

Incarnation of the Real: Approaching the Production of the Hong Kong Literary Magazine *Fleurs des Lettres* (2006-)

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Abstract

The sublimity of factual representation requires historical investigation upon its contradictive nature: powerful as a morally recognized weapon (as Chinese leftist writers adopted to actualize and validate the Communist regime from the late 1910s to the late 1940s) but fragile as an easily side-streamed and censored ideology. While literarily recording the real in “late-capitalist” Hong Kong is encountering imbricated pressure from a tailor-made national security law (approved at the National People’s Congress on 22 May, 2020 to prevent, stop and punish acts in Hong Kong related to subversion, secession, terrorism and foreign interference), this paper sets out to study the resistive formation of a representative contemporary Hong Kong literary magazine called *Fleurs des Lettres* (Ji Fa 字花; 2006-). Starting from a derivation of the spiritual source of Hong Kong literary magazines, it suggests that the responsive composition of *Fleurs des Lettres* follows a realist tradition and contextually practices a localized version. As a scholar and an editor, the writer of this paper will invigorate his historical and discursive analyses of its Issue 1 and Issue 81 with subjective observations.

Keywords: *Fleurs des Lettres*, literary magazine, Hong Kong literature, literary production, realism

道成文字：香港文學雜誌《字花》 (2006-)的現實生成模式

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摘要

「呈現事實」之崇高帶著需要歷史考究來澄清的矛盾性質：既強如一件道德武器（像中國左派作家在 1910 年代末至 1940 年代末催生中共政權並使之合法化的筆法），但又脆弱如一股易被次流化和制裁的意識形態。

在「後資本主義」的香港，國家安全法已於 2020 年 5 月 22 日通過，以防範、制止和懲治與顛覆國家、分裂國家、勾結外國勢力與恐怖活動相關之罪行，這使「文學記存真實」在香港面臨疊加的壓力。本論文按此深究香港當代文學雜誌代表《字花》(2006-)如何以抵抗形式不斷生成，結構上，先追溯香港文學雜誌的精神來源，然後展示《字花》的回應式組成如何順著現實主義傳統，發展成「在地」進路。作為學者與編輯，這論文的作者將以主觀觀察，融薈對第 1 期與第 81 期的歷史與話語分析。

關鍵詞：《字花》、文學雜誌、香港文學、文學生成、現實主義

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The May-Fourth flagship *La Jeunesse* 新青年 (1915-1926), as a prototype of modern intellectual magazines, founded a pragmatic and populist tradition upon Chen Duxiu's 陳獨秀 primary communist thoughts (before his belief in Trotskyism in the late 1920s), Hu Shih's 胡適 liberal pro-governmentalism, Lu Xun's 魯迅 cynical proletarianism, and so on.¹ After the publication of its final issue by Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白, Lu Xun visited Hong Kong and delivered "Speechless China" (Wusheng de Zhongguo) 無聲的中國 and "No Longer Singing with the Old Key" (Lao diaozi yijing changwan) 老調子已經唱完 with his dialectic accent² to over 600 attendants at YMCA Bridges Street Centre on 18 and 19 February, 1927. Yang Jianmin 楊建民³ and many other scholars regard these two talks as leading to the subsequent rise of an avant-gardist print culture (justified by the publication of the first modern literary magazine *Partner* (Bunleui) 伴侶⁴ in 1928 and the boom of modern literary supplements),⁵ whereas scholars such as William

¹ This tradition refutes aestheticist, romanticist, and egocentric fashions such as the one sustained by the members of the Creation Society (Chuangzao she) 創造社, including Guo Moruo 郭沫若, Yu Dafu 郁達夫, Cheng Fangwu 成仿吾, and Zhang Ziping 張資平, from 1921 to 1925.

² Cheng Ming Yan 鄭明仁 reminded that "Lu Xun's Shaoxing accent was too strong, so he needed 許廣平 to simultaneously interpret his two speeches into Cantonese." Cheng Ming Yan 鄭明仁, "Lu Xun zai Xianggang de zuji" 魯迅在香港的足跡 (Lu Xun's Footprint in Hong Kong), Master-insight.com, January 18, 2020, accessed February 23, 2021, <https://www.master-insight.com/%E9%AD%AF%E8%BF%85%E5%9C%A8%E9%A6%99%E6%B8%AF%E7%9A%84%E8%B6%B3%E8%B7%A1/>.

³ Yang Jianmin 楊建民, "Xianggang wenxue de qidian he xin wenxue de xingqi" 香港文學的起點和新文學的興起 (The Starting Point of Hong Kong Literature and the Rise of New Literature), *Literary Review* 1997, no. 4 (July 1997): 32.

⁴ All the names and titles closely related to Hong Kong adopt the Yale romanization of Cantonese throughout this paper; others use *pinyin* instead.

⁵ With reference to the lists that Yang Jianmin 楊建民 and Chan Chi Tak 陳智德 provide, the new-born newspaper supplements for modern creative writing in Hong Kong include *Tai Kwong Literary*

Tay 鄭樹森, Lo Wai Luen 盧瑋鑾, Wong Kai Chee 黃繼持,⁶ Zhao Xifang 趙稀方⁷ and the local writer Lui Lun 侶倫 (1911-1988), as a native witness,⁸ tended to merely accredit an obscure inspiration to this modernist giant. They supposed that a revolutionary reform corresponding to the widespread one in the North was a groundless rumour. No matter whether Lu Xun's charisma truly functioned to seed the then antiquarian colony with *La Jeunesse*'s heuristic modernity, vernacular literary activities (in the Mandarin *Baihua* 白話 style, instead of the Cantonese style) flourished soon after his journey.

From Fredric Jameson's perspective,⁹ symbolic representation of literature is not as subjective, personal, and conscious as it appears; the conflicts between "modes of productions" more fundamentally determine the "ideologemes" that cause the production of literary forms to frame and contain the representation instead. According to his production-form-symbol hierarchy, one can understand *La Jeunesse* and its subsequent imitators as formally embodying the political unconscious of an incomplete Chinese history through realist creativity. The sense of completing history, no matter towards communism (in the classical Marxist sense), liberal democracy (as Francis Fukuyama suggests),¹⁰ or other possibilities, has constantly urged production of text and, both transregionally and

Art (Daaigwong manngai) 大光文藝, *Ripple* (Meibo) 微波, *The Movement of Light* (Gwongming wandung) 光明運動 of *Tai Kwong Po* (Daaigwong bou) 大光報, *Lighthouse* (Dangtaap) 燈塔 of *Universal Circulating Herald* (Cheunwaan yatbou) 循環日報, *Chinese Mountains* (Wangok) 華岳 of *Overseas Chinese Daily News* (Wakiu yatbou) 華僑日報, *Vigorous Grass* (Gingchou) 勁草 of *South China Daily News* (Naamwa yatbou) 南華日報, *Beacon* (Mingdang) 明燈 of *Thien Nam Yit Pao* 天南日報, and *Transition* (Gwodou) 過渡 and *Ironic Tower* (Tit taap) of *Naam Keung Yit Pao* 南強日報. Jianmin Yang, "Xianggang wenxue de qidian he xin wenxue de xingqi," 32. Chan Chi Tak 陳智德, *Bandang shidai de shuqing: Kangzhan shiqi de Xianggang yu wenxue* 板蕩時代的抒情：抗戰時期的香港與文學 (Lyrics in the Chaotic Age: Hong Kong and Its literature in the Era of Sino-Japanese War) (Hong Kong: Chung Hwa Book, 2018), 17.

⁶ Tay William 鄭樹森, Lo Wai Luen 盧瑋鑾, and Wong Kai Chee 黃繼持, ed., *Zaoqi Xianggang xin wenxue zilao xuan (1927-1941)* 早期香港新文學資料選 (1927-1941) (The Selected Resources of Hong Kong New Literature (1927-1941)) (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books Ltd., 1999), 15.

⁷ Zhao Xifang 趙稀方, *Baokan Xianggang: lishi yujing yu wenxue changyu* 報刊香港：歷史語境與文學場域 (Hong Kong Newspapers: The Historical Context and Literary Field) (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing HK, 2019), 79-80.

⁸ Cheung Yin Chu 張燕珠, "Zaoqi Xianggang wenxue de tahuang ren - yi Lui Lun wei li," 早期香港文學的拓荒人——以侶倫為例 (The Pioneer of Early Hong Kong Literature: Taking Lui Lun as an Example), *Hong Kong Literature Study*, no. 3 (May-June 2017): 101-107.

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

¹⁰ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

diachronically, connected individuals of various imagined communities. This connection is intriguing for studying contemporary Hong Kong literary magazines, which have received scarce academic attention by far, as the subjective genealogical succession of publication motion is still unclear. On the realist side, the sublimity of factual representation requires historical investigation upon its contradictive nature: powerful as a morally recognized weapon (as Chinese leftist writers adopted to actualize and validate the Communist regime from the late 1910s to the late 1940s) but fragile as an easily side-streamed and censored ideology. While literarily recording the real in “late-capitalist” Hong Kong (which prefers visual, meaningless, and ahistorical products in Jameson’s sense¹¹) is encountering imbricated pressure from a tailor-made national security law (approved at the National People’s Congress on 22 May, 2020 to prevent, stop and punish acts in Hong Kong related to subversion, secession, terrorism and foreign interference), this paper sets out to study the resistive formation of a representative contemporary Hong Kong literary magazine called *Fleurs des Lettres* (Ji Fa 字花; 2006 -). Starting from a derivation of the spiritual source of Hong Kong literary magazines, it suggests that the responsive composition of *Fleurs des Lettres* follows and contextually practices a realist tradition. As a scholar and an editor, I will invigorate my historical and discursive analyses of its Issue 1 and Issue 81 with subjective observations.

1. Parochial succession of realist sublimity

A serious and continually recognized intention to represent reality, which I would like to coin as “realist sublimity,” occasionally looms out of the genealogy of Hong Kong print culture. It is performativity-ridden to form subjectivity and a powerful inertia of reflexivity. As a historically succeeded drive of literary creation towards a generally admired reflection of the shared real (not necessarily in the form of “realism”¹²), realist sublimity has been long sustaining the aura of remembrance that connects Chinese intellectuals to an imagined community of creative ideals, especially during political vicissitudes. For instance, after

¹¹ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989).

