Chinese Old Tales Retold Fiction in Hong Kong since the 1960s

Research MA thesis

submitted 2021/2/2

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Acknowledgements

I am so lucky to have so many lovely people around me who always encourage me and tell me never to give up when I feel hard to continue my research.

I would like to express my special thanks of gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Maghiel van Crevel for his unwavering support for my endeavor over these two years. He navigated me through my study with his broad vision and critical spirit in China Studies. It was a great privilege and honor to work and study under his guidance. Without his patient help, constant encouragement, and careful supervision, I could never complete this project with so many critical ideas.

Furthermore, my completion of this project could not have been accomplished without the help of my dear friends, Dr. Jiyu Zhang and Dr. Tingting Hui. They shared their valuable experience in research and writing, as well as their difficult time in their study, which reminds me that I am not alone in this journey.

Finally, I must express my very profound gratitude to my parents for providing me with unfailing support and continuous care during my darkest moment in my study and through the process of researching and writing this thesis.

Chapter 1: Historical and Theoretical Background of Old Tales Retold Fiction

1.1 Introduction

The Chinese literary genre known as Old Tales Retold fiction [故事新编小说] is a particular text mode that dates from the first half of the twentieth century, in which authors reanimate myths, legends, folktales, and historical records, often changing the central figures or narratives, rearranging the scenarios, and giving the stories alternative endings in another context. In the 1920s and 1930s this genre has been famously practiced by Lu Xun [鲁迅, 1881-1936], a central author in modern Chinese literature, in a story collection entitled *Old Tales Retold* [故事新编, 1922-1936] that would give the genre its name. Rather than keep fidelity to the original content of the adapted texts, Lu Xun rewrites them in an experimental manner that challenges our common understanding of Chinese history, myth and tradition. To break free from the original context and historical background of the source texts, Lu Xun enacts a dialogue between different times and space, the old and the new, the modern and the traditional, highlighting the breaks and inconsistencies in culture and identity that Republican China had been experiencing after the collapse of the imperial order in 1911.

With such attempt, Lu's reworking reflects an attempted redemption of Chinese national and cultural roots and identity from a "progressive" narrative of (often foreign-inspired) modernity (Zhang, 2019). Subsequently, Old Tales Retold fiction was written by later authors like Shi Zhecun [施蛰存, 1905-2003], Guo Moruo [郭沫若, 1892-1978], Zhang Ailing [张爱玲,1920-1995, aka Eileen Chang], Shen Congwen [沈从文, 1902-1988], Han Shaogong [韩少功, 1953-] amongst others, both in the Republican period (1911-1949) and in the People's Republic of China (est. 1949); in the latter case, this happened from the 1980s onwards (retelling old tales worked very differently in the Hig-Socialist period through to the late 1970s; more on this below). Although the literary techniques and aesthetic vision deployed in every text are different since they are created in different times and by authors of different schools, these rewritings all invite readers to consider how Chinese tradition was challenged in the historical transformation when the old encounters the new, the East encounters the West, and the local encounters the foreign.

In addition to the retellings which has been practiced throughout modern literature in mainland China, in the second half of the twentieth century Old Tales Retold fiction was also written by authors in other Chinese speaking communities, such as Hong Kong, Taiwan and Malaysia, and gradually absorbed into local literary production. Authors

like Huang Jinshu [黄锦树,1967-] from Malaysia, Zhang Manjuan [张曼娟,1961-] from Taiwan, or Li Bihua [李碧华, 1958-] from Hong Kong, are just few examples. These authors show quite diverse preference in story selection and the way of presentation in retelling. Some show strong interest in classic Chinese romance, and some only focus on stories of historical figures; some impose a strong political articulation in writing, and some mainly explore literature as art. All of these diversities remind that Old Tales Retold fiction also should be viewed from plural perspectives.

In the last few centuries and continuing up to the present day, the linguistic, cultural, and historical links between these Sinophone regions and mainland China have been shaped and reshaped by political and ideological shifts inside East Asia (Shan, 2016). This is also reflected in the Old Tales Retold rewritings of ancient Chinese stories. As such, these rewritings not only show these writers' aesthetic vision and their competence in storytelling, but also help to further understand how writers of overseas Chinese communities interpret Chinese literature/culture/value from diverse positions: as diaspora, exile, cultural others, etc., and how the local cultural milieu influences their choice in their adaptation.

To narrow down the scale of my research, I choose Old Tales Retold fiction in Hong Kong as my subject matter in this project. With 150 hundred years being colonized by British, and later taken over by People's Republic in 1997, Hong Kong has a very complicated historical trajectory and a hybrid cultural configuration. Cultural memory in Hong Kong—about China and Chineseness among other things— has been affected and sometimes subverted by the impact of colonialism and a growing sentiment of losing their self-expression (Chow, 1998). Hong Kong subjectivity—in culture, literature, and citizenship—is thus by no means a stable category but rather an ongoing process. With such background, Old Tale Retold fiction in Hong Kong is an important realm for the negotiation of a complex cultural force field.

Old Tales Retold fiction has developed in Hong Kong literature since the 1960s. Here I will offer a few examples. Liu Yichang [刘以鬯, 1918-2018], one of the pioneers of modern Hong Kong literature, has made several experimental attempts in story-retelling. His *Inside the Temple* [寺内, 1964] retells *The Romance of the Western Chamber* [西厢记, 1295-1307], one of the most renowned romantic tales written in Yuan dynasty [1271-1368] by Wang Shifu [王实甫, 1260-1307], which celebrates the loyal and brave lovers who fight against Confucian moral orthodoxy. By using literary techniques like stream of consciousness and verse fiction and unveiling the deep sexual desire of the female characters and the fragility of the male protagonist, Liu reflects on capitalist alienation in Hong Kong and deconstructs the love theme of the source story.

In Ye Si's [也斯, 1949-2013] adaptation of the mythical tales *Shimen, the Dragon Keeper* [养龙人师门, 1994], the modern Hong Kong also serves an important backdrop to understand or interpret the story. To reimagine that the ancient dragon trainer Shimen works in a modern office, the whole story poses a satire of bureaucratism and commodification of all aspects of life, and indicating a mental dilemma of intellectuals in Hong Kong.

In the late 1980s, Xi Xi [西西, 1937-] reframed the legend of Nezha [哪吒], a Chinese mythical and religious child figure, whose story has been recorded in the16th-century Chinese vernacular work in the gods-and-demons genre called *Creation of the Gods* [封神演义], attributed to Xu Zhonglin [许仲琳, d. 1566]. Aside from Nezha's famous naughtiness and rebelliousness, Xi Xi focused on the plot of Nezha's self-punishment and his conflict with his father who finally suppresses him with a magical pagoda. To rewrite this story with multiple narrative voices, Xi Xi sharply poses the question in the end: Is such a repressive method to trap Nezha effective? Thinking about the time, 1986, when this reworking was done, we are invited to respond to this sharp question with regard to the then-impending takeover of Hong Kong to mainland China.

Another noteworthy and well-studied author is Li Bihua [李碧华, 1959-], who is well acknowledged for her "fascination with the materials of past literature" (Chow, 1993, 73), including folklore, legends, and classical literary books. Her rewritings have a huge readership both in mainland China and Hong Kong, and most of them have been further adapted on screen. *Green Snake* [青蛇,1986], *The Reincarnation of Golden Lotus* [潘金莲之前世今生, 1989], and *Yoshiko Kawashima* [满洲国妖艳—川岛芳子, 1990] are the three predominant examples. All three novels write about the eccentric females who are always negatively depicted in Chinese history and Chinese classics for their seduction, unloyalty, and evilness, however Li has made no moral judgment on their characters in her retellings. Through their personals struggling, Li represents the historical trauma in twentieth-century China as well as Hong Kong's specific history, spatial configurations, and sociopolitical situations.

This study does not aim to offer an exhaustive account of Old Tales Retold fiction in Hong Kong or suggest a singular path to read and interpret all this literature of different times and styles. Rather, looking through the dynamic relationship between fiction and history, past and present, text and context and with emphatic reference to cultural and political complexities of Hong Kong in the second half of the twentieth century and recognizing the complexity of Old Tales Retold fiction in Hong Kong, I intend to highlight plural layers and forms of interaction between the source texts and retold versions and further explore how diverse adaptation strategies mediate their

retelling project towards a cultural negotiation between China and Hong Kong. By viewing Old Tales Retold fiction in Hong Kong from the prism of "adaptation theory", I will attempt to chart the interplay of text, context, and author in these rewritings.

1.2 Research Questions

- What strategies of adaptation are deployed in Old Tales Retold fiction in Hong Kong, and how do these respective strategies relate to other features of the works in question?
- How does the process of retelling reflect relations between the "real-world" Hong Kong experience and Hong Kong literature, between history and fiction, against the backdrop of Chinese literary traditions at large?
- How does the process of retelling reflect the individual authors' self-positioning in the Hong Kong social, political, and cultural context?

1.3 Literature Review

1.3.1 *Old Tales Retold* and Old Tales Retold fiction: From Lu Xun to Han Shaogong

1.3.1.1 Lu Xun and *Old Tales Retold*

Lu Xun's *Old Tales Retold* [故事新编, 1922-1936] is composed of eight separate retold stories, covering material from myths to historical records, from folklores to the stories of pre-Qin thinkers. In the last several decades, quite a large number of articles on Lu Xun's *Old Tales Retold* have appeared with various theoretical focus, exploring this art of Lu Xun's rewriting project. Taken as an important reference to investigate the complexity of Lu Xun's critical attitude towards tradition and the positioning of the individual in the "modernization" of China, Lu Xun's *Old Tales Retold* has been a hotly debated research topic both in China and elsewhere (Wang and Widmer 1993; Qian 2014; Qian 2016).

For a long time, Old Tales Retold fiction has been taken as a kind of historical fiction in which authors express their views on their own times by re-presenting the past (Li 1987; Wu and Yin 2003). Yet, as Lu Xun writes in the preface to his collection, his writings are not confined by the historical records he uses, and his writing style is too free for the genre of the historical novel, which follows the historical records; rather, it is designed to provide an alternative historical narrative.

As for historical stories, to my mind those based on extensive research with sound evidence for every word are extremely hard to write, even though they are sneered at as novels smacking of the school room; whereas not much skill is needed to take a subject and write it up freely, adding some coloring of your own. … In some places the narrative is based on passages in old books, elsewhere I gave free rein to my imagination…… at least I have not made the ancients out as even more dead than they are, and this may justify the book' existence for a while.

