao and zhongguoren can be drawn and demarcated. Her works show thematic concerns of race, colonialism, and Chineseness in relation to (Nanyang) huaqiao in 1940s colonial Hong Kong and semi-colonial Shanghai, and to some extent, Nanyang and Europe. This aspect of her writing, however, has mostly been overlooked in critical scholarship on her works. Through encounters between "native Chinese" (*zhongguoren*) and (Nanyang) huaqiao, Chang highlights (Nanyang) huaqiao's hybrid and incongruous identity—one that is at odds with the "authentic" *zhongguo* identity, by invoking the concept of racial purity and reinventing Chineseness pertaining to "sojourner" identity formation / subjectivity in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, and

sexuality. Chang further constructs “Chineseness” through the huaqiao figures’ quest for love and “authenticity.”

In Chang’s literary representations of huaqiao, however, the men are generally portrayed as playboys and womanizers, whereas the women are configured as party girls, mistresses, femme fatales, concubines, thus the female counterparts of the male huaqiao. Furthermore, as this chapter argues, the (Nanyang) huaqiao figures are invoked through colonial Nanyang and Europe as the alien and liminal space of cultural production in the huaqiao’s identity construction. In Chang’s huaqiao characters we see that their “downfall” and “inauthenticity” are usually attributed to their “colonial” connections with Nanyang and Europe; their sexual “deviancy” and licentiousness tied to their “improper” and “decadent” origins. These characters are often depicted through their failed attempts to (re)invent themselves as authentic Chinese as they either have to constantly defend their “Chineseness” or fetish it as a form of symbolic capital crucial to their identity formation. While Chang’s narrative strategy and aesthetics counter the grand and the abstract of the wartime and the revolutionary, her works also foreground various sights and sites in mapping Chineseness across borders—nation-state, homeland, language—where the meanings of “authentic” Chineseness can be tested and pushed to its limits through her configuration of these Nanyang huaqiao figures.

Chapter Four examines mainly Ding Ling’s “Miss Sophia’s Diary” (1928). It explores how the concept of racial / ethnic degeneration is projected onto the Nanyang huaqiao’s body. It argues that the construction of native Chinese female subjectivity is foremost predicated upon the construction of a Nanyang huaqiao / body conceived as deviant and pathological. The Nanyang huaqiao’s place and function in the text thus warrants a close investigation for it has been eluded in the critical scholarship of this canonical work. “Miss Sophia’s Diary” showcases

an economy of desire deeply entangled and implicated in the lure of the foreign as embodied by the Nanyang huaqiao. The female protagonist Sophia's emotional investment in, and abjection of, the Nanyang huaqiao is unparalleled to others in the text. Even after she has denounced and degraded him, she cannot seem to dispel his influence. What further complicates her construction of femininity and female subjectivity lies in the modes of representation through which madness and foreignness is projected. Torn between her impulses to yield to her sexual desire and her struggle to reason with her inner conflicts, Sophia denounces the Nanyang huaqiao, alienates him, and eventually bestializes and demonizes him. Unable to relinquish her sexual desire for Ling she nevertheless senses the threat that he has posed to her health and sanity. It is thus worth noting, why, as a liminal figure, this Nanyang huaqiao has the power (or is empowered) to undermine the narrative voice and power of the female diarist as well as the construction of female subjectivity.

## Chapter One

### The Inescapable Chinese:

#### Huaqiao 華僑, the Missing Sojourner, and Construction of Chineseness

If I am inescapably Chinese by *descent*, I am only sometimes Chinese by *consent*. When and how is a matter of politics.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter gives an overview of “the Chinese sojourner” or “huaqiao” (華僑)<sup>2</sup>, tracing and historicizing its inception since the 1890s during the late Qing and how it has evolved into a ubiquitous identity marker pertaining to the notions of “Chineseness” shared by certain kind of “Chinese.” As vague and ambiguous as it sounds, this might still be the “state” of the term itself in spite of scattered attempts to untangle or clarify it especially in ethnic, area, and literary / cultural studies. However, in these related fields, the huaqiao seems to be defined more by its absence or elusion, or in most cases, simply and conveniently, as “Chinese overseas,” “overseas Chinese,” and the more recent “Chinese / diaspora.” In the hope to shed some light into the “politics of entanglement” involved, this project further questions how huaqiao has been used, on quotidian basis and “global” levels, as an all-encompassing category to address and label almost any so-called “overseas Chinese / compatriots” (*haiwai huaren / haiwai huaqiao / tongbao*; 海外華人 / 海外華僑 / 同胞).<sup>3</sup> The fact that huaqiao as a multifarious designation is still widely

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<sup>1</sup> Ien Ang, “On Not Speaking Chinese: Postmodern Ethnicity and the Politics of Diaspora,” 18. The article was first published in *New Formations* 24 (winter 1994): 1-18, and later revised, expanded, and became a chapter in *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living between Asia and the West* (2001) by the author. The book chapter is re-titled “On Not Speaking Chinese: Diasporic Identifications and Postmodern Ethnicity.”

<sup>2</sup> Hereafter “huaqiao.”

<sup>3</sup> According to Stephen FitzGerald, “The Status of the Chinese in Hong Kong and Macao is ambiguous. Statistically, they are not included within Peking’s category of Overseas Chinese. They are referred to as ‘compatriots’ (*tongbao*),” *China and the Overseas Chinese: A Study of Peking’s Changing Policy, 1949-1970*, 4. On the other hand, Wang Gungwu points out that the ROC have treated “Hong Kong Chinese as their huaqiao”

circulated and used by the regimes of both ROC (Republic of China) and RRC (People's Republic of China), and especially within China, Taiwan, or even Hong Kong and Macao to some extent, attests to the most predominant constitutive aspect of being "Chinese," one strictly defined by its singularity and uniformity. However, this seeming "uniformity" warrants further examination especially the isomorphic terms each in its own way connotes certain kind of Chineseness with their shared denomination: *hua* (華). While this project is not an attempt at theorizing "huaqiao" per se, it demands that we be aware of how "huaqiao" vis-à-vis the production of "Chineseness" has been historicized and politicized in various contexts across space and time. To re-position huaqiao within the framework of "Chineseness" is not to subsume huaqiao under its tyranny but to examine it from multiple points of departure that questions and goes beyond its essentialist reference and Sino-centric framework. In this sense, instead of confining it within the perimeters of various definitive points of reference such as that of nation-state and the homeland, this dissertation argues that the confines of such have already been circumscribed with nuances of alterity as implied in the "qiao" from its inception.

While this project aims to examine and problematize the conceptualization of "huaqiao" it simultaneously highlights the importance to reinsert the "missing link" into the equation, that is, how and why the "Chinese sojourner" has become synonymous with "overseas Chinese," while the "qiao" in the process has been missing / under erasure. Arguably, it can simply be dismissed as a minor issue in "(mis)translation" or just "transliteration." Isn't "overseas" self-explanatory enough, that by definition, geographically speaking, once you become "overseas" you no longer reside in your home country, that you have crossed the border marked by "nation-

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while "totally rejects the inclusion of the people of Taiwan a 'overseas Chinese' whereas for the PRC, "Chinese" in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau are called '*tongbao*' ("compatriots")." See Wang, "Chineseness: The Dilemmas of Place and Practice," in *Sinophone Studies*, 132, 133.

state,” that you might be “extraterritorial,” “transnational,” or even “diasporic”? But how do we account for this “qiao”—why is it left out especially if, arguably and semantically speaking, the “qiao,” as in “huaqiao,” and as part of this identity marker, has already foregrounded a nascent sense of “diasporic” trajectory, a different destination, if not destiny?

Commenting on the diplomatic relations between Southeast Asian countries and the “two Chinas” (ROC and PRC) from 1960s to 1970s, Wang Gungwu, one of the pioneers in huaqiao / overseas Chinese studies, expresses his concerns over the political changes and their impact on the “overseas Chinese” in the area: “[T]he question of which [Chinese] government is recognized has been an important factor in determining who is or is not Chinese”:

With each development, it becomes more imperative to question the use of the term “Overseas Chinese.” It has been used in its broadest sense to cover all people of Chinese descent resident abroad and it roughly translates the Chinese term *Hua-ch’iao* [huaqiao] (Chinese sojourners). For Southeast Asia, the more specialized *Nanyang Hua-ch’iao* [*huaqiao*] or Nanyang Chinese has been widely used until the 1960s. This is a term which has implied a single community with a considerable solidarity. It is a term I have questioned for some 20 years, but it still survives largely because the government in Taiwan has retained it in its official publications. The People’s Republic became more wary of the term after the Bandung Conference in 1955 but were not always consistent until the 1960s. Since then, it has distinguished between “Foreign Chinese” and “Overseas Chinese,” that is, the large majority of those who are foreign nationals but of Chinese descent and the small minority of Chinese nationals who more or less permanently reside abroad. The fact that the two governments use *huaqiao* with different meanings has not helped clarify the term for Southeast Asian governments. Specially confusing has been the way the government in Taipei has encouraged the view that all those of Chinese descent are Chinese first and foreign citizens second.<sup>4</sup>

Wang’s account certainly raises more questions pertaining to the “core” of the “problem” instead of “distinguishing” or “clarifying” one from another. The exigency to re-examine “huaqiao” in

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<sup>4</sup> See Wang Gungwu, the chapter titled “The Question of the Overseas Chinese” in *Community and Nation* (251; italics in the original).

relation to the claim of Chineseness arises not only from the “confusion” and contingencies engendered by the obscurantist nature of these terms. More importantly, Wang’s concerns draw attention to the fact that huaqiao / overseas Chinese has been the viable means for both “Chinas” (and the Southeast Asian governments) to continue on the political mission to exert control and authority over the production and propagation of such an identity marker. Wang proceeds to cite what he considers the “classic example of how awkward the problem can be for the two Chinese governments [ROC and PRC], for the Southeast Asian governments and for various types of Chinese abroad alike, is that of Indonesia”:

For the past twenty years [from mid-1950s to mid-1970s], there have been: (a) Indonesians of Chinese descent; (b) Chinese who are citizens of the People’s Republic; (c) Chinese who are citizens of the Republic of China (Taiwan) whom the Indonesians treat as “stateless”; (d) stateless Chinese waiting for Indonesian citizenship, willing to be protected by the People’s Republic (before 1966) and by the Republic in Taiwan (since 1967) while waiting; and (e) stateless Chinese awaiting citizenship who want to have nothing to do with either government.<sup>5</sup>

If this “classic example” showcases what Wang considers *the* “question” of the “huaqiao,” it further underpins what may be on top of the issues of “citizenship” and national sovereignty, the operative mode of “huaqiao” (not just from Indonesia) functions on the perilous: as targets of racial violence, persecutions, and other anti-Sinitic practices in addition to other political constraints exerted on them by various colonizers as well as the so-called “natives” in Nanyang.

In addition, the political stakes for Nanyang huaqiao also involve constant (re / dis) claiming “Chineseness” and “indigenization” endemic to defining and contesting identity (“post-colonial” or not) even at the expense of cancelling each other. This has further cast the “Nanyang huaqiao” into a double-bind situation: along the dialectical axis where all these denominations and operative forces intersect and intertwine, the incessant wrestle between

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<sup>5</sup> Wang Gungwu, “The Question of the Overseas Chinese” in *Community and Nation* (251).

affirming or disclaiming one's (cultural if not racial) roots / origins (as in hua) and imagining community (cultural and / or legal based on their "qiao" status), between the collective, the hybrid, the local, and the personal, as well as the nation-state, and others. This "question" that Wang has since posed and been trying to answer emulates the conflict, challenge, and predicament, in galvanizing a particular identity for the "Nanyang / huaqiao" in the matrices of identity politics compounded by the interplay of various historical and political forces especially that of legitimacy. Legal issues aside, huaqiao is already inexorably consigned to an irreconcilable condition constructed on the negative, for they can be "disowned" by their "original Chinese homeland" and their "homeland" in Nanyang and elsewhere.

It is not surprising that this unresolved "question" of the huaqiao has led Wang, almost a decade later, to conclude that "the Chinese have never had a concept of identity, only concept of Chineseness, of being Chinese and of becoming un-Chinese."<sup>6</sup> However, it begs the question: What are the limits of the concept of Chineseness—where do they begin and end? For Wang huaqiao seems to be a *non-identity* under such a binary division. Besides, how does one become "Chinese" or "un-Chinese"? How can we possibly facilitate some form of intervention where critical engagement can be viable? David Yen-ho Wu's exposition of the concept of Chineseness might be useful here:

For centuries the meaning of being Chinese seemed simple and definite: a sense of belonging to a great civilization and performing properly according to the intellectual elite's norm of conduct. This is what Wang Gungwu referred to as the Chinese "historical identity." The Chinese as a group traditionally believed that when a larger Chinese population arrived in a frontier land, Sinicization was the only possibly course. It was inconceivable that any Chinese could be acculturated by the inferior non-Chinese "barbarians"; however, such acculturation has been a common course of development for Chinese in the frontier lands and overseas,

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<sup>6</sup> Wang Gungwu, "The Study of Chinese Identities in Southeast Asia," in *Changing Attitudes of the Southeast Asian Chinese since World War II* (1988), 1.

although people still insist that an unadulterated Chinese culture is maintained by the Chinese migrants.<sup>7</sup>

What further complicates this claim of “huaqiao / overseas Chinese / Chineseness” lies precisely not only in what constitutes “Chineseness” (even though it is debatable and can even be arbitrary at times), but more important, who has the “right” to such claims and most important, on *whose* “claims”? If huaqiao somehow has been a misnomer for “overseas Chinese” or “Chinese overseas,” and by reinserting the “qiao”—the sojourning, the temporary stay elsewhere, thus eluding or possibly transcending the geopolitical boundaries of the “nation-state” (or the “empire” as at its inception Qing still was), it is still bound by its root, the origin, the hua, as derived from “*zhonghua minzu*” (中華民族), arguably a rather modern concept which emerged only at the turn of the 20th century.

In his discussion of the construction of Chinese identities, David Yen-ho Wu points out that the creations of various Chinese terms associated with Chineseness originate from “nationalistic writings warning the Chinese people of the danger of annihilation under Western invasion.” As Wu notes:

Both *zhongguoren* and *zhonghua minzu* represent an identity based on concepts of cultural and historical fulfillment rather than the more conventional modern notions of nationality or citizenship. Since most Chinese have believed that the Han people were the race of China, one that had absorbed people of all languages, customs, and racial and ethnic origins, the meanings of being Chinese in the sense of ethnicity, culture, citizenship, or residence were almost never addressed....In the Chinese mind the overseas Chinese or huaqiao (the Hua sojourners) are natural members of *Zhonghua minzu* as well as *Zhongguoren*. Following the traditional thinking of the Chinese people and state, overseas Chinese (regardless of racial mixture) remain Chinese in the fullest sense as long as they are able to claim a Chinese male ancestor, a homeplace in China from which this ancestor supposedly emigrated, and observe some manner of cultural practices.... For ordinary people in China, the term *huaqiao* invokes the image of a certain type of Chinese—one who is Chinese but partly alien, wealthy, often associated with

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<sup>7</sup> David Yen-ho Wu, “The Construction of Chinese and Non-Chinese identities,” 165.

America and the Cantonese—but, in some instances, with Nanyang, the South Seas, and the Hokkienese. Overseas Chinese refer to themselves using a variety of terms in Chinese as well as in other languages, with and without political connotations; these include *huaren* (*Hua* or Chinese persons), *huayi* (descendants of Chinese), and *huaqiao* (Chinese nationals living overseas). (“The Construction of Chinese and Non-Chinese identities”151--152)

Scholars, such as Kai-wing Chow, further expound on the concept of Chineseness as one zeroing in primarily on the imperial cosmological worldview which begot the Middle Kingdom. In “Narrating Nation, Race, and National Culture: Imagining the *Hanzu* Identity in Modern China,” Chow explains that the “imagined community” of a single (modern) Chinese nation, at its genesis, was predicated upon the singular *hanzu* and thus the exclusion of other (minority/ethnic) groups especially the ruling Manchus during the late Imperial Qing. With the Middle Kingdom’s defeats in the Opium War and the rise of the Western and Japanese powers the sinocentric mentality (thus *zhongguo*, 中國, the Middle Kingdom) derived from the *tianxia* (天下; “the realm under heaven / universe”) became “at odds” with the European scheme of world order and power distributions. The self-perceived “centrality” of the Middle Kingdom was contested and displaced. As Chow puts it, “In British literature produced in the nineteenth century, the early name for China, *Middle Kingdom*, could not be literally understood in the modern European episteme. The spatial centrality implied in the term Middle Kingdom was at odds with European cartography that put Greenwich at the center, that is, at the beginning and end of the latitudes of the globe” (Chow 49; emphasis in the original). In this sense, the identity crisis of the Middle Kingdom was not only the result of the defeats and humiliation of the wars and ceding concession territories, it was the sense of displacement: the Middle Kingdom as it used to be for centuries no longer occupied the center of the universe, which means the historicity and continuity sustained by its *tianxia* worldview was disrupted, and the sense of Chineseness grounded on the Middle Kingdom centrality was under siege. If the “fall” of the

*tianxia* worldview largely shattered the immutable and predetermined attributes of “Chineseness,” it was then replaced by another: that is social Darwinism and the discourse of race, pivotal to the formation of the Chinese nationalist ideology.

### **Un/Becoming Chinese: The Non-perishable Sojourner Reinvented**

Becoming Chinese is a complicated matter. Various terms have been used to designate Chinese or some form of Chineseness: *zhongguoren* (中國人), *zhonghua minzu* (中華民族), *huaren* (華人), *huaqiao* (華僑), *huayi* (華裔), *hanren* (漢人), *tangren* (唐人), *tangshan* (唐山). Chinese terms indicating the Chinese language in its various denominations include *zhongwen* (中文), *huawen* (華文), *hanwen* (漢文), and *hanzi* (漢字), etc. While it is beyond the scope and not the purpose of this project to trace and study how each of these terms originated and evolved over time, I will highlight some of the Chinese terms that I have used or will be using in this project. It is thus important to understand that, since the English term “Chinese” is confining, and at times confusing and misleading, it cannot possibly or adequately define and explain the multiple meanings and complexities of “Chineseness.” To exemplify the complexity and multiplicity in terms of meanings and implications attached to these terms, let us take a moment to examine the term *zhongguoren* (中國人), the most popular and commonly used to designate the “Chinese” people / nationals (from China). *Zhongguoren* literally means “the people of the Middle Kingdom,” a term, when simply translated as “Chinese” in English and often used indiscriminately by critics and scholars, loses its ethnocentric and nationalistic nuances and implication. Arguably, all these terms, while showcasing various degrees of “Chineseness” and

thus embodying some form of Chinese identities under different or similar circumstances, might have already expressed nuances of alterity in spite of the essentialized identity of a singular “Chinese.”

Scholars such as Wang Gungwu, David Yen-ho Wu, and Prasenjit Duara, generally agree that *huaqiao* or “overseas Chinese” are constructed out of a cultural identity based on the claims of common “roots” and shared “bloodline,” one further entwined in the formulations and contestations of Chinese nationalist discourses. In his studies of *huaqiao*, especially those from Southeast Asia or the Nanyang, Wang Gungwu points out that the more accurate translation for *huaqiao* should be “Chinese sojourner” instead of “overseas Chinese.” In his book *Dongnanya yu Huaren* (東南亞與華人) (1987) Wang in a chapter titled “Interpretations of the origins of the term *huaqiao*” (華僑一詞起源詮釋) explains that the term *huaqiao* first appeared in 1890s, and was used extensively for all overseas Chinese after the 1911 Revolution in China which overthrew the Qing. This does not mean that Chinese from China had never migrated to other countries before 1890s. Rather, they did so as early as Ming dynasty (1368-1644) and Qing dynasty (1644-1911). The term *huaqiao*, however, was never used until 1890s. Wang suggests that the translation of the term *huaqiao* into “overseas Chinese” is problematic. This is because, as he believes, *huaqiao* really means “Chinese sojourner” (“*zhongguo lujuzhe*” 中國旅居者), as the words “*qiao*” (僑) (旅行; 暫住) and “*ju*” (居) (住), when combined, means to stay temporarily, and are thus associated with traveling and exploration (Wang 1987: 121). In addition, the term also implies an involuntary migration and thus nostalgia for the homeland (Wang 1987: 128).

Between 1903 and 1911, with the publication and circulation of revolutionary materials targeting huaqiao, the Revolutionary leader Sun Yat-sen gained significant support in the huaqiao communities. In his efforts to mobilize huaqiao to support the revolutionary, Sun emphasized the racial component of the term, distinguishing Han (漢) Chinese from the Manchurian who had ruled China since 1644. The Revolutionary helped disseminate “huaqiao” in their fund-raising campaigns. Eventually, huaqiao became equivalent with patriots whose identity was based on their difference from traitors. In this sense the “revolutionary nature” embedded in the huaqiao is almost synonymous with “overseas Chinese patriots” (*haiwai aiguo huaren*; 海外愛國華人) (Wang 1987: 129). Two years before the 1911 revolution, the Qing government passed the Nationality law based on the principle of *jus sanguinis* (血統主義) thereby granting huaqiao dual nationality (華僑雙重國籍法). This legislation thus enabled the Qing government to incorporate huaqiao into “Chinese nationals” (“*guomin*”; 國民) of the dynasty while forging closer ties with huaqiao. The goal, of course, as shared by the revolutionaries and the reformers, was to assimilate huaqiao into various nationalist discourses and to rouse nationalistic sentiments while acquiring political allegiance and financial resources from the huaqiao. In other words, huaqiao has been the cultural-political capital and material resources for these various parties with conflicting interests.

In contrast, Prasenjit Duara contends that the huaqiao was constructed as “transnational nationalists” especially between 1900 and 1911 by three “nationalist groups,” namely, the imperial late Qing, the Reformers, and the Revolutionary, all of which with distinctive or overlapping political agenda aiming at securing financial and material support from the huaqiao with promised symbolic capital. Their task was to “fix a sense of Chineseness” with which to

mobilize the *huaqiao*, a “new national signifier,” a term used to organize and unify the diverse ethnic and dialect groups in the Nanyang, through this vision of owing their “allegiance” to either the Qing or the Republican (Duara 42). Various tactics and projects were engaged to achieve these parties’ goals, such as educational and fund-raising campaigns, political rallies, and secret societies. Meanwhile, nationalist narratives which “deplored the victimization of loyalist heroes by foreigners, both barbarian conquerors of China and Western colonialists” in addition to *huaqiao*’s “glorious role as pioneering colonizers” were used to mobilize *huaqiao* to act as colonizing pioneers in Nanyang (Duara 53). Various kinds of propagandas were also used to remind *huaqiao* that Nanyang had been China’s territory before it was taken over by Western forces, as well as to warn them they have lost their “Chinese” identity, but by committing to various missions of national salvation, they might be able to restore their “Chineseness.”

One particularly intriguing traits of in the construction of *huaqiao* lies in its malleability: it continues to be renewed and reinvented by various discourses and operative modes of power to suit whatever needs when called for. The most basic need is nationalism, evoked at time of crisis when solidarity and camaraderie is conducive and critical in fostering a uniform and singular national and cultural identity. Since its inception and dissemination, *huaqiao* has been construed in various ways, which at times could be contradictory and incongruous. Among them, as Yen Ching-Hwang points out, historically *huaqiao* (overseas Chinese) have been branded as “deserters,” “criminals,” and “potential traitors” by early Qing rulers (Yen 19). This image was soon transformed into a new image of “political criminals,” “conspirators” and “rebels” (23), and then later “*hanjian*,” literally “the traitor of the Han race.” As Yen notes:

When the term [*hanjian*] first appeared in the period before the Opium War, it was applied mainly to the Cantonese who collaborated with British merchants in opium smuggling activities. The assumption was that these people betrayed their

national interests to the foreigners, and as they were of Han Chinese descent, they were therefore termed “*Hanjian*.” ....The official logic was that all suspected “*Hanjian*” could speak a “barbarian” language, and the ability to speak a “barbarian” language required constant contacts with foreigners.... Since Chinese officials had a vague concept of overseas Chinese, this “traitors” image had quickly spilled over to them. The suspicion of overseas Chinese was not entirely unfounded, for it was they who had contacts with foreigners and who could speak a “barbarian” language, and who were likely to cooperate with foreigners. (23)<sup>8</sup>

These negative portrayals of the huaqiao stem from their contact with the West or “foreigners,” and thus render the huaqiao suspicious. However, once the huaqiao were conceived as “Chinese nationals” (*guomin*) as quintessential to nation building in addition to their financial capital, huaqiao seemed to be configured in a more “positive” light.

No discussion of the conjunction between national salvation and national humiliation in this period of intense national building would be complete without considering the crucial role of huaqiao and the rhetoric of “heroic resistance” and “victimization.”

Liang Qichao, the leader of the Reformers, in his article “Biographies of Eight Great Chinese Colonialists” (1906), upon “discovering” several great leaders and kings in the Nanyang area (the South Seas in traditional Chinese conception), laments that how these “great” huaqiao “national figures” have become obscure and “left out of Chinese history is symbolic of how China herself has been left out of the present world struggle to survival” (Kuhn 245). He begins to ponder the “relation between maritime affairs and national vitality” and explains that China should “expand imperialism outward” as these “great national figures” as well as people from the coastal provinces could be mobilized and useful in imperial expansion and nation building just like the Western countries have done (Kuhn 245). He further urges China and the Chinese people to participate in “colonial enterprises” and states that the “support from the government”

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<sup>8</sup> Yen Ching-Hwang, *Coolies and Mandarins: China's Protection of Overseas Chinese during the Late Ch'ing Period (1851-1911)* (1985)

will be crucial to its success (Kuhn 246). He believes “lack of support from the Chinese government” contributes to the failure of colonial enterprises by huaqiao: “Alas! In the hundreds of more kingdoms of the Nanyang, the majority of the population are descended from the Yellow Emperor. Whether from the standpoint of geography or history, they are natural colonies for our people. But now the Chinese residing there can only compare themselves to oxen and horses. Alas! Who is to blame?... Moreover, since we cannot up even protect our own land, which has been handed down from the Yellow Emperor, how can we expect to [protect our countrymen] in Nanyang?”(Kuhn 246). While lamenting the weakness and decrepitude of the Chinese nation, Liang, however, conjures up images of huaqiao as colonial heroes by exalting the survival instinct and successful “colonization” of the huaqiao migrant workers in the foreign land.<sup>9</sup>

This kind of narrative, while exalting huaqiao for their desire to sojourn abroad and thus being role models of colonial heroism, simultaneously configures the huaqiao laborer as “oppressed” to incite indignation in nationalistic discourse.<sup>10</sup> In this particular sense the *huaqiao*, specifically the “*qiao*” as in sojourning and exploration, has been endowed with colonialist mission, one that would strengthen the “Sick Man of (East) Asia,” by conquering the Nanyang frontiers, just as the Western colonial powers had done, by eventually reclaiming the lost territories. As such, the “recognition of a diasporic frontier” has thus transformed the course of the nationalist rhetoric: “Shifting from anti-colonialism to a celebration of colonialism itself, the development of the nationalist rhetoric encompassed a desire for the power of imperialism that threatened its existence in the first place” (Tsu 248). The huaqiao thus embodies and generates new meanings of Chineseness—the alien (Nanyang) frontiers can be transformed into new sites

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<sup>9</sup> See Philip A Kuhn, chapter 6 titled “Revolution and ‘National Salvation’” in *Chinese among Others: Emigration in Modern Times* (2008).

<sup>10</sup> Jing Tsu, “Extinction and Adventures on the Chinese Diasporic Frontier,” *Journal of Chinese Overseas*, vol. 2, no. 2, November 2006, pp. 247-268.

where the once displaced imperial center of the Han race can be rooted, where the “imagined community” of overseas Chinese national identity can take form.

If huaqiao has been portrayed as the “role model” of “colonial heroism” and altering the diasporic frontier into an extension of China, as well as in preserving and passing their so-called *Chinese* heritage and legacy, it has already been abstracted into an (almost) idealized Chinese subject through an ongoing process of subjugation and appropriation, one that has been deeply entrenched in various discourses such as those of nationalism and cultural / biological essentialism. However, this aspect of the huaqiao / Chineseness zeroes in exclusively on a Han identity and identification. In this sense the huaqiao can be homogenized and fully incorporated into a Han Chinese identity: national, racial, and cultural in particular. The construction of huaqiao in late Imperial China was deployed as such thus draws its lineage as descended from the mythic Yellow Emperor (*huangdi*) and endowed with symbolic capital fueled by imperial desire to be assimilated through national / identity formation.

If “huaqiao” as a collective identity can be abstracted into an idealized Chinese subject, its presumed and “questionable” “Chineseness,” however, can be fetishized and objectified and further appropriated and invoked in various rhetorics, especially in the meta-narratives of nationalist imperatives / propagandas by various parties. One of the most popular and common that is still widely circulated today within “overseas Chinese” communities as well as Taiwan and China is the slogan espoused and promoted by Sun Yat-sen: “Huaqiao is the mother of revolution” (“華僑為革命之母”; “*huaqiao wei geming zhimu*”). Since then, huaqiao has been heralded as the savior of the new Republic, hailed as such for their instrumental and indispensable role in the overthrowing of the Qing Empire, and subsequently glorified in terms of their “contribution,” “sacrifice,” and “heroic resistance,” or even “martyrdom” for modern

Chinese nation building and “national salvation” missions such as “China Relief” fund raising campaigns and anti-Japanese movements.

If huaqiao, on the one hand, were exalted as colonial heroes and pioneers in Liang’s writings as means to foster nationalist sentiments during the late Qing, and “mothers of revolution” on the other hand, through Sun and his followers and later the Republican Nationalist government, huaqiao “affairs” (*qiaowu*) have now become the official political and cultural mission of the Chinese government. One might argue that under such conditions, huaqiao has been subject to some form of “colonialism” under the Chinese government as Stephen Fitzgerald has argued.<sup>11</sup> By setting up offices of “Huaqiao Affairs Bureau” in the Nanyang area, the Nationalist government can better manage, mobilize and control its Chinese subjects. As Philip A. Kuhn notes, tasks of these offices include “intelligence gathering (e.g., registration of [Chinese] schools, community groups, and newspaper publishers,” “diplomatic missions,” huaqiao’s “political loyalties,” education, “voluntary associations, and financial resources,” and later “instigation of anti-Japanese movements,” “a political sensitive job that antagonized ruling authorities” especially in the Nanyang.<sup>12</sup> In other words, the Nationalist government “conceived its mission to govern [huaqiao] comprehensively—and (as it appeared to the rulers and peoples of the Nanyang) saw Southeast Asia as an appropriate sphere for China to wield influence through its overseas citizens” (Kuhn 268). Kuhn further concludes that “the Nanyang became an area in which to rouse national loyalty and during the 1930s an economic battleground for China’s resistance to Japan” (Kuhn 268). The Nationalist government’s political mission was at odds with European colonizers in the Nanyang who shut down their offices and banned their activities. Perhaps one of the starkest contrasts in the representations of huaqiao lies in these

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<sup>11</sup> Stephen Fitzgerald, *China and the overseas Chinese: A Study of Peking’s Changing Policy, 1949—1970*.

<sup>12</sup> Philip A. Kuhn, Chapter 6, “Revolution and ‘National Salvation’” in *Chinese among Others*.

bifurcated images: one representing them as patriotic and loyal Chinese subjects in spite of their “*qiao*” and “overseas” status, and the other branding them as “foreign devils” who have lost their “Chineseness” and were subject to political purges especially during the Cultural Revolution period (mid-1960s to mid-1970s). What happens to the “patriotic” huaqiao, responding to the calls of the motherland, when they finally return to the Middle Kingdom? Are they still considered “huaqiao”?

With the return of the huaqiao to their “motherland,” the umbrella term huaqiao further break apart into terms such as *guiqiao* (歸僑), short for *guiguo huaqiao* (歸國華僑), loosely translated as “returned overseas Chinese” or simply “returnees.” These coinages complicate the matter even further as more identitarian groups were form among these so-called “returned Chinese sojourners,” the “*nanmin huaqiao*” (難民華僑; “refugee Chinese sojourners”) mostly from the Nanyang and especially from Indonesia as a result of anti-Sinicism and other political reasons. These people were placed in state-run “Chinese sojourner farms” (*huaqiao nongchang*; 華僑農場), which in many cases allegedly resembled “labor / concentration camps” especially during the Maoist era. In “The Sojourners: Returned Overseas Chinese in the People's Republic of China,” Michael R. Godley elaborates:

Once held to be “sojourners” (huaqiao) when they lived abroad--mostly in Southeast Asia--yet distrusted in the PRC because of their previous foreign connections, the “returned Overseas Chinese” (guiguo huaqiao) faced further hostility and abuse after moving to what they believed was their “homeland.” They were brutalized during the Cultural Revolution, imprisoned as “spies” or “counterrevolutionaries” and attacked as “capitalists,” “imperialists,” “worshippers of things foreign” and, in the most hurtful way, “foreign devils.” Discrimination became so widespread that when word went out to those who were unhappy that they were free to leave, a number of the small elite who had been accepted into the Communist Party joined several hundred thousand others in a mass exodus to Hong Kong and Macau (330).

Godley further elaborates on how these *guiguo huaqiao* were persecuted during the Cultural Revolution and some were “forced to commit suicide” (346). These *guiguo huaqiao* were “at the mercy of the Red Guards who rampaged through China in order to discover and smash the ‘Seven Black Elements’ which, besides landlords, rich peasants, criminals, counter-revolutionaries, rightists and capitalists, came to include all Overseas Chinese” (347). While overseas Chinese farms and villages branded as the “United Nations of enemy agents,” Indonesian *huaqiao* were denounced as “capitalists to be overthrown,” Malaysian *huaqiao* “renegades and traitors,” Japanese *huaqiao* “spies,” and Thai *huaqiao* “agents” of the KMT (347).<sup>13</sup>

If their “overseas” and “foreign” status earned them a bad name during the Cultural Revolution period, *huaqiao*’s “overseas” condition can somehow be “desirable” for the other “regime” in Taiwan. It should be noted though, China / *zhongguo* / 中國 / Middle Kingdom, is not the sole proprietor and perpetrator of this form of “primordial Chineseness.” *Huaqiao* can be a contested site for identity formation based on the rivalry between Taiwan and China in their self-anointed promotion of everything “authentically Chinese.” After the Chinese Nationalist Party (*guomingtang*, KMT) retreated to Taiwan in 1949, it has continued, till this day, to carry on its global political mission of recruiting “*huaqiao*” and managing “*huaqiao* affairs” (*qiaowu*; 僑務) under OCAC (“Overseas Chinese Affairs Council” R.O.C.; 中華民國僑務委員會). In most

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<sup>13</sup> According to Tan Chee-Beng, “*Guiqiao* or ‘returned overseas Chinese’ are a special category of Chinese in China who have returned from overseas to live in China. There had been transnational networks between overseas Chinese and their relatives in China, including Chinese migrants returning to China to settle down or to visit. After 1949, with the establishment of the Republic of China, those who remained in China or had no opportunity to return to their own countries, formed a distinct category of Chinese who could be distinguished from the local people (*bendiren*) by their overseas cultural features, such as speaking Malay or eating Indonesian Chinese food. More arrived in China in the 1950s and 1960s to study or escape from discrimination in Southeast Asia—Indonesia in particular. The local people in China (*benti*) distinguished them as fan or ‘foreign’ in a derogatory sense. They were also distinguished by the Chinese government as a separate category of Chinese, namely the *guiguo huaqiao* or *guiqiao* in abbreviation,” see Tan, “Reterritorialization of a Balinese Chinese Community in Quanzhou, Fujian,” *Modern Asian Studies* (Vol. 44 / Issue 03 / May 2010), 547-566.

cases huaqiao have been considered a pedagogical subject under the KMT's "huaqiao education policy" (qiaojiao zhenche; 僑教政策). Establishment of huaqiao schools and active recruitment of huaqiao students were also heavily subsidized by the US government especially during the cold war era of the 1950s and 1960s. This kind of "huaqiao returnees" in the official parlance is often hailed as homecoming and their first step in their root-searching effort to fully embrace their lost "Chineseness." Since one of its core "missions" after the 1949 retreat was to "recover mainland China" ("*fangong dalu*"; 反攻大陸) (by force) from the hands of the Communist regime, political affiliations of huaqiao became critical. As Allen Chun points out:

The Kuomintang (KMT), or Nationalist regime on Taiwan has, on the whole, depicted itself as the guardian of "traditional Chinese culture." This notion of guardianship has been reflected not only in its conservative attitude toward the preservation of Chinese language, thought, and civilization but also in its proprietary ownership of various "national treasures" (*kuo-pao*) [*guobao*], which include artifacts of high culture, such as those belonging to the National Palace Museum, classic texts, and objects of (historical or archaeological) antiquity that were products of this civilization. At the core of this traditional Chinese identity is the concept of hua-hsia [*huaxia*]. By invoking a sense of Chineseness (*hua*) that is rooted in the shared civilization of the first (mythical) dynasty (*hsia*), *hua-hsia* is, in essence, a code word for both political legitimacy and historical destiny. (Chun, "Fuck Chineseness" 116)

KMT's "nationalizing" projects also include promoting Chinese Mandarin as the "national language" (*guoyu*), establishing official literary associations and the Chinese Literary Awards committee to promote anti-Communist works with special advocacy of "combat literature" (*zhandou wenyi*) to "further reinforce the anti-Communist ideology".<sup>14</sup> This kind of practice prompts questions about the ways in which ideology of Chineseness can be turned into an apparatus to mold the huaqiao into a somewhat ideal pedagogical and national subject, to sustain and materialize its untainted visions of "Chineseness," and to further preserve intact its

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<sup>14</sup> Pei-Yin Lin, "Writing Beyond Boudoirs: Sinophone Literature by Female Writers in Contemporary Taiwan," in *Sinophone Studies*, 256.

primordial Middle Kingdom-ness unaffected by external events and the change of time. In his critique of Chineseness through the use of ethnicity as identity, Allen Chun comments in “Fuck Chineseness: On the Ambiguities of Ethnicity as Culture as Identity”:

The transformation of Chinese overseas into "overseas Chinese" (hua-ch'iao) [huaqiao] was, then, an expansion of Chinese nationalism abroad that attempted to galvanize Chinese identity from what was once kin-centered, dialect groups into a radically new "imagined community" reeducated in standard Mandarin and the orthodox teachings of Chinese civilization. For Chinese who had not severed ties with their homeland, this new sense of identity could be seen as an extension of a primordial Chineseness. For those whose cultural lifestyles had become largely assimilated or syncretic in nature, this new kind of identity was, instead, a source of alienation." (Chun, "Fuck Chineseness," 124)

Chun points out one of the most relevant issues pertaining to the claim of “Chineseness”: how ethnicity in the name of “culture” and a “national identity” based on such claims can be appropriated and turned into some form of symbolic capital while subjugating “Chinese overseas” to their ethnicity as their national and cultural identity. While this “extension of a primordial Chineseness” based on “ethnic purity” can be the curse and prison house for huaqiao, Chun does not explain how this “new kind of identity” could be “a source of alienation” and how it actually has impacted the huaqiao identity formations / identification.