¹² In this paper, I would hope to broaden the scope of realism as including the works that are not traditionally “realist” but contain records, references, allegories, and critics in response to real situations.

the An Lushan Rebellion (755-763), the Tang essayist Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824) propagated the notion “literature as a container of the [moral] Way” (wen yi zaidao) 文以載道; and in the post-May-Fourth era with civil wars and Japanese invasions, the Creation Society (Chuangzao she) 創造社 abruptly turned leftist and He Qifang 何其芳 simplified his writing towards communist proletarianism. In uncountable historical cases, Chinese writers’ incorporation of literary text with recordable facts to expect readers’ practical responses is not for its own sake and is diachronically far beyond “national allegory,” which refers to “the stories of the private individual destiny” that connotes “the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society.”¹³ Upon Hangping Xu’s recognition of the inside-the-political-system Nobel Prize laureate Mo Yan’s fiction as transcending the geopolitics of recognition and subverting the national narrative of mainland China in response to the 1980s context,¹⁴ one can regard the history of Hong Kong literary magazines as similarly reifying the real beyond a grand national (or urban) history, which allegedly disseminates linguistically and culturally inherited impulses to regional literatures derived from the mainland origin (like the May Fourth case).

Before specifying *Fleurs des Lettres* as a documentary medium, I would first briefly delineate the trajectory of Hong Kong literary magazine development with attention to relevant scholarship. This should begin with Xu Yi-xin’s 許翼心¹⁵ research on early Hong Kong newspapers. According to his chronological differentiation between modern literature (jindai wenxue) 近代文學 and new literature (xin wenxue) 新文學, Hong Kong literature before 1927 was founded on the Western colonizers’ print culture. Key local Chinese newspapers, such as *Chinese Serial* (Ha yi gun jan) 遐邇貫珍 (1853-1856), *Chinese Mail* (Wa ji yatbou) 華字日報 (1871-1946), *Universal Circulating Herald* (Cheunwaan yatbou) 循環日報 (1874-1947), *Waisan Daily* (Waisan yatbou) 維新日報

¹³ Fredric Jameson, “Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism,” *Social Text*, no. 15 (Autumn 1986): 69.

¹⁴ Xu Hangping, “Beyond National Allegory: Mo Yan’s Fiction as World Literature,” *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 30, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 163-190.

¹⁵ Xu Yi-xin 許翼心, “Early Chinese Periodicals and the Development of Hong Kong Literature” 早期中文報刊與近代香港文學的開拓, *Journal of Modern Literature in Chinese*, no. 8.2 & 9.1 (2008): 201-212.

(1879-1909), and *Yut Post* (Yut bou) 粵報 (1885-1889)¹⁶ created column space for publishing poems, serial novels, reviews, reportages, travel notes, translated works, and so on. Despite mostly represented in the classical Chinese form (not as “modern” as Xu defines), these new platforms set for Chinese intellectuals diversified publishable literary genres and partially determined the components and factual preferences of subsequently developed literary magazines.

In 1907, *The Fiction World* (Siusyut saigai) 小說世界, *The Collection of New Fiction* (San siusyut chung) 新小說叢, and *The Chinese and Foreign Fictional Works* (Jungngoi siusyut lam) 中外小說林, regarded as the earliest Hong Kong literary magazines,¹⁷ started the local development of a new medium specifically for creative writing. Their few remaining indexes and issues, as Zhao Xifang recorded and summarized,¹⁸ reveal that the then published Chinese fiction (translated fiction was also largely published) commonly adopted the chapter-novel (zhanghui xiaoshuo) 章回小說 style, which started prevailing in the Ming Dynasty and became politically satirical and explicit towards the end of the Qing Dynasty. Although the New Culture Movement (1915-1923) revolutionarily established a modern fashion against this and other classical forms,¹⁹ it also preserved and rejuvenated the conventional sublimity of reflecting reality to be more reformative and pragmatic, no matter in a realistic or romanticist form. However, its impact on Hong Kong literary magazines was tardy. The pre-war literary magazines, as far as the existing ones

¹⁶ On the list that Xu Yi-xin provides in his academic paper, *Chinese and Foreign Gazette* (Jung Ngoi San Bou) 中外新報 (1857-1861) was published in Ningbo and hence not included in my examples. Xu Yi-xin, “Early Chinese Periodicals and the Development of Hong Kong Literature,” 202-203. Besides, I add the dates of suspension for the selected newspapers and revise the name of “Cheunwaan yatbou” (循環日報) that Xu mistook as “wuihyun yat bou” (迴圈日報).

¹⁷ Chan Chi Tak 陳智德, “Baokan yu Xianggang wenxue” 報刊與香港文學 (Newspapers and Hong Kong Literature), *Sing Tao Daily*, September 1, 2014, p. E07. Zhao Xifang 趙稀方, “Banlu zhiqian de Xianggang baihua wenxue” 《伴侶》之前的香港白話文學 (The Hong Kong Vernacular Literature Before Partner), *Hong Kong Literary* 391 (July 2017): 4-17.

¹⁸ Zhao Xifang 趙稀方, *Baokan Xianggang: lishi yujing yu wenxue changyu* 報刊香港：歷史語境與文學場域, 18-23.

¹⁹ The establishment of a new vernacular literary fashion was chiefly founded on the *La Jeunesse* contributors’ critical essays (such as Hu Shi’s 胡適 “A Modest Proposal for the Reform of Literature” [Wenxue gailiang chuyi] 文學改良芻議 and Chen Duxiu’s 陳獨秀 “On literary Revolution” [Wenxue geming lun] 文學革命論 both published in 1917) and literary practices (such as Lu Xun’s iconic short story “A Madman’s Diary [Kuangren rijì] 狂人日記 [1918]).

reveal,²⁰ responded to Shanghai's consumerist writing fever rather than Beijing's humanitarian utilization of text. For instance, Wong Ting Shek 黃天石's short story "Fragmented Stamen" (Seui yeui) 碎蕊 (1921), as one of the earliest Hong Kong vernacular fiction (given the first position in Liu Yichang 劉以鬯's collection of Hong Kong short stories),²¹ was first published on the inaugural issue of *Double Voice* (Seung seng) 雙聲. Its narrative development towards romanticist suicide is plot-oriented and sentimental, not critically heuristic in style as Lu Xun's fiction, despite with characters' anti-feudal complaints, such as "The unliberal marriage has deprived me of my life and soul."²²

The Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) brought to colonial Hong Kong south-coming writers 南來文人 and a leftist propaganda mechanism. Many literary magazines and newspaper supplements, such as the supplements of *Ta Kung Pao* 大公報 and *Sing Tao Daily* 星島日報, and the literary magazines *Cultivation* (Gaangwan) 耕耘 and *Summit* (Dingdeng) 頂點 that the leftist poet Dai Wangshu 戴望舒 edited during 1937 to 1941, functioned as a tocsin to unite the public for resistance. After the war, literary propaganda turned twofold. As many scholars have archivally expounded, the Asia Foundation²³ that preferred the Kuomintang regime constantly sponsored rightist publishing houses, such as Hong Kong Union Press (Yau lyun cheutbaanse) 友聯出版社, People's Press (Yanyan cheutbaanse) 人人出版社, and Asia Press (Ajau cheutbaanse) 亞洲出版社 established in the early 1950s, to confront the pro-mainland voices distributed from *Ta Kung Pao*, *Wen Wei Po* 文匯報, *New Evening Post* 新晚報 and other localized communist media. Despite arguably not as political and binary-opposite as

²⁰ Lo Wai Luen 盧瑋鑾, *The Catalogue of Early Hong Kong Literary Magazines (1921-1937)* (Xianggang zaoqi (1921-1937) wenyi zazhi mulu) 香港早期 (1921-1937) 文藝雜誌目錄 (1996) was an early, and still the key, effort to chronicle early Hong Kong literary magazines. Some recorded literary magazines remain only a title and some only few issues now.

²¹ Wong Ting Shek 黃天石, "Seui yeui" 碎蕊 (Fragmented stamen), in *Xianggang Duanpian xiaoshuo bainian jinghua (di er ban)* 香港短篇小說百年精華(第二版) (The Best Hong Kong Short Stories of the Past 100 Years (Second Version)), ed. Liu Yichang 劉以鬯 (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing HK, 2017), 1-16.

²² Wong Ting Shek, "Seui yeui," 11.

²³ The Asia Foundation was formerly established as The Committee for Free Asia in 1951. Renamed in 1954, it continued an unofficial role to affect the cultural activities in East Asia and Southeast Asia on behalf of the American government.

overgeneralized,²⁴ the publications from both sides, especially the widely discussed *Chinese Student Weekly* (Junggwok hoksaang jaubou) 中國學生周報 published by Hong Kong Union Press from 1952 to 1974, natively manufactured self-identified sense of belonging,²⁵ localized subjectivity of literature,²⁶ and liberal modernism.²⁷ Their timely pursuit for aesthetic innovation and independent enlightenment, in parallel with the boom of literary societies (man se) 文社 in the 1960s and the 1970s as Wu Hsuanjen 吳萱人 detailed in his historical monograph, fostered a successive recognition of high literature as testifying the truth, recording reality, responding to the contemporary, positioning the self, civilizing the masses, modifying/resisting ideologies, and so on.²⁸

Between the suspension of *Chinese Student Weekly* to the inauguration of *Fleurs des Lettres*, Hong Kong experienced a multifaceted transition mixed with handover uncertainty, identity hybridity, growth and domination of popular culture, economic liberalization, communicative internationalization, democratic progression, paradigmatic establishment of Hong Kong studies, and so on. An escapist and topophilic ambivalence that haunted the colonial and then postcolonial city, perhaps represented as cultural artifacts with “spatial

²⁴ William Tay 鄭樹森, Lo Wai Luen 盧瑋鑾, and Wong Kai Chee 黃繼持, “Dialogues on Hong Kong Literary Phenomena of the Fifties and Sixties: Reading ‘A Chronology of Hong Kong Vernacular Literature, 1950-1960’” 五、六十年代香港文學現象三人談—導讀《香港新文學年表(一九五零至一九六九年)》, *Chung Wai Literary Quarterly* 28, no. 10 (March 2000): 25-29. Zhou Jun 周俊 and Song Qi 宋琦, “Bentu xing de zhebi yu huigui – cong wenxue qikan kan zhan hou ershi nian Xianggang wenxue” 本土性的遮蔽與回歸——從文學期刊看戰後二十年香港文學 (The Concealment and Return of Locality: A Review of the Hong Kong Literature Two Decades After the War Through a Study of Literary Journals), *Literatures in Chinese*, no. 1 (Feb 2010): 82-83.