对于历史小说，则以为博考文献，言必有据者，纵使有人讥为"教授小说"，其实是很难组织之作，至于只取一点因由，随意点染，铺成一篇，倒无需怎样的手腕……叙事有时也有一点旧书上的根据，有时斧不过信口开河……不过并没有将古人写得更死，却也许暂时还有存在的馀地的罢。 (Lu Xun 1972, 2-4)

As the book title suggests, all the stories collected in this book are written based on existing narratives. The source texts that Lu Xun chose covers a wide range of genres, themes, and time, and some of them just offer very undetailed narratives. In Lu Xun's retold version, he transformed these canonical texts into a reconstructed narration, interpreted them from a modern writer's point of view and imagination. The goddesses, heroes, mythical leaders of early human tribes, knowledgeable intellectuals— all of those who have been worshipped and admired throughout Chinese culture— lost their conventional mythical power and cultural authority in Lu Xun's rewritings. See, for example, the tragic sacrifice of Nüwa [女娲], the goddess who created humanity and mended heaven in the Chinese genesis mythology, in Lu Xun's "Mending Heaven" [补天, 1922]; or the mental failure and broken marriage of Hou Yi [后羿], the ancient human hero who has been admired in Chinese culture for his courage and power to shoot down the multiple suns threatening to burn his people, in Lu Xun's "Flight to the Moon" [奔月, 1927]; or Dayu [大禹], the curber of the floods and founder of the Xia dynasty [2070 BCE-1600 BCE], a savior of his people who is consistently bothered by bureaucrats in his government in Lu Xun's "Curbing the Flood" [理水, 1935]. After we read these rewritings with both laughs and sentiment, a sharp question emerges. What has caused the failures, in Lu Xun's rewritings, of these figures who are always ready to sacrifice and contribute to their nation?

Unlike Lu Xun's stories collected in *Call to Arms* [呐喊, 1918-1922] and *Wandering* [彷徨, 1924-1925], which count as seminal example of early Chinese realism, stories of *Old Tales Retold* do not touch upon reality with too much seriousness. Facetiousness [油滑] is how Lu Xun portrayed this story collection in his preface. In the literary sense, to be "facetious" means to provoke laughter, or make things amusing

purposely. As analyzed by Zheng Jiajian [郑家建], "facetiousness" in Lu Xun's context has several connotations (1997). First, it refers to a destructive and rebellious way in which the author approaches the canonical textual world. In his facetious tone in narration, Lu Xun pulls the heroes and great thinkers out of "History" and reconstructs their personalities as normal people who may experience loss, suffering and failure. By retelling these grand stories in absurdity, Lu Xun's reworkings could be seen as a counterpoint to canonical history [正史], questioning the hierarchical power structure as well as repressive Confucian moral codes which has been inscribed in ancient stories and passed through Chinese cultures over generations. Secondly, from the aesthetic respect facetiousness contributes to the freedom in writing. As Zheng suggests, facetiousness powers the fictionality and the creativity, which frees Lu Xun from the aesthetics of social realism. In *Mending Heaven*, for example, Lu Xun not only retells the myth of Nüwa, but also ironically appropriates ancient political speech in the *Book of Lord Shang* [尚书, 10th century BCE] and the folklore of Emperor Qinshihuang [秦始皇, 259 BCE- 210 BCE] who sent servants to search for immortality. As he mixed and then translated the classics in the new context, Lu Xun parodied the original meaning of these adapted texts. In such attempts, readers may feel amused, yet confused, and further question the authorities of the canon.

Xu Zidong [许子东] takes Old Tales Retold fiction as a literary device to "fictionalize history" [虚构历史] (2017, 69). When materializing historical time, secularizing mythical figures and parodying historical events, Xu writes, Lu Xun straddles disparate temporalities and remixes these as an interlaced whole. Thus, Old Tales Retold fiction can be identified and characterized by making the past serve the present [古为今用]. In Lu Xun's case, the darkness of reality in his own time was allegorized and mirrored in his rewriting project. In "Curbing the Flood", scholars use phrases such as "Gu Maoning" [古貌宁], and "Hao Du You Tu" [好杜有图], the transliteration of English greeting "Good Morning" and "How do you do", by which Lu Xun satires westernized Chinese scholars of the time. As Huang Ziping [黄子平] argued, Lu Xun's design of ahistorical temporality could be read as a tension and reconciliation   between "personal time" [个人时间] and "historical time" [历史时间] (2001, 108-109).

1.3.1.2 Old Tales Retold fiction from the 1930s to the 1980s

After Lu Xun's endeavor in rewriting, more variations of this text mode could be found among his followers. Shi Zhecun [施蛰存, 1905-2003], the master of New Sensationalist fiction [新感觉派], deploys Freudian psychoanalysis in this rewriting

project. Revisiting the sexual temptation of the Buddhist monk, Kumarajiva, the decapitation of a half-Han, half-Tibetan Tang general, and the cruel killing of misogynist Shi Xiu in the 16th-century Chinese classic *Water Margin* [水浒传] attributed to Shi Nai'an [施耐庵, 1296-1370], a collection of stories of outlaw heroic figures in Northern Song dynasty [996-1127], Shi Zhecun reveals the inherent violence of the historical characters and invests them with sexual desire and split personalities. As William Schaefer reviewed:

> Shi's writing registers far greater suspicion of the narratives of both the past and the present, and of the boundary between them . . . A large measure of the disturbing power of Shi's fiction, I argue, lies in the returns within its narratives not only of the desires of its characters, but also of disruptively heterogeneous elements of a Chinese past that seemed to many in need of repression in the search for modernity. (1998, 27)

Shi's adaptations could be seen as another milestone in Old Tales Retold fiction, which has explored more artistic possibilities of this genre. Shu-mei Shih reads Shi Zhecun's retellings as "a nonideological and apolitical space of textual dissimulation and erotic-grotesque fantasies" (2001, 366). In content, Shi Zhecun reimagines a cruel manhood and masculinity. The bloody and un-moralistic scene has somehow released the primitive passions of Chinese culture which has been repressed after the May Fourth Movement (1919), which aimed to replace old thoughts, old morality, and old culture of Confucianism with a "new," or Western-inspired, culture.

Zhang Ailing's [张爱玲, 1920-1995, aka Eileen Chang] *The Hegemon-King Bids His Lady Farewell* [霸王别姬, 1937], a work she wrote when in high school, is also an important lens to understand Old Tales Retold fiction. The source text of *The Hegemon-King Bids His Lady Farewell* was recorded in *Records of the Grand Historian* [史记, 94 BCE] attributed to the Western Han dynasty [202 BCE–9 CE] official Sima Qian [司马迁, 156 BCE-87 BCE], which documents history of China from ancient past to his own time. In content, *The Hegemon-King Bids His Lady Farewell* tells about the legendary yet tragic life of the masculine hero, Xiang Yu. In Zhang Ailing's rewriting, Yu Ji takes the place of Xiang Yu, becomes the main protagonist of this classic Chinese tragic romance. Unlike Xiang Yu, who is indulged in the unrealistic dream of military conquest, Yu Ji, as spectator, realized that all the war is just in vain for her. She commits suicide for a disillusionment that she, as female, can never obtain the sense of achievement, honor and reward in the way that Xiang Yu, the male revolutionary, does so (Ren 2006). Zhang's rewriting offers another standpoint to review female inferiority

suppressed by the male patriarchy, and her assertion of female subjectivity in this rework constitutes a resistance to male-centered narratives of history.

In the High-Socialist period from 1949 to the late 1970s, rewriting the stories of historical figures proliferated in the early 1960s. Chen Xianghe's [陈翔鹤, 1901-1969] *Tao Yuanming Wrote the Poems of the Funeral Song* [陶渊明写〈挽歌〉, 1961], Huang Qiuyun's [黄秋耘, 1918-2001] *Du Zimei's Homecoming* [杜子美还家, 1962], and Yao Xueyin's [姚雪垠, 1910-1999] *Li Zicheng* [李自成, 1963-1999] are just few examples. As Chen Sihe [陈思和] argues, retelling in this period, could be divided in two types. The first type usually centers one the legendary achievements of Chinese emperors or reputable and historical figures, mainly serving for the Communist Party's ideology and policies. For the other kind, retellings serve as reflection of people's economic difficulties or as a rhetoric of self-expression (2016). Chen also notes that by citing or referencing historical records in the endnotes and deploying the realist technique, rewritings in the socialist era are based on a precise and careful research on the historical figures, following the viewpoint of historical materialism.

Rewritings from the Republican Period find a more creative counterpart in the 1980s and onwards, when root-seeking authors in China [寻根作家] deployed mythical archetypes in fiction-writing. Root-seeking literature's influence on post-Mao literature is vast and profound. Gen [根], the Chinese word for "root", is usually taken as the metaphor of the origins of civilizations, in plural forms. For writers in the root-seeking movement, they show much interest in the cultural and literary forms— myths, old legends and folklores— of nature and the countryside, ethnic minorities, and the unexplored and peripheral cultural spaces, by which they enact a rupture of a monogenetic cultural narrative of Chinese identity.

Although their writing could not be recognized as retellings in a strict sense, authors like Mo Yan [莫言, 1955-], Wang Anyi [王安忆, 1954-], and Han Shaogong [韩少功, 1953-], have embedded mythical narratives in their fiction as a way to reimagine their ethical and cultural origin after the cultural devastation of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Leo Ou-fan Lee argues that, "uncovering the ancient past bespeaks an anticenter impulse" (1991, 208). As he elaborated, "these writers, artists, and intellectuals feel compelled to redefine their own culture as they seek to redefine themselves: How to find a meaning of being Chinese other than what the Party has defined for them" (ibid). Confronting the disappearance of traditional culture between the repression of the Cultural Revolution and the subsequent leap into Westernization and modernization in the 1980s, root-seeking writers take deployment of multicultural and multilinguistic literary traditions as a resistance to the oppressive political culture

of the Party and as active cultural representations which greatly enriched the national culture (Wang 2015).

1.3.2 Approaches to Old Tales Retold fiction

As Old Tales Retold fiction has been more and more eye-catching as a critical part of modern Chinese literature, structuring the poetics of Old Tales Retold fiction is an ongoing endeavor. Marston Anderson's *Lu Xun's Facetious Muse: The Creative Imperative in Modern Chinese Fiction* (1993) can be seen as an insightful start. To bridge Lu Xun's *Old Tale Retold* and root-seeking literature after the 1980s of Han Shaogong and Liu Heng [刘恒, 1954-], Anderson pioneered to examine the paradoxical deployment of mythopoetic tropes throughout modern Chinese literary practices since 1919. As he argued, Lu and Han showed critical acceptance to myth narratives. On the one hand, mythology is an appealing literary device as offering a source of creativity and identity, an issue that preoccupied authors in Republican period and onwards. On the other hand, it is also dangerous and risky to grant myth superiority and prestige because this may easily trap their writing with nostalgia and cultural essentialism. Old Tales Retold fiction, in this sense, is playing with this dilemma, being an exemplary cultural experiment in which writers may expand the potential of their literature to express intense new subjectivities, but "without reneging completely on the social mission modern Chinese literature has assumed since its invention in the May Fourth period" (Anderson, 1993, 268).

In *The Illuminated World: The Poetics of Old Tales Retold Fiction* [被照亮的世界 ——《故事新编》 诗学研究] , Zheng Jiajian [郑家建] offers another avenue to read and interpret literary retelling of Lu Xun. He suggested that in the stories comprising *Old Tales Retold*, Lu Xun allegorized psychological issues that concerned him personally. As he investigated, this writing mode reflects the bizarreness and absurdity of Lu Xun's time which could hardly be uncovered by any realist solution. Reimagining an ancient story helps Lu Xun escape from the tough reality he was experiencing, and enables him obtain a reflexive way to clarify his thoughts and confirm his own position in self-identification (2001).