Huaqiao, as this project contends, from being conceived as a Chinese subject and the progenitor of a new kind of (transnational) Chineseness and its vanguard, to emblemizing the ambivalence of being “Chinese,” are conceived to preserve and maintain the displaced sinocentric Chineseness, thus endowed with the mission to promote and proselytize every form of “Chineseness” possible “overseas”—in this sense it resonates with Tu Weiming’s contemporary “cultural China” paradigm.

Amidst the debates concerning the conceptualization of “Chineseness,” Tu Weiming draws on the legacy of the mythic Chineseness as the basis for his “cultural China” paradigm. In

“Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center,” Tu points out that the term “children of the Yellow Emperor” has been “reenacted in Chinese literature and evokes feelings of ethnic pride” (3) and constantly reasserts the idea that being Chinese is defined by culture and geopolitics. A common ancestry shared by all is what constitutes this sense of Chineseness. Tu then proposes the concept of “cultural China,” with a tripartite division:

The first consists of mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore—that is, the societies populated predominantly by cultural and ethnic Chinese. The second consists of Chinese communities throughout the world, including a politically significant minority in Malaysia (35 percent) and a numerically negligible minority in the United States. These Chinese, estimated to number 36 million, are often referred to by the political authorities in Beijing and Taipei as *huaqiao* (overseas Chinese). More recently, however, they have tended to define themselves as members of the Chinese “diaspora,” meaning those who have settled in scattered communities of Chinese far from their ancestral homeland.... The third symbolic universe consists of individual men and women, such as scholars, teachers, journalists, industrialists, traders, entrepreneurs, and writers, who try to understand China intellectually and bring their conceptions of China to their own linguistic communities” (13-14).

The problem with Tu’s tripartite proposal, however, lies in the hierarchical “symbolic universe” which he urges the Chinese diaspora communities, while occupying the “periphery,” to construct a “new vision of Chineseness that is more in tune with Chinese history and in sympathetic resonance with Chinese culture” (34). Tu uses the term “cultural China” (文化中國; *wenhua zhongguo*) for his vision and to subsume various types of Chinese diaspora / *huaqiao* under such a designation. Even though Tu claims it is not “geopolitically centered” it nevertheless inherits cultural essentialism as he stresses the commonly shared cultural and ancestral roots between the *huaqiao* (Tu, “Cultural China: the periphery as the center” 25).

The problem with Tu’s claim, however, lies not simply in his presumptuous advocating of the term “*wenhua zhongguo*,” but also his endorsement of such a term as the alternative, yet it is still bound by the essentialist notion of Chineseness for it still grounds its claim on the

uncontested meaning of Chineseness by asserting and consolidating its essentialist qualities in the name of claiming the periphery. The difference in the choice of these terms indicates the switch from the “geopolitically centered” of “the myth of the Middle Kingdom” to the ethnocentrism of “cultural” and “ancestral” roots (Tu 22). Tu’s choice of “cultural China,” however, is still sino-centric as it still points and refers to China as the ultimate signifier.

In his evaluation of Edward Said’s Orientalism, Arif Dirlik interrogates the role of the “Oriental” and “Orientalist” elites and intellectuals in the making of what he calls “self-orientalization.” In other words, orientalism is not simply / only a product of Euro-American imperialism and colonialism, the “Orientals” also participate and contribute to the making of such a discourse through the process of self-orientalization. In Dirlik’s critique of Tu’s “cultural China,” he points to Tu’s assertion of “Chineseness” by calling for the replacement of the “center” by the “periphery,” a task Tu believes overseas Chinese / diasporic Chinese should take over while disregarding or neglecting the positioning of these diasporic Chinese agents is itself an act of containment: “The assertion of ‘Chineseness’ against this uncertainty seeks to contain the very dispersal of a so-called ‘Chinese culture’ into numerous local cultures which more than ever makes it impossible to define a Chinese national culture. This strategy of containment is the other side of the coin to the pursuit of a ‘Chinese’ identity in a global culture. If in the former case it may serve to counter a Euro-American hegemony, in the latter case it is itself an expression of establishing a cultural hegemony that denies the diversity of what it means to be Chinese. In this latter case, it is empowered by the very Euro-American hegemony that it seeks to displace” (Dirlik, “Chinese History and the Question of Orientalism,” 116).

Dirlik’s critique of Tu brings me to Shu-mei Shih’s widely celebrated formulations and advocating of the Sinophone as the alternative, which share similar veins with Tu’s proposal

except to “displace” China again with its “periphery” and “margins” and to replace “China / Chinese” with “Sinitic languages” and use the linguistic category as a marker for her “Sinophone,” another model that needs to be addressed later in this chapter.

### **The Aporetic Subject and the Politics of Timelessness**

That sentiment accompanying the absence of home—homesickness—can cut two ways: it can be a yearning for the authentic home (situated in the past or in the future) or it can be the recognition of the inauthenticity in all homes.<sup>15</sup>

The collapse of the Qing, however, did not and has not put “an end date”<sup>16</sup> to the “huaqiao” even though the term was originally created by the Qing and used by various parties to address Chinese overseas. Instead, it continues to fuel and propel the huaqiao vis-à-vis “Chineseness” discourse / enterprise. Through transnational nationalism, huaqiao becomes the site where their “Chineseness” can be projected, exploited and further tested, a dialectics that further exacerbates the definitions and boundaries of the political and cultural; huaqiao as such becomes a site registering contested meanings of “Chineseness” where fixed and fixated attributes of Chineseness can no longer be taken for granted even though from its inception huaqiao have been conceived as inseparable from the “regime(s) of authenticity.”<sup>17</sup>

Huaqiao—created and conceived at the historical junctures when the once inviolable “Chineseness” of the imperial Middle Kingdom underwent massive reconfiguration and was dubbed the *dongya bingfu* (“Sick Man of East Asia”), when the claim of Chineseness could no

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<sup>15</sup> Rosemary Marangoly George, *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction*, 75.

<sup>16</sup> A recurring phrase by Shu-mei Shih in her critique of “Chinese / diaspora” as an identity marker.

<sup>17</sup> Prasenjit Duara, “The Regime of Authenticity: Timelessness, Gender, and National History in Modern China,” in *Constructing Nationhood in Modern East Asia*, 359—388.

longer insulate its celestial sinocentric (*tianxia*) worldview from being attacked and encroached upon by Japanese and Western powers as well as internal dissident voices. At this point, the challenge of “the regime(s) of authenticity” to sustain a continual sense of “Chineseness” so that it could be homogenized and essentialized as the “truth of the nation” was marked by “the aporias of time and the order of authenticity” as Prasenjit Duara aptly elucidates in “The Regime of Authenticity: Timelessness, Gender, and National History in Modern China.” Even though Duara’s main concern here is the nation and the “relationship between the concepts of time and timelessness in national histories” through what he calls “the regime of authenticity,” his formulation of “women as embodiments of authenticity in twentieth-century China” can be useful in the category of huaqiao (Duara 359): “The subject of history is identified by the simulacra of authenticity and purity and of associated notions of honor, morality, and spirituality. It is the order of the sacred within the secular, the essence of the past in the present” (Duara 367). To sustain and contain huaqiao before or after the collapse of Qing involves “representational practices that sustain the order of authenticity,” such as “the movement in politics and culture to identify essences and search for roots” (Duara 367). In other words, the huaqiao as a collective signifier is used to “simulate the authenticity of the primordial nation” (Duara 367) and in the embodiment of Chineseness, one still set in and bound by the imperial *tianxia* teleology and unadulterated by the “sojourning” of the huaqiao. As such the huaqiao is no less than the traditional representation of (the Chinese) woman in general.

Using the Chinese women as his “subject of history” to illustrate what he calls “nationalist patriarchy,” an expression Duara borrowed from Chatterjee (in *Nation* 1993), as a means to subject women to the “regime of authenticity”: Women as the “privileged site” for the “representation of authenticity,” or in the case of huaqiao, “representation of (in)authenticity,”

and further subject to, and yet symbolic of, the “unchanging core” under the regimes of Chineseness. For these reasons the huaqiao need to be constantly enlightened about the value and meanings of Chineseness as well as “custodians of authenticity” (Duara 380). Unfortunately it seems that this Chinese subject can only take refuge in this state, that of being a sojourner, and the condition of sojourning, thus (typecast) in a permanent state of transiency, an oxymoronic existence, bound by a timeless unison of solidarity with the nation-state. In other words, the timelessness of this (non-)identity has the potential to bind the overseas Chinese to the state of being “*qiao*”—temporary, transient, sojourning, forever yearning for the homeland. In his critique of the logic of the historical mode of “linear directionality” (361) committed by nation-state, Duara states that when nation-state comes in to claim its sovereignty over its people, “the modern notion of sovereignty” becomes “irrelevant to the historical relationship between the Chinese imperial center and these local polities” (Duara 360). As he explains, “National history is fully teleological in that its ends are to be found in its beginnings” (361) and by this Duara means the “timelessness” of history: “The unchanging subject is not timeless in the strict sense of being outside of time but rather in the sense of being unaffected by time.”<sup>18</sup> In this sense huaqiao is essentially a timeless (almost phantasmagoric) being—as its meanings continue to evolve and yet “unaffected by time” embodied in the “unchanging essence” of Chineseness, with “a special aura of sanctity, purity, and authenticity” (Duara 365).

The challenge and predicament of framing or even theorizing the huaqiao (or “oversea Chinese” for that matter) lies in the age-old assumption that huaqiao, precisely because of its non-identity as reified by the notion and material condition of being “a sojourner” is eternally bound by, and inscribed in, an affective economy privileging the sentimental, that of

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<sup>18</sup> Duara, see endnote 6 in “The Regime of Authenticity: Timelessness, Gender, and National History in Modern China,” 382.

(be)longings, yearnings, displacement, loss, thus capable of eluding logic. Can we possibly replace and re-(en)vision the huaqiao otherwise? Is it possible to talk about the huaqiao in the “present”—the *here* and *now*, instead of the *there* and *elsewhere*, the *past* and *future* (the lure and promise of homecoming or the impossible return), thus elude the non-logic of timelessness (as in unaffected by time)?

What complicates this issue further lies precisely in this form of imprisonment—the huaqiao is forever tied to the home (mythic, imagined, real, ancestral, etc.) that its identity and subjectivity can only be tentatively established in the gesture of Return: that is, one that, at the moments of its inception caught in the split between various impulses, can only be fulfilled, as it seems, in the act of Homecoming. Thus the huaqiao in its very “essence” embodies the battleground to the legitimate claim of “Chineseness.” Under such circumstances, can we possibly articulate and speak of a huaqiao subjectivity without denying its absence as such? How to articulate and resist “Chineseness” has become, it seems, the somewhat oxymoronic concern, that is, how does one articulate and resist at the same time without jeopardizing one’s integrity, without falling (back) into a teleological framework which further reifies “obsession with China / Chineseness” or a “China-centered” / “Chinese-centered” mindset? A look at Ien Ang’s case might lend some light into this issue.

Speaking about the predicaments of being a “diaspora Chinese,” Ien Ang notes: “In Taiwan I was different because I couldn’t speak Chinese; in the West I was different because I looked Chinese” (*On Not Speaking Chinese* vii). Born in Indonesia to parents of *peranakan* descent, spending her formative years in the Netherlands, and later relocating to Australia, Ang’s diasporic trajectory is not an unfamiliar one. In *On Not Speaking Chinese* (2001), Ang begins her account by reflecting on her experience of being “faced with an almost insurmountable

difficulty” when she was invited to present a paper at a conference in Taiwan in 1992:

“Imagining my Taiwanese audience, I felt I couldn’t open my mouth in front of them without explaining why I, a person with stereotypically Chinese physical characteristics, could not speak to them in Chinese” (vii). Of course one may ponder why, way before she is confronted with her “real Chinese” audience, Ang is already consumed by the anxiety of not being able to deliver her assumed / (self-) imposed “Chineseness.” Agitating over her first arrival on Taiwan, Ang writes: “I felt like I couldn’t speak without recognizing explicitly who I was and responding to how I was likely to be perceived by the people in this country. I expected much questioning, which turned out to be more than warranted: again and again, people on the streets, in shops, restaurants and so on were puzzled and mystified that I couldn’t understand them when they talked to me in Chinese” (vii).<sup>19</sup> This intimate account is compelling not only because it later became the crux and reason for her book, but more important, it fully encapsulates what Ang calls the “predicaments of ‘Chineseness’ in diaspora” (vii).

One might ask, is Ang, by resorting to her “questionable” or “deprived Chineseness,” simultaneously engaging in the act of “(self-) ethnicization” as she further expounds in her book:

Discourses of ethnicity started to proliferate as minority communities began to assert themselves in their stated desire to “maintain their cultural identity.” However, such (self-)ethnicization, which is in itself a confirmation of minority status in white, Western culture, can paradoxically serve as an alibi for what Rey Chow (1991: xvi) has called “prescribed ‘otherness.’” Thus, “Chinese identity” becomes confined to essentialist and absolute notions of “Chineseness,” the source of which can originate from ‘China,’ to which the ethnicized ‘Chinese’ subject must adhere to acquire the stamp of “authenticity.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ang’s use of the term “Chinese” does not differentiate and thus subsumes all “Sinitic languages” spoken in Taiwan as “Chinese” even though Chinese Mandarin, or what Taiwanese call “guoyu” (national language) is not the only one spoken / used there—even though Chinese Mandarin is designated as the national language and thus the official language / language of instruction, others such as Hakka, Minnan / or what Taiwanese would call “taiyu” are spoken there (literally “the Taiwanese language”).

<sup>20</sup> *On Not Speaking Chinese* 30.

One might question what options does such a subject have—given the conditions of either being subjected to “(self-)ethnicization” and / or “prescribed ‘otherness’” while maintaining one’s “cultural identity” somewhat gets in the way? What about “Chinese” or the so-called “overseas Chinese” as “minority” in “non-White, non-Western” societies and cultures? How do they maneuver such terrains of identity formation amid various “operative powers” and political realities? While this dissertation will tackle some of these issues in later chapters it is important to recognize the fact that in many cases, due to harsh and hostile political realities toward “minorities” especially in societies where “race” and “skin color” become the core marker that the target and “scapegoat” then the attempts to “maintain one’s cultural identity” can be a matter of survival as rarely is it an option can one choose, under such circumstances, to be “culturally” attached to one’s racial or ethnic identity.

Meanwhile, as in Ang’s and many others’ case, if the inability to speak the Chinese language(s) serves as a marker of one’s lack of “Chineseness,” Ang’s recounting of her personal experience prior to her arrival in Taiwan and during her stay there encapsulates an untenable moment—one that marks the inability or failure to defend or occupy—of the self-awareness and consciousness of not being able to come to terms with one’s identity (or the lack thereof), but also how and why she is constantly reminded—voluntarily or not, of how indefensible she is for her inability to speak the Chinese language(s) and thus she is always in need of defending a position that she does not possess or occupy, an awkward but almost impossible position which embodies and foregrounds, as Ang has knowingly perceived well before her arrival in Taiwan, an identity politics of “complicated entanglement” (2001: 3) based on the discourse of Chineseness. What marks her difference in both worlds, Taiwan (the East) or the West, lies precisely in using Chineseness as a racial and ethnic label.

Ang's account offers us a critical perspective of how Chineseness can be and has been constructed, produced, and propagated, in the rhetoric of, say, cultural kinship as well as ethnic and national belongings. Ang's case is but one compelling incident demonstrating the difficulty and complexity in the construction of diasporic / Chinese identity whether in the "East" or "West." As she confesses, "I found being Chinese a profoundly ambivalent experience, fraught with feelings of rejection (by the majority of non-Chinese Indonesians) and alienation (from an identity that was first and foremost an imposed one). The need to come to terms with the 'fact' of my Chineseness remained a constant..." (*On Not Speaking Chinese* 39). Ang's experience attests to the "operative power" of such a discourse even though it is first conceived as a "discursive construct" and thus it is imperative to examine and interrogate the "diaspora's quest for Chineseness." Ang notes:

The booming interest in what is loosely termed the Chinese diaspora has unsettled the very demarcation of China as an immensely complex yet ontologically stable object of study. The view from the diaspora has shattered the convenient certainty with which Chinese studies has been equated, quite simply, with the study of China. "China" can no longer be limited to the more or less fixed area of its official spatial and cultural boundaries nor can it be held up as providing the authentic, authoritative, and uncontested standard for all things Chinese. Instead, how to determine what is and what is not Chinese has become the necessary preliminary question to ask, and an increasingly urgent one at that.<sup>21</sup>

As Ang suggests, a better understanding of the construction of Chineseness calls into question the critic's privileged position by first querying the critic's subject position and how she has been conditioned to begin with. This is the first crucial step to "push the limits of the diasporic paradigm" by acknowledging the existence and demarcation of boundaries created by uncontested meanings of Chineseness. Yet, as Ang suggests, the remaining question is how do

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<sup>21</sup> Ien Ang, "Can One Say No to Chineseness? Pushing the Limits of the Diasporic Paradigm" in *Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies in the Age of Theory: Reimagining a Field*, ed. Rey Chow (Durham, N. C.: Duke UP, 2000), 282 (italics in the original).

we “determine what is and what is not Chinese”? More importantly, why is it “the necessary preliminary question to ask” and “an increasingly urgent one”? What is really at stake here? For Ang, such questions have turned to “a personal political issue” and “an existential condition which goes beyond the particularities of arbitrary personal history.” What is at stake here is such a “condition has been hegemonically constructed as a lack, a sign of loss of authenticity” (*On Not Speaking Chinese* 30).

Echoing Rey Chow, Ang later turns this moment of untenability into what she calls the “essentially ‘negative’ agency of hybridity” shared by diasporic intellectuals. As Ang poignantly proclaims, “Who I am” or “who we are” “is never a matter of free choice” (*On Not Speaking Chinese* vii). However, Ang duly points out, the “negative” agency of such hybridity is one that “hold[s] on to this unstable, ambivalent, doubly marginalized positionality” through means of “tactical,” rather than, “strategically” engaged “interventions”: “Tactical interventions never make counter-hegemonic claims to alternative truths but are limited to bringing out the contradictions and the violence inherent in all posited truths” (Ang 2001: 2). Ang calls our attention to the “doubly marginalized positionality” entailed by the labeling or even self-identifying of the diasporic identity. Such tactics aim to “point to ambiguities, complexities and contradictions, to complicate matters rather than provide formulae for solutions” (2).

Ang’s *On Not Speaking Chinese*, however, is not a celebration or wholehearted embrace of the “Chinese diaspora” either. On the contrary, she calls for the importance of recognizing the “double-edgedness of diasporic identity: it can be the site of both support and oppression, emancipation and confinement” (2001: 12). By problematizing, but not abandoning, “the value of diasporic identity politics” and “the importance of Chineseness itself as the symbolic anchor of such politics,” Ang interrogates the “boundaries of the (Chinese) diaspora itself” and pinpoints

“the implicit local / global power relations established in the very construction of the imagined community of ‘the Chinese diaspora’” (2001: 13). Ang’s caution is well grounded as she further pinpoints the pitfalls of using “Chineseness” as a fixed / fixated identity: “Chineseness is a category whose meanings are not fixed and pregiven, but constantly renegotiated and rearticulated, both inside and outside China” (2001: 25). By unraveling her own experience as a “diasporic Chinese,” she exemplifies the problematics of the “cultural politics of diaspora” (25). Calling her “condition” the “‘corporeal malediction’ of Chineseness” while paying homage to Frantz Fanon (2001: 28), Ang stresses that in spite of the fact that Chineseness can be an imposed identity, that does not make it simply a “question of theory” or a “discursive construct,” rather, it is “a matter of subjective experience”: “The relation between ‘where you’re from’ and ‘where you’re at’ is a deeply problematic one”—“it is this very problem which is constitutive to the idea of diaspora, and for which the idea of diaspora attempts to be a solution” (Ang 2001: 30). Ang, however, conceives the “diaspora” as a “third space of hybridity” while recognizing “Chineseness” as an open, instead of a fixed, reference point (35).

In “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return,” published in the inaugural issue of the journal *Diaspora*, William Safran delineates six main characteristics to define the model of diaspora:

the concept of diaspora ... [is] applied to expatriate minority communities whose members share several of the following characteristics: 1) they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original "center" to two or more "peripheral," or foreign, regions; 2) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland—its physical location, history, and achievements; 3) they believe that they are not—and perhaps cannot be—fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it; 4) they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return—when conditions are appropriate; 5) they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and 6) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that

homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship.<sup>22</sup>

Safran explains that “diaspora consciousness is an intellectualization of an existential condition” (87) and Ang further extends Safran’s to “an existential condition that becomes understood and reconciled through the myth of a homeland from which one is removed but to which one actually belongs” (*On Not Speaking Chinese* 30). In Ang’s case as a “Chinese diaspora,” she seems to imply that the missing link of her “Chineseness” lies in her inability to speak the Chinese language(s) and thus poses the problem of linguistic and cultural mediation for her especially on her Taiwan trip. This “existential condition” in Ang’s case, however, seems to be prevalent even among “overseas Chinese” who can speak the Chinese Mandarin language (what Taiwanese call “*guoyu*”—“national language” or “*putonghua*” in PRC, literally “the common language,” which is also the “national language”) and who do not have to be consumed by an “insurmountable difficulty” due to the inability to speak the language(s). This can be seen in works by Sinophone writers who actually write in Chinese. If Ang’s “condition,” as she claims, is mostly characterized by the her inability to speak or understand the Chinese language(s) and thus constitutes the “lack, a sign of loss of authenticity”—then we might surmise, what else can be underlying such an “existential condition” even when one has “full” command of the official “Chinese” language (such as those labeled “overseas Chinese” or “Sinophone” writers)?

Before I delve into these issues, it is pertinent to examine why “diasporic Chinese” have been analogized to a somewhat pejorative category due to their alleged “lack of authenticity” and as such can only be “compensated” through “(self-) ethnicization” and / or the “quest of Chineseness.” If Chinese diaspora (studies) has somewhat “unsettled the very demarcation of

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<sup>22</sup> William Safran, “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return,” in *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, Vol.1, No. 1, Spring 1991, 83-89.

China as an immensely complex yet ontologically stable object of study” as Ang claims, it seems it still cannot shed off the latch-on identity on which it was built as delineated in Safran’s formulation: the myths of the homeland and the return. It might be useful here to bring in Rey Chow’s critique of the discourse of “Chineseness.” As Chow comments: “In the habitual obsession with ‘Chineseness’, what we often encounter is a kind of cultural essentialism—in this case, sinocentrism—that draws an imaginary boundary between China and the rest of the world”<sup>23</sup> Expounding on what she calls “sinochauvinism” (a combination of chauvinism and sinocentrism) Chow cautions against the pitfalls of using “Chinese” as a homogenous label and “Chineseness” as “a monolithic given bound ultimately to mainland China.”<sup>24</sup> Based on such a notion of Chineseness, Chow contends that “modern Chinese studies” is “constructed precisely on the very ambiguity of the ethnic supplement—of the victim-cum-empire status of the term *Chinese*.”<sup>25</sup> Calling for the “problematization of ethnicity,” Chow is fully aware of the challenge of the task by pinpointing the “persistent Orientalist approach adopted by some white China scholars toward their object of study” (Chow 9):

To fully confront the issue of Chineseness as a theoretical problem, therefore, it is not sufficient to point to the lack of attempts to theorize Chineseness as such. It is equally important for us to question the sustained, conspicuous silence in the field of China studies on what it means for certain white scholars to expound so freely on the Chinese tradition, culture, language, history, women, and so forth in the postcolonial age; it is also important for us to ask why and how one group of people can continue to pose as the scientific investigators and moral custodians of another culture while the ethnic and racial premises of their own operations remain, as ever, exempt from interrogation. Chineseness, in other words, would be incomplete without a concurrent problematization of *whiteness* within the broad frameworks of China and Asia studies.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Rey Chow, “Introduction: On Chineseness as a Theoretical Problem,” 6.

<sup>24</sup> Rey Chow, “Introduction: On Chineseness as a Theoretical Problem,” 8.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 8; emphasis in the original.

<sup>26</sup> Rey Chow, “Introduction: On Chineseness as a Theoretical Problem,” 9-10; emphasis in the original.

Though calling for the “theorization of Chineseness,” Chow’s main object of critique obviously focuses on “certain white scholars” and their ethnocentric approaches in their research; however, such an “Orientalist” approach inevitably goes beyond the enclave of “certain white scholars.” This is evidenced by Chow’s subsequent critique of the use of Chinese Mandarin—what Chow dubs the “white man’s Chinese” (11)—as the “universal” and “standard” language in China and in the West and how proficiency and competence in Mandarin, while it is viewed as “an additional professional asset” for “the white person,” has become the benchmark of Chinese’s authenticity and “an index to existential value” especially when it comes to landing a job in China studies (Chow, “On Chineseness” 12).

While Chow’s critique is mainly aimed at the institutionalization of area and ethnic studies in the US and how the issue of “whiteness” feeds into this myth of “authenticity” based on the construction of “Chineseness,” it calls attention to not only the limitations of such approach and practice, but more important, the fallacies of using the rhetoric of the imperative / ethnicity / race or any forms of essentialism as the arbiter of meaning production. Ang’s critique of the use and comprehension of the “Chinese” language and Chow’s concern’s over the use of the “Chinese Mandarin” as an identity marker of one’s presumed Chineseness raise the issue of language in the claims of Chineseness. This aspect of Chineseness echoes Shu-mei Shih’s proposal of the Sinophone with its emphasis on the use of the Sinitic languages, which might seem afresh compared to other (older) “territory-based” frameworks as implied in the “*nei / wai*” (内; inner / 外; outer) dichotomy.

### **Roots, Routes, and beyond**

Since the 1980s several terms have been used in the effort to remap and re-categorize Chinese language literatures produced outside of the PRC (and to an extent Taiwan and Hong Kong even though this demarcation can sometimes be confusing),<sup>27</sup> among them: 海外華文文學 (overseas literatures in Chinese; overseas Chinese-language literatures), 海外華人文學 (overseas Chinese literatures), and 世界華文文學 (world literatures in Chinese; world Chinese-language literatures), originally coined to address literary works written in Chinese Mandarin produced outside of China and Taiwan, or by what the PRC and ROC consider “huaqiao” or “overseas Chinese” (海外華人). These terms, as the term “*haiwai*” (海外; “overseas”) suggest, can still be regarded as reinforcing the conventional demarcation based on the *nei / wai* dichotomy which only reaffirm the “centrality” and thus legitimacy of *zhongguo wenxue* (中國文學; traditionally “Chinese literature”; literally “the literature of the Middle Kingdom”).

Conventionally literary works written in Chinese produced outside of China (and to some extent Taiwan / Hong Kong) have been regarded as “*zhiliu*” (支流; tributary) to the *zhongguo wenxue*, Chinese literature proper, and yet subsumed under the geopolitics of “*dai zhongguo xintai*” (大中國心態; greater China / Middle Kingdom mentality) or “*wenhua zhongguo*” (文化中國; “cultural China / Middle Kingdom”). However, such mentality, while dismissing the aforementioned “overseas Chinese” literatures as “tributary,” still maintains its hegemonic status by claiming the “tributary” as “inseparable” and “un-severable” (“*buke fenge*”; 不可分割; literally “cannot be divided” or “separated”)<sup>28</sup> from *zhongguo* literature as they are conceived as

<sup>27</sup> In PRC literature produced in both Taiwan and Hong Kong in general is still subsumed under the teleological “*zhongguo wenxue*” (中國文學) even though they are called “Taiwan” or “Hong Kong” literature.

<sup>28</sup>“不可分割” attests to how PRC has viewed and persistently reaffirmed Taiwan as part of its “indivisible territory” and the “integral” part of *zhongguo* / Middle Kingdom and thus “inseparable” from the “motherland.”

sprung from the “*muti wenxue*” (母體文學; literally “literature of” or “belonging to the mother’s body”). Under such logic “overseas Chinese” writers are still mainly identified by their sojourning status: *luju* (旅居) and their literary works defined by their relations to the “motherland.” In other words, this whole body of literary works and their writers has been lumped together due to their “overseas” and “sojourning” conditions. As Kim Tong Tee (張錦忠) comments, “overseas Chinese-language literature indicates the dominant position, marginalizing ideology, and co-optative motivation of Chinese literature as both national and ethnic literature. Likewise, worlds Chinese-language literature minoritizes the Sinophone literary articulations around the worlds as writing in ‘world Chinese.’”<sup>29</sup> All these terms, in spite of their limitations and geopolitical politics based on the *nei /wai* dichotomy, can be regarded as stemming from older terms such as “Chinese Sojourner’s literature” or “Sojourning Chinese literature” (華僑文學; “*huaqiao wenxue*” or “*qiaoming wenxue*” (僑民文學) to define literary works produced by “huaqiao / overseas Chinese.” However, the surging interests in these literatures and the incessant effort to (re)define and redraw boundaries of what constitutes “Chinese” literature(s) continue to witness the trend that the studies of (“Chinese”) literatures defy pre-existing (literary) conventions and paradigms, and can no longer be bound by nation-state (China, or Taiwan for instance). The emergence of such terms can also be seen as a response to the heated debates and discussions of the topics of “Chineseness” in relation to the construction of “Chinese” identities among scholars across various disciplines and communities such as overseas Chinese studies, Chinese diaspora studies, anthropology, Chinese literary and cultural studies, as well as the Sinophone.

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<sup>29</sup> Kim Tong Tee, “Sinophone Malaysian Literature: An Overview,” in *Sinophone Studies*, 305.

The coinage of Sinophone is the latest of ongoing attempts to address and remap the concept of “Chineseness.” “Sinophone literature / studies” (*huayu yuxi wenxue / yanjiu*; 華語語系文學 / 研究), according to Shu-mei Shih:

The Sinophone encompasses Sinitic-language communities and their expressions (cultural, political, social, etc.) on the margins of nations and nationalness in the internal colonies and other minority communities in China as well as outside it, with the exception of settler colonies where the Sinophone is the dominant vis-à-vis their indigenous populations. (Shih, “The Concept of Sinophone” 716)

As Shih reiterates in many places, Sinophone “situates itself at the intersection of a variety of academic discourses and fields that have either not been linked with each other or placed into productive relationships in the past.”<sup>30</sup> However, the basic premise of her formulation is predicated upon the rejection of the “Chinese diaspora.” As she further charges:

[D]iaspora as value implies loyalty to and longing for the ancestral “home,” which bind the diasporic to the so-called homeland. It ties the Han in Taiwan and Southeast Asia to the Chinese “homeland” even after centuries and presumes their cultural dependence, if not political dependence, on China. This diaspora framework has also perpetuated the category of the “overseas Chinese,” who respond to the call of a Chineseness so narrowly defined that it becomes quantifiable: one can be more Chinese or less Chinese....” (Shih, “The Concept of Sinophone,” p. 713)

Elsewhere in *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations across the Pacific* (2007), Shih critiques another conception of the “Chinese Diaspora”:

The Chinese Diaspora, understood as the dispersion of “ethnic Chinese” persons around the globe, stands as universalizing category founded on a unified ethnicity, culture, language, as well as place of origin of homeland. Such a notion is highly problematic, despite wide adoption and circulation. (Shih, *Visuality* 23)

While I agree with Shih’s critique of “Han-centrism” for the use of “Chinese” as a “national marker passing as an ethnic, cultural, and linguistic marker” and the “conflation of the word

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<sup>30</sup> Shu-mei Shih, “Introduction: What is Sinophone Studies” in *Sinophone Studies,; A Critical Reader*, 1.

Chinese with everything from China” as a “desire to universalize Chineseness” (Shih, *Visuality* 24; emphasis in the original), I certainly have my reservation with her seemingly oversimplified, if not reductionist, take on the terms such as “Diaspora” and “Chinese Diaspora.” In rejecting “Chinese / Diaspora” she identifies it as another “universalizing category” founded on “unified” identity markers. That is, in debunking “Chineseness,” Shih simultaneously denounces “Diaspora” as an identity marker for its “all-encompassing” quality:

The “Chinese diaspora” as the all-encompassing term for all ethnic peoples who have ancestral links to China oftentimes functions as the alibi for assigning Chineseness as an inescapable, ontological, a priori condition readily subjected to racialization within countries of settlement, to nationalist hailings by China, and to variously motivated cultural essentialisms, even though generations may have lived and died and centuries may have elapsed since the dispersal. “Chineseness” becomes a category that can be quantified and measured, and most importantly, insisted upon, privileging an ideology of origin that refuses to accept an end date to diaspora. (Shih, *Visuality* 184-85)

Shih’s rejection and disavowal of the “Chinese diaspora” as a “misconceived category” sharply contrasts Aihwa Ong’s take of the Chinese diaspora.

As Ong comments in *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*

(1999):

My larger goal is to redirect our study of Chinese subjects beyond an academic construction of Chineseness that is invariably or solely defined in relation to the motherland, China. Those of us outside China have been regarded as “residual China” or as minorities in host countries, that is, as less culturally “authentic” Chinese. Rather, I argue in this book, the contemporary practices and values of diasporan Chinese are characteristics of larger questions of displacement, travel, capital accumulation, and other transnational process that affect large numbers of late-twentieth century subjects (who are geographically “in place” and *displaced*). Over the past few decades, the multiple and shifting status of “Chineseness” has been formed and embedded within the processes of global capitalism—production, trade, consumption, mobility, and dislocation / relocation—and subjected to various modes of governmentality that fix them in place or disperse them in space. (Ong, *Flexible Citizenship* 23—24).

Elsewhere in *Underground Empires* Ong and Donald Nonini reiterate Ong's formulation in *Flexible Citizenship*: "If one adhered to the earlier paradigm of overseas Chinese studies in which to be Chinese 'overseas' was to be part of an imperfect residual China, diaspora might be seen as a negatively defined and inferior phenomenon" (*Underground Empires* 18).