²⁵ Pong Ho Ying 龐浩賢, “Chinese and Hongkonger: An Analysis of the Changing Trend of the Identity Consciousness of Hong Kong Youth from the 1960s to 1970s by the Chinese Student Weekly” 「中國人」與「香港人」: 從《中國學生周報》分析 1960-1970 年代香港青年人身份認同意識的轉變思潮, *Hong Kong Journal of Social Science* 56 (Autumn/Winter 2020): 31-37.

²⁶ Wang Yanli 王艷麗, “Zhongguo xuesheng zhoubao yu Xianggang wenxue de bentu hua” 《中國學生周報》與香港文學的本土化 (Chinese Student Weekly and the Localization of Hong Kong Literature), *Modern Chinese Literature Studies*, no. 10 (October 2013): 76-78.

²⁷ Fu Poshek 傅葆石, “Wenhua lengzhan zai Xianggang: Zhongguo xuesheng zhoubao yu yazhou jijin hui (xia)” 文化冷戰在香港:《中國學生周報》與亞洲基金會·1950-1970 (下) (The Cultural Cold War in Hong Kong: The Chinese Student Weekly and the Asia Foundation, 1950-1970 (Part II)), trans. Qin Yameng 秦雅萌 and Liu Lingyan 劉玲燕, *Twenty-first Century* 174 (August 2019): 68-74.

²⁸ Wu Hsuanjen 吳萱人, *Xianggang liu qishi niandai wen she yundong zhengli ji yanjiu* 香港六七十年代文社運動整理及研究 (A Compilation and Research on the Hong Kong Literary Society Movement from the 1960s to the 1970s) (Hong Kong: Provisional Urban Council Public Library, 1999).

disappearance” and “reverse hallucination” in Ackbar Abbas’s term,²⁹ resiliently preserved a spirit of serious literature despite a contraction of readership. This increasingly localized spirit, as an adapted realist sublimity, is a drive to form *Qiu Ying Shi Kan* 秋螢詩刊 (1970-2010; reissued and suspended for four times), *Su Yeh Literature* 素葉文學 (1980-2000), *Hong Kong Literary* 香港文學 (1985-), and then *Fleurs des Lettres* (2006- ; founded nearly a decade after the handover). It was reflected on what the *Fleurs des Lettres* editors proclaimed at the beginning of its first issue:

The editors and designers of *Fleurs des Lettres* were all youngsters, aged less than 30, born in the late 1970s. Before the formation of *Fleurs des Lettres*, we were merely scattered valiant people. There were two reasons for us to be willing to gather together. First, in the process of creating and studying literature, we found the space where we could breathe and grow. We richly and seclusively harvested an indescribable joy that had been lasting for many years and had not faded yet. Therefore, we ambitiously hoped that other people could also experience similar (or absolutely different) joy. Meanwhile, we discovered that this society needed literature much more than before. As we could see, more and more discourses of dullness, hypocrisy, faked correctness, and self-repetition were infiltrating numerous people’s lives. At the same time, estrangement and rupture were gradually enlarged in the Hong Kong society. Invisible manipulations were increasingly subtle and omnipresent. However, literature is, indeed, a complicated communicative process for pursuing rebellion and reflection, and creativity and conversation. Our society needs the intervention of literature.³⁰

In a postcolonial context, the young editors, including Dorothy Hiu Hung Tse 謝曉虹, Tang Siu Wa 鄧小樺, Hon Lai Chu 韓麗珠, Yuen Siu Cheong 袁兆昌, Kwok Sze Wing 郭詩詠 and Cheung Lik Kwan 張歷君, were witnesses of the march against the proposed

²⁹ As Abbas summarizes, Hong Kong experienced a cultural transformation “from reverse hallucination, which sees only desert, to a culture of disappearance, whose appearance is posited on the imminence of the its disappearance.” “Reverse hallucination, according to his cultural analysis, “means *not* seeing what *is* there.” Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1997), 6-7.

The temporary feature of Hong Kong sovereignty that Abbas noticed matches my affective consideration of local residents’ staying or leaving. This choice can effectuate ambiguous representation of oblivion and remembrance, appearance and disappearance, testification and imagination, and so on.

³⁰ Editors, “Bu keneng de wenxue zazhi - Zi Hua fa kan ci” 不可能的文學雜誌——《字花》發刊辭 (An Impossible Literary Magazine - The Opening Speech of *Fleurs des Lettres*), *Fleurs des Lettres*, April 15, 2006, accessed March 27, 2021, <http://zihua.org.hk/oldblog/?cat=2>.

codification of Hong Kong Basic Law Article 23, which gathered 500,000 opponents on July 1, 2003, and of the long-lasting controversy over the elections for the Chief Executive and Legislative Council seats. Literature, recognized as a sacred high art to resist “discourses of dullness, hypocrisy, faked correctness, and self-repetition” that could refer to consumerist writing, offered a sublime metaphysical space for these (currently still) active writers to free themselves from the repressive reality with “enlarging estrangement and rupture” and “increasingly subtle and omnipresent invisible manipulation.” Regarded as a subversive, reflective, creative, and conversational medium, it enabled its print container, the literary magazine *Fleurs des Lettres*, to act as an imagined community against the implied local politics. This imagined community is more ambiguous than the one that Benedict Anderson termed to reify “nation, nationality, nationalism,” which have been “proved notoriously difficult to define, let alone to analyse.”³¹ It is, beyond the hardly identified belonging of Hongkongers (to the United Kingdom, mainland China, Hong Kong, a mix of them, or a fabricated utopia) and a simple reflection of reality, a threefold hybrid of affective residuals: topophilic, philophilic, and bibliophilic. This means, in a rather poststructuralist sense, an intangible trajectory of love and intimacy towards not only an identifiably conceptualized Hong Kong, but also the transformative power of knowledge and the habitual exchange of creativity through reading and writing, shaped the shared reception of writers and readers for the birth of *Fleurs des Lettres*. However, such an understanding of representing the real through literature is not homogeneous. Local mutation and individual decisions could vary the production of reflection, multiplying strategies and senses different from those applied by other Hong Kong media practitioners, May Fourth realists, and the ancient founders of the sublime tradition of practical writing. These set the necessity of viewing the mechanism of producing *Fleurs des Lettres* from outside to inside.

2. An outsider’s perspective regarding a post-millennial literary container

Kwun Moon Nam 關夢南,³² as the founder of *Qiu Ying Shi Kan*, wrote in its

³¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006), 3.

³² Kwun Moon Nam 關夢南, “Qiu Ying Shi Kan jieshao: chuangkan yu” 《秋螢詩刊》介紹：創刊語

inaugural issue, “While the cultures of the East and West are intensely exchanging, we shall not absurdly express our societal life through writing about the meaningless wind, flowers, snow, and moon. We also cannot ride a donkey or a horse to walk through a superhighway. Therefore, learning from the West is crucial.” Since the 1950s, the “West” had been urging the Taiwanese poets, such as Lo Fu 洛夫, Zhang Mo 張默, and Ya Xian 痲弦 (the three founders of *The Epoch Poetry Quarterly* 創世紀詩刊), to modernize the ways of preserving their societal life; whereas Kwun emphasized this in his poetry magazine in the early 1970s. Literary fashions vary across time and regional boundaries, attracting scholars to connect, differentiate, and summarize. Due to the Sino-British Joint Declaration signed on 19 December, 1984, (post-)coloniality began replacing the East-West division, as the hottest topic to interpret the cultural phenomena of Hong Kong. This covers literature written in Chinese³³ and English,³⁴ film,³⁵ architecture,³⁶ fine art,³⁷ other artistic forms, and synthetic cultural analysis.³⁸

As the grand methodology to conceptualize Hong Kong, (post)colonialism, like Edward Said’s “Orientalism,”³⁹ is not a pure theory to sketch binary opposition, power hierarchy, and overgeneralization. It can obtain a larger theoretical volume through incorporating with malleable contexts. However, in a highly specific regard, quotidian locality and personal affects are more precise and succinct ideas than (post)coloniality to uncover the production of culture. Since always returning to political reflection for a

(The Introduction of Qiu Ying Shi Kan: The Inaugural Words), Qiu Ying Shi Kan, April 1970, accessed April 20, 2021, <http://www.hkbobby.com/qypoetry/introduction.htm>.

³³ Xu Shiyong 徐詩穎, “Ershi shiji jiushi niandai yilai Xianggang wenxue wenhua shenfen rentong yanjiu pipan - yi bentuxing yu Zhongguoxing de neizai maodun wei hexin” 二十世紀九十年代以來香港文學文化身份認同研究批判——以本土性與中國性的內在矛盾為核心 (A Critique of the Recognition of the Cultural Identity of Hong Kong Literature from the 1990s - On the Internal Conflicts Between Locality and Chineseness), *Theoretical Studies in Literature and Art* 37, no. 3 (May 2017): 29-36.

³⁴ Brian Hooper, *Voices in the Heart: Postcolonialism and Identity in Hong Kong Literature* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003).

³⁵ Lo Kwai Cheung, “A Border Line Case: Ethnic Politics and Gangster Films in Post-1997 Hong Kong,” *Postcolonial Studies* 10, no. 4 (Nov 2007): 431-446.

³⁶ Liza Wing Man Kam, *Reconfiguration of ‘the Stars and the Queen’: A Quest for the Interrelationship between Architecture and Civic Awareness in Post-colonial Hong Kong* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2015).

³⁷ David Clarke, *Hong Kong Art: Culture and Decolonization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

³⁸ Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*.

³⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

thematic overview is not helpful to explain the indomitable sustenance of a print tradition of witnessing, this paper will continue with the time-geography of post-millennial Hong Kong literature and the subjective factors that move *Fleurs des Lettres* forward.

Time-geography is a still-developing idea concerning individual actions and interactions across a temporal trajectory, different from M. M. Bakhtin's "chronotope" (also a time-space complex), which is restricted to "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature."⁴⁰ As Bo Lenntorp highlights from Tosten Hägerstrand's orthodox definition, the examination of time-geography holds two tasks: (1) "to receive and bring into contact knowledge from highly distinct scientific areas and from everyday praxis" and (2) "to reveal relations, the nature of which escape researchers as soon as the object of research is separated from its given milieu in order to study it in isolation, experimentally or in some other way distilled."⁴¹ It can transcend a narrow understanding of text through juxtaposing the imagined space inside and the real space outside. From this perspective, a time-geographic study in Hong Kong literature, despite not in a scientific (nor social scientific) discipline, shall start from subjectively experienced and relational time-space, instead of Bakhtin's narratively represented time-space.