Zheng's argument has been further echoed in *Old Tales Retold: Contemporary Chinese Fiction and the Classical Tradition* by Ann Louise Huss who reads Old Tale Retold fiction as "a device by which the 'modern' Chinese storyteller has self-reflexively maintained his/her own foothold in a society in constant inner flux" (2000, 60). Huss's lengthy introduction provides a plausible vision of how Lu Xun's own experience is referenced in his *Old Tales Retold* to support her argument that "History

and its rewritability become a peculiar tool of self-expression and referentiality, often victorious over a greater political purpose" (107). In addition, Huss unfolds the art of retelling within the discourse of "repressed modernity". Borrowing this popular term in modern China studies put forward by David Der-wei Wang in his significant monograph, *Fin-de-Siècle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1848-1911* (1997), Huss puts an emphasis on the new types of characters, Huss ideologies, narrative formats, themes, and sensibilities which have been invented in Old Tales Retold fiction. Her discussion departed from Anderson's analysis by a far broader observation on rewriting attempts made by other authors, articulating different artistic imperatives and motivations in writing. Powered by theories and concepts such as metafiction, postmodernism, Lukács' historical fiction poetics, and by analyzing more case studies including Shen Congwen [沈从文, 1902-1988], Mao Dun [茅盾, 1896-1981] and authors of diverse styles, Huss articulated that Old Tales Retold fiction is not a homogeneous category. Huss further argues that "in practice, this text's mode has not always been tinged with sadness, unqualified nostalgia for a long gone past, or a revolutionary fervor" (166). For authors of modern retellings, she holds, their mentality has transformed from "the anxiety of influence" to the "ecstasies of reference" (61). By "ecstasies of reference", she refers to the relationship between the retellings and the retold, in which "authors no longer interpret the work of their predecessors as threats to the ambition of their own imaginative triumphs" (85), allowing "for a measure of playfulness that encourages the writer to restore his or her own sense of 'culture' and 'tradition' without sacrificing the curiosities and oddities of the present" (86).

The focus on authors' aesthetical creativity and subjectivity in their rewriting has also been addressed and further developed in Zhu Chongke's [朱崇科] *Carnival of Tensions: A Study on Subjective Interventions in Old Tales Retold Fiction by Lu Xun and His Successors* [张力的狂欢——论鲁迅及其来者之故事新编小说中的主体介入] (2006). To build a more complete picture of Old Tales Retold Fiction as a subgenre, Zhu has selected a large variety of case studies, written in Mainland China and Hong Kong, from the Republican period in the early 20th century to the early 21st century. He figures that what he calls subjective intervention [主体介入] is the main narrative strategy of this text mode. As he elaborates, subjective intervention can be understood from two aspects: 1. a subjective passion and the inner motivation that drives the writers to explore the art and the meaning of the selected text. 2.The obligations of the author of retelling: respect, revive, and reconstruct (2006, 8). For Zhu, subjective intervention is a solution to the unavoidable dilemma between the authors' own imagination and the old constructs of the stories they retell. In the line of this logic, the deployment of polyphony and carnival effect in Old Tales Retold fiction are centralized in Zhu's

theoretical framework, borrowed from Bakhtin's dialogism philosophy. In Zhu's usage, polyphony refers to an interaction among different discourses, an unfinished interplay between the authors' consciousness and the consciousness of the characters they create which are weighted equally. In terms of the co-called carnival effect, Zhu refers to the destructive writing strategy in the rewriting process. Theoretically, the Carnival effect serves as a counterpoint of the seriousness of the literary canons and celebrated all self-expression breaking rules of art (35). Reading in this way, Zhu argues Old Tales Retold fiction as involving and open text mode. Bridging the authors' own consciousness and the characters' consciousness, retelling is a literary experiment which challenges reality with sharp critics or amusing parody.

Previous scholarship has provided fruitful debate on how the genre emerges, develops and refines during the twentieth century and actively engages as an important part throughout modern Chinese literature. However, although Old Tales Retold Fiction has been studied in Chinese and in English for many years, the Old Tales Retold texts in Hong Kong have been barely paid attention to so far. Most scholarship that touches upon Hong Kong rewriting does so because they apparently regard the Hong Kong rewriting phenomenon as nothing but contemporary appendage of the giant vista of Old Tales Retold Studies in China. Hence, a space for discourses of diaspora and post-coloniality, which theoretically engages with the cultural specificities of Hong Kong, has remained mostly absent so far.

It is interesting to find that Old Tales Retold fiction in Hong Kong are marginalized in Old Tales Retold fiction Studies, sadly reaffirming prejudices against literature from Hong Kong. As Hong Kong has been dismissed as a cultural desert for a long time, Hong Kong literature has been stereotypically understood as a lowbrow culture which lacks depth in art. As Zhu Shoutong [朱寿桐] argues:

The modern interpretation of the old tales and legends in Hong Kong are just some reflection on life that everyone has, and it do not exemplify the critical and profound realization that literary modernism should present. The rewritings in Hong Kong just reveal simple opinions on modern society or a superficial philosophy of life.

就这些传统故事和传说所展开的现代阐释也只是现代人应有的感兴，没有真正显现出现代主义理性的深刻锐意；它们所传达的仍是一种平民化的现代观念，一种与现实生活密切联系的浅俗哲理。(1996, 107)

Besides, an ideological concern is also an important factor influencing scholars' critics on the texts. When talking about Ye Si's and Xixi's rewritings, for instance, Zhu

Chongke negatively comments that both writers were obsessed with the regional (meaning Hong Kong) events and identity crisis and thus spoiled the universal meaning contained in the myths (2006). Yet, Zhu's negative reception has been susceptible to a kind of anxiety in regard to literary identity: how do these stories from Hong Kong, a cosmopolitan hub of local, national, transnational, and global cultural flows, relate to stories by mainland-Chinese authors such as Lu Xun, Shi Zhecun, and Han Shaogong? In other words, how should Hong Kong literature be understood against the backdrop of Chinese literary tradition without betraying its own political, cultural, and ideological hybrid configurations? Zhu Chongke and Zhu Shoutong seem to dismiss these questions out of hand, and leave much blank in this realm.

1.3.3 Why does Hong Kong matter?

It is almost a commonplace that Hong Kong is a place of borrowed time and borrowed place (Hughes, 1968). As a city which has been colonized by British for 150 years as a consequence of China's defeat in the First Opium War (1839-1842) and later handed over to China in 1997, Hong Kong has undergone a special trajectory of historical and cultural configuration, along with so many difficulties in identity-building and identity-representation. As Anthony Fung argues, "the return of the colony to China was an anachronistic case of decolonization without independence" (2004, 399). The paradoxes of (1) the repressive colonization of Hong Kong and the pride of economic success due to the colonial governance, and (2) the cultural links with China and the deep rejection to the ideological control of Chinese governance, cause Hong Kong a dilemma in positioning itself in the world. The debate of identity and subjectivity has shadowed the intellectual discourse in the in the late twentieth century, especially after the late 1970s when the government of the People's Republic of China set out to take Hong Kong back from British rule. The state of anxiety got further intensified in 1984, with the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration [中英联合声明], and reached its peak in 1997, the year when Hong Kong finally returned back to China.

Many appellations were given to Hong Kong, yet most of them just depicted Hong Kong as a culture with the features of an "Other" (Erini 2001)— silent, remote, and inferior in all aspects. As a colony which had been benefited from global capitalist economy, Hong Kong was praised as the "The pearl of the East" [东方之珠], a shining metropolis which concentrates its energies on business pursuits and serves as a mediation between Britain and China for diplomatic, military, and commercial negotiations; but it was also taken as a "cultural desert" [文化荒漠], a place producing fast-food cultural products like erotic literature, soap dramas, and tabloids, with no art

to appreciate at all. Without a doubt, neither of these titles mentioned above has captured the diversities inside Hong Kong nor offered a substantial way to imagine this place. To resist such arbitrary names, many have struggled to establish Hong Kong's own presence in history, politics, and culture, and to construct, define and reaffirm Hong Kong identity during the last few decades (Lo 1988).

However, it is a hard work to clarify what Hong Kong identity is, since the cultural and demographic exchange between Hong Kong and outside world continues to evolve as a consequence of wars and political instability. The Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), the Chinese Civil War (1945-1949), the outburst of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), and the 1989 Tiananmen Incident, have made quite a number of mainlanders move to Hong Kong. The newcomers—exiles, émigré, sojourners— from mainland China brought in different languages, cultures and ideologies, all in plural forms. Some migrants at that time treated Hong Kong as a temporary residence rather than a permanent home, yet they still impose considerable influence on Hong Kong society, shaping Hong Kong as an open-minded city of immigration. The left and the right, the East and the West, the nativist and the nationalist, all these conflicting concepts have found their place in Hong Kong and negotiate with each other within such a flux. Thus, the connotations of concepts of Hong Kong, Hong Konger, and Hong Kong-ness are unstable, dynamic, and changing along with all the historical turbulence it has been confronting. Dorothy Wang elaborates the transitions of Hong Kong identity as an intriguing example:

> A Hong Kong person who came from China after 1949 is obvious an "outsider" or someone coming south; but to those who came south during the 1970s and 1980s, such a person is already local. A Hong Kong person may speak English or Putonghua [Mandarin], but it is not the language with which he is familiar since childhood; and yet what he knows best, Cantonese, is not convenient for writing. He recites the Chinese classics while at school, but in his eventual employment he would have to acquaint himself with forms of commercial correspondence or the brief and cute wordings of advertisement. (2000,170)

"Hybridity" and "marginality", though both debatable, are the two popular notions which are widely used in Hong Kong studies to characterize cultural scenes of Hong Kong (Ip 1998). "Hybridity" has been mostly applied in postcolonial studies, referring to "creolization, in-betweenness, diaspora, liminality, with mobility and crossover of ideas and identities generated by colonialism" (Loomha 1998, 173). The process— displacement, translation, misreading, and so forth—finally results in the cultural process of hybridization. Likewise, marginality, the issue raised by Leo Ou-fan Lee,

also points to the peripheral status of Hong Kong via-a-vis China's dominance (Lee 1991; Lee 2003). As he argues, in politics, Hong Kong has too much freedom after 1949 which paradoxically marginalizes itself from the political center—mainland China and Taiwan. While in the respect of culture, it follows its own rule of free market in cultural production and consumption. Lee further elaborates the relationship between Chinese culture and Hong Kong culture as follows:

> On the cultural surface, culture is westernized, and commercialized. However, it still keeps some kinds of Chinese culture under this mask. The cultural elements don't appear in a serious way, but as irony, parody, filled with facetiousness, all marking its marginality.