Both Ong and Nonini criticize "overseas Chinese studies" as well as "East Asian" and "Southeast Asian area studies," as products of cold war era ideology and birthed out of "American world hegemony," for their "obsessions" with "norms and values of Chinese culture" based on those of "commercialism," of "familism," and of "loyalty to native place in China": "And it was out of such obsessions that the field of 'overseas Chinese' studies was born: Chinese not residing in China—but in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia—constituted, in the words of the eminent sinological anthropologist Maurice Freedman (1979c, 414, 416) a 'residual China'—an imperfect replication of the template or real 'Chinese culture' in China, which was temporarily not accessible to inquiring social scientists because of the closing of the Bamboo Curtain. Overseas Chinese studies was thus adopted as the semilegitimate stepchild of a sinological anthropology, that was by then flourishing" (*Underground Empires* 7). In contrast, Ong and Nonini, in advocating Chinese diaspora, instead emphasize the constructive and "affirmative" (*Underground Empires* 18) role of Chinese diaspora as a critical category capable of "deconstruct[ing] modern Chineseness" (*Underground Empires* 326). They credit Chinese diaspora as an "approach" that "opens up the question of identity—racial, ethnic, cultural, spatial, gender, and personal—as politics rather than as inheritance... as fluidity rather than fixity, as based on mobility rather than locality, and as the playing out of these oppositions across the world" (*Underground Empires* 327).

Ien Ang is another scholar advocating the “diaspora” as an analytical paradigm. As she comments, “Chineseness is not a category with a fixed content—be it racial, cultural or geographical—but operates as an open and indeterminate signifier whose meanings are constantly renegotiated and rearticulated in different sections of the Chinese diaspora....” (38). In critiquing “Chineseness” and its relation to the construction of Chinese identity, Ang proposes a “disaporic paradigm” in which “many different Chinese identities” co-exist: “This proposition entails a criticism of Chinese essentialism, a departure from the mode of demarcating Chineseness through an absolutist oppositioning of authentic and inauthentic, pure and impure, real and fake” (38). In spite of the differences and contention, Shih’s “Sinophone” and the “Chinese diaspora” proposed by Ong / Nonini and Ang, however, share a common goal: to debunk the essentialist “Chineseness” and as such can be regarded as responses to “resist the suturing call of Chineseness from China.”

In contrast, by privileging the “Sinitic languages” and “*hanyu*” as the prerequisite for the field, what Shih’s “Sinophone” risks—especially in the burgeoning interests in the field and literary / cultural productions—is another form of essentialism: the exclusionary gesture and exclusion of Chinese language literature produced in China except those by the “marginalized” and / or “minorities.” Not only does Shih emphasize the “Sinitic languages” as the main criteria for her “Sinophone,” she also assigns it the “marginal” status, which she defines as “a network of places of cultural production outside China and on the margins of China and Chineseness” (*Visuality* 4). The “Sinophone” proposed by Shih is a thus “language-based” model aiming at debunking the myths of the homeland and return and other “universalizing categories” as identity markers, yet it still risks becoming another “universalist paradigm” as it seems to displace the “center” with the “periphery.” In Shih’s formulation, even though Sinophone is set up to debunk

the egregious classification of world as “China” vs. the rest of the “Chinese” communities it nevertheless has its own fallacies and shortcomings.

I am not suggesting that the term itself is “flawed” in its conception. However, privileging a particular category as means of critical engagement does not and should not be based on the exclusion or rejection of another. Instead, by acknowledging and delimiting the limitations and blindness of these paradigms we may be able to formulate more productive and conducive approaches and critical engagements.

I view Chinese diaspora and Sinophone as capable of debunking essentialization of Chineseness; however, the Sinophone should not be conceived as a “fit-it-all” term for everything “non-China” or “against China”; for everything “non-Chinese Diaspora” or “against Chinese Diaspora.” Instead, it should be regarded as a critical field configured to address the limitations and inadequacies of (conventional) analytical frameworks in order to facilitate contestation and renegotiations of meaning productions. Most important, Sinophone is neither oppositional (as it is in Shih’s proposal) nor tributary to the literature of the motherland: “Chineseness”; “Chinese” (as in *zhongguo*), and should not simply seek and demarcate “margins of Chineseness” and take up “marginality” as its dwellings and positionality as its main venue of contestations and articulations. Nor should it be regarded and posited as perpetually inhabiting the “victimized” and “powerless” or appropriate “the logic of wound” as Rey Chow cautions in her critique of the essentialist claims of “Chineseness.” This is because “Sinophone,” like “huaqiao,” has its connections to “Chineseness” while resisting and rejecting the “universal” calls of “Chineseness” and simultaneously alert to the complicit relations and the “politics of entanglements” involved.

With regards to her accusation of the “diaspora” as an identity marker, Shih seems to have ignored the “dispersal” and “mobility / fluidity” qualities that that the field has stressed. While calling for an “expiration date” for the (Chinese) diasporas, Shih seems to believe the alternative, if not solution, lies in using “language” as the alternative of her proposal of the “Sinophone”:

I coin the notion of the Sinophone to designate Sinitic-language cultures and communities outside China as well as those ethnic communities within China, where Sinitic languages are either forcefully imposed or willingly adopted. The Sinophone, like the history of other nonmetropolitan peoples who speak metropolitan and / or colonial languages, has a colonial history.... (Shih, “Against Diaspora: The Sinophone as Places of Cultural Production” 30)

Here Shih reiterates the need define the “Sinophone” as language-based in relation to its “outsider” and “marginal” status. Shih writes: “When the descendants of immigrants no longer speak their ancestors’ languages, Hanyu and other Sinitic languages, they are no longer part of the Sinophone community” (*Visuality* 185). What could be problematic in Shih’s “linguistic” based definition and formulation is that “de-sinization” and re-assigning one’s ability to speak and proficiency in any “Sinitic languages” including “hanyu” as the definitive basis of the “Sinophone.” Shih has ignored, especially in her blunt rejection of the “Chinese / diaspora,” willingly or not, the intricacies and multiplicities embodied of / in the diaspora. This contrasts with Shih’s static and bounded definition and (mis)understanding of “Chinese diaspora.” By omitting the “hybrid” and “creolized” quality embedded in “diaspora” as an identity marker, she fails to acknowledge the fact the diaspora / studies was conceived as an alternative / critique to the “essentialized” notions based on nation-state, language, race, etc. In this sense Shih’s proposal of the “Sinophone” is compromised and undermined and can be “one-directional” especially when, after assigning language as the marker and organizing principle for the “Sinophone,” she claims that the “Sinophone community is therefore a community of change,

occupying a transitional moment (however long in duration) that inevitably integrates further with local communities and becomes constitutive of the local. It is an open community, furthermore, because it is defined not by the race or nationality of the speaker but by the language one speaks” (Shih, *Visuality* 185).

Sinophone can be a designation for people sharing common Sinitic languages, but just because Chinese diaspora speak the same language (for instance, *hanyu*) does not make it easier for the speakers to form a community based on a shared language as Shih proposes. Using commonly shared language(s) as a “unifying” marker of identity has its own pitfalls: first, people do not consider themselves as belonging to the same “community” based solely on a common tongue; second, Shih simply replaces the categories of “race” or “nationality” with that of “language”—a somewhat arbitrary choice simply because of the “de-sinization” stance she has taken. In Taiwan, China, and many other “Sinophone communities”—a commonly shared language—spoken or written—can actually pose more problems in the effort to create such a community. People speaking various Sinitic languages (or so-called dialects) are, in most cases, mutually incomprehensible. In the case of “*hanyu*” for instance, *hanyu* speakers still discriminate based on “accent”—that is, whether one speaks the “proper Beijing” accent when one speaks “*putonghua*” or the Taiwan accent when one speaks *guoyu* as in Taiwan.

Another problem with Shih’s formulation of the “Sinophone community” lies in the somewhat “assimilationist” based model: urging “immigrants” (she opted for “immigrants” instead of “Chinese diaspora” or “overseas Chinese” / “Chinese overseas”) to be integrated into the “local community.” In her critique of Chinese diaspora studies, Shih charges: “Two major points of blindness in the study of the Chinese Diaspora lie in the inability to see beyond Chineseness as an organizing principle and the lack of communications with the other scholarly

paradigms....” (Shih, *Visuality* 27). Meanwhile, she reiterates that “the notion of the Sinophone is used here to include those areas of the world where different Sinitic languages are spoken and written *outside China*” (*Visuality* 28; italics added). However, Shih’s model—with the emphasis on its spatial configuration of everything “outside China”—eerily resembles the *nei / wai* dichotomy of the conventional model examined earlier, such as the “overseas” status assigned to Sinitic-language based literatures produced *outside China*.

On the other hand, Wang Gungwu raises similar concerns as Shih’s in his inquiry of the “Chinese/ diaspora” as he worries that the word “diaspora” can be used “to revive a single body of Chinese, reminiscent of the old term, huaqiao?” (“A Singular Chinese Diaspora” 158). However, issues of cultural belonging / identification pertaining to the psychic and affective investment such as “nostalgia” and sense of “displacement” should still be validated even if one were to forfeit such an identity marker of the “diaspora,” an aspect Shih somehow misses in her blunt disavowal of the Chinese diaspora. In contrast to Shih, Ien Ang sees the “diaspora” as possessing subversive power: “they have the potential to unsettle static, essentialist and totalitarian conceptions of ‘national culture’ or ‘national identity’ which are firmly rooted in history and geography” (*On Not Speaking Chinese* 34-35). So how do we account for such a stark difference in terms of the perception and conception of “Chinese / diaspora” between Shih, on the one hand, and Ong / Nonini, and Ang, on the other? While Shih sees it as “oppressive” Ong / Nonini and Ang affirm its “liberating” and “subversive” power. These divergent views on the “diaspora” might be reflective of the predicament involved in finding a viable alternative for the “sinocentric” and essentialized markers of identities; however, such debates can be—instead of “root-based (in ancestry for instance)—route-seeking and thus provoking. Diaspora, if

adhered to its “original” meaning, i.e., “dispersal” and “seed sowing” as in Greek, is a more viable option than the antiquated, Sino-centric, essentialist, and yet ubiquitous “huaqiao.”

Diaspora is not and should not be a “universalizing category” or seamless terminology /notion / subfield; likewise, Sinophone should not be conceived as such as to be inclusive of everything “de-Sinicized” and purports to be another “universalizing” category (under the umbrella of “Sinitic languages”). It is thus important to recognize and acknowledge that each “Sinophone” site has its own modes of cultural productions and that the articulations and expressions of such depend on an invariant of factors such as intervention and continual renegotiation of (local or localized) identities. For instance, writers based in various “Sinophone” or “disaporic” sites might simply reject the claims of Chineseness and identify their works with local identities, and find “Sinophone” or “disaporic” to be confining and “misleading.” On the other hand, many contemporary “Sinophone” writers actually prefer the term “diaspora” and categorize their works as Chinese diaspora literature (*huawen lisan wenxue*, 華文散離文學), as proposed and elucidated by Kim Tong Tee.<sup>31</sup> Whereas some of them do not reject the “Chineseness”—especially in the sense of “cultural identity”—“imposed” on them but choose to adhere to the “Chineseness” instead of the “hybridized” or “creolized” identities the fields intend to inscribe and assign to them. However, we need to be aware that this by no means would minimize the struggles or contention / conflict of identification and identity formations. On the contrary, individuals and subfields grapple with various modes of operative powers exerted on multiple levels such as that of the nation-state (from country of origin and country of settlement and in between), choice of language in their writings (as a political gesture in countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia). Diaspora and Sinophone as such provide venues and

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<sup>31</sup>See Kim Tong Tee (張錦忠)’s essay “離散與流動：從馬華文學到新興華文文學” in 《南洋論述：馬華文學與文化屬性》（台北：麥田出版，2003）.

foreground critical dialogues and interventions and do not designate based solely on the “linguistic” components that Shih proposed.

While it is imperative to recognize the hybridity and heterogeneity in the Sinophone and the Diaspora, in many circumstances such conditions cannot have existed without incorporating “local colors” (*bendi seicai*, 本地色彩) into the written Chinese language. In other words, the shared language can be “tampered with” and becomes creolized and hybridized once the “local / localized elements” are incorporated into the narrative. Thus the multivocality of such literary works can infuse nuances of alterity into these paradigms in spite of a shared language while reinventing new identities to further disrupt and defy disciplinary confines and definitions. Through such means “Chineseness”—whether Nanyang or Middle Kingdom—can be contested and renegotiated and cultural identities can be mediated and reinvented. However, this cannot be achieved without engagement and (dis)“entanglement” with the imposed historio-cultural “baggage” of “Chineseness.” This has been a challenge for Sinophone / Diasporic writers when not only the choice of the language (Chinese) sets them apart and becomes the target / scapegoat of racial and political discrimination (such as in Malaysia and Indonesia), their works might not strike any chords with their intended (“Sinophone / diaspora”) readership / communities even if they choose to write in Chinese and their targeted market would not welcome their oeuvre simply because it is much harder to find a niche for these writers and their works due precisely to their precarious condition. These writers would not have been recognized in the “Sinophone / diasporic” community of Taiwan or beyond had not most, if not all, of them won major literary prizes in Taiwan.

I understand Sinophone as a field that intends to lay bare, not to universalize, the problematics of those on the “margins of Chieseness”—and as such should not present and

perceive itself as a “united front” but a modality to challenge and dismantle any universalizing claims. Its usage as an analytical framework should not further obliterate or undermine the modes / sites of cultural productions, considering the realities of various Sinophone sites especially the realities faced by Southeast Asian Chinese writers differ greatly from those in Canada, or even Taiwan (i.e. if one considers Taiwan as such).

Since the 1990s, Ng Kim Chew (黃錦樹), a fervent critic of “Chineseness” / “China-centered” approach taken up by *mahua wenxue* (馬華文學; “Malaysian Chinese literature”) writers, has been voicing his worries that *mahua wenxue* might simply be a replica of *zhongguo wenxue* (中國文學; “Chinese literature”), as Ng has been wary of the “revival” of “sojourner consciousness” (*qiaomin yishi*; 僑民意識) present in *mahua wenxue*. He thus criticizes those *mahua* writers, for their “obsession with China,” have abstracted “Chineseness” in their writings and thus it has been a challenge for *mahua* writers to reinvent and establish its own (Chinese) literary tradition. In his frustration and desperation Ng urges *mahua* writers to “cut the umbilical cord” and “wean” (*duannai*; 斷奶) themselves from the “literature of the motherland” (*muting wenxue*, 母體文學).<sup>32</sup> For Ng, severing the ties through cutting the cord seems to be the only viable way especially since *mahua wenxue* has been cast under the spell of “Chineseness” in various façade: “cultural nostalgia” (文化鄉愁; *wenhua xiangchou*), “China / Middle Kingdom complex” (中國情結; *zhongguo qingjie*), through which *mahua* writers project and construe their sense of cultural belongings and thus bind them to their motherland, and the literary productions subsumed under the calls of Chineseness, and *mahua* literature seen and reduced to a marginal and tributary literature while perpetuating the myths of the (cultural) homeland and return. Ng’s

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<sup>32</sup> See Ng, 馬華文學與中國性 (“*mahua wenxue yu zhongguo xing*”; [Malaysia Chinese Literature and Chineseness]).

proposal has thus sparked fervent debates across various Sinophone / diasporic literary circles. Most of his opponents and critics charge Ng with “complete disregard” of and “irreverence” for the “Chinese cultural traditions”—allegations and accusations further validate Ng’s anxiety over the prison house of “Chineseness.” However, if we read Ng’s proposal as an ongoing engagement with critiques and questioning of “Chineseness” as a unifying / essentialist category, it seems clear it was intended to shed off the latch-on “identity” attached to “huaqiao” and “huaqiao literature,” and thus to break with the cultural attachment to Chineseness, if not the “imagined / ancestral homeland.” For Ng, however, such an approach also foregrounds a “literature without nationalities” (“*wu guoji wenxue*”), a term he uses to characterize *mahua wenxue* produced mainly outside of Malaysia and in Taiwan by *mahua* writers. He argues that this is because their identity—cultural, national—will not allow them to be categorized as Malaysian or Taiwanese—and the works they produce do not fall into either of the tenets.

At the 1989 “world Chinese literature conference” (*shijie huawen wenxue*; 世界華文文學國際會議) held in Singapore, Chow Tse-tung raised the concept of “double tradition” (*shuangxhang chuantong*; 雙重傳統). In the conviction that the “native *zhongguo*” (中國本土) literary tradition is no longer the only one, he proposed the idea of “multiple literary centers” (*duoyuan wenxue zhongxin*, 多元文學中心) to remap “Chinese literatures” produced in places other than China such as “Singapore Chinese literature” (*xinjiapo huawen wenxue*; 新加坡華文文學) and other Southeast Asian Chinese literature (東南亞地區的華文文學). Under such aegis, Wong Yoon Wah (王潤華) proposed “native (*bentu*; 本土) literary tradition” to categorize literatures written in Chinese produced in these areas. As Wong stresses: “We can no longer treat Singapore Chinese literature as ‘marginal literature’ or ‘tributary literature’ to that of

Zhongguo literature.”<sup>33</sup> If we see the Sinophone / Diaspora as the para-sites evincing the polycentric marked with nuances of alterity, as paved by the Chinese *sojourner*, not as the inherited but as inhabited, then it points to destinations, thus defying destinies. As Ien Ang notes, “If I am inescapably Chinese by descent, I am only sometimes Chinese by consent. When and how is a matter of politics” (Ang 18).

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<sup>33</sup>王潤華, “我們不能再把新加坡華文文學看作「邊緣文學」或中國文學的「支流文學」,” “被遺忘的五四: 周策縱的海外新詩運動”(文與哲. 第十期. 2007.6), 609-626. (quote from p. 624)

## Chapter Two

### Narrating Nanyang 南洋:

#### Huaqiao 華僑, Tropicality, and Colonial Imagination

This chapter examines Nanyang (the South Seas in traditional Chinese conception) narratives ranging from the 1920s to 1940s: looking at mainly at Lao She's (老舍) essays, *Little Po's Birthday* (*Xiaopo de shengri*; 小坡的生日) (1930), Liang Shaowen's (梁紹文) *Random Notes on Nanyang Travel* (*Nanyang luxing manji*; 南洋旅行漫記) (1924), as well as Yu Dafu's (郁達夫) Nanyang writings from late 1930s to mid-1940s. All of these writings reflect the writers' sojourning in Nanyang (南來 "nanlai"; literally coming to the South; southbound) at some point of their life. It becomes a common theme in these southbound writer's works: they construct Nanyang as a pathological space filled with tropical diseases as well as a Chinese colonial frontier. However, these southbound writers' formulation of the Nanyang differs from the Europeans' in that they tend to stress huaqiao's unique physiological and immunological strength, which is crucial to huaqiao's survival in the land of the disease and barbarians. In Lao She's and Liang's works for instance, they praise huaqiao's strenuous will and physical strength as their superiority over other races, especially the Europeans in the tropics.

The image of tropical Nanyang as an uncultivated and barren land coincides with the European view of the tropics, thus justifying their colonial mission and conquest. However, the southbound Chinese writers construe huaqiao as far more superior to the Europeans in terms of their physical constitution, adaptability to the harsh conditions of the tropical foreign land, and their invincible will for survival. These writers thus claim that the huaqiao in Nanyang have

outperformed the Europeans. They stress the fact that huaqiao have ventured into barbarous lands of Nanyang and turned them into a civilized and fruitful territory should make them the epitomes of racial survival and regeneration for a nation like China. In this sense their writings also resonate with those of (Chinese) national character and the discourse of eugenics where the options lie in searching for Chinese “paragons” elsewhere—that is, outside of China—as in these writers’ search for alternatives for the sick and decrepit nation in its “overseas citizen” and “compatriots.”

Both Lu Xun and Yu Dafu transplant their male native Chinese protagonists to Japan to explore issues of identity formation and nation building. Both writers seem to share a vision of the nation’s future survival through their depictions of these protagonists, who are usually young male Chinese students, often stranded in a foreign environment where they witness national differences through personal and national humiliation, or personal disgrace and suffering. Yu’s fictions specifically focus on the inner struggles of these (young) overseas Chinese male students in an unprecedented way. In most of his writings, overseas Chinese male students are invested with multiple meanings whose inner conflicts often revolve around the pursuit and destruction of health as a crucial means to identity formation. From Lu Xun’s first-person narrator in “Preface to *Calls to Arms*” to Yu Dafu’s unnamed third-person narrator in “Sinking” for instance, overseas Chinese male students (in Japan) become the symbol of national strength. The depictions of these Chinese students in Japan usually conjure up images of mostly patriotic and yet humiliated protagonists while suffering from various causes of imperialism and colonialism. Lu Xun and Yu Dafu, however, are not the first to bring up these issues related to expatriate Chinese (students) in a foreign country.

Lao She (1899-1966) went to England and taught Chinese at the University of London from 1924 until 1929. *The Two Mas* (二馬 1929) was written during his sojourning in London, and he drew on his own experience to depict Anglo-Chinese relations and how Chinese encounter racial and national discrimination in the foreign land. In the novel, Lao She focuses on three expatriate Chinese: a father and son, and a Chinese student, living in London. The novel highlights the racialized nationalism to which their sojourning Chinese protagonists are subjected and they counter that subjection with patriotic affirmations of Chinese courage and resiliency. In addition, this articulation of patriotism extends beyond the novel's protagonists to its subordinate Chinese characters. Critics of the novel largely regard it as an exposé of British racism against the Chinese. C. T. Hsia and David Wang are indicative of this scholarly consensus. In *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, Hsia praises Lao She for exploding "the myth of the supposed cowardliness of the Chinese" and for his "refusal to commit himself to a simple patriotism" (176). He further credits Lao She for exploding two colonial myths: "The nonwhite man secretly lusts after the white woman and that a nonwhite man will not fight a white man in self-defense" (176). Following Hsia's thread, David Wang, in *Fictional Realism in Twentieth-century China*, points out that "*aiguo* (love of one's country; patriotism) has been one of the most important causes of modern Chinese fiction, and Lao She well deserves to be claimed as one of the most exuberant voices in support of the cause" (159). Both critics, however, have missed the other aspect of the *aiguo* sentiment that runs throughout the novel: namely, Lao She's depiction of different Chinese types whose "patriotism" varies in proportion to what is deemed to be their "authentic" Chineseness.

In "How I Wrote *The Two Mas*," an essay collected in *Laoniu Poche* (老牛破車) (1937), Lao She explains his motive: "The purpose of the novel was to compare and contrast the

differences between the Chinese (*zhongguoren*) and British peoples (*yingguoren*). So to a great extent all of the characters come to represent (*daibiao*; 代表) something. I cannot completely ignore their personality (*gexing*; 個性), but I paid much more attention to the *national character* (*minzu xing*; 民族性) they represent” (*Laoniu Poche* 18-19; italics added).<sup>34</sup> The purpose of the novel, as Lao She claims, is to depict the *zhongguoren* and their national character in a foreign land. Like his contemporary writers, Lao She is also deeply influenced by nineteenth-century European theory of national character which constructs China and its people in almost exclusively medical terms, as a “body politic” that had become “weak” and “diseased.” In addition, the diagnosis of a sick Chinese body was conceived in pathological terms especially in the trope of the Sick Man of East Asia (*dongya bingfu* 東亞病夫). The construction of Chineseness at the turn of the twentieth century has been immensely affected by racialized discourses of national character, which have had a great impact on Chinese intellectuals and reformers that, as a result, a huge amount of writings in this period were fixated on the belief that the Chinese “national character” was inevitably flawed and should thus be responsible for the socio-political turmoil in China since the first Opium War. The May Fourth intellectuals were especially eager to engage in the projects of nation building and literary reforms while diagnosing the dilapidated nation and people. Lao She thus appropriates the discourse of national character to construct Chineseness and his fictional characters.<sup>35</sup> The types of Chinese

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<sup>34</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all translations in this chapter are mine.

<sup>35</sup> Lydia Liu argues that Western missionary and imperialist writings have contributed to the discourse of Chinese national character, which was imported to China at the turn of the twentieth century, and appropriated by intellectuals to develop theories of the Chinese nation-state and literary approaches. Soon the discourse of national character was used by these people to identify Chinese flaws and national weakness. As Liu notes, “The fact that Liang Qichao and Sun Yat-sen were the foremost critics of Western imperialism of their time and yet still had to subscribe to a discourse that European nations first used to stake their claim to racial superiority points to the central predicament of the Chinese intellectual” (49). However, the discourse of national character goes beyond the realm of diagnosing the sick nation, it has, as Liu further contends, become a powerful tool for Chinese writers “to justify

Lao She depicts in the novel include Chinese (migrant) workers (*huagong*) and *zhongguo* students, *huaqiao* students, Chinese considered “yellow faced foreign devils,” and Chinese whose “Chineseness” has been cast in doubt. His main Chinese protagonists are imbued with zeal and patriotism to become “good Chinese citizens” (*hao guomin*; 好國民); this is their mission as sojourners in the foreign land (*Laoniu Poche* 20-21).

In Lao She’s patriotic scheme, all Chinese are subsumed under the rubric of Chinese nationalism and seen through the prism of “national character”—regardless of their social class and geographical origins. Within this patriotic framework Lao She further introduces a critical difference among his characters. A passage on Chinese workers illustrates:

The Chinese workers in London were divided into two camps. One group was composed of people willing to take any kind of job, regardless of how undignified it might be. When a movie studio needed Chinese to play in a scene where they’d all be beaten up, it sought them from among this group. The second group consisted of men willing to starve before doing anything that might result in a loss of face for their country. They were red-blooded coolies, illiterates who couldn’t even speak English and who had few skills, but they were true patriots. The men in both camps were equally limited in their education and equally rough in their behavior. Their lives were equally pitiful. What distinguished them was that the first group was concerned only with getting enough food to eat, nothing else, whereas the second, while also concerned with food, wanted to eat what they got with dignity. The two groups were irreconcilable. Whenever they met, they fought. When the foolishly patriotic and the foolishly unpatriotic met, there was no other solution—they had to fight. And when they did, they supplied plenty of material for foreigners to laugh at. The patriotic ones got their share of abuse and the unpatriotic also got theirs. (299-300)<sup>36</sup>

Here the narrator vividly depicts Lao She’s vision of “patriotism,” the “red-blooded coolies” who will not do anything “that might result in a loss of face for their country” and are exalted as “true

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Chinese literary modernity as a national project” (50). See Lydia Liu, *Translingual Practice*, especially Chapter Two, “Translating National Character: Lu Xun and Arthur Smith,” 45—76.

<sup>36</sup> Quotations from *The Two Mas* in this chapter are taken from Kenny K. Huang and David Finkelstein’s translation with minor modifications.

patriots.” The difference between these two groups lies in the second’s insistence on making a living with “dignity.” However, Lao She cannot help his deep disappointment when conflicts between these two camps of workers have set them apart and reduced them to the laughing stock for the foreigners. Eventually, the “true patriots” are no more “foolishly patriotic” than the “foolishly unpatriotic” ones. The narrator ultimately dismisses the “red-blooded coolies”’ patriotism due to the “shamelessness” they have displayed especially they, like the “foolishly unpatriotic” coolies, have become synonymous with the “Chinatown” that brings “shame” to the Chinese. In fact, these “coolies” are “Chinatown workers” who speak Cantonese and live in “East London, a Chinatown shameful to Chinese” (10). As such, the narrator implies that these coolies cannot represent “authentic” Chinese—if anything, they exemplify the “shame” and humiliation of what it means to be “Chinese” and further reinforce their stereotypical portrayals of being “lawless and godless” (*The Two Mas* 298). The narrator does not endorse the British’s negative and Orientalist portrayals of the London Chinatown and the Chinese workers, but has to invoke the racist representation of these workers and Chinatown reveals a double-bind situation: the (self-)ethnization and prescribed “otherness” of the Chinatown and its inhabitants. As such, the coolies are painted in much less desirable light: they are “yellow-faced devils” that smoke opium and smuggle arms and commit all kinds of “despicable and dangerous crimes” (11). The narrator thus castigates these Chinese workers for their “vices.” Since these workers have “disgraced” their own country and simply add to Chinese history of subjugation under Western imperialism, the narrator ultimately condemns them and their “patriotism” and considers them beneath the educated Chinese students.

On the other hand, the narrator subdivides the Chinese student population:

The Chinese students in England were also divided into two cliques. One consisted of people who came from China itself, while the other was composed of the children of Overseas Chinese [*huaqiao zisun*; 華僑子孫]. Though all of them were patriots, they didn't understand what China's position really was. Having been born abroad, the children of the overseas Chinese were of course ignorant of conditions in their mother country. And the students who had come from China were so anxious that foreigners understand their country that they didn't consider the fact that no foreigner could respect such a powerless place. (300)

While the narrator credits overseas *huaqiao* students with showing their "love" for their "mother country" despite their foreign birth, he nevertheless points to their "ignorance" for not understanding China's "reality." On the other hand, the narrator charges the native born Chinese students who overlook the nation's "powerlessness." Like many of the writers of his time, Lao She's concern for Chinese "national character" stems from his belief that a "powerless" country like China filled with "shameful" or "unpatriotic" (overseas) Chinese has contributed to China's racial and national inferiority. He thus castigates these Chinese for their moral depravity, and believes they are to blame for the nation's humiliation and degeneration. Ultimately, the narrator expresses his hope for the end of such negative and racist representation of China and Chinese, on the condition that "but only if Chinese were able to strengthen their country" (*The Two Mas* 301). Arguably, the narrator eventually subscribes to the "Orientalism" of the British as the "Chinatown workers" are eventually reduced a pack of "bandits" (*The Two Mas* 298). As Kam Louie contends, these workers, instead of the British, are portrayed as the real "villain" (129), and finally reduced to "a faceless Chink, mentioned so often in the novel itself as inhuman monsters abhorred by the Orientalist narratives of that time" (132).

In "How I Wrote *The Two Mas*," Lao She further recounts his sojourning experience in London. While it makes him feel like an outsider and a member of the "yellow race," his sojourning has roused and enhanced his "patriotic fervor." Even though he has sought to depict

Chinese flaws and national humiliation in the novel, he nevertheless believes Chinese patriotism could somewhat become means of national salvation. He thus distinguishes English “patriotism” from Chinese and dismisses the former as narrow-minded” (*pianxia*; 褊狹) for what the English display is “prejudice and hatred” (*pianjian yu taoyan*; 偏見與討厭). This attitude of course, can be said to stem from Lao She’s observation of the British during his stay in London.

When his teaching contract expired, Lao She spent another three months in Europe until his money ran out. Then he decided to “take a look at Nanyang (南洋)” — “a place [he has] always wanted to see.” Even though Lao She admits that Joseph Conrad’s works have inspired him to look to Nanyang for new ideas for his novel(s), he criticizes Conrad for what he considers “white-man centered” ethnocentrism and “imperialistic” impulses in his works. Lao She dismisses Conrad’s treatment of “Easterners” (*dongfanren*; 東方人) and criticizes Conrad for making Easterners the “minor characters” (*peijiao*; 配角) to the “White man” protagonists. While acknowledging his indebtedness to Conrad, Lao She has envisioned Nanyang not necessarily as an anti-colonial site where the huaqiao coolies have been the oppressed underdogs; rather, his imaginary Nanyang triggers a cluster of images of colonial endeavors associated with predominantly huaqiao pioneers and settlers, thus reversing their “colonized” condition and endowing them with colonial powers similar to the Europeans. Ultimately, the tropical dimension of Nanyang in Lao She’s tapestry of narratives has turned into Chinese colonial frontier with nationalist overtones.

In spite of its historical significance as a hybrid and distinctive site of trans-cultural exchanges, Nanyang has generally been viewed, in traditional Chinese imagination, as the land of the “barbarians” (“*fan*”; 蕃; or “*man*”; 蠻). Chinese migration to the Nanyang was dubbed

and stigmatized as “*guofan*” (“crossing into the land of the barbarians”; 過蕃) and before the term “*huaqiao*” was invented in the late 1890s, terms such as “*fanke*” (蕃客)—literally “guest(s) in the land of the barbarians” and “*zhufan*” (“living in the land of the barbarians”; 住蕃)—were used to address and label Chinese migrants and settlers. Even though Lao She is influenced by traditional Chinese conception of the Nanyang and reconstructs such aspects in his writing, he nevertheless is concerned with the “reality” of tropical Nanyang, one entirely different from Conrad’s. As he proclaims in “How I write *Little Po’s Birthday*”:

In Conrad’s works, almost all main characters are white men, while the Easterners play the minor roles only and sometimes used for the purpose of decoration and of adding some exotic setting.... I also wanted to write this kind [alluding to Conrad’s] of novel, but with Chinese [*zhongguoren* 中國人] as the leading characters. Conrad sees the Nanyang as the White men’s poison—if they cannot conquer it, they are devoured by it. What I wanted to write is completely opposite to Conrad’s Nanyang. In fact the *reality* speaks for itself: Nanyang would not have existed without the Chinese pioneers’ and settlers’ hard work. Chinese can endure the greatest hardship; Chinese can resist every kind of disease and suffering: tropical primitive rainforests filled with venomous pythons (*dumang* 毒蟒) and fearsome tigers (*menghu* 猛虎) have been razed to the ground and sterile and barren lands (*bumaozhidi* 不毛之地) have turned into green lush vegetation because of the Chinese.... (*Laoniu Poche* 23-24)

Writing against Conrad and his Eurocentric views, Lao She believes his approach will be different as he is determined to invent an alternative Nanyang epic from entirely the “Chinese perspective.” Lao She further argues that *huaqiao* should be considered the real pioneers and pathfinders in Nanyang for they have turned the virgin land of tropical primitive rainforests into “civilization.” He also contends that the European colonizers, in contrast to the *huaqiao*, cannot withstand the harsh conditions of the tropics due to their weaker composition and physique. He claims that the Europeans are thus inferior to the *huaqiao* and *zhongguoren*—here Lao She uses *huaqiao* and *zhongguoren* interchangeably—as he deliberately attempts to configure both categories as the legitimate Nanyang colonialists. He further charges the Europeans for

appropriating huaqiao's pioneering and colonial enterprise. Consequently, Europeans should not be entitled to claim ownership of Nanyang as they have failed to justify their colonial rule and domination in Nanyang and they simply take merit for the Chinese's hard work. Lao She's concerns over the legitimacy of colonial power in tropical Nanyang betrays the Chinese colonial desire of establishing a solely Chinese colonial regime and legacy on the foreign land.

It should be noted that Lao She's imaginary tropical Nanyang is deemed to be barbaric (*manhuang* 蠻荒), primitive (*yuanshi* 原始), and sterile (*bumaozhidi* 不毛之地), a vision not too different from the European's. While Lao She admittedly suffers the "colonial gaze" of the imperialistic Great Britain especially during his stay there and despises the British version of "patriotism" as well as Conrad's Eurocentric approach, he still cannot help but appropriate such a stance when it comes to his vision of Nanyang and project of rewriting Nanyang as a primarily Chinese frontier. His imaginary Nanyang eerily coincides with the European view of the tropics at the time, which is spawned by the discourse of tropicity in addition to colonial practice. David Arnold's "inventing tropicity" might be useful in the (re)construction of the Nanyang colonial historiography in which the tropics are (re)invented through various kinds of (colonial) writings. The production of a discourse of tropicity is predicated upon a colonial romance that assigns cultural inferiority and geographical blankness to the tropics. This view is resonant again with Lao She's vision of Nanyang if we take another look at his essay "How I write *Little Po's Birthday*." In it Lao She further accentuates his need to (re)invent Nanyang so as to stress the "greatness" of Chinese (*zhongguoren de weida*) and to glorify the huaqiao pioneers. He also admits that he intends to turn his Nanyang (writing) into a "romance" (*luomansi* 羅曼司 in the original; Chinese transliteration of "romance") with "exotic colors" of Nanyang. However, Lao She does not spell out what exactly constitutes the "exoticness" of Nanyang. Nevertheless, his

“romantic” vision of Nanyang correlates to a construction of Nanyang as the Chinese colonial frontier. Lao She thus envisions a Nanyang (colonial) epic as means to inscribe the Chinese onto the “barren” land of the “barbarian” by first establishing the Chinese legacy via huaqiao’s labor or exploitation of the Nanyang frontier.