According to my literature review based on a literary scholar's gaze, the literature produced in modern Hong Kong is strategically anti-oblivious for retaining subjectivity,⁴² geopolitically periphery and hence receptively subordinated,⁴³ cross-cultural, transnational and consciously local as a tool for tracing self-identity,⁴⁴ and (post)colonially

⁴⁰ M. M. Bakhtin, "Forms of time and of the chronotope in the novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. M. M. Bakhtin, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 84.

⁴¹ Bo Lenntorp, "Time-Geography - at the End of its Beginning," *GeoJournal* 48, no. 3 (July 1999): 155.

⁴² Chan Chi Tak, "Forgotten and Anti-forgotten: a Side View on the History of Hong Kong Literature of Forgotten" 「遺忘」與「反遺忘」：香港文學遺忘史的幾個側面, *Thought and Words: Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences* 56, no. 2 (June 2018): 7-34; Yip Cheuk Wai 葉偉璋, "Bonding of Hau Ruhua and Hong Kong Literature: Further Discuss How Hong Kong Literature Resists the Oblivion" 侯汝華與香港文學的結緣－兼論香港文學如何抵抗遺忘, *The Bulletin of The Department of Chinese Literature, National Taiwan University* 69 (June 2020): 199-238.

⁴³ Amanda Yuk-Kwan Hsu 許旭筠, "Reading Hong Kong Literature from the Periphery of Modern Chinese Literature: A Case Study of Liu Yichang" 從現代中國文學的邊緣看香港文學研究：以劉以鬯研究為例, *Journal of Modern Literature in Chinese* 10, no. 1 (Summer 2010): 177-186.

⁴⁴ Ka-ki Wong 王家琪, "China Travel Writings in Early 1980s Hong Kong and Cultural Identity: A

uncertain and (dis)illusional.⁴⁵ This gaze is somehow bounded by an impulse of generalization. It could not reveal the individually specific side of interpretation laid on pre-production of text. Literary scholars are usually only able to reach and expound the *déjà vu* text. However, witnessing with accumulation of publicly hidden stories seems to make a critic's review more holistic, authentic, powerful, and persuasive than those who disconnect their interpretation from lives and activities. For instance, some distinguished literary scholars of Chinese contemporary literature nowadays, such as Chen Sihe 陳思和, Huang Ziping 黃子平 and Ji Hongzhen 季紅真 who participated in the Hangzhou Conference to urge the production of root-searching literature in the mid-1980s, obtained their discursive power from connecting to writers and engaging in literary events. From my personal experience as an editor of *Fleurs des Lettres* in Hong Kong since 2018, the internal details of this local magazine's first decade are only available as secondary sources, through which I can merely establish partial authority upon superficial textual and contextual analysis. Before 2018, even if I interviewed with some editors, their answers, which might selectively foreground their most impressed fragments in response to my limited questions, would probably be incomplete to puzzle out an empirical mechanism that requires connoisseurship to access. Drawn from my reading in general, I would begin by enquiring into the single-word titles from Issue 1 to Issue 12: *Buy* (Maai) 買, *Evilness* (Ok) 惡, *Cool* (Song) 爽, *Fake* (Ga) 假, *Color/Sex* (Sik) 色, *Fun* (Lok) 樂, *Open* (Hoi) 開, *Rotten* (Laan) 爛, *Wood* (Muk) 木, *Ten/Take* (Sap) 拾, *Hot* (Yit) 熱, and *Bite* (Ngaau) 咬. These issues with cover designs in a similar style (see Figure 1) seem to holistically deliver the charm of textual polysemy. Surrounding diverse extension of a themed idea, they experimentally practised the editors' value and concern as mentioned in the inaugural issue such as "constructing Hong Kong literature," offering the fun of "creating and studying literature," counteracting against the overwhelming "discourses of dullness, hypocrisy, faked correctness, and self-repetition," rebelliously, reflectively, communicatively and

Study on the Su Yeh Literature" 從八十年代初香港作家的中國遊記論本土的身份認同——以《素葉文學》為例, *The Bulletin of The Department of Chinese Literature, National Taiwan University* 50 (September 2015): 77-115.

⁴⁵ Kwok-kan Tam, "Identity of the In-Between in Contemporary Hong Kong Literary Writings," in *The Englishized Subject: Postcolonial Writings in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia* (Springer: Singapore, 2019), 15-17.

creatively intervening into social affairs, and “actively seeking for exchanges of thoughts and works between mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong” towards a dynamic globe.⁴⁶



⁴⁶ Editors, *Fleurs des Lettres*, <http://zihua.org.hk/oldblog/?cat=2>.



Figure 1: The covers of *Flours des Lettres* from Issue 1 to Issue 12

More specifically, from an outsider's view, the editorial organization of manuscripts for the first issue playfully transvalues the normalized behavior of "buying." Upon an explicit call for buying this new literary magazine, the internal interpretations of this commercial activity in a highly capitalist society by four local writers (Lo Kwai Cheung 羅貴祥, Chan Lai Kuen 陳麗娟, Lee Wai Yi 李維怡, and Tong Ching Siu 湯禎兆) and two artists (Terence Cheung and Tozer Pak 白雙全) paradoxically negate the necessity of material consumption in response to the presumed alienating nature of Hong Kong. "To buy or not to buy?" appears to be an existential question with a strong accent of Marxist/leftist criticism. In Lee Wai Yi's story "The Lyric of Slowness" (Seng seng maan) 聲聲慢, the protagonist lives in a flat of *tong lau* (a kind of tenement building mainly built between the late nineteenth century to the 1960s in Hong Kong), where encounters a conflict with urban redevelopment. Her grandfather rented the flat and then her father, who works as a garbage truck driver, "decided to buy it after she was born."⁴⁷ As a student who will take the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination⁴⁸ next year, she voluntarily

⁴⁷ Wai-Yi Lee 李維怡, "Sheng sheng man" 聲聲慢 (The Lyric of Slowness), *Flours des Lettres* 1 (April 2006): 22.

⁴⁸ The Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (abbreviated as HKCEE) was a public examination held between 1974 and 2011, basically set for the secondary school Form 5 students who intended to further their study on a competitive basis. At the time of Lee's writing, only 25000 among 74000 day-school candidates can obtain a Form 6 place, (according to The Education Group of *Ming Pao* on 9 August, 2006) through which, after two years of study, the qualified ones can take the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination to compete for only around 10000 funded university quotas. The Education Group of *Ming Pao*, "Shi you zhuangyuan 25 ren po jilu chengji

fights for same-district resettlement with a social worker and meanwhile disputes with her father for selling their flat. Property, as an exchange of surplus value, is here, as usually represented in other local creative works, revealing the upper class' control over and deprivation of the lower class in Hong Kong. Its skyrocketing price due to speculative investment and limited supply founded on the scarcity of land and the government's failed housing policy strengthened economic determinism that subordinates those who cannot earn enough to buy for satisfaction. Consequently, the capitalist ideology upon a suspected collusion between the bureaucratic government and the hegemonic property developers prompts youngsters with less socially imposed burdens to provoke class struggle but contradictorily frustrates them with the invincible stakeholders empowered by a money-oriented hierarchy (property companies / Urban Renewal Authority → the father → the protagonist / the social worker). Overall, Lee's criticism closely corresponds to the creative focus on local humanities of *Fleurs des Lettres*, and this correspondence can be deemed a successful cooperation between the invited author and the magazine organizers (despite not disclosed and hence unknown).

Through a poetic genre, Chan Lai Kuen's "Today I Enter the City, Having Bought —" (Ngo gamtin jeun sing, maailiu —) 我今天進城，買了一 introduces another local time-space related to "buying." In the first two stanzas, she wrote:

Today I enter the city, having bought —

One couple of macaws

One pair of sea-lion shoes

One catty of giraffe meat

Two South Pacific Islands

One Digimon

One Tang Taizong

Four modernizations

Home Affairs Bureau

liangji hua 2 wan ren pengdan" 十優狀元 25 人破紀錄 成績兩極化 2 萬人捧蛋 (A Record-breaking 25 10A Champions and 20000 Students with Zero Mark Reveals a Polarized Result), *Ming Pao*, August 9, 2006, accessed June 2, 2021, <http://web.archive.org/web/20060823102136/http://hk.news.yahoo.com:80/060808/12/1r32g.html>.

Paris and Buzz Lightyear⁴⁹

Reminiscent of Xixi's 西西 experimental poem "Can we say" (Ho bat hoyi syut) 可不可以說 (1982), which playfully mismatches the classifiers fixed in Chinese language,⁵⁰ the second stanza trickily lists out seven sets of objects with quantifiers and classifiers. Targeted by an idiosyncratic narrator with special wants of collecting in an urban space, these "buyable" objects are mostly unbuyable. Following the mostly buyable macaws which are native to Central and South America, the sea-lion shoes and the giraffe meat seem to challenge the identification of legally imported animals and smuggled animals, both as tradable goods in an international liberalist entrepot. After imagining the potential of privatizing the nationally owned lands elsewhere, the narrator jumps to purchasing a virtually existing "Digimon" (which, like a Pokémon, belongs to a Japanese anime / manga about growing evolvable pets for fights), the historical figure "Tang Taizong" (whose reign from 626 to 649 BC in the Tang dynasty marks a summit of Chinese civilization), and "four modernizations" (supposed to be those of agriculture, industry, defense, and science and technology first suggested by Zhou Enlai 周恩來 in 1954 and then concretely practiced by Deng Xiaoping 鄧小平 since 1977). Returning from Japan, Ancient China and Modern China, Chan Lai Kuen mentions the Home Affairs Bureau of Hong Kong to deliver a wish of taking over the authority of coordinating between various stakeholders. According to its official website, the Bureau is positively committed to (1) "facilitating the administration of Hong Kong in line with changing needs and aspirations"; (2) "fostering the spirit of community participation in public affairs"; (3) "building Hong Kong as a vibrant, caring and harmonious community"; and (4) "enriching life through supporting and promoting the development of the arts, culture, sports and recreation, preservation of cultural heritage and beautification of the environment."⁵¹ Supposedly, its multifaceted malfunction that failed

⁴⁹ Lai-Kuen Chan 陳麗娟, "Wo jintian jin cheng, maile —" 我今天進城·買了一 (Today I Enter the City, Having Bought —), *Fleurs des Lettres* 1 (April 2006): 16.