> 表面上是西化的商业性的，然而在表层包装之内仍然潜藏着中国文化的因素，这些因素的表现方式也不是严肃的，而是反讽挪揄、甚至插科打诨这就是一种"边缘文化"的特色。(2003, 174)

With all these concerns, one may find that it is always a hard task to define "what is Hong Kong" or "what can represent Hong Kong". In fact the dilemma to define "Hong Kong-ness" could also be found in literary studies. The definition of Hong Kong literature is ambivalent for all these historical and intellectual complexities. Wong Wai-leung attempts to define what he calls "'authentic Hong Kong writers" as of the following four types:

> Those born, educated and having their literary career in Hong Kong; those educated and having their literary career in Hong Kong; those having started and continuing their literary career in Hong Kong; those continuing their literary activities in Hong Kong as a major part of their entire career." (Wong 1987,16-18)

"Hong Kong-ness" of a writer, as Wong suggested, means the local-experience in Hong Kong. This may offer a rather clear definition on Hong Kong authors and a perspective from which to understand Hong Kong literature. However, this definition may be not sufficient to understand Hong Kong literature as a dynamic concept. Just as discussed by Wong, Hong Kong is not merely a place in the geographical sense, but also a mediation between cultures and ideologies. Ever back to the 1920s, modern Chinese writers, such as Mao Dun [茅盾,1896-1981], Xiao Hong [萧红,1911-1942], Xu Dishan [许地山 1893-1941], have all stayed in Hong Kong for a shelter during the war time, contributing an important part of local literary activities. From the 1960s, quite a number of writers coming from Taiwan, left their literary footprint in Hong Kong and further influence literary production significantly. In this respect, writers

come and go, making Hong Kong literature a composition with diverse literary traditions and cultural influence.

Although for many South-bound writers—authors who came from mainland China—Hong Kong is an alienated place to stay, they constituted an initial power for Hong Kong literary production as they bring along the literary tradition of early modern Chinese literature and nourish Hong Kong literature under the fierce ideological conflicts in Cold War Period. Wong Wai-leung further elaborates the relationship between Hong Kong literature and the great "Chinese literary tradition" that "Its 'Chineseness' is clearly an important characteristic and certainly owes itself to modem Chinese literature. However, Hong Kong literature is a literature in its own right, with its own achievements" (1987, 19).

In the line of these questions, the study of Old Tales Retold fiction in Hong Kong needs more exploration not only on the textual surface of aesthetic dimension, but also on its cultural and historical core. Xu Zidong's inquiry can be seen a good start of all the analysis of rewritings in Hong Kong:

> Why are Hong Kong readers so interested in completely different versions of the Chinese classics? Are there also specific historical, cultural and political reasons that Hong Kong readers and writers want to challenge or keep away from the (Chinese) traditions, and then search for local psychological positioning?
>
> 为什么偏偏香港读者可以接受甚至喜欢看到完全不同版本的中国经典文本呢？这里是否也有与传统文化存在挑战、距离以及寻找本土心理定位的特定历史文化政治原因？(2017,72)

1.4 Theory of Adaptation

As the previous research has well investigated, retelling an old story in the modern context is not merely an experiment in fiction writing. More importantly, it shows how the authors, based in China or the sinophone world, approached Chinese history and culture from different positionalities in different cultural contexts. With recourse to adaptation and translation theories, I propose a new approach to situate the dynamic between text and context in Old Tales Retold fiction, an approach that has been little deployed in previous scholarship.

The activity of adaptation has a long-standing tradition and has been widely practiced throughout history, but in our current time its role has become of paramount importance. Adaptation, by its literary definition — from the Latin "ad-apt-are," "to make to fit" —refers to some sort of change of an item from its original context, form,

or function into another. As has been the case of both literary studies and film studies, this term can be referred to as a particular work that has been transformed from another medium or genre, the Harry Potter series for instance. In addition, in Julie Sander's words, adaptation is an "attempt to make the text 'relevant' or easily comprehensible to new audiences and readerships via the processes and updating" (2006,19), and there is a clear connection here with notions of *translation* as well.

For a long time, adaptation, as a product of transposition, has been regarded as a second-order creation. The early criticism of fidelity which is prevailing in literary studies and film studies argues the adaptation should be faithful to the source it adapts, capturing all the fundamental narrative, thematic, aesthetic features, and "spirit" of its source text, by which it proves itself to realize and represent that which we most appreciate in the source text. The effort of de-hierarchizing the adapted/adaptation relations could be found among the scholarly contributions of Thomas Leitch, Robert Stam, Linda Hutcheon, Julie Sandra, yet the approaches they deploy and the conclusions they made quite different from one to another.

Linda Hutcheon is one of the most renowned contributors in adaptation studies in in the last two decades. Her investigation offers a crucial insight on the interrelation between adaptation and the adapted that: "Adaptations announce themselves not only as autonomous works but as deliberate, announced, and extended visitations of prior works," (2006, xiv), "a derivation that is not derivative— a work that is second without being secondary" (9). She defines the concept of adaptation into three points as follows:

- An acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works

- A creative and an interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging

- An extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work (8)

These three perspectives further echo her approaches adaptation. First and foremost, she takes adaptation as an entity or product, a transposition or transcoding of precious works. Transposition, in her context, refers to a shift of medium, as well as "a shift in ontology from the real to the fictional, from a historical account or biography to a fictionalized narrative or drama" (7-8). She emphasized that adaptation as a product cannot remain entirely the faithful to the source text. Rather it must differ enough from its source while still maintaining the source's fundamental ideas. Hutcheon's second approach is to read adaptation as a process. In this sense, adaptation refers to "a process of creation, the act of adaptation always involves both (re-)interpretation and then (re-)creation" (8), by which the valuable stories could be reserved in the modern context.

In addition, Hutcheon stressed the process of reception when approaching adaptation. As she elaborated, readers experience adaptation as "palimpsests" through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation.

With all these concerns, Hutcheon's view is mainly concerned with the intertextual purpose of adaptation, and further its reception in the target readership. As she argues, "adaptation involves, for its knowing audience, a conceptual flipping back and forth between the work we know and the work we are experiencing", all indicating a level of mutual dependency" (139). From this account, she assumes that readers' competence in possessing the literary or cultural knowledge to recognize the presence of one text in another is a prerequisite to appreciating an adaptation. Despite she defended that adaptation can be appreciated as an artwork in its own right, an adaptation, from her perspective, is still tasked with "salvaging" the adapted and tasks with bringing the afterlife to the source texts. This perception has been further echoed by Rachel Carroll, with her strong opening sentence of the volume *Adaptation in Contemporary Culture: Textual Identities*, that "All adaptations express or address a desire to return the 'original' textual encounter; as such adaptation is perhaps symptomatic of a cultural compulsion to repeat" (2009, 1).

Hutcheon's theory can be inspiring since she further clarifies the relationship with the source text, yet her formulation also raises several other important questions. One of the questions is how the shifts in language, ideology, and cultural background influence the production and reception of an adaptation and what kind of role that cultural realities play in the whole process of adaptation. To quote Stam's words, we may further understand the grammar of transformation from one text to another. As he argued:

> [The] source-novel adaptations? are transformed by a complex series of operations: selection, amplification, concretization, actualization, critique, extrapolation, popularization, accentuation, trans-culturalization. The source novel can be seen as situated utterance, produced in one medium and in one historical and social context, and later transformed into another, equally situated utterance, produced into a different context and relayed through a different medium. The source text forms a dense informational network, a series of verbal cues which the adaptation text can then selectively take up, amplify, ignore, subvert or transformation. (2000,69)

In addition to giving specific examples to identify the intertextual strategies of variable sorts in the process of adaptation, Stam's approaches to adaptation also touch

upon the cultural contexts where the verbal utterances are produced. From this respect, he identifies an adaption as a transformative process—from decontextualization to recontextualization— to make one source culture available to its target readers in another culture. Julie Sander also argues in her monograph *Adaptation and Appropriation*, that adaptation is "an updating or the cultural relocation of a text to bring it into greater proximity to the cultural and temporal context of readers or audience" (2005,163). These ideas all suggest that adaptation should be further analyzed beyond inter-linguistic, intra-semiotic, and inter-medial framework, and needs to be further situated "in different patterns of language use, in different cultural values, in different literary traditions, in different social institutions, and often in a different historical moment" (Venuti 2007,162).

In the volume, *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, Andre Lefevere makes a more detailed analysis of the sociological and cultural factors that govern the adaptation process. He claims that "All rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way" (1992, xii). Lefevere argues for two components of poetics: one is the new literary devices, genres, motifs, prototypical characters and situations, and symbols which have been invented in rewriting; the other the literary norms and conventions to that time. There is a process of negotiation at work here—a dialogue between cultural codes and systems—and adaptation, much more than merely the consequences of crossing linguistic and medium barriers. At the same time, conversely, adaptation also plays a particular role in observation of cultural flows. It allows for the transitivity of social and cultural views and values across different social contexts, by which a timeline of how society's ethics, beliefs, and ideas have evolved over time can be envisioned. To an extent, it also constructs memory and identity from the perspective of cultural politics (Jellenik 2017).

The practitioners of adaptation have long been disregarded or marginalized in the discussion of adaptation theories. Are the adapters invisible? If not, then what kind of role is a practitioner playing in the whole process of adaptation? As has been discussed above, adaptation is not a process aiming at retelling the "truth" in the source text, but presenting diverse possibilities how one text can be interpreted in another voice and in another cultural reality. As the agent of communication across textual and cultural boundaries, the adapters are in mediating positions between their source text and their adaptation, between the context where the source texts were produced and the context of the reception. Just as translators who mediate readers of different languages, the authors of adaptation, too, build a communicative bridge by which the old story can be

understood by people with another cultural background. Thus, they can be understood as the ones who can deploy their intercultural competence to transform a text into another meaning-making system, shared by his potential readership.

Lawrence Venuti is one of the most widely circulated and cited scholars who further explored the role of adapter/translator by the hermeneutic model of translation and adaptation. As Venuti argued, the hermeneutic relation is interrogative, exposing the cultural and social conditions of those materials and of the translation or adaptation that has processed them (2007, 41). He also articulates that any source text comes to the translation or adaptation process always mediates by interpretive practices that position in a network of signification and translation and adaptation "as an interpretive act, that varies source-text form, meaning, and effect according to the intelligibilities and interests in the receiving culture" (2019, 1).

"Interpretant", a term coined by Venuti, is the third term in the competing discourse of fidelity and intertextuality. Formal interpretants include a concept of equivalence, such as a semantic correspondence based on dictionary definitions. Thematic interpretants can refer to specific values, beliefs and representations, working as a cultural prism. They both guide the process of decontextualizing and contextualizing the source text, "replacing intertextual relations in the source language and the culture with a receiving intertext, with relations to the translating language and culture which are built into the translation" (2007, 31). From this point of view, he put a peculiar emphasis on the effort of translator/adapter in the process of translation. In addition to make an intertextual link, the task of translator of an adaptation, as Venuti argued, is to pick up one of many possible interpretations according to their own cultural register. State ideology, cultural climate, the expectation of the target audience, economic and social reasons etc. can all be the possible factors that influence the way that how author interact with their source text. The choices indeed establish a place of enunciation, as well as a context of affiliation, by which the translators can better fulfill their literary, social, and ideological goals to their own time and spaces (Tymoczko 2006). Lefevere also emphasized the ideological dimension in translation studies, "On every level of the translation process, it can be shown that, if linguistic considerations enter into conflict with considerations of an ideological and/or poetical nature, the latter tend to win out" (1992, 39). All these ideas further free adapters from the moral and ethical dilemma in the process of adaptation, and articulate their decisive role in adaptation by emphasizing the social-cultural, ideological, and ethical influences that identify them.