In *The Problem of Nature: Environment, Culture and European Expansion* (1996), David Arnold argues for the significance of geography and landscape in the creation and construction of otherness in relation to Europe. His research focuses mainly on writings in English and the interrelations between the colonial and the Western worlds. Arnold’s conceptualization of the “tropicality” can be used to examine a corpus of works in relations to Nanyang narratives as a result of these writers’ “sojourning” in Nanyang. Arnold’s idea of “environmental otherness” (142) is pertinent to how these writers perceive and portray the tropical Nanyang through the inscription and transcription on the foreign (Chinese) body onto the alien land. These writings express various forms of epidemiological anxieties which are inextricably connected to the imagination and construction of the tropics as the site and sight of the exotic and cannibalistic, which ultimately culminates in the pathologization of the tropics as a pathogenic space.

In *Romanticism and Colonial Disease* (1999), Alan Bewell notes that the emergence of “the tropics” evolved from a climatic term in eighteenth-century Europe to “the notion that the tropics were fundamentally sick and needed to be cured if they ever were to become fully habitable for human beings”; this historical reconfiguration—coincides with the advance of European colonialism—turned the tropics into “a unique biomedical construct” (Bewell 18). This observation is consistent with nineteenth-century colonial medical literature, in and through which the tropics were constructed as a dangerous and loathsome pathogenic space where diseases such as malaria, yellow fever, and cholera thrived and invaded the European bodies

(Bewell 18). This vision of the tropics is recycled by Lao She and his Chinese contemporaries who wrote about the Nanyang.

Lao She's Nanyang imaginary definitely conjures up images of pathological attributes associated with the tropics. This can be seen in his depiction of tropical nature: a primitive, hostile, and dangerous frontier filled with venoms, diseases, beasts, thus hazardous and fatal to the Europeans. Furthermore, Lao She's depiction of the Europeans colonizers as "climate-struck" tropical invalids also coincides with Bewell's observation of the Europeans as such.<sup>37</sup> Lao She has construed the Nanyang frontier as a barbarous and disease-stricken space and can thus be deterrent to the huaqiao's colonizing effort. However, in Lao She's formulation of the tropics, he particularly singles out the huaqiao for their superior physique and endurance, as well as their exceptional resistive powers to tropical diseases. As he notes, unlike the Europeans who have failed to withstand unsavory tropical climate and conditions, huaqiao have nevertheless managed to overcome and conquer the adverse and perilous nature of the Nanyang and have insulated themselves from the deleterious effects of tropical residence. As such Lao She conceives the Nanyang as the land of opportunity for economic exploitation for Chinese pioneers and settlers. Lao She claims that the fact that huaqiao can endure such harsh conditions and have not been prone to tropical diseases certainly attest to the fact huaqiao are a much better caliber than the European colonizers.

By stressing huaqiao's contribution to and achievements in the Nanyang frontier, Lao She further configures the huaqiao pioneers as capable of building Chinese settler colonies as the means to strengthen the Chinese nation while constructing "overseas" Chinese empire in the Nanyang. Lao She's constant need to evoke the huaqiao pioneers and to exalt them as the

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<sup>37</sup> See Alan Bewell, Chapter 8, "Tropical Invalids" in *Romanticism and Colonial Disease*.

legitimate colonialists through their achievements in the Nanyang reveals his desire to assert and recover his wounded sense of national pride, a vein duly expressed in *The Two Mas*, especially in the construction of patriotism as a means to preserve the nation and to counter the anti-Chinese racism he has experience in London. While conjuring the Nanyang frontier as a uniquely Chinese colonial outpost and huaqiao as the extension and transference of the Chinese subject, what underpins Lao She's colonial imagination of Nanyang is the issue of colonial capitalism and the migrant / indentured labor needed to sustain such economic practices. The ideological imperatives of colonial capitalism justify the European rule and dominance of the region. Lao She thus subscribes to such a view even though he sees the Nanyang as a battle over political and colonial turf between the Chinese and the Europeans.

In his anxiety to counter the European colonial enterprise, Lao She has constructed Nanyang as an exclusively *Chinese* frontier. He visualizes himself writing historical fictions of huaqiao / pioneers, a genre that fits into *huaqiaoshi* (華僑史) or *huaqiao fendoushi* (華僑奮鬥史), literally "huaqiao history" or "history of huaqiao's arduous hard work." As a genre designated to chronicle huaqiao's struggles and hardship in the foreign land, it usually portrays huaqiao as the victims of colonial / imperial oppression and discrimination in the foreign land. However, the gist of such narratives lies in recounting huaqiao's heroic deeds and colonial success with emphasis on huaqiao's adventurous spirits and exceptional endurance, in addition to their ability to "swallow pain and suffering" (as in "*chiku*"; 吃苦, literally "eat suffering").

This genre ultimately constructs huaqiao as transnational Chinese subjects who have embraced traditional Chinese core values of self-discipline and hard work, and eventually become either the founding figures of colonial frontiers or "self-made men" with "fabulous

fortune.” One particular figure constructed in this specific genre is Yap Ah Loy (葉亞來), the “disputed” founder of Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur.<sup>38</sup> Allegedly there had been, between 1893 and 1979, at least fifty published historical biographies of Yap, most of which written in the Chinese language.<sup>39</sup> In fact Yap was featured as one of the nine huaqiao colonial pioneers in Liang Qichao’s 1905 account.<sup>40</sup> Such laudatory accounts of huaqiao historical biography usually praise the huaqiao for their effort to successfully transform themselves from the coolies to the mercantile (elite) class within the colonial societies.

One of the most recent publications of such genre, Lynn Pan, for instance, in her *Sons of the Yellow Emperor: The History of the Chinese Diaspora* (1990), has engaged in the task of historicizing these “huaqiao” or what she generally calls “Chinese diaspora” through their struggles and “overseas” success. She construes the huaqiao as “the Jews of the East” and specifically focuses on the early huaqiao traders and merchants and the rise of the huaqiao mercantile class in Nanyang. As Pan comments:

The Chinese [in Nanyang] did not succumb to tropical torpor, for they were driven by that appetite for self-advancement, that dream of fortune which is itself an immemorial impulse of emigration. Grit and gumption, drive and perseverance—these are typical immigrant qualities.... As well as being unusually successful in adapting themselves to new conditions, the Chinese possessed obvious advantages, such as the strength of their historical condition; for although the majority of immigrants sprang from the lowest levels of Chinese society (133)

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<sup>38</sup> In “postcolonial” Malaysia the *bumiputra* regime has contested Yap’s founding status and subsequently changed the school textbooks by establishing the Malay Raja as the “official” and “authentic” founder of the capital. See, for instance, Sharon A. Carstens, especially Chapter 3, “From Myth to History: Yap Ah Loy and the Heroic Past of Chinese Malaysians” in her book *Histories, Cultures, Identities: Studies in Malaysian Chinese Worlds*.

<sup>39</sup> Sharon A. Carstens showcases Yap’s historical biographies in a table which details this information, *Histories, Cultures, Identities: Studies in Malaysian Chinese Worlds* 40.

<sup>40</sup> Liang Qichao, “*zhongguo zhimin bada weiren chuan*” (Chronicles of eight famous Chinese colonial pioneers).

Writers of this genre generally exalt the huaqiao as the “epitome” of the Chinese race.<sup>41</sup> However, what is subtly embedded in this genre or discourse is an underlying message reiterating the historical task of colonial and cultural expansion and transcription. Huaqiao as a collective is endowed with its original historical and cultural resonances; while reaffirming their sojourners’ image it subsumes them under the Sinocentric framework and turns them into agents of Chinese colonial missions. In his Nanyang narratives, Lao She attempts to reinvent the huaqiao (coolies) as the colonizing subject instead of the Chinese coolies he portrays in *The Two Mas*: as the “powerless” and “oppressed” underdogs whose “patriotism” either goes unnoticed or ridiculed.

Lao She’s original vision to turn the Nanyang huaqiao into colonizing subjects inevitably ties them to their “motherland” as the agents of Chinese empire. While fantasizing about building a Chinese empire through the efforts of the huaqiao, the violence of colonialism is completely erased from his Nanyang narratives. In his imaginary, instead of the conventional “piglets” (*zhuzai*; 豬仔)<sup>42</sup> or “coolies” (苦力) he conjures up images of huaqiao “*caizhu*”

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<sup>41</sup> For instance, under the general rubrics of 華僑史 (*huaqiaoshi*; History of huaqiao), huaqiao and their “history” can be further subdivided into various areas, such as Nanyang / Southeast Asia, North America, Latin America, and under such aegis there is huaqiao history based on the “nation-state” such as “Malayan / Malaysian huaqiao history,” “Canadian huaqiao history,” “Australian huaqiao history,” etc. Any of these will generally have tales attesting and reiterating how huaqiao have been subject to various modes of oppression and victimization and how they have overcome such adverse conditions and become “successful role models” (of racial survival) in foreign lands. For a historical account of Nanyang huaqiao and their “*fengdoushi*,” see, for instance, Wu Lehua’s (巫樂華) *Nanyang huaqiao shihua* (南洋華僑史話).

<sup>42</sup> “Piglets” (豬仔) was a pejorative term for the “huaqiao coolies” (華僑苦力), which can also be seen as the predecessor for the more neutral term “*huagong*” (華工). Allegedly “piglets” originated from Cantonese dialect. Several possible explanations for the term include: huaqiao coolies were treated and traded as “animals,” or when the coolies were loaded onto the coolie ship they were tied up as if they were “piglets,” thus denying their freedom and denouncing their humanity while condemning them to a life similar to that of the slave. The agencies that traded (or in many cases, abducted) these huaqiao workers were thus dubbed “*zhuzai guang*” (豬仔館), “*zhaogongguang*” (招工館), or “*mairenghang*” (賣人行), all derivatives of the Spanish “Barracoon” (巴拉坑). According to Chen Min (陳民) and Ren Guixian (任貴祥), the first of such “barracoons” were set up along the coast of Xiamen (廈門) and later in Shangtou (汕頭) in the Southeastern part of China. While “piglets” refer to the male

(“wealthy merchants” or “moneybags”; 財主). As he notes, “Chinese are not afraid of death, because they know how to deal with hardship, how to stay alive. Chinese are not pessimistic at all, because they know how to survive the worst conditions.... With bare feet and hands, with their unbeatable will and a little bit of talent and intelligence, plus a little bit of luck, within a few years huaqiao can turn themselves into fleshy *caizhu* (胖胖的財主)” (24). Lao She’s reinvention of the Nanyang frontier as strictly Chinese reflects the historical impetus to subsume Nanyang into the Chinese imaginary construct of the frontier. However, Lao She also warns, it is all too easy to envision huaqiao as colonial capitalists without acknowledging their heroism and adventurous spirits for they have also expanded the Chinese territories overseas. On the other hand, Lao She implies that China has not given huaqiao any “assistance or guidance” in how to run their overseas (colonial) enterprise. He concludes that “the failure (*shibai*; 失敗) of huaqiao means the failure of the nation (*guojia*; 國家)” (25). Here Lao She’s “charges” against China for its failure to assist their “overseas citizen” in securing and expanding the colonial mission echoes Liang Qichao’s during the late Qing who claims that China could have become a great empire had not for the Qing government’s oversight in collaborating and helping its “huaqiao” pioneers.

In another essay “Still Thinking about It” (還想著它) (1934) Lao She further expounds on his vision of the Nanyang as the Chinese frontier, in ways that resonate with the Nanyang of 1920s and 1930s Chinese travelogues. This depiction is inevitably bound up with and enhanced by cultural representation of Chinese pioneering spirits on a social and colonial mission. Lao She’s vision and narratives of Nanyang (huaqiao) correspond to the thematic concerns of the travel literature about Nanyang at the time.

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coolies, female coolies were called “pig flowers” (“*zhuhua*”; 豬花), but they were mostly young girls sold into prostitution. See 陈民 and 任贵祥’s 華僑史話.

In Liang Shaowen's (梁紹文) *Nanyang luxing manji* (南洋旅行漫記) (*Random Notes on Nanyang Travel* 1924), a travelogue written in Chinese, chronicles Liang's sojourn in Nanyang, especially Malaya-Singapore and some parts of Indonesia. The book consists of 133 chapters detailing his observations of Nanyang, mostly about Nanyang huaqiao, their lifestyles, customs and social practices, colonial Nanyang societies, flora and animals, the natives, and the impact of the tropical environment on the huaqiao and natives. As an official sent by the Shanghai municipal government to "investigate" huaqiao education in Nanyang, Liang is mostly concerned with the "state of huaqiao education" in general. Liang's Nanyang narrative of the huaqiao can be contradictory and ambiguous at times. He generally perceives the Nanyang huaqiao as culturally and linguistically inept and their "Chineseness" compromised. While he castigates the European colonial regimes for the racist and "uncivilized" treatment of the Nanyang huaqiao, Liang nevertheless describes the negative traits of the Nanyang huaqiao. He particularly singles out their "vulgarity" and "lack of culture" (*wenhua*; 文化) (31).

Liang first attributes huaqiao's "uncivilized state" to their genealogical origin as "barbarians" ("*huawaizhimin*"; 化外之民, literally "beyond the realms of civilization"), and later to the "vices" they have acquired in the foreign land. He further accuses these huaqiao of fighting among themselves mainly due to mutually incomprehensible dialects (32). He thus stresses the importance of setting up Chinese schools in Nanyang to implement the "national language" (*guoyu*; 國語)—which is Chinese Mandarin, the national language of China—as the language of instruction and as the vital means to the elimination of misunderstanding between various ethnic groups (32). Liang emphasizes huaqiao's duty as Chinese subjects and stresses the importance of using Chinese schools and a unified language as means to infuse epistemic control over huaqiao.

Like Lao She, Liang constructs the Nanyang as a battleground between the Europeans and the huaqiao over political turf and colonial dominance. While denouncing the schools run by the “English colonial government” for its ideological purposes, Liang reaffirms the needs to establish Chinese Mandarin schools in Nanyang as the crucial means to cultivating “*aiguo*” sentiment (愛國, loving the country, patriotism) among huaqiao. He worries about the huaqiao’s political and cultural affiliations and reiterates the necessity of Chinese Mandarin schools as the means to promote huaqiao identification with the Chinese state and race. He denigrates the huaqiao who have “betrayed” their “Chineseness” by “embracing colonial English education.” Liang further accuses the British and Dutch colonial regimes of their “hypocrisy”: “It is clothed in the mask of civilization but its inside is filled with evil monstrosity and bestial ambition” (33). Here Liang goes on to reiterate the historical presence of huaqiao in Nanyang before the Europeans, and thus he maintains that it is “universally true” that “huaqiao have successfully pioneered Nanyang” and that huaqiao have continued to do so for the European “colonial governments” (33). Liang further contends that the European colonial governments (such as the British in Malaya and the Dutch in Indonesia) have come to rely on huaqiao and accuses them of taking advantage of huaqiao and their pioneering work. He says it is a “shame” that the European colonial governments have been mistreating huaqiao while encouraging their own overseas citizens in engaging in colonial endeavors and expansion of European territories. Liang shares other Chinese writers’ concerns and blames the Chinese government for its failure to support and assist its overseas citizens with their “colonial” enterprise.

While exalting the huaqiao’s pioneering achievements and adventurous spirits, Liang constructs the original Nanyang frontier as a “barren and deserted island” (*huangdao*; 荒島), here echoes Lao She. While portraying the huaqiao as the Nanyang pioneers and emphasizing

their contribution and sacrifice they have made to “civilize” Nanyang, Liang subsequently denounces the “*turen*” (土人), while it connotes “indigenous people,” it is pejorative for “uncivilized people” and thus can mean “barbarians.” And it is in this context that Liang condemns the indigenous people of Nanyang. As he charges,

About fifty years ago, Nanyang was no more than a barren and deserted island (*huangdao*), and its indigenous people have been extremely lazy and backward, as they never concern themselves to be civilized and evolved (*jinhua*; 進化), for they live in caves or in the wild, and only drink coconut milk when hungry, there goes a day for these people. As such the colonial governments have to make good use of the diligent and industrious huaqiao workers (*huagong*; 華工) to do the pioneering work for them. Huaqiao have thus removed all the obstacles for them.... Now huaqiao has transformed Nanyang from a primitive and savage land into a brand new world full of gold (*huangjin*; 黃金). (33)

Liang’s account of the “*turen*” seems to apply to his portrayal of the Malays and reproduces the European colonial vision of the “natives.” He applies the discourse of eugenics and evolution to cast them in negative light. In Chapter 16 “The Laziest Race on Earth” (世界上最懶惰的民族), he identifies the Malays as the “least productive race” of the world. While he continues to see the “*turen*” / “Malays” as exotic, he attributes their “primitive” lifestyle to their “laziness” (43). According to Liang, the Malays—regardless of their social caste—from the sultan to the common people—do not possess any work ethics and prefer a life of leisure and indolence. Liang thus concludes that their idleness and indolence has cost them the “land” and “power” to the country and thus makes them succumb to colonial rule (45). In contrast Liang praises the huaqiao mostly for their hard work and pioneering spirits in Nanyang and attributes their success to their exceptional work ethics and adaptability. Liang’s views of the Malays coincide with the discourse of the “tropicality” of the time and the general colonial view of the “native people.”

In his study of the representation of idleness in South Africa, J. M. Coetzee points out how European travelers and ethnographers in the Cape of Good Hope from mid seventeenth century onwards compiled “categories” and “observations” of the Hottentot lifestyle. Among them, “idleness, indolence, sloth, laziness, and torpor” are the prime terms used to define Hottentot “vices” (*White Writing* 18). Although Liang is not European, his travelogue nevertheless appropriates these “observations” to scrutinize the natives and their “vices.” Coetzee argues that such reports not only stigmatize natives with the “anathema on idleness,” but are also critical means to separate Europeans from the natives. Idleness is perceived as “a sin,” and thus “a betrayal of one’s humanity” (*White Writing* 21). This charge of idleness is accompanied with other characterizations that condemn the Hottentot. As Coetzee puts it, “What is common to these charges is that they mark the Hottentot as underdeveloped—underdeveloped not only by the standard of the European but by the standard of Man” (*White Writing* 22, italics in the original). By nineteenth century, these vices were already seen as “inherent in the [Hottentot] race” and perceived as some form of disease that was capable of inflicting the Boers of the frontier (*White Writing* 28-9). Similarly, in Liang’s and Lao She’s accounts, the Malays are “the prototype” for what he calls “lazy-people-nation” (懶人國) and their idleness is their “worst vice” (惡德), thus marking their doom and loss of independence, and subject to the colonial rule of the Europeans in Nanyang.

In his effort to debunk the myth of the “lazy natives,” Syed Hussein Alatas argues that the indigenous societies in the Malaya peninsula actually stressed the value of labor and industriousness even though Malays traditionally did not engage in colonial economic activities. Citing historical documents written by Malays to support his claims, Alatas contends that the image of the lazy Malay stems from their avoidance of colonial capitalist plantation labor, such

negative view arose from European colonial capitalist norm which rendered the Malay natives' inclination to relax and idle as indolent. He argues that the accusation of native indolence is unfounded even though the Malays traditionally "avoided the most exploitative kind of labour in 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial capitalist undertakings" (74). He claims that the image of the indolent native was the "product of colonial domination" and capitalist exploitation. In contrast, in European literature the Malay native is usually compared to the Chinese, and sometimes the Indians, whose indentured laborer status has forced them to do what Alatas calls the "slave labor" of colonial capitalism. While condemning the native for their indolence, the Europeans generally praise the Chinese coolies for their industriousness.

Under the logic of colonial capitalism, as Alatas comments, a (Chinese) coolie has to be "the mule among the nations—capable of the hardest task under the most trying conditions; tolerant of every kind of weather and ill usage; eating little and drinking less; stubborn and callous; unlovable and useful in the highest degree" (76). Alatas further comments:

The image of the native under colonial domination is the most unprovoked prejudice entertained by a dominant group towards the subject people. The Malays gave their land and political power to the British. They were displaced from mining. They accepted the situation where the wealth of the country was drained to England and to other countries. They become the poor in their own country. They had to share their country with a sizeable immigrant population who were brought down to the interest of colonial capitalism. Yet despite their acceptance of all these they were accused of indolence, treachery, amok running, etc. (127)

Alatas also notes that European colonial historians have traditionally portrayed the indigenous societies as backward and lawless, thus justifying colonial rules and dominance. The Chinese writers' construction of the tropical native, as illustrated in Liang's writing, echoes Alatas's observation of European colonial capitalist practices and their negative portrayals of the indigenous people.

On the other hand, Liang seems to be absolutely appalled when he finds out some of the “upper class” huaqiao, as opposed to the coolies or migrant workers who are mostly illiterate at the time, have become Anglicized and “deserted” their Chinese cultural heritage. In many chapters of the book for instance, Liang laments that the lack of huaqiao schools in Nanyang can be seen as signs of huaqiao’s loss of their Chineseness. He charges the wealthy huaqiao for sending their children to study English at schools run by the “foreigners” (*waiguoren*). He further criticizes these huaqiao for their educational choice and condemns them for their loss of Chineseness. As he puts it: these huaqiao do not know “one single Chinese character” (*zhongguozì*), thus a sign of their betrayal of their “Chineseness.” For him, this kind of huaqiao is neither Chinese nor British (71). Liang’s condemnation of the “Anglicized” huaqiao reflects the historical concerns among Chinese intellectuals and writers especially in their contact with their Chinese Other in the Nanyang. They worry that huaqiao would eventually lose their roots and “Chineseness” if they become “acculturated” in the host societies. This attitude implies that the huaqiao would no longer identify with China and fail to be “transnational nationalists.” What underlies such issues also showcases Chinese intellectuals’ concerns for implementing Chinese language schools in Nanyang as means of consolidating huaqiao, and imbuing them with a sense of global Chineseness that goes beyond spatial and geographical boundaries.

The imperative to implement Chinese Mandarin as the unified “national language”— (*guoyu*) among huaqiao communities in Nanyang entails and ensures a Middle Kingdom identity / identification. It is thus not surprising Liang condemns the colonial governments for the enforcement of certain regulations to eliminate Chinese language schools in Nanyang. While castigating the colonial government(s) for their anti-Chinese policy, Liang charges those huaqiao who work for the colonial governments and act as their compradors:

What a pity! Even though there are no “*maiguozei*” (賣國賊) among huaqiao, but unfortunately there are “*maizhongzei*” (賣種賊) among them. So what exactly is “*maizhongzei*”? It is self-explanatory: these people are *zhongguoren* (中國人), but they have chosen to become compradors for the colonial governments, and engage in immoral acts (勾當) to harm their own people.... (37)

Both “*maiguozei*” (賣國賊) and “*maizhongzei*” (賣種賊) are considered turncoats and traitors, with the former selling the nation and the latter the Chinese race, as implied in “*zhong*” and “*tongbao*” (“compatriots”; 同胞).

While continuing with his accusations of these huaqiao for their betrayal, Liang further reveals his anxiety over the loss of Chineseness especially among huaqiao who do not speak the Chinese language. He sees them as either Westernized or “Malayanized.” In Chapter 68 “Malayanized Chinese” (*malaihua de zhongguoren*; 馬來化的中國人), Liang recounts his travel to Malacca and his meeting with Tan Chen Lock<sup>43</sup> and a few of his friends. Liang finds it most peculiar and unbelievable, with the exception of his Chinese tour guide and friend, that the rest of the “Chinese” speak Malay and English except Chinese. He is equally “flabbergasted” when he finds most of these people eat with their fingers, and their “excuse” is that fingers “are much more convenient [to use] than chopsticks,” among other “idiosyncrasies” he has observed (147). Liang concludes that “this is what happens when Chinese [*zhongguoren*] have become Malays [*malaihua*; 馬來化]!” (147). Liang’s attitude and condemnation of the “Malaynized Chinese” reveals his Sinochauvinism: these “acculturated” Chinese are no longer “Chinese” for they have lost their “roots.”

These people in Malacca are actually “Strait born Chinese,” or what the locals call “Baba” (for the men) and “Nyonyas” (for the women), or what the Indonesians call “Peranakan.”

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<sup>43</sup> Tan Chen Lock later founded and became the chair of MCA, Malayan Chinese Association and later Malaysian Chinese Association.

By labeling these people as “*malaihua de zhongguoren*,” Liang has implied these people no longer possess ethnic and racial “purity” and thus alluded to their “creolized” identity. However, Liang’s friend has actually informed him of the Malacca Babas’ historical and cultural origins. As he states, these people have settled in Malacca for at least “more than four hundred years”; as a result, they no longer speak their own dialect such as the Fujianhua, and they actually speak Malay (*malaihua*; 馬來話) (146).<sup>44</sup> However, in spite of the long historical presence and localized identity these people have acquired, Liang still calls them “huaqiao” and / or “zhongguoren.” He considers their lack of Chineseness primarily in their inability to speak their “mother tongue,” or “*zhongguohua*”—the language of the Middle kingdom.

Throughout his travelogue Liang heavily castigates these “huaqiao” for their “Westernization” and “Malayanization.” Not only does he criticize their clothing, lifestyles, food (such as the spicy and curried dishes), but also their identification and political affiliations with the British colonial government. Liang condemns these people as they identify themselves as “Good British Citizen” (English in the original text) (147). As Liang notes,

But when you speak with Tan Chen Lock do always remember—never ever mention “*zhongguo*” (China, the Middle Kingdom) these two words. The words *zhongguo* are his taboo. If you make such a blunder, he will argue with you. This is because he considers himself a British citizen. (Except his eyes are neither blue nor his hair blond.) “*Zhongguo*” is the synonym of weakness, powerlessness, filth and despicability, so he is afraid to identify himself as / with *zhongguoren*. Since I have learned my lesson when I met with the *local born huaqiao* (*tusheng huaqiao*; 土生華僑) in Ipoh I always remind myself not to make the same mistake again—whenever you meet with *local born huaqiao*, never ever talk about anything about China” (147; italics added).

Here Liang finally acknowledges these people as “local born huaqiao” even though the designation itself is problematic, that is, if one is “local born” then the label of the “sojourner” as

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<sup>44</sup> The issue concerning the Strait born Chinese (whether they are Baba, Nyonya, or Peranakan, etc.) is beyond the scope of this dissertation and actually warrants another book-length study.

in *qiao* should not apply. But Liang seems to be totally unaware of the problem for he continues to discriminate these people through the lens of racial and cultural essentialism. Liang's message points out the complexities and multiplicities pertaining to Chinese identification and identity construction especially in colonial Nanyang. He calls into question the "Chinese" identity regarding these "local born huaqiao," "Westernized," or "Malayanized" huaqiao not because he has mapped out a terrain where the production of Chineseness can be contested but because he sees them as sellouts, an accusation prevalent in the Nanyang narratives of the time concerning huaqiao identity and the claim of nativity and authenticity.

For Liang and other southbound Chinese writers huaqiao's mastery of the "mother tongue"—as in *guoyu*—is the crucial means to one's accessibility to (the symbolic capital of) Chineseness. For these writers, the huaqiao who choose to ally themselves with the British—politically claiming themselves as British citizens and culturally "abandoning" their "mother tongue" by opting for an English or Anglicized education—can no longer be considered Chinese. Liang's writing exudes this Han ethnocentrism especially when he condemns them for their failure to preserve their "Chinese" roots. However, he simultaneously denounces them as "British subjects" for their lack of "Whiteness" / "Englishness" as evidenced in their lack of "blue eyes" or "blond hair." He further reveals his Sinochauvinism when he denounces these "huaqiao" as the "Chinese turncoats"/ traitors (*hanjian*, the traitor of the Han race). Even though Liang finally acknowledges that some huaqiao can be "*tusheng*" (local born), he nevertheless accuses them of turning into the Malays or the British and thus dismisses them as "neither Chinese nor British." He designates their loss of "Chineseness" in terms of essentialist cultural, linguistic, and racial identity. These huaqiao are denounced as racially and cultural "contaminated"; Liang's castigations of these "corrupted" Chinese point to the historical

conditions of colonialism in Nanyang as his depiction of the (“local born”) huaqiao attests to the poignancy of contradictory nature of his claims: while he sees it a form of subjugation and betrayal on the part of huaqiao for not preserving their cultural heritage and opting to become “British citizens” or even “Malays,” he sees no problem at all to subsume the huaqiao, especially the “local borns,” under the call of “Chineseness.” In other words, huaqiao—local born or not—is construed as inseparable from the Middle Kingdom Chinese subject, thus denying the hybridized subjectivity of the local borns.

Liang’s “local born huaqiao” later become Lao She’s protagonists in *Little Po’s Birthday* (*Xiaopo de shengri*; 小坡的生日). Lao She, inspired by Conrad, is determined to write about the “greatness” (*weida*) of Chinese as the main characters set in Nanyang with zhongguoren as the protagonists. As Lao She explains in another essay “Still Thinking about It” (1934) regarding why he wrote *Little Po’s Birthday*:

I wanted to write a novel with Nanyang as the setting. I wanted to praise and commend the great success and achievements of Chinese pioneers of Nanyang: we have planted the trees, we have ploughed the lands, we have erected houses, we have paved the roads, and we have mined the fields. We have done *everything*. Venomous Snakes, dreadful beasts, malaria and diseases filled barren lands, we fear not. We have pioneered and built Nanyang with our bare hands. I wanted to write about this, about our greatness (*weida*; 偉大). Right now the Westerners (*xiyangren*) are more superior to us, but their success still depends on us. We are beneath the Westerners, but we are above the rest of the other races. [我們在西人之下，其它民族之上]... As long as we strive ourselves to work harder, we will move upward and forward, and never downward. Without us, Nanyang would not have existed; this is the truth, and truth in its essence. The Malays [馬來人] are known for their laziness and indolence, the Indians [印度人], however, are no more industrious than us. As for the Westerners, they can only stay at Nanyang for no more than three to four years and then they have to return home to recuperate, if not they will simply collapse. We have worked hard, we have conducted business, and we have become doctors and lawyers. We can stay here for ten, hundreds, or thousands of years, we can endure all kinds of weather, all kinds of suffering and hardship, and we can do all kinds of work... I wanted to

write a novel like this. This is not hero worship (英雄崇拜); this is nation /race worship (民族崇拜).

As propagandistic as it sounds, this is Lao She's ambition and original plan before he wrote *Little Po's Birthday*. The discourse of national character permeates the passage above. It can be said that Lao She exhibits Sinocentrism and Sinochauvinism in his message especially when he sees it his mission to write such a novel. While exalting the huaqiao as the heroes of Nanyang pioneers, he calls his mission "nation / race worship"—even though he grudgingly ranks the Chinese race beneath the Westerners and proudly above the rest of other races. For him Chinese national weakness can be compensated through huaqiao's pioneering work and claiming Nanyang as the Chinese frontier.

The underlying message in Lao She's writing also exhibits evolutionary overtones, as he believes that the survival and strengthening of the Chinese nation lies in the strengthening of the Chinese race. Lao She's vision of reinventing the Nanyang frontier to embody his social mission alongside rewriting Conrad's canon proves to be a tantalizing endeavor. His condemnation of the other races such as the Malays for their "laziness" also coincides with Liang's and the European view of the native. He dismisses the Indians for their lack of competitiveness sounds "biased," if not racist, especially if he initially envisioned himself to rewrite Conrad's Eurocentric novels. To disparage other races and to place the Chinese above the rest other than the Westerners reveals Lao She's ethnocentric view as means to preserve national and racial integrity and superiority. The Sinocentric perspective in Lao She's original vision of the Nanyang calls for the replacing of the "White men" with the huaqiao and reconfiguring huaqiao as the pillars of Nanyang frontier building, yet Lao She seems totally unaware of the complicit relations between his claims and the mission of fiction writing.

By construing Chinese / huaqiao as the one above the rest of the other “inferior” races such as the Malays and the Indians allows Lao She to construct his own version of (Chinese) colonial romance—as he stresses in the other essay “How I wrote *Little Po’s Birthday*.” His projection of huaqiao as the glorious colonial pioneers of Nanyang allows him to construct Nanyang as a purely Chinese “colony,” revealing the colonial need to perpetuate the myth of empire. In this construction of colonial romance, both Lao She and Liang see huaqiao as the embodiment of Chinese colonial legacy and thus imperative for huaqiao to maintain the filial bond with the motherland, the Middle Kingdom. While Lao She’s vision corresponds to the traditional view of using literature to serve country as its social mission by simultaneously turning the Nanyang frontier into a Chinese empire, this aspect shares and reaffirms the European vision of colonial mission. Essentially Lao She is promoting the huaqiao as the “(Chinese) empire builders” as Ian Watt in *The Rise of the Novel* (1957) describes Robinson Crusoe in *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and other “colonial heroes” spawn by the Robinsonade.

Accusing the Europeans of stealing the Nanyang frontier from the Chinese, Lao She can thus readily reclaim the Nanyang as the Chinese territory. For Lao She the act of writing itself has specific meaning precisely because it is a symbolic means of claiming ownership of the Nanyang frontier, in this sense Lao She’s vision resembles Liang Qichao’s; they both construct the huaqiao as malleable Chinese subjects and can thus be turned into Chinese colonizing subjects. This is evident in the portrayal of his colonial vision, which conjures up mainly imageries of laborious husbandry by the huaqiao. Lao She’s imaginary Nanyang echoes many southbound Chinese writers’ vision. They generally envision Nanyang as the land of the savage, the uninhabitable, and the ultimate “primitive” with its “natives” dependent on “nature.” Essentially Lao She and Liang have construed the Nanyang as if it were a *tabula rasa*—

uninhabitable or uninhabited—without history or culture—before the arrival of the huaqiao pioneers and settlers.

Lao She spent about six months in Singapore in 1930 and worked as a high school Chinese language teacher there. He wrote most of *Little Po's Birthday* in Singapore and completed the last section of the novel after his return to China. So far very little critical attention has been given to this text. C. T. Hsia dismisses the work as “a fantasy for children” (Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* 1961, 166-7). In this novel, Lao She presents Little Po, a “huaqiao” boy born and grows up in Singapore, and his daily life. In the first few chapters, he focuses on Little Po’s confusion with his racial and national identity. Immediately in Chapter One, “Little Po and Younger Sister” (小坡和妹妹), Little Po and his siblings, as Lao She reveals, are baffled as they cannot tell what their “true origins” can be. Metaphorically speaking, the narrator has thus denied these “local born huaqiao” the access to their “local” identity and cast their genealogical lineage in doubt. On the other hand, the narrator proceeds to reveal Little Po’s somewhat “secretive wish,” that is, Little Po has aspired to become an *Indian* security guard and a *Malay* patrol officer. Here the narrator implies that instead of identifying with the Chinese, Little Po does simply the opposite—he identifies with the “lesser” races, the Indian and the Malay. The “Buddhist nun in Heaven Fairy Temple,” however, does not strike a chord with Little Po at all. Instead he looks forward to becoming either an Indian guard or a Malay patrol officer. Worse, Little Po is attracted by the physiological features of the “alien races.” The Indian guard appeals to Little Po due to his “dignified good look” (尊嚴好看), and his “big black red face” with long moustache, “pointed nose, and deep eyes are presentable and auspicious looking” (又體面又有福氣), whereas the Malay patrol officer looks “powerful and majestic with his imposing air” (有勢力威風).

The narrator foreshadows Little Po's identity confusion in subsequent chapters. Meanwhile, the narrator suggests that Little Po might end up like the Indian security guard or Malay patrol officer because they, "from day to night, do not have to worry about anything or do anything at all, as they just sit at the door watching what is happening, and that's why they are so idle" (6). Both Lao She and Liang have criticized the "natives' idleness" as signs of their "primitiveness" and their "subjugation" to colonial rule. Here Lao She alludes to Little Po's problematic racial identification and thus the risk of adopting the "native" vices of laziness and indolence.

Race is an important thematic concern in this novel, as Lao She devotes a whole chapter to the topic and titled it "Race Problems." Lao She presents "race problems" in colonial Singapore through linguistic confusion among the children. Little Po's brother Big Po is learning "the devil's language" (*guizihua*; 鬼子话) at school, pointing to the colonial tongue of English, whereas the "Westerners" are often regarded as "foreign devils" (*yangguizi*). School children also learn the "national language" of Chinese Mandarin (*guoyu*, 國語) from a Shanghainese teacher. Here the narrator implies the "inauthentic" accent and usage the children pick up from the Shanghainese. Worse, Little Po speaks Malay with his siblings and other kids. As a result Little Po is totally confused due to the linguistic difference between them. Here Lao She implies that even though school children learn the "mother tongue" of the *guoyu* of China, but since it is taught by a "Shanghainese," the native Chinese language can thus be adulterated and "de-nativized," thus losing its "original flavor" and authenticity.