⁵⁰ In "Can we say," there are 6 sets of mismatched classifiers. Each set has 4 verses in the pattern "one ... of ..." following "Can we say." For example, the fourth set is "Can we say / a flower of umbrella / a bunch of snow / a bottle of galaxy / a gourd of universe." Xixi 西西, "Ke bu keyi shuo" 可不可以說 (Can We Say), in *Xixi shiji 1959-1999* 西西詩集 1959-1999 (The collection of Xixi's poems 1959-1999) (Taipei: Hongfan Bookstore, 2014), 10.

⁵¹ Home Affairs Bureau, "Vision & Mission," hab.gov.hk, March 29, 2021, accessed June 4, 2021, https://www.hab.gov.hk/en/about_us/vision.htm. This bureau was reformed to be "Home and

to resolve series of political controversies fostered the poet's eagerness to buy it up for a thorough reform. Without illustrating her political wish upon the right of abode issue in 1999, the 1 July March against the national security bill (Article 23) in 2003, continuously postponed universal suffrage, repeated interpretation of the Basic Law made by the National People's Congress, and so on, this poem abruptly ends the second stanza with two western symbols alliterated with their first Chinese character “巴.” (“巴黎” and “巴斯光年” correspond to “Paris” and “Buzz Lightyear” respectively.) The unrelated metropolis of France and American cartoon character finish a montage of fragmented and hybrid experiences that can well conclude the illogical, transnational, commodity-driven, egocentric, and arbitrary feature of Hong Kong.

Besides Lee's short story and Chan's poem, Tong Ching Siu reflected on the empty reproduced shopping malls in Hong Kong through an essay, Lo Kwai Cheung contributed a poem to satire the commercial culture identified as “flush after use,” and Terence Cheung and Tozer Pak used illustrations and collages to murkily and ambiguously respond to “buy.” Apart from the themed section, the first issue of *Fleurs des Lettres* has many other columns to include creative works of established writers (“Planting Words” [jik ji] 植字) and of new writers (“The Practice of Planting Words” [jik ji linjaap] 植字練習), book reviews (“Reading A Cart of Books” [du kyatche syu] 讀一車書), literary criticisms (“The Sound and the Fury” [hyunhiu yu choudung] 喧囂與躁動), and translations (“The Moon of Everywhere” [seifong yutleung] 四方月亮). These columns include various genres and also the voices of writers with mainland Chinese (Ding Ding 丁丁, Wang Ziping 王子平, and Luo Gang 羅崗) and Taiwanese (Luo Yijun 駱以軍 and Leo Ou-fan Lee 李歐梵) backgrounds. The subsequent issues follow a similar structure and format with flexibility to make changes.

Having published for two years (12 issues), *Fleurs des Lettres* adopted a new style for its covers to contain another mood of reflexivity. The white heading was cancelled and, from Issue 13 to Issue 18, the designers used creative photos to foreground the surreal fantasy of imagining reality. (See Figure 2) From Issue 19 onward, the covers returned to an illustration style, like Issue 1 to Issue 12, but invited various local artists to offer their

Young Affairs Bureau” in 2022.

own visual interpretation, such as Wong Ping 黃炳 for *Capital-lettered Comrades* (Daaise tungji) 大寫同志 (Issue 45), Angela Su 徐世琪 for *The Microscopic Body* (Yuksan meitai) 肉身微體 (Issue 55), and Peter Bird 江田雀 for *Is There any Class for Creative Writing?* (Chongyi se jok yaumou fo?) 創意寫作有冇課? (Issue 63). There were only few exceptions, such as Issue 50 with a cover photo of three featured Hong Kong female writers Wong Pik Wan 黃碧雲, Chung Ling Ling 鍾玲玲, and Sharon Chung 鍾曉陽, before a serial attempt starting from Issue 74.



Figure 2: The covers of *Fleurs des Lettres* from Issue 13 to Issue 18

Moreover, the titles of *Fleurs des Lettres* after Issue 12 were no longer fixed to one Chinese character. Diverse titles open up multiple reflections on current concerns, with a high proportion explicitly related to local and comparative politics, including *Go, Go to 1989* (Jau, jau dou 1989) 走·走到 1989 (Issue 19), *I am more radical than Hong Kong*

(Ngo bei Heung Gong gik jeun) 我比香港激進 (Issue 26), *The Fighters with Pens against the Waves!* (Jindau je, batgon gik long!) 戰鬥者，筆桿擊浪！(Issue 31), *No One Should be Elected* (Yat go duo batnang syun) 一個都不能選 (Issue 33), *The Record of Semi-Handover* (Bun wuigwai gei) 半回歸紀 (Issue 38), *The Politics of Silence* (Jingmak dik jingji) 靜默的政治 (Issue 39), *Countdown 1984* (Dou sou 1984) 倒數 1984 (Issue 51), *The Memo of Occupation Incidents* (Jimling sidin) 佔領事典 (Issue 53), and *2047 Patriotic Literature* (2047 oi gwok manhok) 2047 愛國文學 (Issue 62). Comparatively less emphasized, there were also topics focusing on language and literature, such as the problems of Hong Kong language education (Issue 29), an introduction of new writers (Issue 34), the Polish female poet Wisława Szymborska (Issue 37), a memorial of the Hong Kong writer Yesi 也斯 (Issue 42), an illustrated catalogue of literature in 2014 (Issue 47), and the conversation with literary works and reviews of three female writers (Issue 50).

Art for social sake seems to be the core value that *Fleurs des Lettres* insisted throughout the issue. It both kept its nature as a literary magazine (which is a qualified medium for the “project grant” application from its core funder Hong Kong Arts Development Council) and aestheticized political thoughts for acceptance (close to, but in a much smaller scale, the cultural fever represented via literature in the second half of 1980s in mainland China that propagated a radical upgrade of civilization⁵²). Although the columns “Planting Words,” “The Practice of Planting Words,” and “The Sound and the Fury” only stayed until Issue 43, this print medium with a communicative wish across national borders still accepted submissions of creative writings and reviews from new and established, Hong Kong and overseas writers. Certainly, if one peruses *Fleurs des Lettres* issue by issue, there will be more details to unveil, especially the coincidentally represented / implied political events, the stylistic delineation of reality, the technical synthesis of

⁵² In particular, Jing Wang interprets “the cultural and literary elite’s utopian discourse of the 1980s in its various manifestations” as “their decade-long ideological negotiations with the Party and their engagement in the debates over the aesthetics through which broader issues of cultural politics were addressed.” Jing Wang, *High Culture Fever: Politics, Aesthetics, and Ideology in Deng’s China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 3.

These manifestations passed through a “methodology fever” in 1985 and 1986 and intensified the conflict between the socialist utopian discourses and social elites’ own projects until 4 June, 1989. (1-2)

myriad writings and illustrations within and across issues, correlations with local literary dynamics and personal literary histories, exceptional cases, and so on. From a methodological consideration, one can further include reader-response or sociological approaches to obtain qualitative and quantitative understanding of reception. For instance, *Fleurs des Lettres* took two surveys in 2009 and 2021 through questionnaires. (The questions and results of the former one have been untraceable, whereas the questions of the latter one is translated and attached in Annex 1.) Besides, the reporters of *HK01*, a Hong Kong online news portal, published an article “Those who read *Fleurs des Lettres*” (Nase duk Jifa dik yan) 那些讀《字花》的人 to record three readers’ perceptions about *Fleurs des Lettres* at its tenth-anniversary party in 2016, such as Miss Fok’s comments “the content and style [of *Fleurs des Lettres*] are rather fresh and not boring” and “[in its inaugural period] the magazines in this kind were rare and its design and typesetting were attractive.”⁵³

However, despite these multifarious efforts, the core of the subjective formation of *Fleurs des Lettres* is still transcendental. A simple explanation of the unreachability of this formation that does not require the aid of Kantian vocabulary is the absence of participation in the course of analysis. A literary scholar, as an outsider, can only dovetail personal experiences and already-formed text to make a guess. How about being an editor? Although they draw big pictures together and can keep smooth information circulation through internal communication, the necessity of division-of-labor would cause uncontrollable, unexpected, and discordant outcomes that they could not decipher. Therefore, while I share my involvement in the production of Issue 81 (a significant political example) in the following section, I can merely play my role and speak within my assigned duties. For the readers of this research article, sorry to say, you are still restricted to second-hand interpretation despite a closer peep.

3. An insider’s limited gaze

⁵³ Jiaoyang Cheng, and Chan Fung king, “Naxie du Zi Hua de ren” 那些讀《字花》的人 (Those Who Read *Fleurs des Lettres*), *HK01*, April 30, 2016, accessed June 8, 2021, <https://www.hk01.com/%E8%97%9D%E6%96%87/18780/%E9%82%A3%E4%BA%9B%E8%AE%80-%E5%AD%97%E8%8A%B1-%E7%9A%84%E4%BA%BA>.

A literary magazine in a city is a space within a space, and this space can reversely contain imagined spaces corresponding to real spaces, like a *mise-en-abyme* structure.⁵⁴ The sophisticated intertextuality between the real and the fictional, the contemporary and the diachronic, the here and the elsewhere, the empirical and the referred, the memorial and the affective, and so on requires both intra- and inter-subjective interrogations to illuminate.