1.5 Methodology

Based on the contributions of previous studies, I will narrow down my research to investigating the adaptation strategies deployed in Old Tales Retold Fiction in Hong Kong since the 1960s, and their cultural implications behind the textual surface. Among all the Chinese-speaking communities where Old Tales Retold fiction can be found, I select Hong Kong as my subject matter because of two reasons. For one thing, these texts of Hong Kong have been marginalized in most Old Tales Retold fiction studies so far and their value has been far less appreciated. Simply taken as "popular literature" with little aesthetic value or lightweight, free-floating "literary experiment", these texts in Hong Kong were treated as a "forsaken child" of the great tradition of its mainland counterpart, and thus were negatively received by critics in mainland China. Second, as I have reviewed before, Hong Kong has a particular history and culture formation, long been influenced by two political powers— British colonial governance and Chinese cultural dominance. Retelling old Chinese stories, in this context, not only matters with how the modern conflicts with the tradition, but tells that how Hong Kong as a cultural receiver or a derivation transforms the Chinese tales into its own "language" and style. With such perceptions, I believe that a study of Old Tales Retold fiction in Hong Kong in may add some new perspectives to the current Old Tales Retold fiction studies, and provoke more thoughts on cultural negotiations between China and other Chinese-speaking communities.

Four authors and their texts were selected as my case study in study Old Tales Retold fiction in Hong Kong—Liu Yichang, Ye Si, Xi Xi, and Li Bihua, who are diverse in their life and writing trajectory and show different approaches to ancient Chinese texts.

Liu Yichang, my entry point to Old Tales Retold fiction in Hong Kong, is a South-bound writer who has been educated and worked in mainland China, and then exiled to Hong Kong after 1949. His strong affinity to New Sensationalist School in Republican period and explicit reflection to Hong Kong cultural realities makes his rewriting a good example to observe how his two identities encountered, and how, Liu, as a mediator, manipulate this encounter with literary innovations.

Ye Si, also known as Leung Ping-kwan, was born in Hong Kong, later studying in North America. His lament on the lack of cultural subjectivity in Hong Kong urges him to seek approaches to capture the "reality" and "locality" of Hong Kong by looking back to Chinese myths.

I chose Xi Xi as my third case to further explore how an adaptation echoes with the sentimental identity crisis in the 1980s. As a writer who has been regarded as one of the most "local" authors, Xi Xi integrated the old tales of different versions all together yet kept questioning their validity throughout her adaptations.

Li Bihua, one of the most active popular writers and scriptwriters in Hong Kong, in the 1990s and onwards is my final case, by which I proceed to explore how revisiting the past serves as a respond to the political realities of Hong Kong's return to Chinese control.

To capture the differences among the four authors and integrate them as a whole, I will introduce the theory of adaptation as my lens to read these selected texts. With all these regards, the theory of adaptation has been established in three dimensions— text, context, and authorship— which are tightly interrelated with each other. It serves as a triple prism to observe the inter-textual and extra-textual interactions in the process of adaptation. If we read Old Tales Retold fiction studies from the perspective of adaptation, crucial issues— authors' identity, the negotiation with literary traditions, ideological conflicts for instance— come to the fore and demand engagement. These issues have no doubt presented themselves with great significance in the previous scholarships somehow, yet very few articles have touched upon them all with equal concern. The theory of adaptation can be beneficial to Old Tales Retold fiction studies because it allows us to recognize it as a form of critical practice in a larger social background without dismissing a textual analysis. More importantly, it takes this text mode as one implication resulting from the validation of the adaptor as a social as well as a textual player, which has been dismissed in most discussions before. Seeing through this spectrum, we will put Old Tales Retold fiction as a challenging site filled with cultural negotiation and conflicts. Via certain strategies in adaptation, the authors of Old Tales Retold can be self-aware in terms of the positions they stand for in cultural and ideological flux. Their own tones in retelling and interpreting the existing values, ideologies, and aesthetics of the old constructs could be seen as a means of declaring their own identity.

Chapter 2: Two Writers in Exile

Liu Yichang [刘以鬯] and Ye Si (also known as Leung Ping-kwan) [也斯] have been considered two of the most significant figures in Hong Kong literature, and their fiction with modernist techniques has been praised as a lens to observe the sociopolitical upheavals in Hong Kong in the 1960s and onward (Au,2019). Interestingly, for both writers, rewriting older texts constitutes a crucial part of the writing career. Establishing the intersection of past and present through the process of revisiting Chinese myths and folk tales, their rewriting projects endeavor to retrieve the classic literary aesthetics and display an innovative experiment in language and genre. More importantly, to integrate their own personal experiences in Hong Kong—alienation, displacement and marginalization— into their plot, Liu Yichang and Ye Si also demonstrate that retelling can be a way of self-seeking and self-expression and a critical response to the colonial capitalist modernity. In this chapter, several of their adaptations written in the 1960s and the 1970s will be discussed as case studies. By closely scrutinizing the changes in setting, structure and protagonists' characteristics which differentiate their adaptations from the source stories, we may be able to outline the contours of Hong Kong's cultural complexities and the struggling selves of Hong Kong authors.

2.1 Retelling Romance as Grotesque: Alienation in Liu Yichang's *Inside the Temple*.

2.1.1 Displacement, Stream-of-consciousness and *Inside the Temple*

Although Liu has always been praised as the father of literary modernism in Hong Kong literature, it is still debatable to what extent Liu should be celebrated as a Hong Kong author. As a writer who has contributed to literary production in different locations, tracing back the history of his writing career is a crucial step in understanding his works. Liu was born in Shanghai in 1918 to a family of intellectuals and received the best education, both Chinese and Western, from St. John's University in Shanghai. During this time, Liu came into contact with the imported literary fashion of Western modernism and Hollywood films, as well as Chinese literary schools based in Shanghai. Among these were the New-Sensationalist writers, such as Mu Shiying [穆时英, 1912-1940] and Shi Zhecun [施蛰存, 1905-2003] , who had a tremendous influence on Liu's later works. Liu started his literary career as a writer, an editor and a literary critic when he was a young student in Shanghai, and he continued his literary journey as an editor of two national newspapers when he was exiled in Chongqing, in China's temporary capital during the war during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1949).

After the Chinese Civil War (1946-1949), fought between the Communists and the Nationalists, Liu Yichang was further exiled to Hong Kong for economic difficulties he faced when his publishing business broke down. However, this did not prompt the end to the displacement. From the 1950s to the 1960s, he moved to Malaysia and Singapore for his writing career, because he found the influence of the money-driven society of Hong Kong to negatively impact his desire for serious writing. After the 1960s, Liu finally moved back to Hong Kong and began work as a productive column writer and novelist and as the founder of a serious literature magazine, *Hong Kong Literature* [香港文学] since 1985.

The long and profound internal and external displacement experience offers him opportunities to come in contact with a variety of literary traditions, all of which contributed to extreme diversity in his literature (Huang 2019). A fusion of literary styles, where Chinese literary traditions met novel Western techniques, Liu's writing is unique and experimental in comparison to that of his contemporaries. Realizing that a conventional realism could not fully convey the "reality" as observed by Liu, he turned to embracing the modernist literary techniques, such as stream-of-consciousness, through which he could explore or reveal the conflicts within characters' minds. As he emphasized,

> It is not enough for an author to just tell a story. He needs a new device. To explore the inner reality is one of the necessities in writing.

> 小说家不能平铺直叙地讲一个故事就算，他需要组织一个新的体制。内在真实的探求成为小说家的首要目的已属必须。（1963, preface）

This philosophy in writing has been widely practiced in his early works in Hong Kong. *The Drunk* [酒徒, 1963] and *Intersection* [对倒, 1972], have been widely taken as the representative examples of modernist literature in Hong Kong, and the reflection of Liu's mental alienation and displacement from Hong Kong society (Huang, 2019). In comparison, *Inside the Temple*, a novella adapted from a classic Chinese romantic tale in a modernist style, proves less reputable as a reflection of Liu's mental world (Zhu, 2002). This, however, does not make it any less interesting for the present project.

The source story of *Inside the Temple* is *The Romance of the Western Chamber* [西厢记, 1295-1307], one of the great romantic dramas in premodern China written by Wang Shifu [王实甫, 1260－1307] in Yuan dynasty[1271-1368]. Written in a society under the influence of Confucian orthodoxy, where free marriage is not an occasion to be celebrated, this romantic story is rather rebellious, as it deeply attacked the traditional mores of ancient China. As C.T Hsia further argued, "Certainly no previous

Chinese author has ever caught the changeable states of a young man in love, by turns enraptured and dejected, tender and silly, with as much precision in such a copious volume of impassioned verse" (2004, 91).

It tells of a secret love affair between Zhang Sheng, a talented intellectual living in poverty, and Cui Yingying, the daughter of a chief minister of the Tang court, who fall in love at first sight when they meet in a temple. The vast difference in social class between the couple leads Cui's mother to disapprove of their marriage. A further obstacle described in the story includes the presence of the rebel leader Sun Feihu and Cui's cousin Zheng Heng, both of whom also wish to have Cui as wife. It becomes evident that the relationship between Zhang and Cui is faced with formidable obstacles. However, with the help of Cui's maid, Hong Niang the couple secretly get reunion in the garden of the temple. In the end, Zhang is appointed to high office in the imperial government after completing the imperial civil service examination, and the marriage backed by true love defeats the restrictive feudal ethics.

2.1.2 Two kinds of interior monologue

As Lefevere argues, adaptations are always influenced by the poetics, including the new devices, genres, motifs, as well as the literary norms and conventions to the time when the rewritings are created (1992). Indeed, Liu Yichang's rewritings also manipulate the source texts with "the new devices" to his own time. With his preference for stream-of-consciousness writing, Liu sets up two paths of internal monologue to reveal what is meant by "inner realities." The first can be more accurately called inner thoughts of characters. Experimentally, Liu applies the parentheses to mark a separate textual space which does not necessarily follow the storyline of the old constructs, in which characters' own disjointed mental wanderings in random associations or broken syntax could be envisioned. An interesting example of this style of writing is seen here:

> Cui gently touched her beautiful body with her hand. She fell in love with herself. She seduces Scholar Zhang just because she fell in love with her self.
>
> (He is a scholar, she thought. A scholar can be crazy enough in bed to make Confucius cry.)
>
> (Sun Feihu is a barbarian, she thought. She can image his barbarian behavior.)
>
> For the first time, the girl was in a state of narcissism. Her emotions were inflamed. Outside the window came the ringing of the bell and over the wall came the footstep.