On the other hand, Little Po's observation of the how people dress seems poignant. He compares Chinese style clothing with that of the "Western devils" (Westerners) (*yangguizi*; 洋鬼

子) and notices that only Westerners wear socks, stockings, and leather shoes in tropical Singapore. Even though this might imply that these Europeans are totally out of place in their clothing in the tropics, Little Po and other children would rather identify with the “Western devils.” In an act of masquerade, they imitate the “Western soldiers” by putting a belt on their waist and believe they are turned into “pointy nose and blue-eyed” Westerners. All these instances show that Little Po only identifies with non-ethnic Chinese, be it Indians, Malays, or Caucasians. Worse, Little Po and his siblings would like to become the “pointy nose and blue-eyed Western devils,” a sign of them losing their “Chineseness” as they seem to identify with the Europeans. In this act of mimicry, these children have forsaken their racial and ethnic identity and adopted a uniquely Caucasian one, as exemplified in the physiological features that these children have tried to emulate and duplicate.

Little Po and the kids he plays with—regardless of their ethnicity or race—all speak the Malay language (*malaihua*). Basically the narrator emphasizes the fact that Little Po does not know and cannot tell the difference among various ethnic groups and races: He is *always* confused in his “own country.” He cannot tell if he is “*Fujianren, Guangdongren, Indian, Malay, White, or Japanese*”—another sign of his confusion. Even though he eventually “wipes out the Japanese from his ‘*renzhongbiao*’ (人種表)”—due to the adults’ anti-Japanese sentiments and as a sign of “*aiguo*” (loving the country, patriotism; the love for the Middle Kingdom), he is still confused as to what “nationality” and “race” he belongs to. Little Po’s “*renzhongbiao*”—a grid and list of various human species and races—only adds to his confusion and bafflement. He is totally lost and perplexed and cannot find any “answers.” On the other hand, Little Po thinks that people’s faces can alternate and change whenever necessary. All of

these examples point to the issues of mimicry, identification, and identity construction in the “local born huaqiao” in Singapore.

The geopolitical significance of Singapore is also cast in doubt. The narrator criticizes the shape of Singapore on the map: it is neither round nor square and it cannot accommodate the worlds that Little Po’s parents and the Indian security guard come from. Moreover, Little Po believes that China and India do not really exist even though his parents claim otherwise, as Little Po comments: “There is no China (zhongguo) or India on the map of Singapore!” Little Po thinks that his parents have lied to him—if the Indian security guard is from India and his parents from China, how come he cannot find China or India on the map of Singapore, Little Po questions. While this question can simply be dismissed as the child’s inquiry and ignorance, its underlying message conveys a sense of urgency and crisis in the identity construction of colonial Singapore and people like Little Po. At first it might look like this cartographic construction of the Singapore map—with the absence of China and India—envisions and foreshadows the possibility of a Singaporean identity independent of the “motherlands.” But upon close scrutiny, one finds that such an identity formation seems unlikely, if not impossible. For the narrator insinuates that without such cartographic presence of the motherlands, as in China and India, Little Po is completely lost and so do his parents and other (Indian) immigrants, and thus erasing the trajectories of the huaqiao or the Indians from colonial Singapore. The irregular shape and totally unidentifiable form of this cartographic image only attests to its territorial designation: a land in the periphery, thus Little Po has not been able to see his parents’ and other immigrants’ (home countries) on the map, alluding to one’s loss of the “original” identity, and adding to Little Po’s identity confusion. In other words, the narrator is invested in establishing a “mistaken identity” through Little Po’s confusion.

In contrast to his portrayal of the overseas Chinese in England (for instance, the Mas strongly assert their Chineseness), Lao She's depiction of Nanyang (local born) "huaqiao" is endowed with uncertainty and confusion of their racial identity. This explains why Little Po cannot assert and affirm his racial or ethnic identity. Little Po's constant confusion and his inability to tell the difference between various ethnic groups and races can be devastating as the narrator suggests. In another scene, Little Po gathers a group of multi-racial children to play with him. In order to facilitate the play, all of the children begin speaking Malay—the "lingua franca of Nanyang" (南洋的 "世界语") as the narrator puts it. Little Po's confusion about his racial, national, linguistic identities is manifested again and again in his sense of loss.

Arguably, Lao She might have alluded to the "multiculturalism" of 1930 Singapore where multiracial and multicultural local sensibilities seem to mingle well in spite of Little Po's identity confusion. However, upon close scrutiny, the narrator alludes to the difficulty, if not impossibility, of establishing a uniquely "Chinese" or concrete "racial" identity when multiculturalism seems to take over monoligualism where only a "pure" and a "single" mother tongue can be spoken of. Lao She's Sinocentric impulses can still be detected in scenes where the children get together and play without having to worry about their racial or cultural differences. In one instance when Little Po is playing with kids of Fujian, Malay, and Indian origins, his older brother tells on him because their father have forbidden them from playing with kids of other ethnicity and races, Little Po simply responses: "When we all play together, I'll ask them to all turn into *zhongguoren*, it should work, shouldn't it?" (14). Here the narrator reveals that Little Po's parents are Guangdongren (Chinese from the Guangdong province of China), and his father especially looks down upon other ethnic groups such as the Fujian and the Shanghainese, as well as other races such as the Malays and Indians. The narrator does not give

any specific reason. The contextual evidence shows that Little Po's parents take pride in their "Guangdong" origin because "Guangdongren are the wealthiest in the world" (15). However, in Little Po's world, it is easy to solve his parents' "problem." He believes the kids he plays with—such as the Indian—like the little chicks turning into different colors when they grow—will eventually turn into "zhongguoren" when they grow up. "If chicks can transform and change colors, so will kids" (15), as Little Po claims. As such, the narrator concludes that the kids have solved "race problems." One might say that this is truly a kid's fantasy and wistful thinking, however, it also reveals Lao She's anxiety over the issues pertaining to "local born huaqiao's Chineseness" and how they can possibly construct a Chinese identity in colonial Singapore. It is thus not surprising to see that under Lao She's depiction, 1930 Singapore is a microcosm of his colonial vision except with a few twists, for the basic premise lies in visualizing Singapore as the displaced center of the Middle Kingdom and thus the impossibility of cultivating an "authentic" Chinese identity.

In another essay "Still Thinking about it" (*haxiangzheta*; 还想着它) Lao She further elaborates on what he considers "Nanyang flavors" (*nanyang fengwei*): "Neither Chinese nor Western" (*zhongbuzong, xibuxi, ziyou nanyangfengwei*”; 中不中，西不西，自有南洋風味). He is concerned if his students can master the "national language" (*guoyu*, Chinese Mandarin, thus "the national language" of China and not Singapore), and they "all love *zhongguo*." However, he observes the divides among various ethnic groups and notice that they are hostile to one another. He believes the lack of unification among these groups contribute to the failure of Chinese colonial mission in Nanyang. On the other hand, Lao She is eager to infuse what he considers "local color" (*difang seicai*; 地方色彩) into his fiction; however, the political overtone should not be overlooked either. As he explains in "How I wrote *Little Po's Birthday*," his real

motive (動機) was to present how “weak and minor races” (弱小民族) can unify and become resistant to the colonial forces. He intentionally left out the “white children” (白小孩) in his fiction in his reinvention of the Nanyang. Nevertheless, Lao She admits that it was simply his dream and “ideal” (理想), as “in reality everybody was not unified.”

In his reminiscence, Lao She expresses his “love” for Nanyang. He stresses that Nanyang is full of “colors”—and these “colors” have become intriguing images in his dream. He reaffirms that Nanyang can be “real” (實在的), but more important, Nanyang has come to represent the surreal, as it is fantastic, “primitive” (原始的), and “romantic” (浪漫的). Lao She admittedly envisions Nanyang through what he calls “*tonghua*” (“fairy tales”; 童話)—a term he has used several times to characterize Nanyang and *Little Po’s Birthday*. To see Nanyang as a “fairy tale” can be wishful thinking on Lao She’s part, for earlier in the essay Lao She admits that he had no means to write a historical novel of Nanyang huaqiao due to several limitations. Yet he still portrays Nanyang—at least in his dream—as a “fairy tale” with “magic power” (*moli*; 魔力), a power Lao She further attributes to several aspects he considers important: “the economic, commercial, military, national rivalry (*minzu jingzhen*; 民族競爭), poetry, music, and colors.”

Lao She sees it a necessity for all the “victimized” countries and peoples to form an alliance to stand up against the “oppression” of the White / Europeans not because he is truly concerned with the “oppressed.” His colonial romance allows him to eliminate the “White presence” from his novel and to dispute the European legacy in Nanyang. As such he is able to reinvent the Chinese as the legitimate colonizer. For him the presence of the huaqiao in Nanyang is axiomatic of Chinese legitimacy over the “possession” of Nanyang. It is thus not

surprising to see both Liang and Lao She have portrayed the Europeans as the usurper of Chinese colonial power / colonizing subject. In both of their works they aim to re-inscribe Chinese presence into Nanyang and establish huaqiao as its legitimate heir. In Lao She's writing especially, colonial practices go hand in hand with the act of (re-)writing (Conrad's fictions), thus the act of inscription, whereas the violence associated with colonization and colonial practice has been eliminated and huaqiao reduced to agents of Chinese colonizing missions.

Lao She's anxiety over the future of the Chinese race and its prospect of securing Nanyang as the Chinese frontier can also be found in Yu Dafu's (郁達夫) Nanyang writings. In Yu Dafu's case, he left China in 1938 for Singapore and worked as a chief editor for the literary supplement (文藝副刊) of *Sin Chew Daily* (*xingzhou ribao*; 星洲日報), and remained a sojourner in Nanyang until he was assassinated by the Japanese in Indonesia 1945.

In his Nanyang period, Yu Dafu no longer produces fictions preoccupied with sexuality or sentimentality. Instead he sees himself a cultural agent whose mission is to promote a unique Nanyang Chinese literary tradition in the Nanyang frontier. His Nanyang writing of this period is also endowed with political overtones especially in his reflections of the status and literary merits of Nanyang or Malayan Chinese literature in relations to its supposedly center, that is, China as the originator and reference point of Chinese literature proper. He urges Nanyang writers to establish a uniquely "*Nanyang seicai*" (Nanyang color) or "*bendi seicai*" (local color) sentimentality, and believes it is his duty to "reform" and "improve" the Nanyang literature.

In an article titled "*Yinian lai mahua wenhua de jinzhan*" ("The Progress of Malayan Chinese Culture in the Past Year"; 一年來馬華文化的進展) published in the New Year edition of *Sin Chew Daily* in 1940, Yu traces "Malayan Chinese cultural progress in the previous year."

Even though Yu claims that the purpose of the article was to evaluate “the general cultural state” (*yiban de wenhua zhuangtai*) in Nanyang in spite of his relatively brief stay there, he attempts at first to address the “positive progress” he observes in the Nanyang Chinese society.<sup>45</sup> To do so, Yu begins by invoking negative images associated with *zhonghua minzu* (“the Chinese race”) and uses the term to refer to the *huaqiao* in Nanyang as part of the *zhonghua minzu*. In this sense Yu has subsumed the *huaqiao* under the rubrics of the Chinese race and *huaqiao* as a collective is seen to have inherited the “Chinese vices.”

Conflating *huaqiao* and *zhonghua minzu*, Yu mentions some of the vices he observed in China and states that he is surprised to see the “gang-and-clan-culture-based Nanyang” (*bangpai wenhua*) has somewhat moved forward toward “unification” (*tuanjie*). Here Yu refers to the “fights” that Lao She writes about in *Little Po’s Birthday* and his essays. This “bangpai wenhua” refers to the stereotypical metaphor such as “scattered sand” used to describe the *huaqiao* especially at a time when encroachment by Japan is a pressing issue. The examples he gives include the efforts taken by various local cultural organizations to rescue the ancestral homeland especially those involving anti-Japanese fund-raising campaigns. Such efforts, as Yu proclaims, will safeguard the Chinese race (*zhonghua minzu*) from extinction. This is but one example of “*kangri jiuwang*” propaganda (“anti-Japanese and saving the [dying Chinese] nation; 抗日救亡) that Yu has produced during his Nanyang period. It reveals Yu’s anxiety over the possible extinction of the Chinese race while pressing the Nanyang *huaqiao* to help rescue their motherland. In this vein Yu’s effort resembles his predecessors especially before the late Qing was overthrown when *huaqiao* was considered a major capital in nation building.

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<sup>45</sup> See the article in *Mahua xinwenxue daxi yi* 507-510.

In most of his Nanyang essays Yu reiterates Nanyang huaqiao's mission as saving the motherland from annihilation by imperialistic powers. In the essay, Yu also focuses on Nanyang huaqiao's "advancement" and "progress" in terms of "culture" (*wenhua*). He argues that the "uncultured" Nanyang frontier has long been the arena for profit and gain, and yet Nanyang huaqiao, at the face of the breakout of the Pacific War, have showed integrity and support for their motherland (*zuguo*). This can be seen through the promotion and popularity of the use of the national language (*guoyu*), which means Chinese Mandarin, and the advancement of educational standards, among others. Nanyang huaqiao, as the "Chinese citizens" as well as part of the Chinese race (*zhonghua minzu*; 中華民族), will thus become the protector and progenitor of *zhonghua wenhua* (Chinese culture). In this sense Nanyang huaqiao are endowed with the responsibility to preserve the Chinese race and culture; for Yu believes that as part and an extension of *zhonghua minzu*, Nanyang huaqiao will become the epitome of "national and racial immortality" (*minzu yongsheng*).

During his Nanyang sojourning, Yu has produced more than three hundred such articles, many of which resemble war-time propaganda and Chinese nationalist grand narratives. Some of them also feature thematic concerns of racial improvement (*renzhong gailiang*; 人種改良), on which Yu believes national progress will base. Yu's works on Nanyang or *mahua wenxue /wenyi* (馬華文學 / 文化) in the late 1930s and early 1940s express his concerns over Nanyang Chinese cultural heritage in relation to literary filiations and the issues of homeland and colonial identity. Like most of his contemporary writers and intellectuals, Yu believes and sees Nanyang as either a "cultural desert" (*wenhua shamo*; 文化沙漠) or "a colony with very low cultural standard" (*wenhua shuzhu hendi de zhimindi*; 文化水準很低的殖民地)

(58).<sup>46</sup> Yu sees Nanyang literature, the Chinese newspapers and other publications as means to “resist the enemy [Japanese] and rescue the nation [China]” (*kangdi jiuguo*; 抗敵救國) (58). Yet Yu seems to be preoccupied with what he considers the “local color” (*difang seicai*) of Nanyang literature, one he thinks should distinguish itself from the Chinese literary tradition of China. He thus urges Nanyang writers not to write in the vein of Lu Xun but to create their own literary tradition based on “Nanyang seicai.”<sup>47</sup> However, if Yu’s advice for the Nanyang writers seems to emphasize artistry over ideology, and calls for an alternative literary tradition with its focus on the “local colors,” he nevertheless shares Lao She and Liang Shaowen’s view and *sees* Nanyang as another Chinese colonial frontier.

In several travel pieces, Yu expresses his concerns and laments over the loss of Chinese dominance in the Nanyang, a sentiment shared by many Chinese writers at the time. This sentiment is especially obvious in his essay “*maliujia youji*” (Travel notes on Malacca, 馬六甲遊記; 1940). The opening paragraph alludes to the tropical weather of Nanyang and its impact on the writer. He describes himself as if caught in an “incessant somnambulism” (*mengyoubing*; 夢遊病), a condition that makes him sick and lose his ability to tell the difference between the past and the present: “Living in this year-round summerlike Nanyang without any distinction of four seasons, my memory is getting weaker every day” (65).<sup>48</sup> Yu further describes himself as an exhausted sojourner and all of a sudden, amid waking up in his dream, he finds himself in a “distant foreign land” (*henyuan henyuan de yiguo*). It is interesting to note how Yu further invokes sentiments of mourning (“*aisi*”; 哀思) on his trip to Malacca.

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<sup>46</sup> See for instance, Yu’s essay “*benbao shizhounian jinian*” in *Yu Dafu Nanyang suibi* (郁達夫南洋隨筆) (ed. Qing Xianci; 秦賢次, 1978).

<sup>47</sup> See especially Yu’s essay “*jige wenti*” in *Yu Dafu Nanyang suibi*, 64--69.

<sup>48</sup> See “*maliujia youji*” in *Yu Dafu Nanyouji* (郁達夫南遊記), ed. Wen zhichuan (1956).

The next paragraph Yu describes the sceneries on his way to Malacca, such as tropical rubber tree and coconut plantations, the Malay atap-thatched houses, ox-carts, paddy fields under the foothills—scenes he considers exhibit “primitive Malay” life and some of which reminds him of rural Chinese villages. Yu then proceeds to write about the history of Malacca, how it has achieved its significance and “greatness” as an “ancient historic city” by examining its colonial past and present. Yu states that Malacca has become “known” to the Chinese since the Ming dynasty especially after Admiral Zheng He’s voyages to Nanyang.<sup>49</sup>

The invocation of Zheng He and the Chinese maritime presence in Nanyang Malacca is pertinent to Yu’s allusion to Malacca and Nanyang’s colonial history. Yu recounts that the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the British have all conquered and ruled Malacca. His visits to the historical relics and sites left by the European colonizers serve to remind him of the Europeans’ glorious colonial enterprise and dominance in Nanyang. Invoking Zheng He’s historic presence in Malacca, Yu laments the Chinese *absence* in overseas colonial endeavors and its failure in securing any overseas colony. As Yu comments in a rather sentimental tone: “I recall what it must be like when *sanbaogong* (a venerable designation for Admiral Zheng He, alluding to his deified status) set foot here [Malacca], I also think about the deep regrets (*quehan*) as a result of how we mainland Chinese citizens (*women daluguomin*) have failed to run our overseas colonial enterprise (*haiwai zhiminshiye*), this is why till nowadays we are still oppressed by our imperialistic neighbors, and half our rivers and mountains (*jiangshan*; connoting “territory”) being stained with foreign pungent smells and filth, this is mainly because our people are entirely devoid of adventurous spirits, our country lacking foresights and planning” (69). Here Yu

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<sup>49</sup> For a historical account of Admiral Zheng He’s voyages to the region and others, see *Chinese Disapora since Admiral Zheng He*, ed. Leo Suryadinata (2007). Allegedly Zheng He and his fleets sailed to Malacca in 1421 and then crossed the Indian Ocean and voyaged to the east coast of Africa. Scholars argue that Zheng He and the Chinese sailors were familiar with this trade route and Zheng He continued with his expeditions until the Ming dynasty banned overseas travels and voyages.

cannot help but express his mourning (*aisi*) for the Chinese “failure” in claiming Nanyang as the Chinese territory. Compared to the Europeans, he believes China has failed to seize the opportunity to build a Chinese colonial enterprise.

When Yu invokes the historicity and ancientness of Malacca, what he *sees* is an “ancient city” built by the Chinese in the Ming dynasty, thus not the one by the European conquerors. His visit to “the most ancient Buddhist temple *Qingyunding*” (71) is meant to reconstruct the Chinese as the proper colonizing subject in the Nanyang. According to Yu, within the temple there is a shrine worshipping two Ming dynasty era pioneers built by the Ming “deserters” (*yimin*) and another two Chinese “kapitans” (captains in Portuguese). All the historical presence attests to the merits of Chinese pioneers and settlers. Yu’s sentiment resonates with Lao She’s when he prescribes the Chinese and huaqiao as *the* legitimate heirs and colonizers of the Nanyang frontier. They both dispute the Europeans’ legacy in the Nanyang and both aim to reclaim Nanyang as the Chinese territory. As such, their writings betray the colonial impulse associated with European colonizing mission.

What is ironic in this passage is also Yu’s use of the language of betrayal. In passing he mentions the shrine was built by Ming “deserters.” One of the original terms used to designate “huaqiao,” “deserters” refer to the huaqiao who left the Middle Kingdom for Nanyang, meaning these people had thus “abandoned” and “deserted” their own homeland, and thus considered traitors and criminals and would be severely punished or persecuted if they ever returned to China again. Yu’s nostalgia is reminiscent of his mourning for the loss of Chinese vitality and the rhetoric of national character; his travelogue reads like a eulogy over the loss of Chinese “dominance” over its “southern territory”—a sentiment espoused by many of Yu’s contemporary

(southbound) writers. The implication embedded in the colonial desire to recreate and rewrite a Chinese legacy is revealing.

In “*Ouzhouren de shengmingli*” (“Europeans’ life / vitality”; 欧洲人的生命力) for instance, Yu Dafu expresses his concerns over Chinese racial degeneration and revival in relations to eugenics. Without going into any details as how to carry out such endeavors, Yu believes that it is “everyone’s duty and responsibility” to rethink how to “improve the [Chinese] human race” and “strengthening [Chinese] life” (*gailiang renzhong, zenjiazhongzhu shengmingli*) (122).<sup>50</sup>

Begrudgingly, during their sojourn in Nanyang, Liang Shaowen, Lao She, and Yu Dafu mourn over the missed opportunity for the Chinese to launch colonial enterprise and claim Nanyang as a Chinese territory. All of these writers, in their Nanyang narratives, have configured the Europeans as intruders and impostors and the huaqiao, along with the Chinese, as the “victims” of European imperialism and colonialism. These Nanyang narratives evince the writers’ ideological dissimulation of colonial impulse in the language of betrayal, and thus Nanyang is construed as the object of colonial desire and the Chinese frontier. Nanyang as the object of colonial fantasy—in this sense the huaqiao, as well as Nanyang, can be seen as doubly colonized object—by the Europeans and the Chinese. The assumptions that Nanyang should have been or should be the Chinese frontier and territory instead of the Europeans’ reveal the writers’ self-contradictory cogency, while seeing China as the victim of European and Japanese imperialism they believe Nanyang should be subject to another form of colonialism by way of huaqiao pioneers and settlers, and in Yu Dafu’s case, by using the literary as means of resistance against Japanese encroachment upon Nanyang and China. These writers also betray their own

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<sup>50</sup> Yu, “*ouzhouren de shengmingli*” in *Yu Dafu Nanyang suibi* (郁達夫南洋隨筆).

colonial desire when they vehemently dispute or disavow Europeans as the legitimate colonizer or heir to the Nanyang frontier while attempting to displace the Europeans with the Chinese counterpart of the Middle Kingdom.

### Chapter Three

#### “*Tamen Huaqiao*” 他們華僑:

#### Imagining Femininity, Masculinity, and Reinventing Chineseness

Eileen Chang (Zhang Ailing; 張愛玲) (1920-1995) is probably one of the very few writers who have written extensively about (Nanyang) huaqiao and issues concerning their racial and cultural identity and identification. More specifically, her works show thematic concerns of race, colonialism, and Chineseness in relation to (Nanyang) huaqiao in 1940s colonial Hong Kong and semi-colonial Shanghai, and to some extent, Nanyang and Europe. This aspect of her writing, however, has mostly been overlooked in critical scholarship on Chang’s works. Chang has generally been hailed as a “literary genius,” a “cultural icon,” and “arguably the most talented woman writer in twentieth-century China.” Even after decades of living reclusively in the United States, Chang has acquired somewhat of a “cult status”<sup>51</sup> and remained an iconic literary figure even posthumously. However, critical attention to her works does not match her meteoric rise to fame. Even before the Communist took over China in 1949, she had been completely elided from a literary tradition largely dominated by mostly leftist revolutionary discourse. As Rey Chow puts it: “For precisely the reason that they offer some of the most uncompromised insights into the contradictions of nationalism, patriotism, and modernist enlightenment, her works were, for a long time after 1949, considered politically incorrect, and disappeared from mainland Chinese critics’ attention until the 1980s” (159). In fact Chang was

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<sup>51</sup> Nicole Huang, David Wang, C.T. Hsia, Leo Lee, among others, unanimously agree to Chang’s literary status as such. Many have used meteoric rise to describe her literary career and her rise to fame. Those who have followed her and mimicked her style are also dubbed “張迷” (“Chang’s fans”) or “張派” (“Chang’s style”)—basically a phenomenon called “Chang craze” (“Zhangre”; 張熱), all pointing to Chang’s mystique and celebrity status that probably no writer (of her era) could have ever achieved.

never really given a place in modern Chinese literary historiography until C. T. Hsia resurrected her and endorsed her works in his monograph *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* (1961).<sup>52</sup> Hsia exalts Chang as “not only the best and most important writer in Chinese” but also concludes that Chang’s short stories “in some respects claim superiority over” the work of “serious modern women writers in English” (389).

In spite of her enormous popularity in Chinese (literary) communities especially those of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and some parts of Southeast Asia, Chang has been bypassed in the study of modern Chinese (national) literature produced in mainland China. The reasons are simple and purely political. Her works had no place in the ideologically driven literary canon since she did not follow the “revolutionary” tradition. Moreover, her marriage to Hu Langcheng, who was considered a *hanjian* (漢奸; literally “traitor of the *han* race”) during the Second World War in Japanese-occupied Shanghai, has cast her in much less favorable light given the political milieu of the time.<sup>53</sup> In spite of the popularity of her works, she was accused of writing mostly on the frivolous and about bourgeois life and petty urbanites (*xiao shimin*; 小市民), both of which were at odds with the “anti-war” or “revolutionary” literature of the national literary canon. Worse, some mainland Chinese (literary) critics have accused her of not writing about the “proletariat,” the peasant, or the working class.<sup>54</sup> Such accusations have obviously rendered Chang and her work inappropriate for the revolutionary and socialist propaganda especially after the Communist Party took over in 1949. However, these critical assessments also overshadow the

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<sup>52</sup> However, Hsia had his political concern as he was anti-communist and Chang’s works were considered “politically correct” in Taiwan and thus escaped censorship there.

<sup>53</sup> Even though the marriage with Hu was short-lived, but due to Hu’s involvement with the Chinese puppet government and his collaboration with the Japanese during the second Sino-Japanese war, he was considered a traitor and thus rendered Eileen Chang suspicious.

<sup>54</sup> During her sojourning years (1952—1955) in Hong Kong, Eileen Chang worked as a translator and freelance writer for the United States Information Service. She was also commissioned to write anti-communist novels: *The Rice-Sprout Song* (1954) and *Naked Earth* (1956).

significance of her other works in the era of colonial Hong Kong and semi-colonial Shanghai. Unable to write, Chang was forced to leave mainland China for Hong Kong in 1952 and later migrated to the United States in 1955. Leo Lee notes that Chang's writing in general "runs counter to the prevailing ethos of nationalism and revolutionary progress at the time (*Shanghai Modern* 269) whereas Rey Chow applauds her for writing "against the backdrop of the revolutionary and nation-building rhetoric of her age" (171). This view is later taken up by Nicole Huang, in her preface to *Written on Water* (2005), where she claims that Chang's greatest legacy in the 1940s lies in her "construction of an alternative narrative of war, one that contradicted the grand narratives of national salvation and revolution that dominated the wartime literary scene" (*Written on Water* xii). However, critical attention to Chang's works is mostly about Chang's "desolate" style and generally defines her works as "romances" or "love stories."

This chapter will focus on several of Chang's essays and fictions, by examining an aspect rarely explored before in the scholarship of Chang, namely, how Chang uses the figures of (Nanyang) huaqiao to explore racial and cultural identity and its relations to notions of Chineseness. Through encounters between "native Chinese" (*zhongguoren*) and (Nanyang) huaqiao (華僑), Chang highlights (Nanyang) huaqiao's hybrid and incongruous identity—one that is at odds with the "authentic" *zhongguo* identity, by invoking the concept of racial purity and reinventing Chineseness pertaining to "sojourner" identity formation / subjectivity in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality.

In her essay "From the Ashes" (燼餘錄; 1944), Chang, in a flashback of historical events pertaining to her experience during WWII in Hong Kong, recounts how she feels lost as where to begin writing about the war. Initially she attempts at distancing herself from writing about it: "I would not have known how or from where to begin speaking of what I saw and heard in Hong

Kong during the war, because the experience cut too close to the bone, affecting me in an altogether drastic fashion” (39).<sup>55</sup> This distancing is of particular importance to her not just in her essays, but also in her short stories, to which this chapter will return. Instead of blocking her from writing about traumatic events, Chang explains that this distance has allowed her to “keep those events in some kind of order” and claims that her “impressions of the battle of Hong Kong seem nevertheless to be almost entirely restricted to a few irrelevant trivialities” (39). She states that what truly concerns her are “irrelevant things”: “I have neither the desire to write history nor the qualifications to comment on the approach historians ought to bring to their work, but privately I have always found myself wishing that they would concern themselves more with irrelevant things” (39). Through these “trivial things” she registers the war’s impact on her classmates at the University of Hong Kong. Chang notes:

In Hong Kong when we first received word of the advent of war, one of the girls in the dormitory flew into a panic, “What am I to do? I have nothing to wear!” She was a wealthy *huaqiao* for whom different sorts of social occasions required different sorts of apparel. She had made adequate preparations for all kinds of contingencies, from dancing on a yacht to a formal dinner, but she never considered the possibility of war. She managed to eventually borrow a baggy black quilted cotton dress, which she figured would not be the least bit attractive to the fighter planes circling overhead. When the time came to flee, all the students in the dormitory went their separate ways. After the battle, when I ran into her again, she had cut her hair short in the boyish Filipino style that was all the rage in Hong Kong at the time, so that she could look more like a man if need be. (40; italics added)<sup>56</sup>

Right before she offers this example Chang has actually proposed to write about the “psychological response” of people to the WWII in Hong Kong. One might question her attempts at reconstructing her experience of war-ravaged Hong Kong through her depiction of the *huaqiao* woman’s obsession with clothing. Chang’s simple answer is that it is how people

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<sup>55</sup> Quotations of Chang’s essays in are mostly based on Andrew F. Jones’ *Written on Water* with some modifications.

<sup>56</sup> Quotations from this essay are taken from Andrew F. Jones’ *Written on Water* with minor modifications.

respond to the war: “The psychological response of different people to the war did, in fact, seem to have something to do with their clothes” (40). Chang follows up this response with the portrayal of another woman:

Take Sureika, for instance. Sureika was the reigning beauty of a remote little town on the Malay Peninsula, a skinny girl with dark brown skin, heavy-lidded and languorous eyes, and slightly protruding front teeth. Like most girls who have been educated in a convent, she was almost shamefully naïve. She chose to study medicine. Medical students have to dissect corpses, but do the corpses wear clothes? Sureika was concerned about this question and made inquiries. This became a standing joke around campus.

When a bomb fell next door to our dormitory, the warden had no choice but order us to evacuate down the hill. Even at the height of the crisis, Sureika did not neglect to pack up her most luxurious clothes and, in defiance of the earnest counsel of many wise people, found a way to transport them down the hill in a large and unwieldy leather trunk in the midst of an artillery barrage. Sureika later participated in defense work, becoming a substitute nurse for a Red Cross medical unit. She would squat down on her haunches to gather firewood and light bonfires, clad all the while in a copper-red brocade gown, embroidered in green with the character for “longevity.” And though it was something of a shame to wear such a nice dress under those circumstances, the brilliances of her attire allowed her an unprecedented degree of self-confidence, without which she would have been unable to mix so well with her male coworkers, and this made it worthwhile. (40-41)

This lengthy quote exemplifies Chang’s insistence and persistence on using what she considers “irrelevant trivialities” to write about “history.”

Throughout the essay Chang continues to write about seemingly irrelevant or trivial “psychological responses” of her classmates. One of them, a Sri Lankan woman, risks her life “by going into town to see a movie” and remains “calm” when a bullet shatters the bathroom window, “leisurely humming a tune” as she continues with her shower. Her action infuriates the warden, but Chang praises her as the only person with true “guts” (41-42): “Her indifference seemed to make a mockery of everyone else’s terror” (42). Before I expound on Chang’s aesthetic approach and her take on writing about history, it is worth paying attention to her

choice of materials. Notably, Chang's portraits of these "overseas" women are devoid of the "pain and suffering" so prevalent in revolutionary or wartime literature. The contrast between the air-raided Hong Kong and the two women's obsession with their dress seems preposterous, and Chang seems to be amused by their somewhat puerile "psychological response" to the war and she is not hesitant to point out how "shamefully naïve" one can be. However, her deployment of these two women with their obsession with how to dress during war time seems irrelevant to the "reality" of the war at all. Her portraits of these women have allowed Chang to retrieve her memory and telling moments of the war through what she again considers the "trivialities" as a way to mediate writing about history, as her approach to "history" by using the everyday life as part of historical reflection. Nonetheless, we might ask, how does her writing of these figures offer critical reflections on the broader issues of these subjects? Chang never explains why these women are so obsessed with their clothing and what to pack. But the underlying reason might be because the huaqiao / overseas women have no place called home; in spite of their projected wealth, they live on their luggage. This can be seen right after these elaborate and meticulous descriptions of her female classmates. What happens next is that the university shuts down, "out-of-town students," including herself, are driven into "homelessness"; their only apparent option is to "join the defense effort" (42).

For Chang, the reality of the war, or the concept of reality itself, could best be encapsulated through the writing of "irrelevant trivialities." However, just because Chang insists on writing about the trivial does not mean she is unaware of or exempt from the destructiveness and trauma caused by the war. As she finally unfolds the "reality" of war-torn Hong Kong:

Throughout the eighteen days of the siege, was there anyone who did not experience that unbearable, half-past-four-in-the-morning feeling? Waking to another trembling dawn, surrounded by fog, cowering from the cold, with nothing to depend on. No way home. And if or when you got home at all, you might not

find it there anymore. Homes can be destroyed, money transformed into worthless paper in the bat of an eyelid, other people can die. And one's own life? Precarious at best. (45)

Here Chang demonstrates what she considers the aesthetics of desolation (*cangliang*; 蒼涼). In the conclusion of the essay, Chang reflects on life and war in general, “What a shame that we occupy ourselves instead searching for shadows of ourselves in the shop windows that flit so quickly by—we see only our own faces, pallid and trivial. In our selfishness and emptiness, in our smug and shameless ignorance, everyone of us is like all the others. And each of us is alone” (52).

“Reality” to Chang—whether it is war (such as war-ravaged Hong Kong), literature, or the petty urbanites in her works—is likened to “that incomprehensible cacophony; however, there sometimes happens to emerge a moment of sad and luminous clarity, when the musicality of a melody can be heard, just before it is engulfed once more by layer after layer of darkness, snuffing out this unexpected moment of lucidity” (39). Chang deeply believes her poetics of desolation can best capture that “unexpected moment of lucidity” especially at turbulent times when most of her contemporary Chinese writers are too obsessed with “wartime” or “revolutionary” materials. Accused of not fulfilling the social and revolutionary cause of her time, she further responds in another essay “Writing of One’s Own”: “All I really write about are some of the trivial things that happen between men and women. There is no war and no revolution in my works” (“Writing of One’s Own” 18). In self-defense she insists that “desolation is a form revelation” whereas “tragedy is a form of closure” (“Writing of One’s Own” 17). This is because she believes that “[w]hen history insists on the same sort of coherence, it becomes fiction” (“From the Ashes” 39). Choosing to explore love, marriage, and human relationships, Chang explains that these subjects have allowed her to focus on

“sensibility” rather than the “demands of rationality” for works that “portray war and revolution often fail precisely because their technical prowess outstrips their artistry” (“Writing of One’s Own” 18).

In “From the Ashes” Chang also portrays another huaqiao at the war’s end:

In this euphoric atmosphere, only Jonathan stood alone, brimming over with disdain and fury. Jonathan was another *huaqiao* classmate who had joined the ranks of Volunteer Corps and fought in combat. He wore an open-necked shirt under his great coat, his face was wan, and a lock of hair dangled between his brows in a manner reminiscent of Byron—such as shame that his pallor was merely the result of a bad cold. Jonathan knew all about what had happened during the fighting in Kowloon. What made him angriest was that they had sent two undergraduates to the trenches to carry an English soldier back from the front: “Two of our lives weren’t worth one of theirs. They promised special treatment when they recruited us, said we would be supervised by our own professors, but they broke every single one of their promises.” As he had thrown aside his scholar’s brush to join the ranks, he must have thought the war would resemble an excursion to Kowloon chaperoned by the Young Men’s Christian Association. (47; italics added)

Chang’s invocation of the huaqiao and her highlight of their naiveté alert us to her use of different strategies to write about the “reality” of the war. In this particular instance, she introduces Jonathan, the huaqiao, as a Byronic figure but then dismisses this resemblance as the effect of “a bad cold.” Chang does not spare her satirical tone by calling attention to the naiveté of the huaqiao figures: the women are depicted as if they are going to a ball or masquerade and the man on an “excursion.” In her war-time writing, Chang presents an alternative view to traditional and official Chinese nationalist grand narratives: there are no accounts of (huaqiao’s) heroic resistance or martyrdom, nor are there idealized versions of patriotism. Instead, she depicts the huaqiao as absurdly out of touch with war’s reality.