As an editor, I suppose the time geography of this identity is different from that of a scholar, as certain ways of self-reflection and interaction are unique. This differentiation does not mean to meticulously deconstruct the assemblage of me but highlights the politics of focalization. From the first day I was invited to be a freelance editor by Kwan Tin Lam 關天林, Chief Editor of *Fleurs des Lettres*, and Louise Law 羅樂敏, then Director of Spicy Fish Cultural Production Limited 水煮魚文化製作有限公司 (a limited company in charge of the publication of *Fleurs des Lettres* and other local literary projects), an editorial mindset has partaken my daily life, shaping my subjective tendency and selecting related time-spaces to access. From 2018 to now, I have been paying particular attention to the timelines of publication and deadlines of assigned tasks, ideas related to current and upcoming issues, textual techniques, potential interviewees and writers, local and international literary activities, referable media and materials, readers' feedback, and new possibilities of development. I realize that there are other competitive online and print magazines, such as *P-articles* 無形·虛詞 (2018-), *O-square* 方圓 (2019-),⁵⁵ *Hong Kong Literary, Voice and Verse Poetry Magazine* 聲韻詩刊 (2011-), *Tai Tau Choi Literature Monthly Magazine* 大頭菜文藝月刊 (2015-), *RES()NATE: The Cantonese Literary Magazine* 迴響粵語文學期刊 (2020-), *Breakazine* (2009-), and *Sample* (2016-2022).⁵⁶ They form independent ecosystems (or sometimes called “mountain strongholds”

⁵⁴ By Gregory Minissale's definition, *mise-en-abyme* is “a process of representation within representation.” Gregory Minissale, *Framing Consciousness in Art: Transcultural Perspectives* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 49.

⁵⁵ Both *P-articles* and *O-square* were founded by Tang Siu Wa, one of the founders of *Fleurs des Lettres*, under the administration of Hong Kong Literature House 香港文學館. The former one is published in both print and online forms: one with the Chinese title “無形” (shapelessness) attached to the life and fashion periodical *City Magazine* and one with the Chinese title “虛詞” (empty words), respectively. It accepts short reviews and creative works, whereas the latter one only targets on long writings.

⁵⁶ Both *Breakazine* and *Sample* do not mainly focus on literature, but their thematic designs are somehow similar to those of *Fleurs des Lettres*, especially of its recent series.

[saan tau] 山頭 for their factional feature) to give birth to new writers and sustain the creative careers and fames of active ones. In addition, I would keep my eyes on multiple indicators of personal literary achievement, especially participation in literary projects and activities (both local as the RTHK radio series “Thirteen Invitations to Hong Kong Literature” 香港文學十三邀⁵⁷ and the regular poetry meetings of *Voice and Verse Poetry Magazine* and international as Iowa Writers’ Workshop, International Writers’ Workshop, and the International Poetry Nights in Hong Kong) and acquisition of key local literary awards (including two held by Hong Kong Public Libraries [Hong Kong Biennial Awards for Chinese Literature 香港中文文學雙年獎 and Awards for Creative Writing in Chinese 中文文學創作獎], The Dream of the Red Chamber Award 紅樓夢獎, Youth Literary Awards 青年文學獎, Global Youth Chinese Literary Award 全球華文青年文學獎, University Literary Award 大學文學獎, and City Literary Awards 城市文學獎⁵⁸) and overseas literary awards (such as Nobel Prize in Literature, the Newman Prize for Chinese Literature, and China Times Literary Prize 時報文學獎). These indicators can compose a private sense of canonization prior to the tardily compiled literary history, helping literary editors to grasp a pluralistic but holistic image of contemporary marrow for representation.

In parallel to the literary realm, the broader social realm also determines my editorial perspectives. During the production of the series “Anthropocene” (Yan gaan) 人間 (Issues 74 to 79) and “My City Elsewhere” (Ngo sing joi tafong) 我城在他方 (Issues 81 to 86) and the special issue “Open a Way” (Hoi lou) 開路 (Issue 87) from July 2018 to September 2020, suffocating political events intensively happened in Hong Kong. Since Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor 林鄭月娥, the fourth Chief Executive of Hong Kong, proposed the legislation of the Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal

⁵⁷ “Thirteen Invitations to Hong Kong Literature” is a radio program of Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK), hosted by Leung Lee Chi 梁莉姿, Li Chiu Chun 李昭駿, and Benedict Lee Ho Him 李顯謙. The three post-1990 Hong Kong writers interviewed the core members of local literary organizations and groups for the first series and young Hong Kong-born writers for the second series. Each of the series has 13 episodes.

⁵⁸ Global Youth Chinese Literary Award, University Literary Award, and City Literary Awards are set for university and college students. There is a growing trend of holding literary competitions for this target group. The recently initiated ones are the Hang Seng University Award for Chinese Literature 恆大中文文學獎 founded by The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong in 2018 and Wollongong Literary Award 伍倫貢文學獎 founded by UOW College Hong Kong in 2021.

Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill in early 2019 due to the case of Chan Tong Kai 陳同佳 who murdered his pregnant girlfriend in Taiwan and then fled to Hong Kong, conflicts had not stopped and turned increasingly radical. Within few months in the second half of 2019, the tear gas, rubber bullets and bean bag rounds that end the peaceful protest on 12 June, the Yuen Long attack on 21 July (an indiscriminate but dilatorily interrupted attack of around 700 white-shirted gangsters with mental rods) and the Prince Edward station attack on 31 August (allegedly causing deaths of demonstrators due to the brutality of the police) evoked a cynical social atmosphere against the government and the police. Although corporeal confrontation dwindled after the outbreak of COVID19 pandemic and the enactment of the security law, a resistance culture maintained by the anti-government “yellow ribbons” (wong si) 黃絲 (in contrast to the pro-government “blue ribbons” [laam si] 藍絲) had firmly occurred for strategic bargaining. With distinctive anthems (such as “Glory to Hong Kong” [Yun winggwong gwai Heung Gong] 願榮光歸香港), representative icons (such as LIHKG Pig [lin jyu] 連豬 and LIHKG Dog [lin gau] 連狗), slogans (such as “Liberate Hong Kong, the revolution of our times” [Gwongfuk Heung Gong, si doi gaak ming 光復香港, 時代革命), business models (such as the operation of Yellow Economic Circle [wongsik ging jai hyun] 黃色經濟圈), propaganda strategies, and funding systems, this highly creative culture is supported by a majority of local art practitioners who share a wish of freeing Hong Kong.

Concerning the editorial members of *Fleurs des Lettres*, at the time of writing this paper in mid-2021, I supposed most of them would identify themselves as a yellow ribbon, whereas I tended to recognize myself as a neutral “green ribbon.” However, our similar-level intellectual background (over half of us held a PhD degree, from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Baptist University, Fudan University, and King’s College London) and our shared support for innovative high culture against consumerist formulae, clichés, and obscurantism kept us rationally and aesthetically united within harmonious heteroglossia. From my joining at Issues 74 to that writing moment, the editorial team varied little and hence the editorial style was rather consistent. At the beginning, there were Angus Lee Yat Hong 李日康, Lee Chiu Chun 李昭駿, Eddie Cheung Wai Sum 張煒森, Wong Yi 黃怡, Tang Lok Yee 鄧樂兒, Lok Sin Ming 駱倩鳴,

and Law Wai Yat 羅維日, headed by Kwan Tin Lam. Later on, only Lau Pen 劉平 and Janice Li Ka 李嘉 joined the team, in place of Law and Janice.

Now I would turn to a genetic epistemology of literary magazine that incorporates our historiographies upon intertwined live experiences. The gene in this regard is founded on locality, which cannot be straightforwardly identified like the locality in the scholarly discourses of grand literary history, such as that deeming geographical belonging the key to classify Hong Kong writers (Wong Wai Leung 1985).⁵⁹ From a microscopic view, I returned to my participation in producing the “My City Elsewhere” series, which clearly practiced the holy mission of literature through responding to local reality. Bearing in mind the aforementioned quotidian and academic understanding, I entered a meeting on 23 June, 2019, a few days after the 16 June Demonstration with close to 200 million people publicly calling for the withdrawal of the extradition bill. Upon some rough ideas discussed in the last meeting and the structure drafted by Chief Editor, we thought further about six themed landscapes: islands, mysteriously enclosed areas (*sīmā-bandha* / gitgaai) 結界, ruins, skylines, undergrounds, and mountains. From the perspective of Shih Shu-mei’s 史書美 “comparative studies of relationship,” Chief Editor directed us to focus on the “relational network” of text *per se*. As “the worldliness and specificity of literature is located at its interaction with different historical spaces,” the series was proposed to comprise translations, interdisciplinary criticisms about geopolitically related phenomena, field-trip reports, and book reviews. Under political gloom, I could feel that all the discussants intended to explore the allegorical potential of spaces, with higher sensitivity to current politics than while working on the last series “Anthropocene,” which took six sorts of “people” (witnesses, rebels, pilgrims, reproducers, disabled people, and sleepwalkers) as subjective objects to reveal “accumulated observations 21 years after the handover of Hong

⁵⁹ According to Wong Wai Leung’s 黃維樑 groundbreaking monograph *First Exploration of Hong Kong Literature* (Heung Gong man hok cho taam) 香港文學初探 (1985), Hong Kong writers can be divided into four types: “First, the ones who were born, grew, wrote, and became famous in Hong Kong; second, the ones who were born abroad, but grew, wrote, and became famous in Hong Kong; third, the ones who were born and grew abroad, but wrote and became famous in Hong Kong; fourth, the ones who were born, grew, started writing, and even became famous abroad, but then sojourned or stayed in Hong Kong and continued to write.” Wai-Leung Wong 黃維樑, *Heung Gong man hok cho taam* 香港文學初探 (First Exploration of Hong Kong Literature) (Hong Kong: Wah Hon Publishing, 1985), 16-17.

Kong.”⁶⁰ The textually represented six landscapes appeared to expectedly act as, taking Henri Lefebvre’s terms on monuments,⁶¹ real social (or “perceived-conceived-lived”) spaces⁶² with memorial condensation of historical vicissitudes, affects, and motions.⁶³ They could both narratively record events and performatively speak for acts.

In the discussion of the first issue of the new series, we followed the usual procedure of first philosophizing the core theme (with a lot of definition, conceptualization, stratification, interpretation, summarization, categorization, referencing, justification, and so on) and then brainstorm about some possible content, determine a list of potential writers and interviewees, and complete a division of labor. Concerning the theme “islands,” which Chief Editor quintessentially related to “closeness and openness” and “independence and connection,” the first subject came to our mind was probably Hong Kong, whose clear-cut borders (the surrounding sea and Shenzhen River) and deep-port-favored contours attracted British colonizers’ occupation. As also a holistic historical concept beyond Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Peninsula, Hong Kong further aroused our ambivalence about belonging to Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, and / or mainland China. This belonging is a compound of various postcolonial historiographies in conflict, subject to personal witnesses and beliefs. For me, as a local resident born in Hong Kong in 1987 living with my citizenship-obtained father and mother who came from Guangdong in the late 1970s

⁶⁰ The summary of the “Anthropocene” series is available on an official website of *Fleurs des Lettres*. *Fleurs des Lettres*, “Zi Hua di 74-79 qi ‘renjian xilie’ taozhuang” 《字花》第 74-79 期「人間系列」套裝 (The “Anthropocene” Series Set: Issues 74 to 79 of *Fleurs des Lettres*), Spicy Fish Cultural Production Ltd., accessed June 15, 2021, <https://spicyfish.myshopify.com/products/zihua74-79>.