崔莺莺用手抚摸着自己的胴体，爱上了自己，她是因为爱自己才像张琪挑战的。

(他是一个读书人，她想。读书人在床上的疯狂必使孔子流泪。)

(孙飞虎是一个粗人，她想。粗人的动作可以想象得到。）

(所以她想，为了满足好奇，她应该祈祷白马将军早日来临。）

女孩子第一次得了怜己狂，感情在发炎，窗外传来铃檐打铃，还当时越墙来的足音。(Liu 2018, 158)

The interweaving of the narrator's presentation and characters' thoughts provides an alternative meaning to the story. This is not merely a device meant to enrich the plot. Rather, the words in parentheses also reveal hidden characteristics of the characters. For instance, it is shown that Cui appeals to her sexual desires and narcissistic tendencies, which subverts the traditional image of Cui Yingying that has been depicted in the original version.

The second kind of monologue always appears in the dream space. For Liu Yichang, the dream world is a place where everyone can enjoy complete freedom. The character of Cui's mother is considerably altered in her dream state, as opposed to the description of her conscious self. Instead of shaping her as a strict keeper of Confucian orthodoxy, Liu further reveals her subconsciousness— her profound loneliness and sexual dissatisfaction resulting from her failed marriage. She dreams that a young man would come and have sexual intercourse with her.

A young man makes many prophecies for the future, saying that there would be light, space craft and moving vehicles. That is a world where old ladies can buy the love from young man for money……She wants to buy some love but she doesn't know from whom she can buy that. That is a sad thing. She hopes that she can live in that absurd time.

小伙子做了许多预言，说是将来人类可以有电灯，有飞船，有走路的机器，有年老的夫人出钱向年轻人购买爱情……她欲购买爱情， 却无由致送的发光的黄金。这是很悲哀的事情，老夫人只希望生存于千百年后的那个荒唐时代。(183)

It is explicitly seen that Liu uses this dream as a bridge connecting the past and present, and as a device to mirror the reality of the emerging metropolis of Hong Kong. However, the parody of the money-driven society is not the only message that Liu aimed to convey. The absurd scene did not come to an end in this paragraph. As written

in the aforementioned story, Ms. Cui expected to reach an ultimate happiness in her dream world, where she found "yesterday" and "tomorrow" do not exist. Becoming more and more bold in her own mind, Ms. Cui even dreamed that she slept with Scholar Zhang. The erotic desire materialized later in the story.

As Zhu Chongke has argued, the dream realm can be a subversion of the reality (2002). The dream, in Liu's constructs, enables all the characters to ignore the obstacles in reality and find what they lost in reality. The two kinds of inner monologue are interwoven, expanding a hidden mental world of the characters, particularly the females. The monologue opens another narrative space for the original content, marking writer's own creativity and imagination. Not merely serving as an re-interpretation of the happenings in the classic romance, *The Romance of the Western Chamber*, Liu's *Inside the Temple* is indeed a new story which fulfills Liu Yichang's aesthetic pursuits.

2.1.3 Rewriting against capitalist modernity: alienation, suppression, and fragility

In terms of the structure, a new kind of paradigm of Chinese romance, known as Caizi Jiaren [才子佳人], centered on the love between the a young scholar and a beauty, has been developed in *The Romance of the Western Chamber* (Hsia 2004; Hessney 1974). Strongly echoed by later practitioners in Ming dynasty [1368-1644] and Qing dynasty [1644-1912], this model has been gradually standardized, even stereotyped, with fixed narrative elements, characterizing the lovers as hero and heroine who are mastering peak physical attractiveness and high intelligence in literature, both of which are the ideals of masculinity and femininity in pre-modern China (Hessney 1974). Within this story type, the female characters were always objectified as erotic subjects. The erotic scene, in the *The Romance of the Western Chamber* and others, is quite common, where a female body will be imagined and mastered under a male gaze (Song 2004).

However, this structure hardly emerges in Liu's rewriting. Rather than being shaped as a brave and intelligent hero who could capture a female's heart with his courage and literary talent, Scholar Zhang, the only male protagonist of *Inside the Temple*, is merely an ordinary man or even an anti-hero. He is always presented as innocent and unreliable when faced with female seduction, and his passionate feelings towards Cui Yingying could not be released and expressed. In the old versions of *The Romance of the Western Chamber,* the heroic deeds of Scholar Zhang serve to curtail the plot and continue the story that he uses his intelligence to save the lives of people

Inside the Temple. However, in Liu's retold version, this plot was summed up in one sentence, as per his abstract and poetic nature of writing:

"I have a solution." The scholar overcame his fear and cowardice. He can be a hero when he stands out.

"我有办法。"书生克服内心的怯懦，挺身也有英雄姿势。(2018, 156)

With all other details removed, Liu seems to be uninterested in such traditional constructs which have been reinforcing Scholar Zhang's positive image. Throughout *Inside the Temple*, Scholar Zhang is an extremely marginalized and alienated character. On one hand, he has been repressed by the economic pressure imposed by Cui's family, which finally silences his self-expression. More importantly, he also failed to express out his sexual desire. Compared with other modern rewritings of *The Romance of the Western Chamber* which celebrate the lovability of the hero and the heroine to transcend social restrictions, Liu's *Inside the Temple* should be viewed as an exceptional case.

It appears that Liu does not design his rewriting with romance and happy endings in mind. Instead, he showed more interest in emphasizing the sexual tension between characters, as he vividly described each one's desire for sex and mental fulfillment. Also, as Liu emphasized several times in text that "Tomorrow, just as yesterday, will disappear in the end." [明天和昨天一样都会死亡] (161), Liu presented the temporality and fragility of love and romance, which considerably challenged the discourse of loyal romance. Indeed, such the temporal fragmentation also offers glimpses into the totalization of Hong Kong's capitalist modernization, which "instilled a unifying temporality into developing colonial Hong Kong of the 60s and 70s " (Hsu, 2010, 181).

A panicked male character appears again in Liu's latter adaptation works, such as *Spider Spirit* [蜘蛛精, 1978] and *A Legend of Chasing a Fish* [追鱼, 1995], both of which are adapted from classic Chinese fantasies that have been widely retold from generation to generation. When compared with previous examples, these two adaptations not merely continue to emphasize something horrific and bizarre throughout the narration — a scholar who disappears in a pond and a helpless monk trapped among hungry spider spirits. But, more importantly, the female characters in these stories were depicted as more sexy, seductive, and mysterious – as destroyers and even killers. While the male characters are weak and unabled when they displaced in the such seduction. With the existence of femme fatale, all these fantasy stories have been restructured into grotesque horrors.

Liu's *The Romance of the Western Chamber* was written in 1964, in a period of politization influenced by sociopolitical events in the PRC and the influx of migrants and refugees in the British colony of Hong Kong. Furthermore, it was very much a period of rapid economic growth and social turmoil. With the advent capitalist modernization, the growth of mass production and mass consumption challenged social norms and accelerated the clash of sociocultural values (Fu 2000). In the realm of art and literature, Hong Kong was especially perceived as a capitalized, commercial center where people were too obsessed with further improving their lavish lifestyles, and where most cultural production was dismissed under the category of "popular culture" (Larson, 1999). Within such a background, "criticizing a rigidification of the system of the metropolis and a thematized alienation and loss of value" was a common approach taken by Hong Kong authors (Gänssbauer and Yip 2017, 92).

Indeed, as has been discussed in Chapter 1, adaptation always reflects a certain ideology and poetic nature in a given society. Furthermore, it provides a path for the negotiations of cultural codes and systems of different times and spaces (Lefevere 1992). In creating an adaptation, the author acts as a transcultural actor who transfers the story to readers with different cultural backgrounds and makes it both understandable and accessible for the new sociopolitical milieu. The monologues that deployed by Liu Yichang and the subversion of the Caizi Jiaren pattern, decontextualize the classic romantic relationship and recontextualize the old story in the modern Hong Kong, as an echo to the collective mentality shared among the South-bound authors.

According to Liu Yichang's own evaluation, many of his works should only be regarded as "trash literature" which are only used to earn a living, and only some could be taken as serious literature which really matters with the art of novel-writing (Larson 1999). Liu's own struggle when he started a writing career in Hong Kong may help to justify the image of inferiority of young scholars that is presented in his adaptations. As an adaptation, Liu's *Inside the Temple* and his other rewriting projects not only represented Liu's strong preference for modernist aesthetics. The effect of bizarreness of love relationship and the broken social mores which he reinforced in his adaptations indeed can be seen to reflect Liu's sense of being lost amidst the torrents of drastic and economic changes, and a sense of anxiety and estrangement felt by a new-comer Hong Kong writer at a time when the city was undergoing an unbelievable economic success. On the other side, Liu also seeking for a fusion or an interaction between cultures. In such pieces of adaptation, he is not held back by much social consciousness and ethical values which is common in leftist modern Chinese literature which he is familiar with, and, by contrast, positively absorbs modern techniques which are introduced from

western literature (Hsu 2010). It further examines Hong Kong as a gateway of East and West cultures, and the cultural fusion in the reception of the Chinese ancient tales in modern period.

For Liu Yichang, adaptation can be seen to be an alternative response to his confusion about his existence in the capitalist modernity of Hong Kong. To end this section, I believe Kwai Cheung Lo's comment may provide good insight into Liu's mentality: "He is both decadent and also its antithesis, anti-decadent, an embodiment of contrary views, a wealth of oppositions and struggles" (2010, 179). Just as those ancient young men hesitated before submitting to female seduction, Liu is not a radical resistant to all the new and decadent culture that he was initially reluctant to accept. He attempts to find a better gesture which keeps him balanced in such a dilemma in order to reconciliate with the burdensome past.

2.2 Hong Kong in Chinese Myths: Self-exile in Ye Si's *Shimen, the Dragon Keeper*

2.2.1 The Story of Hong Kong: why is it so difficult to tell?

Compared with Liu Yichang who kept roaming in different cultural realities and confronting a deep historical rapture between past and present, Ye Si had a rather stable life and writing career. Born in 1949 in the Guangdong province and soon moving to Hong Kong, Ye Si spent most of his life on this island as a poet, novelist, scholar, and cultural critic. With a strong emotional attachment to Hong Kong, the place he was raised, educated, and worked, Ye Si paid particular attention to the literature in postcolonial discourse of Hong Kong, both in his scholarly research and creative writing.

Writing is said not to come easy to people from/in Hong Kong. Although this statement has been repeated, elaborated, and explained by many scholars who are interested in Hong Kong literature, culture, and history, it is still worthy to discuss, even at present time. When talking about Hong Kong literature after the 1950s, scholars will never ignore Ye Si's powerful inquiry: The Story of Hong Kong: why is it so difficult to tell? [香港的故事为什么这么难说?] (1995, 4). Characterized by capitalism, transition, and globalization, Hong Kong has been represented by different voices and different perspectives. Yet, there is always the question of how these narratives – nationalist or anti-nationalist, West or East, local or foreign, traditional or modern, and all other binaries resulting from the Cold War and other political upheaval – speak for a real and vivid Hong Kong. As Ye Si observed:

The story of Hong Kong has been told by many voices. Each of the voices give us a different Hong Kong story. What can be affirmed is that these stories tell us less about Hong Kong than the position to which the storyteller belongs.