In another essay 洋人看京戲及其它 (“*yangren kangjingxi jiqita*”; “Peking Opera through Foreign Eyes”; 1943)<sup>57</sup>, Chang again alludes to the huaqiao’s out of touch with reality when it comes to viewing and understanding China. She first portrays China in a series of stereotypical images in relation to the politics of viewing through the eyes of the Westerners and huaqiao (華僑). She states that it is sometimes necessary for *zhongguoren* (native Chinese; 中國人) to view everything *zhongguo* (中國; China / Middle Kingdom) from a *yangren*’s (洋人; “Westerner”) perspective to better understand China, however, she nevertheless has maintained an ambiguous stance throughout the essay. As she notes, “To see China through the eyes with which Westerners watch Peking opera would be an exercise not entirely lacking in significance” (105). Such a statement prompts further questions: Why would Chang deem it important to see China through the eyes of the Westerners? Before she gives any possible answers, she further brings in an array of visual elements and viewing positions into the text. However, the opening paragraph does not bring up the “viewing position” of the Westerners as the title suggests. Instead, Chang focuses on the connection between loving China and the danger of not knowing what China truly is:

China is all of these things—colorful, shocking, enigmatic, absurd. Many young people love China and yet have only a vague notion of what this thing called China might be. Unconditional love is admirable, but the danger is that sooner or later, the ideal will run up against reality, and the resultant rush of cold air will gradually extinguish one’s ardor. We unfortunately live among our fellow Chinese [*zhongguoren*]. Unlike *huaqiao*, we cannot spend our lives safely and reverently gazing toward our exalted motherland at a comfortable remove” (105; italics added). [我們不幸生活於中國人之間，比不得華僑，可以一輩子安全地隔著適當的距離崇拜著神聖的祖國].<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> “Still Alive” is its original English title and was published in the June edition of *The XXth Century* [二十世紀] 1943 (an English journal published in China with Westerners and expatriate communities as its main readership). Later Chang translated the essay into Chinese and changed its title into “洋人看京戲及其它.” See Andrew F. Jones’s translation, “Peking Opera through Foreign Eyes,” in *Written on Water* (2005).

<sup>58</sup> Chang’s stance resonates with Lao She’s depiction of the huaqiao in England especially in *The Two Mas*.

This opening paragraph calls attention to the representation of China by invoking patriotism. It further conveys a foreboding message, that is, the “danger” of “unconditional love” for one’s country and its “reality” when run against the “ideal.” It alludes to the “unconditional love” that “young people have for their country” so pervasive in revolutionary and wartime literature, thus unfolding Chang’s subtle critique of Chinese patriotism especially if these “young people” only have a “vague” idea of what “China” really is. Meanwhile, the recurrent motif of *juli* (“distance / distancing”; 距離) is particularly pertinent to what it means to see China as the liminal figure of the *huaqiao* is again invoked as the (cultural) agent of this “distancing.” Why is it necessary for Chang to invoke the *huaqiao* in order to bring out this “distancing” to view China? Furthermore, why is it important to maintain such a “distance”—especially “safely” (安全地)—when it comes to viewing China?

What complicates the matter is the creation of visual verisimilitude she incorporates in the essay through the use of the Peking opera and more importantly, by juxtaposing various gazes of different viewers: Westerners, *huaqiao*, and *zhongguoren*. What is central to the essay is not so much how to see China through foreign eyes, but rather, to recognize the variability of what is (not) China depending on the viewing position when the issues of race and ethnicity are invoked. The most intriguing part of this essay is, even though at times she claims to align herself with the “Westerner’s” (*yangren*) perspective of seeing China, she invokes the *other* Chinese, that is, the *huaqiao*, at the very beginning of the essay to mediate her own viewing position. It is important to keep in mind that Chang introduces *huaqiao* and their viewing position before she brings in the Westerner’s perspective. When “*huaqiao*” is inserted into the spectatorship to contrast the collective “we” *zhongguoren*, the viewing positions become much more ambiguous especially if Chang is engaging in a chain of displacing one with the other. In

her effort of self-representation of “Chineseness” vis-à-vis the Peking opera, Chang seems at times to inhabit the viewing positions of the Westerner and the huaqiao to keep some form of “safe” distance while continuing to be surprised and bewildered in viewing China. It is thus important to pay attention to the significance and implication of the other Chinese, namely, the huaqiao, and its prescribed “otherness” especially since Chang claims that the huaqiao inhabit a “safe distance” and thus “removed” from the native Chinese. In other words, how to see China for Chang is foremost a matter of mediating the gaze “between” *zhongguoren* (citizens of the Middle Kingdom; native Chinese people) and *huaqiao* (the Chinese sojourners), rather than the *yangren* and *zhongguoren*. For her the difference of seeing China through the eyes of *huaqiao* and *zhongguoren* lies precisely in the nature of the identity politics. *Huaqiao* can view China in an exalted manner and idolize the so-called “motherland” (*zuguo*) simply because they are not *zhongguoren*.

The significance of seeing China and Peking Opera through the Westerners’ eyes is two fold. Even though the essay was originally written in English under the title “Still Alive” intended for a Western audience, Chang is fully aware of her position as a writer *and* a native Chinese (*zhongguoren*). She explains that the intricacies of Peking opera will provide the means to understand China. Peking opera is used to highlight the temporal quality of the Chinese culture: its timelessness and mythic quality. With its spectacular visual elements Peking opera is seen as the essential marker of Chineseness, which served to perpetuate cultural Chinese identity and Chinese exoticness. Moreover, its stage is the site where self-representation of Chineseness takes place. On the other hand, in her novella “Aloeswood Incense,” Chang showcases what she considers exotic “Chineseness” through the Western eyes: “These oriental touches had been put there, it was clear, for the benefit of foreigners. The English come from so far to see China—one

has to give them something of China to see. But this was China as Westerners imagine it: exquisite, illogical, very entertaining” (8). In this passage she specifically points to the Western / colonial gaze, one unmediated by the *huaqiao*, and thus this aspect of China is purely “orientalist.” However, while issues of cross-cultural [Westerner / Chinese] and cross-ethnic [*zhongguoren* / *huaqiao*] spectatorship complicate how to view China (through Peking opera), it remains recurrent in her works to find the narrator(s) or character(s) proclaiming the need to fulfill such foreign or Western needs to see the “authentic” China.

In the Chinese version of the essay Chang uses the words “觀光” (*guanguang*), which literarily means sight-seeing through the eyes of a tourist, thereby aligning the viewing position of the foreigner with that of a tourist.<sup>59</sup> As Chang writes, “For only it is through surprise and wonderment that we may be able to find real understanding and a steadfast, reliable love” (*Written on Water* 105). She emphasizes the relevance and potency of seeing China through the eyes of the Westerner via “sight-seeing” with the accompaniment of dazed surprises and excitements. However, the essay also prompts these unanswered questions: What exactly is “the reality” and “real understanding” that Chang claims as opposed to seeing and idolizing China from a “safe distance”? What kind of “love” is she alluding to? Is it “love” for the “modern” nation, for the ancient / real China, or for a “China” no longer exists or has never existed apart from on stage as in Peking Opera? Instead, she likens her gaze to that of a tourist, and her viewing position is compromised because of her self-proclaimed “ignorance” of Peking opera. What Chang subtly conveys in her essay is that *huaqiao* and Westerners in this case have something in common: the safe distance and ignorance from which the foreigner gazes at China.

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<sup>59</sup> This aspect of the “viewing” / gaze—as in “sightseeing” is completely lost in Jones’ English translation.

In many of her works, Chang uses the huaqiao figures to explore issues of viewing China, its relations to notions of Chineseness, as well as the ideas of nativity and authenticity.

This stance coincides with Chang's portrayal of the Nanyang huaqiao in "Love in a Fallen City," in which the "Westernized" Nanyang huaqiao idolizes and idealizes China before his "return" from England. Once in China, he becomes disenchanted and disillusioned with "the reality." However, Chang's exploration of the issues of Chineseness—mainly what it means to be Chinese—has further implications and ramifications when it comes to viewing China involving huaqiao in particular. Throughout the essay we are presented with ritualistic performance of Chineseness which consists of auratic quality of idealized images of Chineseness, and this corresponds to how the Nanyang huaqiao views China and his quest of "authentic" Chineseness as captured in Chang's novella "Love in a Fallen City." It also entails how Chang foregrounds the huaqiao figures as ethnicized categories of Chinese collective cultural memory and representations. Huaqiao in her portrayals are generally "Westernized" and their "Chineseness" compromised. Consequently, these huaqiao figures are generally cast as in need of defending and preserving their Chineseness.

In Chang's novella "Love in a Fallen City" (傾城之戀; 1943), the male protagonist Fan Liuyuan, whose portrayal is reminiscent of Ding Ling's portrayal of Ling Jishi, is the stereotypical male (Nanyang) huaqiao as a corrupted dandy / playboy / womanizer. Or at least this is how critics in general—if they ever pay any attention to this figure—see and dismiss him as such. Before we are introduced to Fan, a thirty-two year old Nanyang *guiqiao* (short for *guiguo huaqiao*, returnee huaqiao), a brief introduction of his origin by the matchmaker Mrs. Xu is crucial to the typecasting of this huaqiao figure. First Fan's father is described as "a well-known [*huaqiao*] with properties scattered throughout Ceylon, Malaya, and other such places"

(122; italics added). Fan's reputation, however, is immediately cast in doubt as he takes women "to be so much mud under his feet" (122). He is characterized as "eccentric and odd" (怪僻), mainly due to "his unusual childhood," as Mrs. Xu explains:

"His parents weren't officially married. His father met his mother in London, when he was touring Europe. She was a [*huaqiao* party girl] [*huaqiao jiaojihua*; 華僑交際花],<sup>60</sup> and the marriage had been kept secret. Then Fan's first wife got wind of it. Fearing that the first wife would take revenge, the [second wife] never dared to go back to China, and Fan Liuyuan grew up in England. After his father's death, Liuyuan sought legal recognition of his rights; even though the first wife had only daughters, two of them, there was still quite a bit of nastiness. He was all alone in England, and went through some hard times, but at last he got the right to inherit his father's estate. The Fan family was still very hostile toward him, so he lived in Shanghai most of the time, returning to the family home in Guangzhou only when absolutely necessary. The unstable emotional environment of his early years had left its mark on him, and gradually he became a playboy — he gambled, he gourmandized, he visited prostitutes. The only pleasure he denied himself was married bliss." (122-123)

The image of Fan's biological mother as a *huaqiao jiaojihua* is another aspect warranting further investigation as it is a recurrent motif in Chang's works when it comes to the representation of *huaqiao* women.<sup>61</sup> Arguably, she can be seen as a counterpart to the male *huaqiao* "playboy" / "womanizer." While Mrs. Xu is eagerly looking for a match for Fan it is inevitable that his "origin" will be the issue here as he is referred to as the "son of a concubine," thus rendering his "legitimacy" for a *zhongguo* wife / woman in doubt. This passage also highlights Fan's "eccentricity" by calling attention to his "bastardized" origin, his treatment of women like "mud," and his promiscuity.

<sup>60</sup> I have made several minor modifications based on Karen S. Kingsbury's translation of the novella. The modifications are not meant to deviate from the original Chinese rendition but to reflect Kingsbury's "mistranslation" in some of the details and Chinese terms. Thus I revert to using the original Chinese designation(s) to keep the historical and cultural resonances in the original text. On the other hand, the figure of "*huaqiao jiaojihua*" (華僑交際花) as such deserves a closer scrutiny as it insinuates *huaqiao* women's somewhat promiscuous sexuality and moral laxity.

<sup>61</sup> This is insinuated in Chang's essay "From the Ashes" as discussed earlier, when the *huaqiao*/overseas women were too obsessed with their clothing during wartime Hong Kong.

Fan is later matched up with the novella's female protagonist, Bai Liusu. A divorcee from Shanghai, she is looking to a second marriage as the opportunity to break away from her family who mostly deem her to be a disgrace and financial burden. Fan and Bai engage in a series of flirtations that take place in colonial Hong Kong. Critics who generally read this simply as a ("romantic") "love story" have thus missed or ignored the embedded message of Fan's "love interests" and quest for "Chineseness" in his courtship of Bai. The quest is at the center of my analysis. In his quest, Fan is preoccupied with notions of "authentic" Chineseness and how he can finally reconnect with his Chinese cultural heritage so that he might be seen as a more or less "authentic" rather than a "Westernized" Chinese. Fan ultimately looks for an "authentic native Chinese woman" who possesses traits of he considers "authentic Chinese femininity" to be his wife. In this sense, his quest can be seen as his means to securing an "authentic" Chinese identity. Meanwhile, as a returnee huaqiao, Fan is portrayed as a wealthy businessman and it is mainly his inherited fortune that has attracted Bai in the first place. This explains why as a divorcee with no other options or resource, Bai is so obsessed with scoring a second husband, and Fan seems to be her ticket to a life of leisure and marriage is her ultimate goal.

The narrative is punctuated by Fan's desire to assert and (re)invent authentic Chinese identities, a trait made obvious in his courtship of Bai. Meanwhile, Fan deliberately casts Bai as an authentic and yet traditional Chinese / native woman, thus subjugating Bai to his (colonial) male gaze. Arguably, their relationship is also Fan's means to (re)construction of "authentic" Chineseness and thus demonstrates what is really at stake here is probably not "love" at all.

What is at stake here is not just this seemingly mismatched couple's "love interest." The image of the "fallen city" of Hong Kong is also looming in the backdrop of their relationship. The novella proceeds to make allusions to the colonial inheritance of the city. In addition to his

quest of Chineseness, the narrator also invokes colonial Englishness and suggests that Fan seems disappointed in its decline:

The Hong Kong Hotel has the most old-fashioned ballroom I've ever seen, "said Liuyuan. "Everything about the place—building, lights, décor, orchestra—is very *English* and, forty or fifty years ago, was very up-to-date. But nowadays it's not much of a draw. *There's nothing to see there*, except maybe the funny little waiters. Even on a very hot day, they wear those northern-style trousers, gathered tight at the ankles."

"Why?" asked Liusu.

"Chinese flavor!" ("Love in a Fallen City" 133-134; italics added)

Here the narrator makes allusions to the waning of British colonialism in Hong Kong in the face of the breakout of the WWII when the Japanese are about to invade and air raid the city. What exactly would Fan like to see—when he claims "[t]here is nothing to *see* there"—the very hotel supposedly embodied quintessential (colonial) Englishness? He is dismissive of and disappointed with the "Chinese flavor" taking over the original "Englishness," hence his laments of "nothing to see there." Here the narrator simultaneously invokes Fan's colonial gaze and his "Westernized" background while alluding to the fall of Hong Kong. In addition, Chang portrays Hong Kong as an expatriate space where outsiders with different racial and ethnic backgrounds commingle, a city where two seemingly incongruous worlds meet: one is the "old world" of Shanghai where Bai comes from, a world where the traditional Bai family still goes by the "Old Clock" and unaffected by the flow of modern time, and the other represented by Fan's "Westernized" and adulterated world of the colonial.

If Fan is truly disappointed in not seeing the representation of authentic Englishness he sought and dismissive of the "Chinese flavor" that has replaced it, he is no less determined to locate authentic Chineseness in Bai whom he informs: "I don't care if you're good or bad. I don't want you to change. It's not easy to find a real Chinese (*zhongguo*) girl like you" (135).

Fan is embarking on a quest of possessing the perfectly authentic *zhongguo* woman (真正的中國女人) through marriage. For Fan, what is truly “Chinese” should remain “unchanged” and timeless—whatever that is—one of the characteristics of Peking opera as Chang illustrates in her essay. Bai, however, does not perceive herself as authentic but rather as “old-fashioned” (136). Nevertheless Fan presses on. As he claims: “Real Chinese [*zhongguo*] women are the world’s most beautiful women. They’re never out of fashion” (135). Throughout their courtship, Fan persists in attributing his reified vision of “authentic” Chineseness to Bai, a reified notion of Chineseness quintessential to his desire to reclaim his seemingly lost “Chinese” identity.

However, Fan deliberately distinguishes what it means to be a “Westernized Chinese” from a “Sinicized Westerner.” Such a distinction is crucial to Fan’s self-identification and identity formation. As Fan notes:

“It’s true I’m not a real [authentic] Chinese [*zhongguoren*]. It’s just that in the past few years I’ve become a little more like a Chinese [*zhongguoren*]. But you know, a foreigner who’s become a Chinese [*zhongguoren*] also becomes intransigent, more intransigent even than an old-fashioned scholar from the dynastic era” [我的確不能算一個真正的中國人，直到最近幾年才漸漸的中國化起來。可是你知道，中國化的外國人，頑固起來，比任何老秀才都要頑固.] (135—136)<sup>62</sup>

In Chang’s formulation, Fan represents a “Westernized Chinese,” and his “Chineseness” either lost or compromised. However, the narrator seems to suggest that in order for a “Westernized Chinese” to foreground a more legitimate and thus “authentic” Chinese identity, Fan has to first concede that his *huaqiao* / Westernized identity is at best “inauthentic.” This also suggests Fan has to forfeit his “Westernized” cultural identity as his first step to reclaim Chineseness. By admitting to his “inadequacy” as a (Westernized) *huaqiao*, Fan believes he is able to reinvent

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<sup>62</sup> Kingsbury mistranslated “頑固” as “reactionary” and it is just the opposite in the original Chinese, which means “intransigent” and thus opposing to change.

what he considers proper and “authentic” Chineseness. For him, being a “Sinicized Westerner” as he deems himself should make him eligible to be considered an “authentic *zhongguoren*.”

Of course it also begs this question: What exactly is an “authentic *zhongguoren*” (“真正的中國人”)? Moreover, what does he mean to be “Sinicized” (“中國化”)? Does he view sinicization as his ticket to the claim of “authentic Chineseness”—whatever that might mean and entail? All these questions are relevant as they also point to the predicament and challenge for *huaqiao* regarding their construction of identity and subjectivity and how to position themselves within the colonial spaces of Hong Kong and Nanyang, as well as their so-called “homeland” of China. This also explains why and how to “become a little more like a Chinese (*zhongguoren*)” has been such an obsession for him. Fan further distinguishes different types of “Chineseness” when he claims that Bai should see herself as an authentic *zhongguo* woman, which is, in Fan’s view, different from a Shanghainese woman (even though Bai is also Shanghainese) (137). Chang calls attention to the distinction and ethnic difference between various groups and the social perceptions of these groups in relation to the construction of Chineseness.

Fan’s claim that he is not a legitimate or authentic Chinese stems from his belief that Chineseness is a form of symbolic (cultural) capital based on racial and ethnic purity as well as nativity, as such he deems himself the “lesser” Chinese and thus his self-perceived “impure Chineseness.” In other words, such a view reinforces the stereotypical and negative image of *huaqiao* in general. Since they are defined in their “absence of roots” and thus their loss of “Chineseness,” *huaqiao* have to embark on this mission of disclaiming their adulterated background before they can reclaim their “Chineseness.” In this light, it is thus important to note how Fan is insinuated in his improper origin: his social reputation as a dandy as an indication of his moral depravity and sexual laxity, which again, echoes his biological *huaqiao jiaojihua*

mother who, similarly, did not have any “legitimacy” to any claim of Chineseness or recognition in the Fan clan but only as a “concubine.”

Fan’s quest for Chineseness and attempts to locate the authentic *zhongguoren* or *zhongguo* woman has its limitations. He is fully aware of his “inadequate” Chineseness, as if in a gesture to compensate for his lack of “authentic” Chineseness, Fan simultaneously seeks to pinpoint and attribute what he considers “Chineseness” to Bai. In this sense Fan is attempting at authenticating his own “compromised” Chineseness, this explains why he has been trying to “become a little more like a Chinese” (*zhongguoren*). He deeply believes that through “sinicization” he can be and should be deemed as an “authentic” Chinese. Such an assertion and awareness exemplifies the sense of inadequacy and thus the lack of legitimacy when it comes to claim of Chineseness on the part of *huaqiao* in general. Whereas Bai (“Bai” literally means “white” in Chinese and thus implying “purity” and “pureness”), never really has to prove how “Chinese” or “un-Chinese” she is and can laugh at Fan’s claims that she is a “real Chinese,” Fan, as a bastard son of a *huaqiao* father and *huaqiao jiaojihua*, does not really stand a chance claiming Chineseness. What is at stake here is the issue of legitimacy and authenticity and the interplay between the two; the logic behind such a claim lies precisely in its illogic. Nevertheless, the assertion is so important for Fan that he realizes that he has to prove himself to the “real Chinese” (in this case Bai) that he can be *more* Chinese than the real Chinese.

The quest of authentic Chineseness crucial to Fan’s identity formation. However, he needs to exoticize the Orient / Chineseness and what he considers authentic Chinese femininity has become a form of self-imposed Orientalism. For Bai, as Fan puts it, it is the “aura” that anoints Bai’s authentic *zhongguoren*’s identity. What is at stake here is also the problem of

identity construction in relation to objectification and fetishization of Chineseness and its relation to the notion of authenticity and representation.

The figure of the Chinese woman becomes the (Westernized) Chinese sojourner's instantiation of an essentialist China. It explains why Fan's quest and the materialization of Chineseness can only be configured in the symbolic domain of a Chinese woman originating and still somewhat inhabiting the "old world" of China where it still goes by the "Old Clock." In this sense, Fan's fantasizing Chinese femininity helps him pinpoint authentic Chineseness in the old world, one marked its timelessness. Fan thus wistfully sees Bai as a "Peking opera singer" when he comments that Bai comes "from another world" ("Love in a Fallen City" 144). This quality of the Peking opera and Fan's emphasis of its "otherworldliness" is reminiscent of Chang's essay about the Peking opera, which has now again become an icon of China not just for the Westerners in Chang's work, but also for huaqiao. When Fan compares Bai to a "Peking opera singer" not only is he determined to see Bai as "someone from another world" but he is also determined to construe what he considers "authentic" Chinese femininity in its otherness, thus pressing Bai to inhabit a space of prescribed cultural and racial otherness as he has been "destined" to due to his huaqiao status. Fan thus explains to Bai: "You have all these little gestures, and a romantic aura (羅曼蒂克的氣氛), very much like a Peking opera singer" ("Love in a Fallen City" 144). Even though Fan is romanticizing Bai's feminine Chineseness, Bai instantly dismisses and refutes Fan's claim: "But of course it takes more than one to put on a show, and I've been forced into it" ("Love in a Fallen City" 144). If being a Peking opera singer represents what it means to be an authentic *zhongguoren*, then it definitely involves "putting on a show" and that Bai has been "forced into it" and there is the "aura" that Fan perceives that Bai is deliberately trying to dismiss and demystify. Chineseness at this point, echoing Chang's essay,

becomes a site / sight of (self-) performance involving staging and putting on a show. This is probably the only point in the narrative that Bai tries to demystify Fan's fetishization of her as the quintessential *zhongguo* woman. Here Fan also suggests that Bai possesses (feminine) qualities associated with the "romantic aura" of Chineseness in spite of her protest / rebuttal. Bai rebuts that she has been "forced into it"—her reluctance and rebuttal is significant and insightful here. Bai refuses the symbolic domain of Chineseness imposed on her even though she knows Liu is only after such qualities. Arguably, this is how Fan sees and configures Bai throughout the text. Fan's incessant effort to prescribe "authentic" Chineseness to Bai through various auratic sights/ sites of retrieval and inscription reveals his own anxiety being seen as a "lesser Chinese." This also alludes to the sojourner's predicament, in spite of his ability and necessity to move through various spaces, he is never in place, always in search of home.

Arguably, the whole narrative can be seen as a series of "putting on a show"—both the male and female protagonists are on stage and act out their flirtations and seductions at various venues such as the hotel / room, dance halls, cinema, restaurants. At one point Fan directs Bai to wear "*qipao*" ("banner gown" or "cheongsam") to show her authentic Chinese femininity. However, whether *qipao* can be seen as "authentic" Chinese is debatable. In "A Chronicle of Changing Clothes" (1943), Chang examines the history of Chinese fashion, which she believes to consist "almost exclusively of the steady elimination of [sic] details" (68). The *qipao*, according to Chang, was originally a Manchu style fashion with complete "lack of feminine grace"(71) and the original "*qipao*" was "stiff, cold, and puritanical" (72). However, these details do not deter Fan from seeing the *qipao* as "authentic Chinese" and "feminine." As he explains to Bai, "But I'm serious. The first time I saw you, you were wearing one of those trendy tunics, and I thought you shouldn't bare your arms like that. But Western-style clothes

aren't right for you either. A Manchu-style cheongsam [*qipao*] might suit you better, if its lines weren't so severe" (143). For Fan, a "Manchu-style cheongsam" is still much more appropriate clothing for this "authentic" Chinese woman than the "Western style" clothing.

Fan further invokes Nanyang and its primitiveness in his announcement to Bai that he will take her to the rainforest of Malaya (present-day Malaysia) to escape from the scrutiny and gossip of people in Hong Kong and embrace the "nature" and "primitive" setting of Malaya. Fan believes this might be the only way for Bai to be released from the shackles of the "old world" of Shanghai where she came from. As Fan puts it, "When I first met you [Bai] in Shanghai, I thought that if you could get away from your family, maybe you could be more natural. So I waited and waited till you came to Hong Kong... and now, I want to take you to Malaya, to the forest with its primitive peoples..." (144). This invocation of Nanyang Malaya as the option to go back to "nature" and "primitiveness" coincide with Western colonial construction of the tropics and notions of tropicality. Yet this Nanyang also corresponds to the sojourner's cultural imaginary for it is the only place that Fan seems to be able to identify with. However, Fan immediately dismisses the thought and proposal of taking Bai to the "primitive Malaya" for he "can't imagine [Bai] running through the forest in a cheongsam" (143). Here Fan alludes to the absurdity of placing an "authentic" Chinese woman in a primitive setting as she will be totally out of place, even though this might be the only place he finds himself to be fitting in. Yet Fan admits that "nor can [he] imagine [Bai] not wearing a cheongsam" (143).

The dilemma of the huaqiao subject is poignantly reflected in this situation: Nanyang cannot and will not be a place for authentic Chineseness, alluding to Fan's "condition" as a Nanyang huaqiao. By invoking Nanyang Fan becomes somewhat "sentimental" in his

confessional message, that is, his dreams of home and homecoming—China—are shattered when he finally returns to China. As Fan explains to Bai,

“You’ve certainly seen more than enough of all these people, and awful things that are everywhere around us. But if you were seeing them for the first time, it would be even harder to bear, even harder to get used to. That’s what it’s been like for me. When I arrived in China I was already twenty-four. I had such dreams of my homeland. You can imagine how disappointed I was. I couldn’t bear the shock, and I started slipping downward. If... if you had known me before, then maybe you could forgive me for the way I am now.” (“Love in a Fallen City” 139-140)

Due to his bastardized origin, he has not been able to “return” to China and when he finally does, he is there to fight for his inheritance and his proper *place* in the Fan clan, and thus initiates his needs (to be) “re-Sinicized” when he goes (back) to China. Fan aptly exemplifies what Chang has in mind, “Peking Opera through Foreign Eyes,” when she reflects on huaqiao idolizing their “motherland” from a safe distance. Fan becomes thoroughly “disillusioned” after he has “seen the real China”—that is, once the “safe distance” is removed—and it becomes a self-imposed task for him to seek out authentic Chineseness.

As if to compensate for his disappointment and shock and possibly loss, Fan is determined to locate it through his objectification and fetishization of Chinese femininity. The narrator implies that Fan’s “displaced” or “lost” Chineseness can only be found by turning it into a form of exotic symbolic capital. “Love in a Fallen City” is thus not so much about “love” between a man and a woman but more about a Nanyang huaqiao’s displaced “love” for his “lost” home/land and Bai as his “object” of love seems to hold promise to his quest. Bai as such is Fan’s possible access to Chineseness and his claim of him being a much more “authentic” Chinese because he is a Sinicized Westerner has to be tested. In an effort to show his “love” to Bai and prompt her to reciprocate, Fan cites the verse from *The Book of Songs*: “Facing life,

death, distance / Here is my promise to thee—/ I take thy hand in mine:/ We will grow old together.” (149). This ability to cite classical Chinese verse (to a supposedly authentic native Chinese woman) becomes another means for Fan to reassert himself as a Chinese, preferably an “authentic” one, and one approved by the “authentic” Chinese. However, Bai immediately dismisses him before he even starts reciting the verse, saying that she does not “understand that sort of thing” (148). This scenario suggests a role reversal here: a “non-authentic Chinese” trying to explain classical verse to an “authentic Chinese” even though Fan makes it sound like an apology: “My Chinese isn’t very good, and I don’t know if I’ve got it right, but I think this is a very mournful poem which says that life and death and parting are enormous things, well beyond human control. Compared to the great forces in the world, we people are so very, very small. But still we say ‘I will stay with you forever, we will never, in this lifetime, leave each other’—as if we really could decide these things!” (149). Bai, however, is not impressed with Fan’s “showoff” of his Chinese classical knowledge, nor is she moved. Instead she chides Fan for not straightforwardly asking to marry her.

Fan’s attempt at gaining access to Chineseness has been denied, demystified, or denounced, over and over again, by Bai, the embodiment of the “real *zhongguoren*” in the narrative. It is important to see that Fan is actually pleading with Bai to love and understand him. However, Bai is too obsessed with her possibility to score a second marriage and thus it prompts Fan to counter her: “Basically, you think that marriage is long-term prostitution” (149). While pointing to the economy of marriage as a social constitution, Fan is also fully aware of the reason why Bai is with him. Yet Fan still sees Bai as a seductress simply because, under his gaze, Bai exudes “authentic” Chinese femininity which is also quintessential to Fan’s reinvention and claim of Chineseness. Fan’s efforts can also be seen as attempts to appropriate a proper

*zhongguo* identity, and thus his quest for love is symptomatic of his quest for authentic Chineseness.

Critics of Fan however, would not choose to see him beneath his façade. In spite of the effort to resuscitate Chang from the neglect of ideological driven canonical framework of the Mainland, C. T. Hsia, for instance, still cannot read the text beyond its “intent,” that is, simply as a “love story.” Hsia simply dismisses Fan as “wealthy playboy” and “Love in a Fallen City” as “a story of courtship” (Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* 414). The issue of “Chineseness” embedded in the text is completely lost in Hsia’s and many other critics’ assessment. For Leo Lee, Fan is simply dismissed as a “rich playboy who has just returned from England”<sup>63</sup> (*Shanghai Modern* 294), and seen as a supplementary character to Bai. Moreover, Fan is further reduced to “*a playboy with no sense of culture or history*” (*Shanghai Modern* 296; italics added). In another vein, commenting on Fan’s quoting the classical verse, Leo Lee thinks it is “indeed enigmatic and hard to understand”: “*How can someone born and educated abroad, whose ‘Chinese isn’t very good,’ suddenly remember a line from an ancient classic written in the classical language (wenyan), not in the modern vernacular as used in the story’s narration and dialogue?*” (*Shanghai Modern* 299; italics added) Why would Leo Lee claim that Fan is simply “*a playboy with no sense of culture or history*” and that because he was “*born and educated abroad*” he cannot possibly know any classical Chinese, let alone citing any classical verse? Chang had probably foreseen such unsolicited “accusations” from future critics and thus Fan is offered some form of agency in the form of apology when he acknowledges his “lesser Chinese” / “inauthentic Chinese” self-prescription as elucidated above. Hsia’s and Lee’s comments simply reflect their Han-centric and essentialist notions of Chineseness based on nativity and

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<sup>63</sup> It is established in the narrative that Fan has “returned” to China for over eight years.

authenticity. Since Fan is a Westernized huaqiao, he cannot possibly possess any “authentic” Chinese traits, let alone any “sense of culture of history.”

In another novella “Red Rose White Rose” (紅玫瑰白玫瑰 1944), Chang depicts and contrasts *Nanyang huaqiao* women with *zhongguo* men and women in terms of their sexuality, racial purity, and gender roles as aspects of “questionable” Chineseness. The third-person narrative focuses on the gender relations between the male protagonist, Tong Zhenbao, and the women he encounters at various times and spaces. Through his relationships with his “Red Rose” and “White Rose,” the narrator unfolds the power dynamics between these characters across sexual and racial boundaries. In Tong’s “order of things,” women are generally classified in three different ways based on their origins and accessibility: *zazhong* (雜種; mixed-blood), *huaqiao* (華僑), and native Chinese (中國女人; *zhongguo nuren*). They are then subdivided based on their sexual accessibility: materials for wives (妻子), mistresses (情婦), and prostitutes (娼妓). These three types of women further serve to define the male protagonist’s sense of well-being and what it means to be “the ideal modern Chinese man” (最合理想的中國現代人物). Tong further sorts them into either the “Red Rose” or “White Rose” within his scheme. As the narrator remarks, “There are two women in Zhenbao’s life: one he called his white rose, the other his red rose. One was a spotless wife, the other a passionate mistress” (255). Even though the “white rose”—being “chaste” and “spotless”—is set up to contrast the “red rose,” and thus seems to fit Tong’s projection of an ideal wife, things do not always go as he has planned. When Tong learns that his categorization does not hold—that Red can be White and vice versa, his “perfect world” falls apart. Since Tong is set up to be an epitome for the generation of “new youth” in China, who embrace “modernization” and thus symbolize vitality and regeneration, his

disintegrated world reveals the narrator's satiric stance, if not critique, of Chinese modernism and nation building.

The narrative crisscrosses different timelines and is mostly structured by Tong's sexual encounters with different women at different times and places, which begins during his studies in England. As a self-made man, Tong's ultimate concern is to have mastery and maintain a respectable social position. According to the narrator, Tong is the "ideal modern Chinese man": he has a "proper" background and career, an engineering degree from Britain, works at a foreign company in Shanghai, and eventually marries a proper Chinese woman, who "has never been a party girl" (*jiajihua*) (255). Ultimately what Tong wants for a wife is a chaste and respectable native Chinese woman, unlike the *huaqiao jiaojihua*, whom he considers to be mistresses/prostitutes. Regardless of their origins, these women are nevertheless objectified through Tong's traditional male values and sexual mores. From the onset Tong is portrayed as a "filial son," a "helpful" brother, "the kindest, truest, and most generous of men," whose life is "a complete success" (255). He seems to be the most perfect "modern Chinese man" and to have everything under control. Self-preservation for Tong is his ultimate goal and purpose. However, under this veneer of "perfection" embodied by this "ideal modern Chinese man," Tong has his first whoring experience with a Paris woman during his stay in Europe, an experience he deems a total disaster because he has failed to be the "master"; utterly shamed, he feels like a "fool" (258). This experience spurs him to assert himself as "the absolute master" of "his own world" when it comes to his relationships with women.

The narrative, however, undermines all of Tong's efforts to be seen as the "ideal Chinese man." The huaqiao and the mixed-blood (雜種; *zazhong*)<sup>64</sup> such as the Eurasian girls are all dubbed "Red Rose," who are generally considered promiscuous, as Tong believes them to be much less inhibited as a result of their social upbringing and adulterated cultural background. For this reason, he prefers *huaqiao* and *zaozhong* to native Chinese women (*zhongguo*) as his mistresses. His first "Red Rose," a mixed-blood in England, is perceived as such: "No hair to protect her neck, no sleeves to protect her arms—Rose did not watch her words, and her body was open for the taking. She was carefree with Zhenbao, and he put that down to her being innocent, but her being so carefree with everyone struck him as slightly nutty. This kind of woman was common enough in foreign countries, but in China it would never do. Marrying her, then transplanting her to his hometown—that would be a big waste of time and money, not a good deal at all" (260-261). Tong thinks of her as a "child" or "childlike" (260). A "Westernized Chinese" man after years of living abroad, Tong still views "foreign / Western" women as morally deficient and lax. Hence, when he has an affair with his friend's wife, Wang Jiarui, a Nanyang huaqiao, he is determined to keep his world "right" and refuses to let his sexual desire for this Nanyang huaqiao get in his way. As he does with his first "Red Rose," Tong also compares Wang to a "child." Our first glimpse of the Nanyang huaqiao woman is from Tong's perspective: "He'd heard that she [Wang Jiarui] was a [huaqiao] (華僑) from Singapore who, when she was studying in London, was quite a party girl [*jiaojihua*; 交際花]" (263).

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<sup>64</sup> *Zazhong* in Chinese carries the negative connotation of not simply a hybridized identity, but a much more derogatory implication: one that is essentially "bastardized" and thus losing not only its purity but also its legitimacy.