⁶¹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. D. Nicholson Smith (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991).

⁶² Andrea Connor summarized Lefebvre’s three intersect-able kinds of social space: “perceived space produced through spatial practices that ‘secrete society’ through everyday routines, networks and mappings of space; conceived space, that is the space of abstract, rational and conceptual mappings of space by architects, urban planners and bureaucrats; and lived space, that is the space in which the real and imagined space interest – a space of ‘passion and action’ that can encompass both the real and imagined space of any place and through which resistance to the dominant conceptual mapping of space is articulated.” Andrea Connor, *The Political Afterlife of Sites of Monumental Destruction: Reconstructing Affect in Mostar and New York* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 10.

⁶³ Lefebvre regards monumental space as a “social condenser.” Although he differentiates between the complexity of a spatial work and the complexity of a text, I tend to support that real space and textual space share similar expressive and practical possibilities in this paper. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 222.

and Fujian in the early 1980s respectively, I heard a lot of first-hand stories about a backward China and experienced a major shift of mainstream ideology from “loving the nation but not the party” before 1997 to the confrontation between procedural patriotism and pro-colonial nostalgia / pro-local autonomism after 1997. My growth in Hong Kong for over 20 years, my PhD study in London about Chinese educated-youth literature after the Down-to-the-Countryside Movement (from the late 1960s to the 1970s), and my work in the Chinese department of Sun Yat-sen University for 3 years shaped my perspectives as rather cosmopolitan and anti-radical in spite of occasional discomfort with the local spread of the Central Government’s influence, mainland Chinese culture, and Mandarin usage. Tricky, my mild view due to “genetic” and empirical hybridity was somehow congruous with the implicitness of a high literary magazine with government sponsorship. From the ideas of Kamau Brathwaite’s “tidalectics,” Epeli Hau‘ofa’s “a sea of islands” in place of “islands in a far sea,” and Carl Schmitt’s “world history as the history of wars between the oceanic hegemony and the continental hegemony” to the facts of the great wall built in the disputed Nansha islands, the foundation of the Principality of Sealand and the Republic of Rose Island on artificial platforms, and the refuge of Crimean peninsula for exile Soviet Union writers and artists, the editorial team diversified relevant discourses, instead of rigidly connecting the ideas and facts to (in)dependence, legal autonomy, legitimacy of revolutionary actions, coalition of various yellow-ribbon parties, propaganda and resistance strategies, and other pro-democratic hot topics. Even the touches on Hong Kong topics were rather anecdotic. We mentioned the Great Clearance (Qian jie) 遷界 of Hong Kong (from 1661 to 1683) in the Qing Dynasty, the suggestion of re-establishing Hong Kong on another island before the handover, the disciplinary, punitive, and estranging function of Hei Ling Chau 喜靈洲,⁶⁴ and Hong Kong literary events corresponding to the theme, such as the establishment of the “On the Island” literary society (douseung se) 島上社 in 1928 and the publication of Liu Yichang’s *Island and Peninsula* (Dou yu bundou) 島與半島 (1973-1975) and Yesi’s 也斯 *Island and Mainland* (Dou wo daailuk) 島和大陸 (1987). These were not opportune records of the intensified disintegration of the “One Country

⁶⁴ Hei Ling Chau is an island located in the east of Lantau Island with facilities set for rehabilitation from drug addiction and correction services.

Two System” principle, which firmly distinguishes between mainland sovereignty and island autonomy.

After addressing some concrete details, we proposed to invite Ng Kim Chew 黃錦樹, Chang Kuei-hsing 張貴興, Poon Kwok Ling 潘國靈, Lo Kwai Cheung, or Chong Yee-Voon 鍾怡雯 to write a series fiction, publish a transmedia work, perhaps translate the works of Filipino housemaids or selections from the Taiwanese-Filipino poetry gatherings, hold a book-club meeting about Oe Kenzaburo’s *Notes of Okinawa* (1970), and take a site visit to neglected island-like spaces. I was then in charge of writing a report on the book-club meeting and continued my normal duty of selecting the submissions for the permanent column of creative works unrelated to the theme.⁶⁵

Having finished a meeting with 7 participants including the writer Dung Kai-cheung 董啟章, I wrote an article entitled “The island of irrepresentability: the record of the *Notes of Okinawa* meeting” (Moufaat doiyap no dou – gei *Chungsing jaat gei duk syu wui*) 無法代入的島——記《沖繩札記》讀書會. At the beginning, I introduced with a paragraph as below:

Gathering at night in Hong Kong Reader Bookstore, like staying on an independently floating island, we talked about Oe Kensaburo’s Okinawa recorded for history, like an out-of-body experience, or like a sacred wandering. The huge Other is still pressing the top of our heads. Our understanding from between the center and the periphery, the writers and the victims, Japan and Hong Kong is ultimately feeble. What am I? Can I change myself to be the me who is not like me? This is a note about notes. It is humbly written and cannot represent anyone.⁶⁶

With an intention to minimize my personal involvement, I simply provided some background information. After the introduction, I then selectively posted the directly transcribed conversation without interpretation. Partially following my guidance towards a metaphorical reference to Hong Kong, the reviewers shared their view about Okinawa as

⁶⁵ The selection process involves three editors. All of us need to review all the submissions (mainly short stories, poems and prose) and then choose the best and second-best works. After voting and considering multiple factors, such as limitation of pages and support for young local writers, we will then finalize a list for publication.

⁶⁶ Gabriel F. Y. Tsang 曾繁裕, “Wufa dairu no dao – ji Chongsheng zhaji dushu hui” 無法代入的島——記《沖繩札記》讀書會 (The Island of Irrepresentability: The Record of the Notes of Okinawa Meeting), *Fleurs des Lettres* 81 (Sep-Oct 2019): 23.

not belonging to Japan, China, and Ryukyu Kingdom, the masochistic reflection of Oe Kensaburo, the features of writing on an island, and the geopolitical possibility of writing “*Notes of Hong Kong*.”⁶⁷ Overall, politically sensitive content was absent. There were merely tacit criticisms, such as the saying of Wong Nim Yan 黃念欣, currently Associate Professor of Chinese at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, “In fact, Shi Shuqing [施叔青] had written *Trilogy of Hong Kong* [Xianggang san bu qu 香港三部曲] about centenary vicissitudes to assist your reflection. As a Taiwanese writer, he apologized for the colonizers. However, by far, I cannot think of any mainland writers whom I want to write in relation to Hong Kong.”⁶⁸ Despite not mentioned by Wong, I supposed both the participants and the readers of my transcription could realize the implication related to the strict censorship of the Chinese government and the mainland-centric attitude of the institutionally manipulated Chinese writers.

Beyond this writing, other manuscripts were out of my control. Oriented by the final decisions of Chief Editor and other sub-team members, the themed content was largely different from the original plan. (For the full final catalog of Issue 81, please see Annex 2.) First, the invited writer was not Ng Kim Chew, Chang Kuei-hsing, Poon Kwok Ling, Lo Kwai Cheung, and Chong Yee-Voon, but the local poet Liu Wai Tong 廖偉棠 instead. Famous for political poems written during and after the Umbrella Movement (2014), Liu won the literary critic Hung Wai’s 洪慧 comment⁶⁹ as “epitomizing how Hong Kong poets arduously pursued their artistic beliefs in a repressive and trap-like reality.” In Hung’s comparison between the poems of Liu and Yip Ying Kit 葉英傑, who were granted the Biennial Award and Recommended Prize for the 16th Hong Kong Biennial Awards for Chinese Literature in 2021 respectively, Liu’s courageous emphasis on resistance was highly appreciated, whereas Yip’s distancing of his private life from political events was regarded as futile and despicable. Hence, I reckon that the publication of “Three Chapters of Islandic Poems” (Dou si saam jeung) 島詩三章 in Issue 81 suits Hung Wai’s pragmatic

⁶⁷ Gabriel F. Y. Tsang, “Wufa dairu no dao – ji Chongsheng zhaji dushu hui,” 23-26.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 26.

⁶⁹ Hung Wai 洪慧, “Xianggang zhongwen wenxue shuang nian jiang xinshi zu you bai lie sheng” 香港中文文學雙年獎新詩組優敗劣勝 (The Superior Lost but the Inferior Won for the 16th Hong Kong Biennial Awards for Chinese Literature), Paratext, November 9, 2019, accessed June 17, 2021, <https://paratext.hk/?p=2333>.

poetics and perhaps also the editor-in-charge's responsive intention. Completed on 3 August, 2019 (after the Yuen Long attack), the verses of three poems are fraught with melancholy, powerlessness, and forbidden desires. For instance, Liu fabricated his stay in an imagined dystopia in "The Piteous Island" (Lin dou) 憐島. As written in the first two stanzas, "I gallop in my island like a ghost / without horse hoofs, remaining only a lotus // Chasing an island for a stay, away from / the continent that knows only reproducing and devouring her children."⁷⁰ The island, reminiscent of Esther Cheung's notion "city is the confluence of historical ghosts,"⁷¹ is a site of an urban flâneur's traumatic illusion driven by the mainland Other's cannibalistic repression (like what Lu Xun highlighted in "A Madman's Diary" [Kuangren riji] 狂人日記 [1918]). Though not explicitly mentioning the intervention from the Hong Kong Liaison Office and recalling the names of alleged martyrs, such as Marco Leung Ling Kit 梁凌杰 who committed suicide on 15 June, 2019 for demanding governmental remedies for the anti-extradition bill problems, the poet apparently evokes the officially hidden memory of sacrifice and a shared wish for islandic independence.