[每个人都在说，说一个不同的故事。到头来，我们惟一可以肯定的，是那些不同的故事，不一定告诉我们关于香港的事，而是告诉了我们那个说故事的人，告诉了我们他站在什么位置说话。] (1995,4)

However, the rapid cultural and demographic exchange between Hong Kong and the outside world marred by political instability is probably not the only explanation of why Hong Kong literature and culture have been suppressed, misunderstood, and stereotyped in representation. Riemenschnitter provides another observation about Hong Kong, which further explains Ye Si's inquiry. She argues: "Transnationally governed states become used to forget and reinvent their pasts in an accelerationist, commercializing process of nation-branding, the modern idea of a homogenous, morally accountable nation, together with the myth of its territorial foundation" (2014, 114).

To borrow Ye Si's own word, he was writing in the generation of the "photocopier" [影印机], due to which everything could be copied and reproduced in a short time. As a result, a stereotypical image of Hong Kong — one teeming with drugs, eroticism, tall buildings, revelry, beauties, and gambling [贩毒走私，色情泛滥，高楼大厦，灯红酒绿，燕瘦换肥，赌狗赛马]— spread so easily and deeply in people's mind, and rejected the narration of a real Hong Kong (1994, 290).

2.2.2 *Shimen, The Dragon Keeper*: Bildungsroman or anti-Bildungsroman

Like Liu Yichang, Ye Si also realized that realism was not sufficient to represent the local experience, as it is dynamic and difficult to be capture. To explore the possibilities of storytelling, Ye Si showed a particular sensibility to myths – an infinite imaginary space to retrospect the reality – which he thought to be a supplement to realism (1994, 294).

Among all, *Shimen, The Dragon Keeper*, written in 1974, is one of the representative examples among all his myth adaptations. The source material which Ye Si's retelling is based on, is the myth *Shimen, The Dragon Keeper* which is recorded in the early collection of Chinse mythical figures *Biographies of Immortals* [列仙传] , attributed to the Western Han dynasty [202 BCE–9 CE] editor and imperial librarian Liu Xiang [刘向, 77 BCE- 6 BCE]. The original text which introduces Shimen's life story is only 50 characters long. In summary, it writes about the conflict between a

dragon trainer, Shimen, and an emperor, Kong Jia. Shimen was killed by Kong Jia, but Kong Jia was later punished by a mysterious force of nature. Obviously, within such a short and abstract text, it is almost impossible to identity the characteristics of the protagonist, and one can only find some fragments of narratives rather than a whole story. Thus, Ye Si provides a completely new setting, characters, and storylines to fill these gaps and enriched the primary narratives aesthetically with his modernist techniques.

In the aesthetic respect, Ye Si's style of magical realism should also be noted since it reshapes Ye Si's reading of such a mythical story. As introduced before, the present reality and the ancient mythical world are highly intertwined in Shimen's story. Based on the realist details, yet still including the mysterious and fantasy elements, the retold version of Shimen's tale bridges the reality and fictionality in a balanced way. Shimen is shaped as an immortal figure with magical power who has been staying in the human world. From the very beginning, Shimen was told by his sister that only after he finished repairing 300 pairs of shoes could he start to train a dragon. After the repetitive physical labour and an uncomfortable interview by an officer who kept asking his working experience and whether he has a diploma or certification to prove his skills, Shimen finally got an opportunity to train the dragon in the emperor's palace. From the description, his working environment could be easily recognized as a modern office in Hong Kong under the bureaucratic system. For instance, when Shimen attempted to get some food, land, sunshine, and air for the dragon, he was told that he had to fill the application form and submit it on a certain day of application which comes once a month. The whole procedure is complicated, especially for food application, as he would need to get the signature of the emperor. As such, the exhausting and nonsensical rules in Hong Kong are revealed in a great irony. By Ye Si's expansion and reinterpretation, a culture of Hong Kong metropolis has been successfully embedded in the retold text and the details as such also exemplify Ye Si's cross-cultural reception of the Chinese myth.

Two storylines are interwoven in this fiction. The first one could be indicated as the process of dragon training. At first, the dragon was weak and incapable, because it was not treated properly by the previous dragon trainers. Making such a dragon survive, speak, and fly is the main mission for Shimen. For him, the dragon is the only one who can understand him among all the voices of repression, misunderstanding, and rejection. Teaching a dragon, therefore, could be seen as way of self-fulfilment. Another storyline is Shimen's resistance and entanglement to all the absurdity he has experienced. Besides Shimen and Kongjia, there are also several new characters that Ye Si added in

his retold version. These characters, like A Ji, A He, or A Mu are fully submitted to the current rules and alienated to be a part of official politics. In negative images in the story, they tell Shimen not to be serious in training a dragon, but rather focus his energy on learning how to live with the office politics. The conflicts in value between Shimen and other characters are brought up throughout the whole story.

These two storylines are unseparated from each other most of the time. The more Shimen devoted himself to the dragon training, the more mental clash he would receive from the outside environment. Based on Shimen's experience, Tai and Mao read this adaptation under the concept of Bildungsroman, a literary genre originated in German literature, which focuses on the psychological growth of the protagonist from youth to adulthood, and, in structure, follows the following model: "seduction — departure — test — confusion — insight — loss of purity — understanding oneself and the meaning of life" [诱惑 —— 出走 —— 考验 —— 迷茫 —— 顿悟 —— 失去天真 —— 认识人生和自我] (2015, 106). As Tai and Mao further argued, this story experimentally reflects the process that a young man explores the society, as well as his loss and confusion in his painful growth.

However, such statements still remain debatable. First, in content, Bildungsroman always presents individual change of the self in the process of formation, and such formation should always correspond to the changes of societal condition. Meanwhile, in Shimen's story, the process of self-formation is not that evident. As he asked: "What is life, what is love, what is literature?" [什么是人生；　什么是爱情；什么是文学?] (Ye 1994, 125), these questions never leave, but intensify his existential crisis. His mentality of displacement in his self and his inner rejection to follow the absurd social system failed to disappear. Furthermore, it is easy to dismiss Shimen's struggling and resistance when we identity his experience as "growth" and "maturation" under the conceptual framework of Bildungsroman. The Bildungsroman traditionally tells how the character learn to accept the world he or she lives in. Ending on a positive note, the protagonist's disappointment and pain passed, and a life of usefulness lies ahead (Graham 2018). In comparison, Shimen's story was more critical and rebellious. The protagonist refused to follow the standards imposed by the outside world, and he never attempted to reconcile with others. Even when he was executed for secretly setting the dragon free, he thought back on his life as follows:

> In the whole system, he is just a speck of dust, a nail that does not work, which can be thrown anyway. He is not resigned to this destiny. He wants to fly, shouting out, throwing away this world which throws him away ……something wants to rush

outside his heart and flow from his mouth. That is a real alive dragon, thinking freely, moving its tail, breaking down the fixed and standardize real world.

整个制度中，他不过是一颗微尘，一枚出了问题的钉子，随便扔掉算了……他不甘心这样，他不要做被扔掉的钉子，他要飞，要高声呼啸，要扔掉这个扔掉他的世界……有些什么要汹涌地从他心中，口腔里涌出来。那是一条翻腾的龙，奔驰的神思，挥动它的尾巴，将要打碎这个僵固的现实世界。 (Ye 1994, 142).

Such monologue further indicates that this is not a story of reconciliation, but a story of struggling self-realization. His mind is set not on accepting his destiny, but rather on challenging and avoiding fate.

2.2.3. Self-exile：as a response to a post-colonial cultural crisis in Hong Kong

In this retold version, Kong Jia also died of the magic power caused by Shimen's anger. Shimen was resurrected after he was executed, but because of Kong Jia's death, he was punished to become a normal human and could not go back to the world of the gods anymore. In the end, he found a small and immature dragon when he was roaming, and decided to spend his rest life on training a dragon again.

The dragon here may also be a symbol of freedom, passion, and creativity. From the perspectives of Tai and Mao, this ending indicates a hopeful and new start to Shimen. However, reading it in the context that "A Ji took over the power, and everything was getting worse. Shimen felt he could never escape from that" [由阿吉来握权，事情只会更坏了。他觉得好像怎样飞也逃不脱] (144), to train a dragon again should be rather taken as a hopeless self-exile. In this sense, Shimen completely gives up to fulfil himself in the current society, and such an ending is even ironic — it does not point to an assimilation, but only to profound loneliness and imminent rejection.

To combine a Chinese traditional myth and the imported magical realism of Latin America literature seems to be quite experimental and challenging in the artistic aspect, yet also crucial as a response to the postcolonial culture of Hong Kong which Ye Si lived in. Shimen's failure in return to where he belongs is probably also confronted by Ye Si, who is unsatisfied with a repeated and overcommercialised cultural production in Hong Kong. To construct a self-expression between two kinds of literary traditions, Ye Si seems to answer his own inquiry which has been discussed in the beginning of this chapter: why is the story of Hong Kong so hard to tell? He strove to find a possible literary device by which Hong Kong stories could be envisioned, and the adaptation —

where west and east are encountered, and a hybridity of cultures in Hong Kong could be reflected — is one of his solutions.

The hardship in constructing a valid representation of Hong Kong is also highly associated with the hardship to seek, build, and represent a valid identity of the person of Hong Kong. In Ye Si's point of view, the culture and value system in Hong Kong had been shaped by the British colonizers, while Hong Kong people are quite used to it, and accept it from ignorance, in the sense of not knowing any better. In Ye Si's research on postcolonialism, he selected Mexican writer Octavio Paz's *The Labyrinth of Solitude* as his lens to analyse the cultural blank of a colonized place. In the article under the same title, *The Labyrinth of Solitude* [孤寂的迷宫], Ye Si first concurred Paz's idea that Mexicans are struggling with the two different identities, while they rejected to submit to either of them. Only when the intellectuals invent their own words and concepts can they get an approach to their own realities. However, such a process always comes with loneliness. Elaborating on this idea with the case of Hong Kong, Ye Si argued that Hong Kong, just as Mexico, also posited in the middle of two cultures— the Great China and the British colony. Thus, agreeing with Paz's theory, Ye Si indicated that Hong Kong should also construct its own way of self-expression in order to resist the colonial effect, even though this will be a difficult and lonely effort (2011).

Within his adaptation project, Ye Si revealed the cultural crisis and mental clashes in extractive capitalism from various angles, but its significance is far beyond. On the one hand, it challenged and enriched the two mainstreams of stories of Hong Kong — "one is about the international metropolis and postmodern transnational enterprise and the other is about national history" [一种是国际性都市的故事。后现代企业的故事……另一种是民族性的故事] (Ye 2012, 11). On the other hand, engaging with the ancient characters possessing magical power, Ye Si has invented a reflective space to deal with his own dilemma when facing to the cultural inferiority of postcolonial Hong Kong.

By exiling himself in his loneliness, Shimen found a rather new start to self-fulfillment. For Ye Si, self-exile is like a response and an approach to the cultural realities with which he is confronted. When explaining his interest in Chinese myths, Ye Si argues that they open a door for him into a fancible and imaginative world and help him escape the humdrum and restricted office life (1994). Appropriating the Hong Kong cultural and societal realities — the office politics, for instance — within the mythical constructs, Ye Si contests and defies the stereotypical discourse and narrative of Hong Kong with his local sentiment. A return to a mythical world in literature proposes to excavate and embrace the narratives of a heterogeneous time and space,

thus further creating the image of resistance to colonial repression that remained integral in Hong Kong society.