Like Fan's biological mother in "Love in a Fallen City," Wang is cast as a *huaqiao jiaojihua*, whose sexuality and morality, along with her "Chineseness," are in doubt: she is "fiery and impetuous," "frivolous," adulterous, indulgent, and never bothers to hide her sexual desire or extramarital affairs. Tong considers Wang's lifestyle and manner "strange." His scrutiny extends beyond this Nanyang *huaqiao jiaojihua*'s sexuality to virtually all aspects of her character: for instance, the way she dresses, the "Nanyang flavor" cooking in her household, "Chinese food prepared in Western style," and that she is "not good at housekeeping" and only knows "how to entertain" (266). Worse, in her Chinese husband's own words, "She doesn't understand a thing. She's been in China for three years now, but she still isn't used to it here, and she can't really speak Chinese well." (267) In other words, Wang the *Nanyang huaqiao jiaojihua* is everything a proper *zhongguo* woman is not.

Like Ling Jishi, Wang Jiaorui is also a *huaqiao* from Singapore. She was sent to England by her family to search for a husband and eventually marries a Chinese national. Throughout the narrative, Wang's "Chineseness" is constantly cast in doubt. This is evident in her efforts to reassert her Chinese identity and to dismiss her "otherness" and "exoticness" associated with Nanyang *huaqiao*. In one particular instance to reclaim her Chineseness, Wang insists that she also "has a [Chinese / *zhongguo*] name" (267). In this scene, the Nanyang *huaqiao* has to validate her Chineseness to the native Chinese men. Wang further tries to write the Chinese characters of her name to prove that she indeed is "Chinese." However, Tong simply laughs at her while her husband ridicules her for her poor Chinese handwriting. At this point, Shihong, Wang's husband, steps in and remarks:

"The way you write Chinese characters (*zhongguo zi*), you shouldn't show them around," Shihong said with a smile. "People will just laugh." When Zhenbao saw

the three crooked words on the paper, each one bigger than the last, and the last one breaking apart into three distinct fragments... he really had to laugh” (268)  
 “You huaqiao—the names they pick never have any style” [你們那些華僑, 取出名字來, 實在欠大方], said Shihong. (268)

“You don’t know about those huaqiao (*tamen huaqiao*; 他們華僑), they—  
 “Shihong started to say, but Jiaorui hit him. “It’s always ‘they, them, those huaqiao!’” She said. “Don’t call me ‘them’!” Shihong went right on. “They have the bad habits of the Chinese (*zhongguoren*) and the bad habits of foreigners (*waiguoren*; 外國人) as well. From the foreigners they learn to be afraid of getting fat, won’t eat this, won’t eat that, always taking purgatives but can’t stop eating sweets. But then—go ahead, just ask her! If you ask her why she’s eating this, she’ll say she’s had a little cough recently, and candied walnuts are good for a cough.”

“That really is the old Chinese way,” Zhenbao said with a smile. (268)

This passage shows how Wang’s “Chineseness” is constantly under siege and how her *Chinese* husband identifies her with the collective huaqiao: “You huaqiao” (你們那些華僑) and “those huaqiao” (他們華僑)—they are forever the “outsiders” as embedded in the pronouns of “you” (你們) and “they” (他們). The native Chinese’s contempt for this Nanyang huaqiao and what she represents stems from the desire to construct Chineseness as a homogenous and univocal category, one that excludes the Nanyang huaqiao’s diverse and complex ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This dichotomy between the native Chinese and the huaqiao is further intensified by the former’s self-righteousness and ethnocentrism, or what Rey Chow calls “sinochauvinism.”

The collective huaqiao is tarnished with the “vices” they pick up from both native Chinese and foreigners. Wang Jiaorui is thus not an individual huaqiao (woman) at all—like Ling Jishi in “Miss Sophia’s Diary” who embodies huaqiao male “vices” and “the worst breed of the human race”—she has to have her share of corrupted Chineseness. In short, Wang is the embodiment of fallen Chinese woman who picks up native Chinese and foreign “vices.” Worse, Wang also represents “loose” foreign /huaqiao female sexuality precisely because she is, after

all, not really a genuine Chinese—any more than her male equivalent Ling Jishi or Fan Liuyuan is. In her subsequent affair with Tong, she is portrayed as a seductress, almost a femme fatale. Even though Tong is attracted and intrigued by her, he is simultaneously contemptuous of her.

Throughout the narrative, multiple sensuous hints and details are revealed to suggest her “cultural impurity—that is, her inauthenticity as a proper Chinese lady” (Chow 167). Tong, however, while indulging himself in his affair with Wang, never falters in his belief: he will never marry this kind of “loose” woman embodied by “Red Rose.” It is not only Wang’s promiscuity that disqualifies her as “marriage material,” it is also the ostensible fact that she is merely a “spoiled” child with an “infant’s mind” (271). While Tong continues to exoticize the Nanyang huaqiao, he sees her as an “infant” with an “undeveloped mind.” Wang’s seductiveness lies precisely in her being a huaqiao / *jiaojihua*, her irresistible “childlike charm,” her exoticness associated with her colonial Nanyang origin, her lax sexuality with her “Westernized” education in England, and her totally out-of-place-ness for being a “wife” in China—where her “Chineseness” is constantly under scrutiny and cast in doubt, and whose licentiousness is ultimately set up to contrast Tong’s proper Chinese wife, who, ironically, as the narrative reveals, also engages in adulterous affairs. As Rey Chow comments:

The cultural and linguistic belittling and demeaning of those who are in diaspora--those who, for historical reasons, are compelled to leave home and whose ties with the authentic fatherland have become suspect because of contacts and couplings with foreigners--is something familiar to diasporic communities around the world, but in "Red Rose and White Rose" this sociological fact is explored specifically in relation to the narrative descriptions of femininity and sexuality. If the endless debates about what is authentically Chinese (value) and what is not--debates which undoubtedly have their equivalents in other cultures--are characteristic of the histories of diasporic populations in modern times, these debates are given a new turn in Chang's story by being linked, by being contiguously placed in relation to sexism; it is sexism, her story demonstrates, which constitutes the core of cultural authenticity, loyalty, and patriotism--and gives them their metaphoric depths. Such sexism makes women the visible

bearers of cultural and sexual boundaries, bearers whose transgressions matter, while the equivalent transgressions of men continue to be overlooked. (Chow 170-171)

However, if Rey Chow were to examine and comment on the Nanyang huaqiao men such as Ling Jishi in “Miss Sophia’s Diary” and Fan Liuyuan in “Love in a Fallen City” she would probably have concluded otherwise. That is, Nanyang huaqiao men’s sexual transgressions do matter and that is the main reason they have been unanimously portrayed as “playboys / womanizers” whose “Chineseness” is also “under siege.” This can be seen in the contrast between Fan Liuyuan and Tong Zhengbao. Though both seek out prostitutes, they are portrayed differently: Tong is considered the embodiment of the “most ideal new / modern Chinese man” whereas Fan is “eccentric and odd” and basically a “womanizer” having to reassert his Chineseness in his quest for love, which plays out in his courtship with whom he considers an “authentic” Chinese woman, which can be seen as his attempts to appropriate a proper *zhongguo* identity. His self-awareness and acknowledgement that he is not an “authentic” Chinese when he tries to dismiss his “Westernized Chinese” / colonial identity by insisting on and further appropriating a “Sinicized Westerner” identity is indeed intriguing and prompts more questions pertaining to notions of Chineseness and identity construction.

What further complicates the claim of authenticity for the huaqiao (or diaspora in Chow’s usage) is not simply the issues of “sexism” which Chow suggests that men can be exempt from. It is the “huaqiao” configuration as a whole, since at its inception huaqiao is already conceived as “inauthentic” mainly due to its “sojourner” condition. Admittedly, the narrator is being ironic in “Red Rose White Rose”—using Tong to interrogate and demystify the modern Chinese male ideal. The anti-climactic moment of the narrative arrives when Tong discovers his wife’s extramarital affair. This moment also suggests Tong’s failure to maintain his self-image as the

master of his own world and thus the disintegration of his modern Chinese male ego. In this light the purity, pureness, and chastity embodied by the “White Rose,” that is, his ideal native Chinese wife—instead of the negative values and qualities represented by the “Red Rose”—has failed to emasculate this iconic figure of modern native Chinese man, as the White Rose ultimately unsettles his “perfect” veneer and further undermines his sense of self.

In Eileen Chang’s writings, the huaqiao men / women are invoked through colonial Nanyang and Europe as the alien and liminal space of cultural production in the huaqiao’s identity construction. In both Fan Liuyuan and Wang Jiaorui we see that the Nanyang huaqiao’s “downfall” and “inauthenticity” are attributed to their “colonial” connections with Nanyang and Europe; their sexual “deviancy” and licentiousness tied to their “improper” and “decadent” origins. In Fan’s case his biological Nanyang huaqiao *jiaojihua* mother, just like Wang Jiaorui the Nanyang *jiaojihua*, has been cast in much less favorable light. The huaqiao *jiaojihua* is the femme fatale and the seductress and more often than not foreshadows her misfortune. In Fan’s mother’s case she is portrayed as a concubine and has thus failed to secure a proper position in the husband’s family / clan even though she has borne him a male heir—and Fan’s history and origin is stigmatized. In both Fan and Wang’s case they have somewhat failed to (re)invent themselves as authentic Chinese as they have to constantly defend their “Chineseness” in their self-performance and staging of Chineseness.

Eileen Chang’s portrayals of Nanyang huaqiao through her sensual details have informed us of the historical and cultural representations of (displaced) sojourners especially during WWII Hong Kong and semi-colonial Shanghai. While Chang’s narrative strategy and aesthetics counter the grand and the abstract of the wartime and the revolutionary, her works also foreground various sights and sites in mapping Chineseness across borders—nation-state,

homeland, language—where the meanings of “authentic” Chineseness can be tested and pushed to its limits through her configuration of these Nanyang huaqiao figures.

## Chapter Four

### The Other Chinese: *Nanyang Huaqiao* 南洋華僑,

#### Gendered Corporeality, and the Heterotopias of Chineseness

This chapter examines mainly Ding Ling's (丁玲) (1904--1986) "Miss Sophia's Diary" (*shafei nushi de riji*; 莎菲女士的日記) and its relations to the construction of illness, disease, and Chineseness. It specifically calls attention to the role and portrayal of the Nanyang huaqiao (Chinese sojourner from the South Seas; 南洋華僑) in relation to the discourse of madness and female subjectivity. In addition, it highlights the significance and problems of the Nanyang huaqiao in "Miss Sophia's Diary" in order to devise alternative ways to approach the text by further addressing these questions: How is disease conceptualized in geographical terms and further personified in terms of a diseased (Chinese) Other? How and why is the Nanyang huaqiao portrayed as "diseased"? Moreover, how does the Nanyang huaqiao underscore construction of Chineseness? What is the conjunction of femininity and sickness in relation to suffering and psychological pain?

"Miss Sophia's Diary" has been repeatedly singled out and hailed as the quintessential May Fourth feminist text as it offers multiple understandings of the era's novel, that is, the emergence of the new woman and the modern girl. However, the premise of such critical gestures usually neglects broader issues of identity construction as critics generally read the text vis-à-vis the configuration of female subjectivity within the framework of patriarchal oppression and traditional social norms. In short, such critical reception of "Miss Sophia's Diary" demonstrates the complicity between feminist interpretations and the obliteration of the Chinese

Other, in this case the Nanyang huaqiao. This chapter thus offers critical engagement with a far deeper historical and cultural articulation of the relationship between the Nanyang Chinese sojourner and the Chinese native / female subject. It draws attention to the connection between the formation and assertion of this celebrated female subjectivity and the configuration of the Nanyang huaqiao's identity (or the lack thereof).

In "Miss Sophia's Diary," as this chapter will contend, the underlying agenda in the psychology of being desired and desiring unfolds an entanglement between the politics of place and psychic investment in terms of racial and cultural identity and identification. Being Chinese is not just a matter of drawing different kinds of boundaries—national, cultural, sexual, gendered, etc.—but also involves maintaining a distanced position from, and a more superior stance to, the (Nanyang) huaqiao as exemplified by the female subject in "Miss Sophia's Diary." However, such an ambivalent distancing / positioning is recast in "Miss Sophia's Diary" by tropes of madness and sickness in conjunction with the discourse of race. It is thus important to pay attention to how the narrative deliberately differentiates the Nanyang huaqiao from the other Chinese / males especially through identification with his ethnic and geopolitical origin, that is, Nanyang and the West, supposedly the source of his corruption and degradation.

When "Miss Sophia's Diary" (1928) was first published, it was considered "a bomb shell thrown on the deadly quiet literary scene."<sup>65</sup> Since then, "Miss Sophia's Diary" has been hailed, "more than any other literary text by women writers of the May Fourth era [1910s to 1930s], as an exemplary text for a feminist critique of male ideology" (Tsu 159). It has also been heralded as one of the first "feminist" works of modern Chinese literature. Recognized for her "bold and outspoken exploration of women's sexual feelings," Ding Ling was credited with inaugurating the tradition of "female writing." Ding Ling was hailed as the first female writer who "speaks

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<sup>65</sup> Quoted in Feuerwerker, *Ding Ling's Fiction: Ideology and Narrative in Modern Chinese Literature*, 30.

out about the dilemma and conflict of the newly ‘liberated woman’ and whose understanding of the ‘Modern Girl’ was deeper than that of any of her contemporaries.”<sup>66</sup> Due to the unprecedented explicit nature of female desire and sexuality depicted in “Miss Sophia’s Diary,” Ding Ling was “well on her way to becoming one of China’s most celebrated—and in the eyes of some, notorious—women writers” (Feuerwerker 6).<sup>67</sup>

“Miss Sophia’s Diary,” written in diary form, covers thirty-three entries over a period of three months of Shafei (Sophia), the first-person narrator, who suffers from tuberculosis and tries to sort out her relationships with her two male suitors, Weidi and Ling Jishi. Critics have generally examined the significance of Sophia’s diary writing in relation to her struggle over her desire while exalting her as the exemplary new and modern woman. This kind of evaluation is predictable as the narrative is marked by oscillation between Sophia’s sexual desire, imagination and reality, and at times Sophia has to check her own impulses by stating the need and the social expectation of women to return to the realm of traditional norms imposed on women in general. While tackling the problems of female identity and sexuality, the diary becomes a means through which Sophia reveals her state of mind and feelings and eventually questions the status of her existence. However, what is at stake here, as this chapter argues, is much more complicated than

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<sup>66</sup> Lydia Liu, *Translingual Practice*, 172. See also Tani Barlow’s evaluation of Ding Ling: “Ding Ling was one of modern China’s most famous writers and cultural revolutionaries. She belonged to the May Fourth Generation, a group of academics, writers, politicians, and cultural revolutionaries who acted as brokers between imperial and socialist China,” *I Myself am a Woman: Selected Writings of Ding Ling*, ed. Tani Barlow, p. 2.

<sup>67</sup> “Miss Sophia’s Diary” is the center piece of Ding Ling’s earliest works and was written before she joined the Communist Party. The “explicit” content of this text gave Ding Ling a lot of trouble during the turbulent eras of the Cultural Revolution when it was at odds with the party literary policies. After being expelled from the Communist Party and her works banned and rights as writer and citizen denied she was then, in 1958, further exiled to the “Great Northern Wilderness” (*beidahuang*) for twelve years and subject to manual labor and various forms of persecution. For a detailed account of Ding Ling’s life see Yi-tsi Mei Feuerwerker’s *Ding Ling’s Fiction: Ideology and Narrative in Modern Chinese Literature*.

most critics have anticipated; one of which is the significance of, and implication associated with, Sophia's portrayals of the Nanyang huaqiao Ling Jishi, her object of temptation, in contrast to that of Weidi, her other suitor. Sophia foregrounds her self-representation in her diary through setting up her two male suitors as two opposites, one as the native Chinese and the other Westernized huaqiao. At times, both male suitors are feminized as Sophia attributes traditional female characteristics to them. For instance, Weidi is always emotional, moody, and likes to cry in front of her, and never hesitates to show his jealousy of Ling. On the other hand, Ling is characterized by his charming physical traits such as his "tender rosy cheeks, soft gazes / looks, enticing mouth / lips," seductiveness, his "soft and tender voice," and how he flushes easily.

However, as this chapter shall elucidate, Sophia's desire for, and "entanglement" with, the Nanyang huaqiao Ling Jishi has led to a state of "madness" (*kuang*, 狂; *dian*, 癡; or both), and eventually to seek suicide as a way out. She becomes much more vulnerable as the narrative unfolds the dangers associated with her relationship and infatuation with Ling. In this sense my reading of this text marks a break from previous interpretations which focus primarily on the discourse of the New Woman / Modern Girl in the May Fourth literary historiography, or how the narrative form of the diary is used to express and construct a female subjectivity entwined in the emergent discourse of sexuality and gender consciousness. Such critical frameworks tend to elide the presence as well as the significance of the Nanyang huaqiao in the text, not to mention the questions as to why this Nanyang huaqiao has been inserted into the narrative and how he is able to subvert what the narrative purports to do in the first place. While my subsequent investigation will attempt to offer possible answers to these questions, it is important to recognize that the only template available, as the text reveals, to introduce the Nanyang huaqiao into the narrative is through Sophia's incessant objectification and fetishization of his physical

appearance and mannerisms even at the expense of the female narrator's health and sanity. This is the aspect that has also been neglected in the critical attention to the text.

As discussed in the previous chapter the term "huaqiao" is etymologically derived from the interpellation of the sinocentric / nationalist framework of "Chineseness"—in this sense a displaced Chineseness in the hua sojourner's identity (or lack thereof). As such huaqiao can be seen as a "displaced" (Chinese) subject whose Chineseness has been in doubt. The narrative's impetus to pathologize the Nanyang huaqiao is symptomatic of the tension and intensity of Sophia's inner struggle and agitation. In Sophia's pursuit of love and expression of sexuality, the Nanyang huaqiao is conceived as an impediment. However, his presence is also capable of driving her over the edge—thus the source of her torments and losing her mind. Since his presence is always cast in his otherness, Ling becomes a means of demarcating boundaries especially when she perceives him as some form of menace capable of undermining her sense of integrity, especially in terms of physical and mental health. In this sense the text becomes the contact zone through which the encounter between the foreign and the native can be played out.

In Ding Ling's case it also becomes an act of cleansing her female protagonist from the contamination of the foreign, as her protagonist reiterates her possession by her own desire for the foreign Chinese. In spite of its appeals, this foreign / Western connection, however, often "signals something suspect, inauthentic, possibly corrupting" (Feuerwerker 26). Since "Miss Sophia's Diary" was written during a period of intense nationalism and nation building in which discourses about sexuality, sexual and racial health, and controversies over modernizing discourses of the body and gender abound, it has contributed to the construction and perceptions of Chineseness especially in the representation of Nanyang huaqiao. However, the interconnection between imagination of disease and geopolitics has been omitted. The discourses of Chineseness

and the politics of place / geopolitics in relation to the construction of the Nanyang huaqiao should merit our critical engagement. To say that the (Nanyang) huaqiao is “understudied” in modern Chinese literature is probably an understatement, as current scholarship on the (Nanyang) huaqiao subject in the literary and cultural productions is pretty much nonexistent in spite of the fact that they have been featured in works by Ding Ling, Eileen Chang, and Lao She. It is against this backdrop of neglect that this chapter argues that the body and figure of Nanyang huaqiao has become a trope and site against which Chineseness is constructed and on which the concept of racial degeneration is projected.

It is interesting to note that Sophia is the only character in the text with a “Western” name (“Shafei” is the Chinese transliteration). The allusion to a Westernized lifestyle is also noted in the first entry of the diary: tubercular Sophia stresses the fact that she has to reheat the milk (niunai; 牛奶) multiple times while trying to find things to occupy her somewhat tormented mind. She finds it “most impossible” to follow the doctor’s instructions and she becomes “even more irritable than [she] was before” (50).<sup>68</sup> She becomes infuriated for no reason as she “work[s] [her]self into a rage” (51). As she confesses: “I can’t really find a single thing here that doesn’t disgust me”; “It all infuriates me.” She constantly voices “fresh complaints and dissatisfactions” and insists: “Novelty, for better or worse, always seems just out of reach” (51). Her male suitor Weidi’s arrival finally “comfort[s]” her “as though [she had] suddenly been released from a suffocating room” (51). However, she does not think she can show her real feelings (51) as she claims, “I act as women are supposed to act” (52). Coupled with the motif of hiding and not revealing her true feelings, the narrative unfolds Weidi’s physical incompatibility with a prevailing ideal of traditional Chinese manliness. As Sophia notes: “There isn’t another

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<sup>68</sup> Quotes from “Miss Sophia’s Diary” are based on Tani Barlow’s translation with some modifications of my own. See “Miss Sophia’s Diary” in Barlow’s *I Myself Am a Woman: Selected Writings of Ding Ling*, 49–81.

woman alive who would have resisted toying with him, as I have. Besides, I'm genuinely sorry for him" (52). Weidi's "stupid abandoned displays of affection" disgust her and make her "sick" (52). In other words, Weidi's lack of masculinity has become a source of contempt for Sophia.

Obviously Weidi is cast in an almost docile and submissive role. Sophia admits to enjoy watching his tears and sentimentality which further gives her the "satisfaction of a savage" (*yeren*; 野人): "I am at a loss to know how to analyze myself. Sometimes I can feel a kind of boundless unfathomable sorrow at the sight of a white cloud being blown and scattered by the wind. But, when faced with a young man over twenty—Weidi is actually four years older than I—I find myself laughing with the satisfaction of a savage as his tears fall on the back of my hands" (53—54). This imagery of Sophia "laughing at" Weidi, her object of ridicule, and aligning herself to the position of a "savage"—from where she derives her pleasure—has been overlooked by critics and thus warrants attention and examination. As if laughing at him is not enough, Sophia tells Weidi, "Don't imagine I'm so feminine and weak that I can't resist a tear" (54) and later confesses in her diary: "When this honest, open man was here, I used all the cruelty of my nature to make him suffer" (54). Sophia is unhesitant to admit to her "cruel" nature in her manipulative maneuvers of her loyal suitor, as she is obsessed with what constitutes "femininity" and female autonomy in the politics of love and courtship. Meanwhile the reference to "savagery" can be viewed as foreshadowing her "lunacy" later when she encounters the Nanyang huaqiao. "*Yeren*" not only connotes uncivilized barbarity but also primitive passions and unrestrained forces.

Sophia might have found a channel for her repressed sexuality when she is introduced to the Nanyang huaqiao. We have the first glimpse of Ling Jishi in the January 1 entry:

That tall guy is stunning. For the first time, I found myself really attracted to masculine beauty. I'd never paid much attention before. I've always felt that it

was normal for men to be glib, phony, cautious; that's about the extent of it. But today as I watched this tall one, I saw how a man could be cast in a different, a noble, mold. Yunlin looked so insignificant and clumsy by comparison... Pity overwhelmed me. How painful Yunlin would find his own coarse appearance and rude behavior, if he could see himself. I wonder what Yufang feels when she compares the two, one tall, the other not. (55)

To contrast and exalt the Nanyang huaqiao's attractive "beauty," Sophia puts herself in the position of Yunlin, her girlfriend Yufang's boyfriend, and claims that the latter would feel "ashamed" and "inferior" at the sight of the huaqiao's appearance—that is, if Yunlin "could see himself." To further set him apart from the other males, Sophia writes:

How can I describe the beauty of that *stranger*? Of course, his tall body, his delicate white face, his thin lips and his soft hair would all dazzle anyone, but there's also an elegance about him that *I can't express in words or put my hands on, but sets my heart aflame*. For example, when I asked him his name he handed me his card in an incredibly grace and finesse. I looked up and saw the corners of his soft, red, and deeply inset mouth. Could I tell anyone how I looked at those two delightful lips like a child longing for sweets? But I know that in this society I'll never be allowed to take what I want to satisfy my impulses and my desires, even though it would do nobody else any harm. That's why I had to control myself, keep my head down, and silently read the name on the card: Ling Jishi from Singapore.... (55; italics added)

The first clue we have of Sophia's portrayal of this Nanyang huaqiao is his unmatched "male beauty"—one Sophia has never seen before—and the "foreignness" endowed in his "male beauty"—while being addressed as the "stranger." Ling Jishi captures Sophia's attention because of his exceptional "male beauty"—as Sophia puts it, the "first time" she has ever been "aware" of and Ling's unique "male beauty" has put him in another category of male: one that "can be cast in another and a noble mold." Sophia seems mesmerized by Ling's "elegance," "incredibly relaxed way," and his "delightful lips."

It seems obvious that Sophia immediately falls for this Nanyang *huaqiao* simply because of his beauty and mannerism. However, the distinctive features and beauty of this stranger / Nanyang huaqiao are beyond her words—his presence in the narrative is already cast in the

realm of the elusive and equivocal in spite of his unusual beauty and elegance: in other words, words have failed her (說不出), the stranger's image is "intangible" (捉不到), and his "elegance" is something she couldn't have thought of (想不到). The first enunciation and presence of this Nanyang huaqiao in the text is already set up in a form of intangibility albeit his beauty and mannerism, which simultaneously inhabits the *absence* of words and paradoxically any substance—in the failure to articulate, as reinforced by the triple negatives here: *bu* (不). At the sight of this "strange" Nanyang huaqiao and in awe of his beauty, Sophia finds herself speechless and completely in awe, which further places, in spite of his seductive presence, the intelligibility of this Nanyang huaqiao in doubt.

It should be noted that, however, throughout the course of the narrative, Ling Jishi the Nanyang huaqiao only inhabits a space marked by his present absence, one only accentuated with his "beauty" that seem to elude language. In addition to embodying this negative agency, he is further elided and doubly ostracized in the narrative: as Sophia proceeds to expound later in her diary, Ling's Westernized beauty and cosmopolitan charms earn him no place or position in the narrative. But before Sophia can further dwell on Ling's appearance and seductiveness, she is concerned about how to suppress her desire and conceal her emotion:

I was so eager to avoid seduction that I didn't dare look directly at him. It made me furious when I could not bring myself to go into the lighted area in front of the table. My ragged slippers had never bothered me before, yet now I found myself ashamed of them. That made me angry at myself: how can I have been so restrained and boring. Usually I find undue attention to social form despicable. Today I found out how moronic and graceless I could seem. Mmm! He must think I'm right off the farm." (55)

At this first encounter between the Chinese modern girl / new woman<sup>69</sup> and the Nanyang huaqiao, in addition to this removed and filtered gaze she has earlier imposed on the Nanyang huaqiao, Sophia confesses how she feels, compared to Ling's cosmopolitanism and "noble" flair, embarrassed by her own "provinciality" as she reviles herself for being "awkward," "dumb," and "clumsy" at the meeting. For Sophia, other than the "foreignness" of this Nanyang huaqiao, what sets them apart initially also lies in the self-judgment elicited through her constant self-scrutiny and questioning whether she could be a desirable "match" for such "Westernized beauty."

At issue here is also the problem of power and subjugation. When Sophia proclaims that "I'll never be allowed to take what I want to satisfy my impulses and my desires, even though it would do nobody else any harm. That's why I had to control myself," she also hints that she is unwilling to sacrifice her "reputation" by giving in to her desire for the Nanyang stranger. This distancing is strategic as it allows the narrator to continually place him where he comes from and belongs: colonial Nanyang / Singapore. The significance and politics of geopolitics and place will be dealt with later in this chapter when the Nanyang huaqiao's charming façade falls short of the promise and is finally degraded. Immediately after this encounter Sophia's tuberculosis gets worse as she has "lost all faith in the medicine," which was supposed to cure her (56). Arguably, Sophia's worsening health is caused by this unnamable desire for this Nanyang stranger. The connection between the lure of the foreign and sickness becomes palpable whenever Sophia begins to yield to Ling's seductive power. Hence Sophia must negate the legitimacy of her

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<sup>69</sup> "In his essay 'Ding Ling,' published in 1931, the literary critic Qian Qianwu discussed the theory of the 'stance of the modern girl' (original phrase in English), which many critics claimed to be the unique contribution of Ding Ling's early fiction. Qian explained that this stance differed from that of other women writers because it was free of 'feudal consciousness' and also in many other ways was typical of an 'end of the century' psychology: it included self-confidence, emotionalism and moodiness, dependency, pessimism, weariness, depression, hesitation, inability to concentrate and to pursue a course of action, disorganization, mental fragmentation, doubt, and 'mystical delirium' (original in English) (Qian 1931: 227)." Qtd. in Wendy Larson, *Women and Writing in Modern China* (190).

desire for the Nanyang huaqiao. As she questions herself: “But can I really name what I really want?” (56) For her, to not *name* what she “really wants” paradoxically empowers her as the act of naming and articulating such means validating the presence and significance of the Nanyang huaqiao.

In spite of her refusal to name what she truly wants, Sophia’s actions speak otherwise as she decides to move closer to Ling Jishi even though she has to lie to her friends about her “real” reason to move: “The lies came so easily I felt I almost had an instinct for it” (56). From this point onwards, in addition to the motif of lying and cheating, the narrative is further fortified with another disguise: this time the female diarist’s increased sense of defense and defiance, primarily anchored upon her articulations of desires. As she admits, she wants Ling Jishi to “declare his love for [her] and then [she’d] let him know what [she] wanted” for she “still want[s] people to respect [her]” (57). When she runs into Ling accidentally she is “ecstatic and the ecstasy [makes her] bold enough to look right at him several times” (57). Refusing to name the Nanyang huaqiao as her object of desire, Sophia nevertheless feminizes objectifies him. Meanwhile, Sophia seems convinced Ling would live up to her expectation: “He can’t be too much of a bastard... a big tall man like that—he’d never have blushed so red in the face” (57-8). This is worth noting as Sophia is soon to discover under Ling’s “noble” and “beautiful” façade hides a “despicable soul.” But for now, Sophia is “possessed with a desire to mark every part of his body with [her] lips.” As she claims: “My passion raged with new ferocity” for Ling (58). However, once Sophia has uncovered the “ferocious” part of her desire upon her encounter with the Nanyang huaqiao, a “stranger” she hardly knows at this point, she begins to reflect upon her actions and thoughts and feelings:

Now that I have time for reflection, I can’t imagine my impulsiveness driving me into any worse situation.... How can I say I’m in love with this man from

Nanyang [Nanyang ren; 南洋人]? I don't know anything about him. All this stuff about his lips, his eye-brows, his eyelashes, his hands, is pure fantasy. These aren't things a person should need. I've become *possessed* [著魔] if that's all I can think about now. I refuse to move. I'm determined to stay here and recover my health. I'm decided now. I'm so full of regret! I regret all the wrong things I did today, things a decent woman would never do. (58; italics added)

At this point in the narrative Sophia, admittedly knows hardly anything about the Nanyang huaqiao, has used the language of “delirium,” if not “madness,” to express her desires for him. While attempting to deny her “ferocious” (狂熱) passion for Ling, Sophia repeatedly claims from this point onwards—of being “possessed” (著魔) by such desire, which further aggravates her psychosomatic distress. While deliberately distancing herself from Ling, Sophia again refuses to *name* him, thus he is constantly addressed as the *Nanyangren* or *Nanyang huaqiao*. The narrative is progressively tinted with various degrees of “madness,” alluding to her “losing her mind.”

One might wonder, what exactly is holding Sophia back from acquiring her object of desire? Critics generally ascribe traditional social and gender norms as the problem of her sexual fulfillment, thus underlying what Sophia considers “things a decent woman would never do.”<sup>70</sup> They either denounce Ling and call him an “unworthy man”<sup>71</sup> or simply deny his significance in Sophia's narrative. Though such reasoning foregrounds Sophia's seemingly endless struggle between her desire and self-respect, as well as her iconoclastic stance against the established moral code for women, however, it cannot sufficiently explain why and how Sophia's desired object, this Nanyang huaqiao, is constantly kept and placed within the geopolitical framework of

<sup>70</sup> For instance, Lydia Liu remarks that Sophia's final rejection of Ling Jishi is a “victory” over the “oppressive ideology” as well as “the male-dominated world of meanings and values” represented by Ling. See Liu, *Translingual Practice*, 175.

<sup>71</sup> Tani Barlow simply dismisses Ling as “unworthy man,” see Barlow, *I Myself am a Woman: Selected Writings of Ding Ling*, 25. On the other hand, Jing Tsu calls Ling Jishi “a rather unremarkable and shallow man,” see Tsu, *Failure, Nationalism, and Literature*, 161.

reference, that is, Nanyang / huaqiao, or simply the Nanyangren. Furthermore, it completely ignores how the native Chinese subject uses the Nanyang huaqiao, this other Chinese, to construe his prescribed ethnic and cultural otherness and his final degradation.

Meanwhile, as Sophia configures her relationship with Ling as if she is planning a battle. To remain in control is her goal, thus her use of the language of defense is further intensified by that of warfare. As Sophia notes:

I haven't invited Ling Jishi over, either; although he's asked several times how things are going now that I've moved, I've pretended not to get the hint and just smile back. *It's like planning a battle.* Now I'm concentrating all my energy on strategy. I want something, but I'm not willing to go and take it. I must find a tactic that gets it offered to me voluntarily. I understand myself completely. I am a thoroughly female woman, and women concentrate everything on the man they've got in their sights. *I want to possess him.* I want unconditional surrender of his heart. I want him kneeling down in front of me, begging me to kiss him. I'm *delirious* [我簡直癲了!]. I go over and over the steps I must take to implement my scheme. *I've lost my mind* [我簡直癲了!]. (58-9; italics added)

Sophia's obsession with Ling is commensurate with her preoccupation with her illness. Coupled with the language of warfare is also the motif of madness: as Sophia proclaims she has become "delirious" and "lost" her "mind." Sophia repeatedly uses "*dian*" (癲)—a form of madness—in this entry as her infatuation with the Nanyang huaqiao's beautiful appearance and physical body intensifies. The diary becomes a means to register her desires and her ravings through her use of the language of lunacy, one she increasingly commits to especially when her delirium escalates and aggravates her sanity.

The connections between sickness and irrationality have become much more palpable at this point in Sophia's diary and confession. Aside from her delirious state, Sophia begins to associate her illness with her desires for Ling as her "condition continues to deteriorate" (61). As she confesses: "That discourages me, naturally, since nothing I desire ever ends up helping me. Is this craving really love? It's all so completely absurd..." (61). The most obvious

reason for her deteriorating health, arguably, would be the tuberculosis and the ennui she has to deal with on several levels. However, Sophia seems convinced that she is losing her mind and claims that “if that is the case” then she is “truly willing to be losing [her] mind.” As such and in an attempt to intoxicate herself she begins drinking (62). This is the first time in the narrative Sophia uses “*fakuang*” (發狂) to address her state of mind and inner struggles over her desire for Ling. What is degenerating, as implied by the text, is not only her physical health, but more importantly, as Sophia admits, her “reason” being taken over this “*fakuang*”—a form of madness. This thus marks the moment when the writing self (the diarist) and the pathological self (tubercular Sophia) are finally converged and her *fakuang* has threatened to take over the narrative itself. While later this chapter will further expound on the genealogical and etymological aspect of this *fakuang* vis-à-vis Lu Xun’s “Diary of a Madman,” it is pertinent to highlight the use of this language of “madness” in relation to the articulations of the female diarist’s desire, how her “passion” has morphed from a “ferocious” state (*kuangre*; 狂熱), being “possessed” (*zhaomo*; 著魔) and “delirious” (*dian*; 癲), to finally losing her mind characterized and triggered by involuntary outbursts of emotion, thus *fakuang* (發狂), and a combination of all of these in various stages commingled with her physical debility.

When Sophia is planning her every move in her relationship with Ling she uses disguise (lying and defiance) and the language of warfare as her means to remain in control and to subjugate Ling. However, when her desire for Liang undermines her reasoning, the narrative reveals her vulnerability and debilitated state, thus her delirium and her repeated claims of losing her mind. As such, her *fakuang* can be seen as her means to foreground her alibi to eventually demean and denounce the Nanyang huaqiao while simultaneously constructing a narrative that registers her afflictions and emotional distress. Her breakdown suggests self-inflicting tortures

as she was fully aware she was not allowed to drink due to her tubercular condition and worsening health. She seems to have lost all hopes in life. During her *fakuang* state Sophia has a “premonition of death” and so begins her life in the hospital. There is a lapse in her journal entries from January 18 until March 4. Sophia is presumably hospitalized all this time as she later recounts the details of her hospitalization in her diary. In spite of her sickness, her desire for the Nanyang huaqiao does not seem to subside. Instead she is “filled with pride when he visited [her] in the hospital” for only somebody as “desirable” as him with his “elegance and finesse” is “eligible to pay his girlfriend a visit at the hospital” (64).<sup>72</sup> Sophia’s sense of pride is accentuated when she sees herself as the object of “envy” among the nurses for having such a handsome and attractive beau. However, when asked about her relationship with Ling Sophia is unwilling to tell the truth. She simply states that Ling is a “Nanyang huaqiao.” Denying her relationship with Ling while deriving pleasure from it, Sophia’s reiteration of Ling being a “Nanyang huaqiao” not only demonstrates her ambivalence and evasiveness but more importantly, her need to re-situate Ling within his foreign place of origin. As the narrative continues to reveal, this native Chinese subject’s desire to constantly circumscribe the Nanyang huaqiao while invoking his Westernized façade eventually reveals her need to construct her subjectivity through essentialized notions of Chineseness.