While Liu Wai Tong's poems adopted surrealistic defamiliarization for a balance between literary aesthetic and expressive politic, Kam Jing's 金靜 interview with Albert Lai Kwong Tak 黎廣德, the founding Vice-Chairman of the Civic Party, directly highlighted the problematic policy of the Hong Kong government. This unexpected article is not literature-related, following a trend of increasing social involvement since the "Anthropocene" series. Surrounding the "Lantau Tomorrow Vision" 明日大嶼願景 reclamation project, the interview report quotes Lai's view against the project based on the concerns about climate change, transportation, and other sources of land supply. Other than these, the reporter added her blunt criticism, like "If not forgotten, we know that the government in Leung Chun Ying's [梁振英] era had thought of utilizing the country parks [to resolve the long disputed residential issue]. How could we imagine that the government

⁷⁰ Wai-Tong Liu 廖偉棠, "Lian dao" 憐島 (The Piteous Island), *Fleurs des Lettres* 81 (Sep 2019): 15.

⁷¹ Esther M. K. Cheung 張美君, *Huanmei dushi: Zhang Meijun boshi Xianggang dianying yanjiu lunwen ji* 幻魅都市：張美君博士香港電影研究論文集 (The Ghostly City: A Collection of Dr. Esther Cheung's Hong Kong Film Research Essays), trans. and ed. Siu Heng 蕭恒 (Hong Kong: Typesetter, 2020). This quotation is from a letter attached to her collection of research essays, so there is no page number.

headed by Carrie Lam is more stupid than the most stupid? ‘Lantau Tomorrow Vision’ is ultimately stupid.”⁷² By comparing between two chief executives, she straightly expressed her accumulated antipathy beyond a single policy.

Other unplanned publications include translations of the Crimean Tatar Writer Seyare Kokche’s poems, the Hong Kong science fiction writer Albert Tam’s 譚劍 short story, and Taiwanese eco-writer Liu Ka-shiang’s 劉克襄 cross-island travel notes. Besides, in other issues of the “My City Elsewhere” series and also other issues, unplanned publications were common, and my power to intervene was limited. From Issue 82 to Issue 86, I merely contributed one book review⁷³ and had no further participation in the themed writings after the general meetings. An observable fact is that the interviews of this series were mostly unrelated to literature and mostly coincident with controversial events, and the invited writers and selected literary works generally preserved the facts and affects that the readers can splice to a reflection on the present scenarios of Hong Kong. There were also exceptional cases to cover some apolitical possibilities diversely related to the topographical enlightenment as proposed.

After all, making a conclusion for this research article is uneasy. With an academic approach, the illustration from the historical succession of a realist spirit represented via literary magazines to the formation of *Fleurs des Lettres* flows rather smoothly. However, shifting a scholar’s gaze to an editor’s gaze for unveiling an inside operation of producing performative text through the same print medium, I expose my limitation more than an innovative way of reading. Individuality appears to be the ultimate and hardly transcended issue to resolve. I can merely interrogate my background and participation, and peruse other authors’ writings to maximize my knowledge of the production and political connotation of compiled text. Being the chef editor is probably helpful to reveal a bigger picture and more intentional details. Despite probably not going further to this position, I suppose a further study in the chef editor’s subjective gaze and leadership is valuable, because

⁷² Kam Jing 金靜, “‘Mingri da yu’: Xianggang ren de zui yu yu - zhuanfang Li Guangde” 「明日大嶼」：香港人的罪與愚——專訪黎廣德 (“Lantau Tomorrow Vision”: The Crime and Fool of Hong Kong People - An Interview with Albert Lai Kwong Tak), *Fleurs des Lettres* 81 (Sep-Oct 2019): 18.

⁷³ It is entitled “As human, as burden: on *The Same Piteous PhDs*” (Meichang sat gaak, tungsi fuleui - ping boksi leun lok yan) 未曾失格，同是負累——評《博士淪落人》，published in Issue 82.

Sinophone literary history is riddled with occulted canonization oriented by leading editors, such as Hu Feng 胡風, Ba Jin 巴金, Wang Wen Hsing 王文興, Zhang Mo 張默, and Liu Yichang. Besides, another worth exploring matter is censorship in the Hong Kong context. On 3 March, 2021, one of the *Fleurs des Lettres* editors told us in our facebook group that, in avoidance of breaking the National Security Law, some issues of *Fleurs des Lettres* had been off the shelf in a second-school library, including those that mention the June Fourth Incident in 1989, the 1 July Protest in 2003, the Anti-national Education Movement in 2012, the Umbrella Movement in 2014, the Fishball Movement in 2017, the Anti-extradition Bill Movement in 2019, the happy resistance strategy, civil disobedience, the idea of city-state, and separation of three powers. The keywords are endangered within a historical tension of oblivion and remembrance, and are testing our will to textually sustain a practical ethics of testimony. On 17 March, 2021, in the same facebook group, we discussed how to respond to the establishment camp's recent criticisms against the Hong Kong Arts Development Council. This relates to not simply a potential financial risk, but a sophisticated plight composed of a limited readership, post-capitalist cultural logics, and (self-)censorship. I believe further scrutinizing individual decisions will be necessary for coordinating between various rhetoric wisdoms that can help guarantee a smooth and free communication between intellectuals despite encrypted. Ideally, with increasingly advanced hermeneutics, literary magazines will act as an effective blockchain of the moral Way.

Annex 1: A Questionnaire targeted at the readers of *Fleurs des Lettres* (translated from Chinese)⁷⁴

No matter meeting us by chance, reconnecting to us after a long absence, or persistently supporting us, you are invited to spend five to ten minutes here. We just want to do better. We will choose some readers to enter the next stage. Having completed an in-depth discussion session, the selected ones will be granted special rewards.

*Required

1. How long have you known *Fleurs des Lettres*? *

- Less than 1 month
- Less than 1 year
- 1 to 3 years
- 5 to 10 years
- 10 years or above

2. How did you know *Fleurs des Lettres* at the beginning? *

- Started to follow it from the inaugural issue
- Got recommendations from friends
- Discovered it from social media
- Saw it in a bookstore, a library, or a book fair
- Knew it because of an adored author
- Other:

3. When did you buy *Fleurs des Lettres* last time?

- Within 1 month ago
- Within 0.5 year ago
- Within 1 year ago
- 1 to 3 years ago
- Over 3 years ago

4. Where did you buy *Fleurs des Lettres* last time?

- A chain bookstore, such as Eslite
- An upstairs bookstore or an independent bookstore
- A book fair
- An online store, such as Shopify and Pinkoi

5. How many issues of *Fleurs des Lettres* have you read?

- 1 to 5 issues
- 5 to 10 issues
- 10 to 20 issues
- More than 20 issues

⁷⁴ Staff, "Zi Hua duzhe wenjuan diaocha" 《字花》讀者問卷調查 (A Questionnaire to the Readers of *Fleurs des Lettres*), Google Forms, accessed June 8, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/6yoV0y>.

6. How many issues of *Fleurs des Lettres* do you have at home?

- None
- 1 to 5 issues
- 5 to 10 issues
- 10 to 20 issues
- More than 20 issues

7. Which way(s) of reading *Fleurs des Lettres* would you prefer? (Can choose more than one) *

- Take a leisure time to sit still and peruse
- Flip over during a commute to or back from a workplace
- Read while having a meal
- Read before sleep
- Read while staying in a toilet
- Other:

8. The reason(s) for spending money on buying an issue of *Fleurs des Lettres* (Can choose more than one) *

- A beautiful cover
- An attractive theme
- The cohort of authors
- An attractive giveaway
- The readability of a randomly seen paragraph
- The good texture on your hand while holding it

Annex 2: The catalog of Issue 81 of *Fleurs des Lettres* (translated from Chinese)

Proem: Islands

Kwan Tin Lam / Preface

Li Chi Tak / a rock

Liu Wai Tong / Three Chapters of Islandic Poems: The Island of Father, The Republic and the Island, The Piteous Island

Kam Jing / “Lantau Tomorrow Vision”: The Crime and Fool of Hong Kong People – An Interview with Albert Lai Kwong Tak

Text

Gabriel F. Y. Tsang / The Island of Irrepresentability: The Record of the *Notes of Okinawa Meeting*

Each Other

Returning an Island to an Island – The Creative-writing Meeting of “Minim Space”

Translations – Tartary on an Peninsula

An Interview with the Crimean Tatar Writer Seyare Kokche
Selected Translations of Poetry

Albert Tam / Island and Mountain

A Record of Cross-island Travelling – The First Round

Liu Ka-shiang / To See the Wild Boars with *Da Ma*

Special Column

The Special Column of Wong Ping: Ping’s Viewpoint

The Open Quotation Marks of Hong Kong Literature

The Thirteenth Station: Topographic Literature

The Fourteenth Station: Lu Lun

A Guide to Further Reading

A Story

Miha / Jauss and Ork

Cheuk Wan Chi / Smoking Dolphins

The Array of Book Reviews

Angus Lee Yat Hong / After the Meat and Wine have Passed through the Intestines – A Book Review of *The Dining Table for Eating Text*

Huang Runyu / Illusion is Supporting our Survival – A Reading of Michel Faber’s *Some Rain Must Fall*

Hong Liu / Here See the Era without Spectators

The Special Column of Kun Nan / The Literary Music and the Carving of Dragons: The Rendezvous of Saturn and Pluto Opens the Door to Revolution

Exceptional

Tang Lok Yee / The Not-yet Disbanded “De-N Club”: An Interview with the Postdramatic Alice Theatre Laboratory

Quartet – The May Fourth

Kevin Yau Ting Kit / May Fourth and Hong Kong: Vernacular Movement as a Connective Point

Lee Mei Ting / May Fourth and Hong Kong

Chiu Kuei-fen / The Hundred Years of Taiwan New Literature

Yeung Cheuk Fung / Whose 1919? May Fourth in the Word

Portrait

Lau Kwong Shing / The Merry Christmas on a Battlefield

Upon Checkers

Wong Leung Wo / Take a Shower

Li Xiaoyu / Special

Yim Hon Yam / Waiting

Chow Hon Fai / A Farewell Poem

Cunzheng / Sitting Opposite

Ng Kin Ying / Pokémon

Yunshu / Bedroom

Hon Ki Chau / Burn the Flat

Capability

Ng Kin Ying, Yim Hon Yam, Cunzheng, and Yunshu

Lennon Wall

Tsang Wan / Great Achievement

Wong Ho Wai Tomaz / That Sophisticated and Youthful Yellow Raincoat

Ling Bing / Tunnel

Rewrite the Local

Mak Shu Kin / The Sea Opposite

Last but Supreme

Lee Mei Ting / What does “Anti” Mean for Anti-diaspora?: An Interview with Prof. Shih Shu-mei

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