The narrative reverts to the diarist’s self-interrogation and self-doubt while invoking Ling as the “Nanyang huaqiao” and the language of madness. This resonates with Sophia’s earlier self-scrutiny: “Have I fallen in love with *that Nanyang ren?*” In addition to her losing her sanity, this Nanyang huaqiao has turned Sophia into an invalid especially during her breakdown and hospitalization, for Sophia has suffered from the perplexity of modern love and the “madness” that accompanies it. During her hospitalization, she reflects on her experience: “I started

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<sup>72</sup> My own translation.

thinking about weird things that go on between men and women... my training in this regard is far greater than all of my friends' combined. Still, recently I've felt at a *spectacular loss* to understand what is happening. When I sit alone with Ling Jishi, my heart leaps and I'm humiliated, frightened.... Yet when he rises to go, I feel *an attack of anxiety* as though I am about to stumble into something really *horrible*... But he seems to understand how I feel" (65; italics added). Unable to comprehend "what is happening" to her, Sophia nevertheless feels uneasy at the prospect of "a spectacular loss." It seems that Sophia's sense of self is under assault as she feels "an attack of anxiety" when she is alone with Ling. At this point Sophia is losing her anchorage and her anxiety attack foreshadows what is about to happen. The narrative is imbued with this foreboding sense of urgency and unease, one associated with Ling and Sophia's desire for him.

In the midst of Sophia's perilous condition, the narrative announces Weidi's arrival as if to intervene and intensify the rivalry between her two male suitors. When Weidi comes to visit Sophia, he proclaims his love for her and tells her that he doesn't like Ling. Dismissing his love, Sophia concludes that Weidi is simply jealous of Ling: "This insipid jealousy, this selfish possessiveness, this is love?" and she starts teasing Weidi. Right after Weidi leaves, however, Sophia "scrutinize[s] [her] own intentions": "When I see Ling Jishi sit so relaxed and casually in my room, I can't help pitying Weidi. I pray that not every woman in the world will neglect and disdain his great sincerity, as I do, thus submerging myself in a morass of guilty sorrow I cannot get free of. More than that. I hope a pure young girl comes along who will redeem Weidi's love, fill the emptiness he must feel" (67). Even though Sophia rejects Weidi's love, she seems genuinely concerned with his wellbeing and attributes his love manifestation to his "great

sincerity.” In spite of being her object of pity and ridicule, Sophia believes that “a pure young girl” should come to his / her rescue.

It is interesting to note that nowhere does the narrative show signs or evidence to support Sophia’s claim of Weidi’s “great sincerity” and him deserving “pure young girl’s” reciprocal love. The stark contrast between Weidi and Ling Jishi, however, as this chapter argues, goes beyond what critics generally claims to be a traditional Chinese male vs. a Westernized Nanyang huaqiao vying for Sophia’s love and attention. This comparative framework allows the narrative to showcase the contention between two male suitors. It also allows her to somehow assert her selfhood, thus establishing her control of and dominance over her male suitors in the triangular relationships. However, this kind of interpretation has its limits as it does not explain why Sophia has such bifurcated attitudes toward her male suitors. Whereas Sophia’s somewhat fluctuating feelings toward Weidi gear toward guilt ridden remorse and unworthiness, her infatuation with Ling puts her sense of self at risk as exemplified in her deteriorating health and increasing delirious and *fakuang* state. One may ask, why does Sophia believe, in spite of her teasing Weidi and toying with his affection, he deserves some “pure” woman’s love whereas she has never expressed such feelings for Ling?

The subsequent entry after the showdown between the male contenders takes a sharp turn, as the narrative further reveals Sophia’s tormented mind in her incessant self-reproach: “Who can I tell about my stupid moods, which I refuse to cry over but haven’t the strength to laugh at?... How can I possible take up a pen and spell out in detail all my self-accusations and self-hatred?” (67) When the writing self begins to question the usefulness and effectiveness of writing itself it becomes almost a self-defeating act. In a sense the narrative has reached its limitations as the site of meaning production and almost come to an impasse. Sophia’s “self-

accusations” and “self-hatred” stem from, as she is about to reveal, her desire for Ling. Sophia thinks that while words have failed to capture her inner feelings, she becomes much more febrile as she professes her psychological agitations: “I’ve degraded myself again! But who will understand me? Who will embrace me and comfort me?” (68). Sophia finds herself caught in this predicament: whether she should yield to her desires for the Nanyang huaqiao and the consequence, as she perceives, means humiliation and degradation. The more she finds herself “degraded” the more jeopardized her selfhood is, the more she finds language inadequate to delineate her sense of affliction and her feelings for the Nanyang huaqiao. As she proclaims: “What I’m really doing is very difficult to put into words. Naturally I have never for a moment acknowledged to myself that I might be in love with that *tall guy*” (68; italics added). Here Sophia admits to not admitting to herself that “that tall guy” is simply forbidden love / desire and that eludes language or even reason. Notice that Sophia has not addressed “that tall guy” by his name. Since she feels shameful and humiliated for desiring Ling she expects her diary / writing to be her means of relief, if not resistance to Ling’s power and seductiveness over her. However, when the diarist self discovers the act of writing and language have somewhat failed to engender meanings (that make sense to her), the narrative proceeds to its shocking revelation, the “truth” about the Nanyang huaqiao.

How, we might ask, would such a charming man carved out from a “noble mould,” come to his degradation and downfall once Sophia gets to know him? Why would Sophia demean him again and again throughout the text? Invoking again Ling’s beauty and charming appearance, commingled with self-blame and her self-doubt Sophia begins to lash out her condemnation of Ling Lishi: “But why should I fall for a typical Nanyang person (十足的南洋人) just because of those meaningless charms?” Immediately after her self-renunciation, Sophia’s tirade is directed

toward the *Nanyangren*, expressing her contempt of her desired object. Instead of addressing him by his proper name, she not only evokes the collective image of the *Nanyangren* but further accentuates his essential otherness with “*shizhu*” (十足), meaning “completely / thoroughly/ undeniably so.” It is also worth noting that this image of the collective *Nanyangren* is invoked through and aligned with the “superficial qualities”—“those meaningless charms” embodied by Ling and his kind. As Sophia writes:

His tall body, his tender pink face, his soft lips, and his charming eyes could allure a lot of women who were vulnerable to beauty, and his languid manner could bowl over any who were still capable of love. But why should I fall for a typical overseas Chinese just because of those meaningless charms? Our most recent conversations have taught me a lot more about his really stupid ideas. All he wants is money. Money. A young wife to entertain his business associates in the living room, and several plump and fair-skinned sons, exquisitely dressed. What does love mean to him? Nothing more than squandering money in the brothel for some momentary sexual gratification, and sitting on the soft sofa fondling scented flesh, a cigarette in his mouth, his legs crossed casually, laughing and talking unrestrainedly with friends. When it’s not fun anymore, never mind; he just runs home to his wife. He’s passionate about the Debate Club, playing tennis matches, studying at Harvard, joining the foreign service, becoming an important statesman, or inheriting his father’s business and becoming a rubber merchant. He wants to be a capitalist... that is the extent of his ambition! (68)

After Sophia finds out about the “truth” of this man, that beneath his handsome appearance lies a “degraded” and “despicable soul” and that “all he wants is just money, sex,” and the traditional values associated with female virtues, she tries to break up with him. But before she does so, Ling Jishi is condemned not only for his seductive and “corrupt” influences but also for what he represents: the “typical” *Nanyangren* who is un-Chinese, or whose Chineseness is at best, in doubt, thus explaining Sophia’s maintaining her distance and identifying him in his “breed” as the collective *Nanyangren*. From the outset we are informed multiple times that Ling Jishi is not “physiological” Chinese as he is portrayed as “Western” / “Westernized” in essence: his looks,

his mannerism, his ambitions, his lifestyles, and where he comes from. Thus in denouncing and degrading this particular Nanyang huaqiao, Sophia is simultaneously denouncing what he “undeniably” represents.

Ling Jishi’s presence in “Miss Sophia’s Diary” barely inhabits any tangible space—as exemplified in Sophia’s first encounter with and description of him. Conceivably, the lure (of the foreign) is disguised in the Nanyang huaqiao’s superficiality—his physical appearance, his mannerism, his etiquette—and thus eludes language, yet it is his appearance that has seduced Sophia and thus the object of her desire, which drives the narrative into denouncing his significance pertaining to any meaning production. The specularly of his beauty in association with “Westernized” façade is only set up to be denounced and castigated later. If anything, the Nanyang huaqiao is only allowed to reside in the textual space of his superficial beauty that admittedly mesmerizes Sophia and eludes words. This evasion and elusion echoes what the narrative purports to do, that is, the Nanyang huaqiao only exists in his sojourning—thus he barely occupies any tangible space or takes up any substance. He is set up to be *sojourning* into the textual space and once denounced and condemned, he must excuse himself, find exit and take his leave—thus his superficiality and hollowness.

Sophia is obsessed with primarily his beauty, which then she perceives as hollow and empty, juxtaposed with the Nanyang huaqiao’s “despicable soul” and “monstrosity.” In other words, the narrative has never allowed the Nanyang huaqiao any voice even though the narrator from the onset has set up the foreigner as the center of the action that drives her into her *fakuang* state. In this light, the Nanyang huaqiao is concocted as the consumptive—materialized in Sophia’s worsening health and tubercular attacks, where actions take place in confined space: Sophia’s cell either at her rental or the hospital. In other words, the Nanyang huaqiao is also

constructed to fall short of his promise. The lure of the foreign, however, lies not only in the Westernized Nanyang huaqiao's physiological beauty and charms (coded "un-Chinese") as Sophia has elucidated throughout the narrative, it also lies in what he represents: the English lessons that she asks of the huaqiao and his role of an English tutor. When she asks Ling to tutor her in English she excuses it as her ruse to get closer to him and thus to secure her object of desire. However, in spite of her condemnation of this Nanyang huaqiao and what he represents Sophia has not denounced (the benefits of) the English language lessons. One of a very few times Ling Jishi is given the opportunity to "speak" in the text is when he is put in the position of an "English tutor." He asks Sophia if she is "pleased with his English lessons" and that he will be more than willing to tutor her if she continues to let him. In other words, Sophia is only willing to be under Ling's "tutelage" when Ling is cast in the position of an "English tutor" instead of a "lover / seducer."

In addition, the Nanyang huaqiao is physically and culturally circumscribed by the terrestrial boundaries of imperial cosmological tributary order, that is, as in Nanyang, the South of the South (traditionally and geographically Nanyang was conceived as the South Seas of Southern *zhongguo* / Middle Kingdom), as a reference to maritime tropical and peripheral identity, as opposed or tributary to continental / Middle Kingdom, and gradually evolving into a somewhat restrictive colonial, and regional frameworks carved up by various Western colonial / imperial powers.<sup>73</sup> In the case of Ling Jishi, we are told that he is from Singapore, at the time a British colony as part of the Straits Settlement as were Penang and Malacca (海峡殖民地). The native Chinese female subject constructs Ling as someone who identifies with the West and

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<sup>73</sup> According to Wang Gungwu, "The word 'Nanyang,' the 'Southern Ocean,' is used as an equivalent of the more recent coinage, "South-east Asia. There is implied in the word 'Nanyang' territories which have been reached by sea, by the South China Sea, and consequently, the areas which specially concern the Nanyang Chinese have been the key coastal strips of mainland South-east Asia and most of the islands of the Philippines and Indonesia." See Wang Gungwu, *A Short History of the Nanyang Chinese* (1959).

Nanyang, thus foregrounding Western colonialism, especially in terms of the colonial legacy. The legacy is embodied in his wealth, ambitions, and “inevitable” corruption and degradation which are attributed to his ethnic and geopolitical origin, Nanyang / huaqiao.

The allusion to Nanyang huaqiao as a collective embodied by Ling further suggests their complicity in the collaboration with Western colonial powers as agents for the dissemination of the foreign tongue and other cultural values, in this case Ling’s position as an “English tutor” to the Chinese modern girl (even though Sophia is the one soliciting for the “English lessons”). The colonial enterprise invoked in the quote above, that is, to the extent of the Nanyang huaqiao’s “ambition” as Sophia condemns him of, such as “inheriting his father’s business and becoming a rubber merchant” and ultimately becoming “a capitalist”—points to a particular mode of colonial production as in the form of “rubber plantation economy”<sup>74</sup>—central to British imperialism and colonialism, is also from where the Nanyang huaqiao acquire their “wealth” and “capital.” Since the colonial rubber plantation economy was the major enterprise in the Nanyang at the time, economic gains aligned with Western colonial practices were crucial for the formation of Chinese mercantile class in the region.<sup>75</sup> Placed within the broader context of the historical, cultural, and geopolitical of China, Nanyang, and its (Western) colonial legacy, the figure of Nanyang huaqiao in “Miss Sophia’s Diary” is thus instrumental yet bereft of agency, as he is used to invoke notions of Chineseness, colonial powers, and modernity cum Westernization. It is thus not surprising to see how the Nanyang huaqiao in this particular (con)text is reduced to, and denounced as, a “despicable” “Westernized” corrupt dandy /

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<sup>74</sup> As Jiat-Hwee Chang notes, “The predecessor of the [British] Colonial Office was simply called the Board of Plantation,” in “Planning Rubber Plantations: Tropical Production, Malaria, and the Management of Labor in British Malaya, 1900-1942.”

<sup>75</sup> See also Michael R. Godley, *The Mandarin-capitalists from Nanyang: Overseas Chinese Enterprise in the Modernization of China, 1893–1911* (1981). Godley details how late Qing / China had “discovered” Nanyang huaqiao and their “full values” and used them as “entrepreneurial agents” in “China’s infant modernization,” which also prompted late Qing to establish and expand its consulates in Nanyang. See especially Chapter 3, “China’s Discovery of the Nanyang Chinese” and Chapter 6, “The Search for Overseas Chinese talent and Wealth.”

“monster,” marked by his “empty soul” and complete lack of redeemable qualities. This configuration also undercuts the referential framework of the Nanyang huaqiao’s fragmented (colonial) (Westernized) subjectivity, complicating the power dynamics between the native Chinese female subject’s self-construction and subjugation of the male Nanyang huaqiao object. Arguably, this female subject is construed precisely to contain this Chinese Other—Nanyang huaqiao. Her expression of female subjectivity is predicated upon the loss of agency of the Nanyang huaqiao.

Critics of “Miss Sophia’s Diary” generally believe that the reason Sophia rejects Wei is because he is too traditional for her. But upon close scrutiny, one can see that Sophia rejects Wei for other reasons. Even though Sophia rejects Wei’s love, she nevertheless casts him in a much better light. In contrast to Ling, Wei is “loyal”; as Sophia claims, “No one is as reliable as Weidi,” and he is “innocent” and “pure.” Throughout the text Weidi is portrayed as the “loyal” and “reliable” type. Sophia repeatedly refers to her “unworthiness” of Weidi’s love, confessing she does not deserve such an “admirable,” “sincere,” and “pure” soul and wishes that some “sincere and pure” woman would reciprocate Weidi’s love. Sophia has clearly stated that Weidi’s “innocence” and “purity” should be shielded from her sophistication and manipulation. For instance, “Weidi can only express his sincerity and love loyally” (但他卻只能如此忠實的去表現他的真摯; 12/14 entry). In her confession, Sophia pleads that she knows her own “sin” (罪過) for “torturing” (磨折) Weidi and that “please do not love a woman who does not deserve (不配承受) such loyal and sincere love” (12/29 entry). Sophia also believes that it is “sinful” for her to reciprocate Wei’s love because she possesses “cruel nature” (殘酷的天性).

We may thus ask, why does Sophia regard loving the “sincere and loyal” Weidi a “sin”? Why does she feel “guilty” and forbid herself from loving Wei back? Does she feel “sinful” and

“guilty” because she is “only” attracted to Ling’s un-Chinese and Westernized male beauty and sexual appeals, which Weidi lacks? In other words, Weidi is “innocent” and “pure” because according to Sophia, he does not seem to possess any of the sexual desires by which Sophia is driven. She has stressed the fact that Weidi is always very “reliable and loyal” (老老實實; 12/29 entry). Weidi’s “purity” and “innocence” also imply that he does not possess any of Ling’s “despicable” and “degraded” qualities. In this sense Sophia has stressed Weidi’s incorruptible nature and thus Weidi is set up as Ling’s antithesis and the epitome of Chinese manhood. As such Weidi’s “Chineseness” cannot be tainted due to its “innocent” and “pure” nature. Such depictions of Weidi also imply that Sophia will only endorse “love” in the form of traditional conjugal relationship and courtship that she seems to despise in the first place.

Sophia is obsessed with Ling Jishi’s Westernized beauty and masculinity and thinks of him as her “chivalric European medieval knight” that she has been dreaming about. In fact, throughout the diary, Sophia’s sexual fantasy has revolved around this image of such a chivalric knight, and thus she confesses that what drives her into the “fakuang” state is her infatuation for the Nanyang huaqiao and her insatiable desire for him, which has sickened her somatically and emotionally. In denouncing Ling, Sophia paints him as a “pathetic womanizer” and thus his seemingly lack of concerns for his moral laxity and debauchery has not only disqualified him her love but also denied his access to Chineseness. His “tainted” Chineseness has become a token of his “monstrosity,” and thus he is unworthy of her love, and the claim to Chineseness. When Sophia is further consumed with the effort to cleanse Ling’s “most despicable” influence from her, she again describes herself as being “possessed” (著魔) and “fakuang” (發狂)—the motif she so often invokes—as a result of her desire for Ling. At this point Sophia seems fully aware that she is vulnerable to the incursion of foreignness emanated from the Nanyang huaqiao.

Sophia also claims, in her denunciation of the Nanyang huaqiao, Ling “has never truly been loved” and does not know what “love” is. However, this statement is at best arbitrary and can be seen as springing from Sophia’s hatred of Ling. This shows that Sophia’s narcissism and desire to be in control, thus the arbiter of what “love” is and only she can decide if Ling really understands what “love” is supposed to mean. In denouncing Ling and his unworthiness of her “love,” she also pronounces his ineligibility to love. However, Sophia is not immune to Ling or his charms in spite of all her attempts and denunciation.

In the last few entries of her diary she keeps repeating how she has become “*kuang*” or “*dian*” (我簡直狂 / 癲了) whenever she feels she has given in to her desires for the “unworthy” man. In fact it has become almost a refrain —“I must be losing my mind” (我簡直狂 / 癲了)—in these last few entries. While seeking her self-confirmation, albeit in vain—that she will finally resist Ling’s temptation, she acknowledges, paradoxically, her “madness.” As she addresses herself as if in third person: “Sophia will never ever be so stupid to fall for that Nanyangren!” Juxtaposed her *fakuang* and *fadian* with her denunciation of the Nanyang huaqiao, Sophia further renounces language—speech or written words—becomes futile (語言, 文字是怎樣在這時顯得無用). On the one hand, this statement can be read as Sophia’s proclamation that language has reached its limits: no amount of writing or words will relieve her from her inner conflicts and suffering. On the other hand, it can be interpreted as Sophia’s acknowledgement that her desires and torments elude language and thus her failure for self-preservation.

Sophia is absolutely overwhelmed and appalled when she is unable to come to terms with her inner emotional turmoil caused by her infatuation with Ling, and while she has pathologized him and everything he represents she is simultaneously pathologizing herself and her condition, thus her nervous agitation and breakdowns as evidenced in her *fakuang* and *fadian*. The

inefficacy of language coupled with its inadequacy to explain the inexplicable obsession with Ling has led her to identify him as the cause of her *fakuang* even more so than her poor health caused by tuberculosis. Once they kiss—this physical contact with the Nanyang huaqiao—everything Sophia has held on to at this point is dissolved and the motif of foreignness again resurfaces and threatens to take over the text and Sophia’s agency. In the earlier journal entries Sophia has deployed the language of defense and warfare to devise every possible scheme and strategy to manipulate her two male suitors, and she seems to genuinely derive pleasure from such endeavors and becomes at times self-absorbed in such. However, after the “truth” of the Nanyang huaqiao has been uncovered such language of warfare is employed to arm and disguise her vulnerable self. The more she tries to resist Ling’s temptation the more she finds herself caught in her *fakuang* state. Sophia essentially perceives and portrays herself as an inevitable victim of sexual desire that has gone astray in the object of desire: Nanyang huaqiao. The narrative’s continuous attempts to eradicate this huaqiao’s presence, paradoxically, marks Sophia’s heightened sense of anxiety and her increasing absence of reason. This explains Sophia’s use of the rhetoric of plague in her detailed description of her sexual desire and relationship with Ling.

The crucial role of “madness” in Sophia’s construction of subjectivity and female desire in relation to the Nanyang huaqiao’s warrants further scrutiny. To outline a general template of *fakuang*, we need to first look at how the trope of madness—in various phases and façades—is incorporated into the narrative. Throughout her diary Sophia employs a variety of these terms to address her mental state and her desire of the Nanyang huaqiao: the most common ones are “*fakuang*” (發狂) and “*fadian*” (發癲); or in the combination, as in “*diankuang*” (癲狂); at times

she also uses “*feng*” (瘋) and “*chimi*” (痴迷). All of these terms suggest various forms of lunacy with connection to psychic conflicts and sometimes obsession and lack of self-restraint.

It might be useful to draw a parallel between Lu Xun’s Madman in “Diary of a Madman” (*kuanreng riji*; 狂人日記) and “Miss Sophia’s Diary” to further capture the significance of *fakuang*. Published in 1918, “Diary of a Madman,” often called the first major “modern” short story in China, chronicles a first-person diarist’s journey into madness through self-introspection and questioning and denunciation of traditional “virtue and morality.” This Madman’s paranoia is depicted in the context of madness (*kuang*) that contours the ailing Chinese psyche and his confrontation with the oppressive reality of the time. The character of the Madman has since been considered an embodiment of Lu Xun’s critique and representation of Chinese national character. In this case the Madman’s re-reading of history unfolds the four-thousand-year history of Chinese cannibalistic culture. In the story, Chinese cannibalism is juxtaposed with Darwin’s theory of evolution as the Madman reflects on the origin of cannibalism and the progress of human beings.<sup>76</sup> The rhetoric of evolution allows the Madman-narrator to criticize the national character in terms of backwardness and cannibalistic practice.

In his effort to look up the history of cannibalism, the Madman comes to conclude that History<sup>77</sup> has “no dates,” and thus presents a universal and homogeneous overview of official history. Ironically enough, the Madman is portrayed as the one who is able to question the

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<sup>76</sup> “[W]ay back in the beginning; it’s probably the case that primitive peoples all ate some human flesh. But later on, because their ways of thinking changed, some gave up the practice and tried their level best to improve themselves; they kept on changing until they became human beings, real human beings. But the other didn’t; they just kept right on with their cannibalism and stayed at that primitive level.”

“You have the same sort of thing with evolution in the animal world. Some reptiles, for instance, changed into fish, and then they evolved into birds, then into apes, and then into human beings. But the others didn’t want to improve themselves and just kept right on being reptiles down to this very day.” Lu Xun, “Diary of a Madman,” 38.

<sup>77</sup> “There were no dates in this history, but scrawled this way and that across every page were the words BENEVOLENCE, RIGHTEOUSNESS, and MORALITY. Since I couldn’t get to sleep anyway, I read that history very carefully for most of the time, and finally I began to make out what was written between the lines; the whole volume was filled with a single phrase: EAT PEOPLE!” Lu Xun, “Diary of a Madman,” 32.

values and cultural heritage of official history and to derive at a true vision of social reality. The Madman is capable of reading “between the lines,” to search for and reveal buried truths of history as his insanity aggravates. Reading between the lines allows him to diagnose the illness and madness of history, which has cloaked its cannibalistic nature in the disguise of Confucian benevolence. Yet it is at this moment, that is, in his *fakuan* state, his perception of reality sharpens and begins to probe into the depth of history itself when he realizes he is a misfit within the rigid and oppressive structure of social order.

Pathologizing China and Chinese’s shortcomings has allowed Lu Xun and other May Fourth writers the privilege of assuming the role of prophet and visionary in the service of national salvation.<sup>78</sup> The pathological construction of Chineseness is also crucial to the May Fourth endeavors to moralize literary productions. As Xiabing Tang expounds on the meanings of *kuang* (狂) in relation to Lu Xun’s *kuangren* (狂人; Madman):

Etymologically *kuang* describes a hound gone wild and assaulting indifferently its master and its master’s guests. On the basis of this signification, it has acquired over time a rich textual of meanings, including “madness,” “the ecstatic,” and “a wildly unrestrained person.” As an adjective... *kuang* is equivalent to “unrestrainedly outgoing, wildly defiant.” In Confucius *Analecets*, it also occurs as a verb meaning to progress or aggress.... *Kuang* is the archetypal metaphor for an explosive ecstasy (ex-stasis), a jumping off the right track, a transgressive crossing of the boundary—in short, a return to the primal or instinctual drive. It captures, to a certain extent, the inner experience of the alterity of reason, of what has to be repressed and marginalized as irrational....*kuang* is a discursive energy that erupts and interrupts the normal and normalizing system of meaning.... By definition, then, *kuang* stands as a radical shift, in the production of meaning, from the chain of the signified to the elusive chain of the signifier. In other words, *kuang* switches the whole question from what reality is to how reality is constructed and represented through various sociosymbolic practices, not the least of which are our linguistic conventions. This epistemological break is precisely what takes place in the mind of Lu Xun’s Madman. His *kuang* indicates a return of that which has been excluded or obliterated from the horizon of allowed or conceivable experience. It represents a transgressive discourse not only because it

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<sup>78</sup> See, for instance, Merle Goldman & Leo Lee, eds. *An Intellectual History of Modern China* (2002).

goads the self-conscious subject to challenge the given boundaries but also because it drives the subject himself to all the limits, all the frontiers, of experience. (Xiabing Tang, “Lu Xun’s ‘Diary of a Madman’ and a Chinese Modernism” 1226)

Seen from this light, it is clear why Sophia can only find meaning in her *fakuan* state, since it alone offers access to the truth. Although she has been trying to circumscribe the Nanyang huaqiao’s presence in her journal, she comes to realize that Ling’s presence might be obliterated but his power over her cannot be suppressed. In this sense Ling is emblematic of Sophia’s inexplicable obsession and thus embodies Sophia’s irrational passions. His presence continues to exercise some form of power over her that she eventually sees no option left but to seek self-destruction and death. The diary thus witnesses Sophia’s sexual adventure and confession and her “transgression” for falling for an “unworthy” Westernized Nanyang huaqiao.

After several episodes of denouncing and condemning the Nanyang huaqiao, Sophia still shows no signs of stopping. The worst is yet to come. From this point onwards in the narrative, Sophia’s depiction of Ling is constantly punctuated with “racial” terms that eventually betray Sophia’s cultural and racial anxiety. She blames herself and especially Ling for her “downfall” (*duoluo*; 墮落) and calls him a “monster” (*guaiwu*; 怪物), and “*the worst breed of mankind*” (*renleizhong zui liezhongde ren*; 人類中最劣種的人).<sup>79</sup> We may ask, what exactly has Ling done to deserve such castigation? The severity of Sophia’s accusation suggests Ling must have committed some kind of crime or aberrant act. Upon close scrutiny, however, Ling at this point, instead of being a “passive lover” waiting for Sophia to make her move all along, has eventually taken the initiative to “kiss” Sophia. However, Sophia’s anticipated moment has not brought her the expected sexual fulfillment in spite of her claim of “victory.” At this crucial moment she

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<sup>79</sup> According to Frank Dikötter, “zhong” [種] in the Chinese language “was the central element of a complex terminology: it meant ‘seed,’ ‘breed,’ or ‘biological species,’ and was used in association with *lei*, ‘type,’ ‘category,’ in *zhonglei* at the discursive level of race as type.” See Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, 70-1.

despises herself and further denounces Ling. It is understandable that Sophia feels disillusioned or betrayed after discovering the “truth” about this Nanyang huaqiao, but to call him “the worst breed of mankind” not only condemns Ling as an individual, but through Ling, the whole “breed.” This “breed” is “the worst of mankind” because Sophia has been sizing and judging Ling through her filter: as a “typical Nanyang huaqiao” Ling also represents his “type”, his “breed,” and thus his “biological specie,” as well as his ethno-cultural identity.

In this story not only do we witness a relationship characterized by Sophia’s attraction to and repugnance of the Chinese Other but also her mental agitation and deterioration. Her obsession with and psychic investment in the figure of the *foreign* Chinese has made Sophia not only literally and figuratively *sick* of her object of desire but also her very own desire. We might ask, why is Ling Jishi endowed with such negative and “despicable” qualities? Why is it necessary for the native Chinese woman to configure him as foreign and “Westernized” and thus his lack of “authenticity”? Yi-Tsi Mei Feuerwerker offers her explanation:

Like other objects of temptation in Ding Ling’s stories—Mengke’s cousin, Amao’s city—Ling Jishi is both enhanced and tainted by Western connotations. (In fact, being from Singapore, *he is only ambiguously Chinese.*) Tall and slim, he has a white complexion, bright red and temptingly soft lips—an important focus for Sophie’s fantasies—and hopelessly “Western” values.” (*Ding Ling’s Fiction* 28-29; emphasis added)

Feuerwerker believes that it is Ling’s “ambiguous” Chineseness which constitutes his foreignness, and thus his superficiality and his lack of authenticity. In order to consolidate the self as the authentic Chinese, the figure of this Chinese Other has to be defined and marked by what he lacks: that is, racial and ethnic purity. In contrast to Weidi, who is “pure,” “innocent,” and “loyal,” Ling Jishi is thus invested with negative terms, superficial and corrupt / “Western values” associated with foreign sexuality and promiscuity. Because Ling Jishi is “ambiguously Chinese,” he is demonized as a “Westernized” / “inauthentic” Chinese who only possesses

superficial beautiful appearance with a “despicable soul.” Worse, his identification with the colonial Nanyang is condemned to be an act of forsaking one’s Chineseness. But if Ling’s ostensibly “Western” lifestyle, “capitalist” aspirations and above all, his place of origin—the Nanyang—has denied him Chineseness, then Sophia’s failure of self-preservation can be seen as her “authentic Chineseness” being under siege and her need to employ the language of defense and warfare to arm herself. It thus makes sense to view Ling as the manifestation of Sophia’s illness, her source of physical, mental, and psychological agitations. He has, in a way, replaced tuberculosis as her “irrational” and “inexplicable” passion for him has consumed her to the point of killing her. Perhaps, Sophia’s agency as a narrator and “modern liberated” native Chinese woman is predicated upon the imagination of a corrupt Chinese Other, in the configuration of this *Nanyang huaqiao*, so that the line of racial and ethnocultural (im)purity can be invoked and drawn.

## Postscript

This dissertation has argued that in spite of its uniformity and singularity as the collective huaqiao emanates, the term “huaqiao,” originally conceived to be bound by the “myths of the homeland and return,” can also be read in its polycentric nature in the original point of reference as in “qiao,” to serve multiple operative powers exerted by the dynastic Qing, various factions of interest groups especially the Reformers and the Revolutionaries, not to mention the colonial regimes which carved up the Nanyang such as the Dutch, the British, the French, as well as the Japanese, and later, the “post-colonial” indigenous regimes in the area. In this sense huaqiao is as much as a contested term / site as the discourse of “Chineseness,” especially if the definitions and its meanings vary in times and sites, always dependent on the politics of exclusion and inclusion within the mechanisms of such operative powers. In other words, to view huaqiao as evincing polycentric (Chineseness) instead of one single origin is to see it as the origin’s needs to engage in constant remaking and repackaging “Chineseness.”

By re-placing the “huaqiao” at various nodal points of historical conjunctures in terms of temporality: late Imperial vs. Republican, before and after 1949, the Cultural Revolution era, for instance, and spatiality: the Middle Kingdom, China, Nanyang, Taiwan, or other Sinophone sites, trajectories of “sojourning” become visible. By revisiting the “representational times and spaces” of its production, and re-visioning the (un)charted geopolitical terrains where “huaqiao” has been conceived, destinations become the routes for the sojourner.

With the pitfalls of using “Chinese” uncritically as an identity marker in mind, this dissertation unpacks the case of huaqiao vis-a-vis the construction of Chineseness. While one of

the main tasks in this project aims to retrieve huaqiao from oblivion and to lay bare the epistemic violence incurred by the discourse of “Chineseness,” it foremost cautions against the uncritical use of the term “Chinese” primarily as a label—national, cultural, racial, or otherwise. This dissertation thus re-reads and posits huaqiao, amid the burgeoning interest in Sinophone literary and cultural productions and debates of Sinophone subjectivity and identity formations, by focusing on, and contesting, how the construction of huaqiao identities involves constant re-configuring sites of contestations where nuances of alterity can be unveiled and inserted into the historiography of such endeavors. Since its inception in the 1890s, *hua-qiao*, as the term connotes, while being grounded in its cultural and racial “roots,” has managed to configure trajectories and “routes” of sojourning, as in implied in “qiao.” This project thus continues to recast the analytical framework of “Chineseness” vis-à-vis the sojourner’s footpath and trails of sojourning, at the intersection of “roots” and “routes”—when *hua* and *qiao* crisscross, where destinations await. The huaqiao in and at its inception is already an identity in alterity marked with dissonance and disjunction.

To re-place huaqiao at the junctures of various sites (cultural and linguistic) is to acknowledge what gives huaqiao its critical forces lies precisely in its ambivalent nature, a heterogeneous ensemble marked by nuances of alterity within and across heterotopias. In his essay “Of Other Spaces,” Foucault proposes the idea of “heterotopology” which embodies various forms of heterotopias. The heterotopia is both real and unreal in the sense that it is “a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space” (24). Huaqiao is thus more than an organizing principle or simply a label for “Chinese overseas” or “overseas Chinese,” for *qiao* in itself is inextricably interwoven with a dispersing network (as in the sojourning) of incommensurable heterotopias (China, ancestral homeland, mythic homeland, or simply a

network of sites) that inhabit multifarious destinations of politico-cultural contentions. *Qiao* underlies and foregrounds the itinerary of Chineseness in alterity, a configuration of movement; an identity subject to revision and interrogation, as well as engaged in the production of counter-forces of disruption and subversion.

*Huaqiao*, in spite of being constructed in the discourse of “inheritance” derived from imperial cosmological Chineseness as in *hua*, as well as the cultural and political discourses of nationalism, as this dissertation argues, is defined by their “histories of elusion.”<sup>80</sup> Diverse and competing interpretations of Chineseness point to the complex nature of the issues at stake: *huaqiao*, Chinese sojourners, overseas Chinese, Chinese overseas, Chinese diaspora, Sinophone subjects—all share their link of “Chineseness” and yet their meanings are still debated and continue to be reinvented and renegotiated, attesting to the transformative powers of such categories. If they are inevitably or inherently interpellated in their roots they are constantly transformed and undercut by the routes.

Ultimately, this project seeks to somehow untangle the “politics of entanglement” by delving further into these questions: what does it mean when we use “Chinese” to designate? What if you are only “ambiguously” or “marginally” Chinese? Addressing these questions by examining a body of literary works, as well as the configurations of the *huaqiao* and Nanyang, this project calls attention to the challenges and predicament of formulating *huaqiao* as an alternative analytical paradigm. This is crucial as my critical intervention not only explores a much overlooked aspect of modern Chinese literature vis-à-vis the configuration of the *huaqiao* figures

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<sup>80</sup> Aihwa Ong and Donald Nonini maintain that “overseas Chinese” identities are “constituted through transnational systems rather than in stable cultural identities” and as such should be considered “differently situated subjects” whose identities “are molded through links among sites of discipline, histories of elusion, and imaginaries of power,” *Underground Empires*, 326.

and its relation to the discourse of Chineseness, it further calls attention to the challenge and predicament of framing and theorizing the huaqiao (or “oversea Chinese” for that matter).

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