Liu Yichang's and Ye Si's adaptation projects are both closely relevant to their experiences in Hong Kong under capitalist modernity. As adaptors, they have played a very important rold in their rewriting project by introducing a special, personal rouch into the rewritings. Against the background of consumer culture and identity crisis of Hong Kong in the 1960s and 1970s, revisiting these adaptations invites a rethinking of the difference, contestation, resistance, and challenges below the surface of the cultural flux.

Chapter 3: Can Hong Kong Speak? Polyphonic Heteroglossia in Xi Xi's *The Household of the Chentang Pass Commander* and *The Fertile Town Chalk Circle*

Xi Xi (the pseudonym of Zhan Yan [张彦]) is one of the most renowned essayists and novelists of Hong Kong, having gained her reputation in the 1980s. Playing with different genres and kinds of art, her fiction has been celebrated as innovative and experimental for her generation, and adaptation is one of the ways in which this manifests. In resistance against the monolithic grand narratives of history, Xi Xi constructs an alternative interpretation of Chinese traditional tales by deploying multiple layers of narration in storytelling and challenging the familiar themes for Chinese readers in *The Household of the Chentang Pass Commander* [陈塘关总兵府家事, 1987] and *The Fertile Town Chalk Circle* [肥土镇灰阑记, 1986].

In this chapter, I would like to argue that in Xi Xi's retellings of old tales, children, women, and marginal characters who are forcibly silenced in literary canons or "History", are instead free to speak with their own consciousness, by which Xi Xi offers decentered, multiple, and fluid voices, and constitutes the effect of polyphonic heteroglossia. Reading these against the backdrop of political turbulence after 1984, this chapter is also meant to shed light on how adaptation reflects the anxiety over Hong Kong's future and the sentiment of losing Hong Kong's autonomy and self-determination.

3.1 Time in transition: Hong Kong before 1984

Since the late 1970s, along with high-speed economic growth and prosperous urban development, the cultural identity of Hong Kong gradually become a heated topic (Tam, 2005). Although before the 1970s, Hong Kong had been widely recognized as a refugee city, the new class of educated youth who have a stronger connection and sense of belonging to Hong Kong accelerated the formation of a new Hong Kong identity (Ngok 2008). Economically, through rapid social reforms in public infrastructure and welfare system, such as the Mass Transit Railway project (MTR) and the Hong Kong government's public housing system, Hong Kong has become one of the most advanced cities of Asia and even of the world, and consequently produced a sense of pride and of belonging for Hong Kongers (Mak and Chan 2013). Consequently, the economic progress also brought a much more opportunity for political liberation. Since the late 1970s, Hong Kong has been a relatively free and vibrant civil society, in which freedom of speech and the freedom of staging social protest have been guaranteed, and political participation has been encouraged (Ngok 2008).

Yet, being a Hong Konger cannot be taken for granted ina narrative under reconstruction, foregrounding the cultural negotiations of Chinese cultural particulars. As analysed by Anthony Fung, "the rise of Hong Kong identity can be seen as a process of dissociation from the social and political life of the mainland, as well as a natural formation of local culture vis à vis colonial cultural domination" (2004, 401). Reinforced by mass media, people on the mainland at this period were given a certain negative stereotype. They were presented as living a different lifestyle and having a different way of thinking from people living in Hong Kong, and such a way of presentation has reinforced the image that Hong Kong is the home of "real" Hong Kongers and contributed to set new generation of Hong Kongers apart from their mainland siblings.

Amidst social, political, and economic progress, the Sino-British Joint Declaration, a treaty between the PRC and the UK, was signed in 1984, projecting the peaceful return of Hong Kong's sovereignty to China in 1997, and declaring that Hong Kong would be ruled under the "one country, two systems" principle [一国两制], meaning that Hong Kong's previous capitalist system would remain unchanged for a period of 50 years and that Hong Kong could continue to have its own governmental system, legal, and economic affairs, all of which are independent from mainland China. The system has been implemented through the Hong Kong Basic Law, which ensures that Hong Kong, as a special administrative region of China, has a high degree of autonomy and enjoys executive, legislative, independent judicial power, human rights, and freedoms. However, facing China as their future sovereign master with a completely different ideology and political regime, Hong Kongers did not feel optimistic about their future after 1997 (Lo 2005). As a result, a safeguard for protecting civic society and the territory's autonomy turned out to be an important part of the formation of Hong Kong identity.

Against this backdrop, Xi Xi's two adaptations clearly reflect the complex mentality of Hong Kongers when facing the fate to return. In content, *The Household of the Chentang Pass Commander* and *The Fertile Town Chalk Circle* both deeply inquiry on the bond between children and parents, sharply questioning whether children can say no to their parents with self-determination and autonomy.

3.2 Can the children say no to their parents?

The Household of the Chentang Pass Commander is adapted from the story of Nezha which was introduced in the *Creation of the Gods* [封神演义], a 16th-century Chinese vernacular literautre which intertwines numerious elements of Chinese

mythology, including deities, immortals and spirits, and have deep roots in popular religious beliefs in ancient China. Xu Zhonglin[许仲琳] who is supposed to have died around 1566, has been considered as the original author. In the *Creation of the Gods,* Nezha is depicted as the son of a military commander of Chentang Pass, named Li Jing. As a mythical figure, Nezha is a bad-tempered and aggressive child born with supernatural powers. After he kills the son of the Dragon King for fun, he commits suicide and returns his flesh and blood to his parents so that his family would not be punished for his mistake. Later, his master helps him survive in another body, which is made of lotus root, and his mother receives his message in dream, and so collaborates to build a temple to place his spirit. However, angry for his rebelliousness, his father Li Jing destroys his statue and sets fire to his temple where local people worship him. As a result, Nezha attempts to kill him after he resurrects. After several fights, Li Jing gets help from Daoist Masters, and threatens Nezha with a powerful pagoda, which can burn him to death.

Indeed, Nezha's story has been widely adapted into mass culture, especially in animation and movies throughout the twentieth century. However, within these transformations, Nezha is usually shaped in a positive image, characterized by his righteousness, courage, and heroic deeds. In the meantime, his patricide and extreme defiance to the fatherhood is usually concealed or removed from the storytelling. In such way of presentation, Nezha's self-punishment has been interpreted and reinforced as a representation of filial piety and heroism which is rooted firmly in the ideal values of Chinese culture (Li 2019). On the contrary, Xi Xi's retelling shows no interest in keeping Nezha as a hero who should be appreciated and celebrated. Keeping the original storyline, Xi Xi inserts a lengthy passage on the irreconcilable conflict between Nezha and Li Jing.

What makes Xi Xi's rewriting quite aesthetically innovative is that she separates the entire story into thirteen sections, each section narrated by a character involved in the story. Jinzha, who is known as Nezha's older brother, is the storyteller of the final section. In fact, Jinzha's narration on Nezha's violence to his father is not based on any moral judgment. Rather he sympathizes with Nezha's suppressive experience. In the end, he sharply questions Li Jing's crackdown on Nezha in an ironic tone. As he says:

> I also really want to know why these masters do not teach Nezha to behave well and listen to his parents, but only teach our father to use a weapon to threaten him.

> 我也好想知道，这些师傅们，为什么不想想办法，好好教诲三弟，要他孝顺父母，却要爹爹拿着一件治标不治本的东西。(1998，25)

As Jinzha argues several times in this part, Nezha never changed his mind over killing their father even he after surrenders, and he is always ready to fight back when he is free. The ending question also invites readers to further think whether violent suppression that brings fear, and hatred could also bring peace and love, recover a sense of belonging and reconstruct an emotional bond in broken relationships.

The image of a repressed child can also be evidently found in Xi Xi's *The Fertile Town Chalk Circle*. *The Fertile Town Chalk Circle* is based on a fourteenth-century drama from the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) named *The Chalk Circle* [灰阑记], created by Li Qianfu [李潜夫]. The story has been traveling across cultures and genres over last few decades, for example, being adapted in a play by Bertolt Brecht in the 1940s, under the title *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*.

The original version of *The Chalk Circle* is a story about fortune, jealousy, murder, and judgment in the rich family of Lord Ma. His first wife poisons him, then accuses his second wife, Haitang, of the murder and snatches her son, Ma Shoulang. Judge Bao [also known as Bao Zheng], uses a ruse to find out who is the real mother. He orders a lime circle drawn on floor and let Ma Shoulang stand in between. He asks the two mothers to pull the son to their own side and the winner will take the son back. Following this instruction, the first wife pulls Shoulang hard, yet Haitang does move because she does not want to hurt her son. By this, Judge Bao realizes Haitang's innocence and gives her justice.

In content, Xi Xi's *The Fertile Town Chalk Circle* follows the source story in its basic storyline and directly takes a number of paragraphs from the original version into the rewriting. In the original *The Chalk Circle*, there is a storyteller who takes the responsibility to frame out the drama (Zhang 2018). Expanding this literary tradition, in the narrative structure of Xi Xi's version of *The Chalk Circle*, there is also a character who introduces the background and the plotline to the audience.

However, apart from the obvious similarities between the core stories, there are other notable transformations that can be seen in its structure. In *The Chalk Circle*, Ma Shoulang, is no more a side character who can only listen to the adults in silence. In *The Fertile Town Chalk Circle*, in addition to playing a main character who participates in the development of the plot, he also takes the viewpoints of a spectator and a narrator, who enacts a dialogue with audience. For example, in the very beginning, Ma Shoulang stands out and speaks offstage, giving a prologue for the drama. The second perspective he deploys here makes the drama rather more engaging and reflexive, and makes reader follow his guidance in interpretation.

Let me tell you the truth. The Fertile Town is not a place for drama because it is a stage per se. Everything happens here is real, and there is no need to have another performance. We are not in modern times instead of the ancient past. Anyway, whether in the ancient past or in the present, our days are still overcast— the old still remains and the new doesn't come.

让我老老实实告诉你，肥土镇并不在上演戏剧，因为肥土镇本身就是舞台。一切都是真事，何须搬演。这不也不是古代，而是现代。不论古代还是现代，旧的尚未过度，新的仍为到来，这仍是一个灰蒙蒙的时代。（Xi 1995,77）

In the rewriting Ma Shoulang plays a storyteller who deploys internal monologue and feelings, and at the same time an omniscient spectator who provides comments on the dramatic events. More importantly, as this paragraph suggests, he bridges past and present, in-stage and off-stage, fictionality and reality. In this way, Xi Xi shifts her focus onto the child's feelings during the whole event, and revisits the story from his perspective.

Although Ma Shoulang feels deeply sympathy for his mother's life experience, which suffers from economic difficulties and inferior social status, he does not express much intimacy with her or any expectation to go back home. Instead of celebrating the Judge Bao's wisdom, or Haitang's love for her son, Xi Xi rather criticizes the meaningless of such "chalk circle" in an ironic tone.

The following speeches given by Ma Shoulang articulate Xi Xi's skeptical attitude towards the notions of motherhood, guardianship, and relatedness, highlighting a protest against losing self-determination.

The dead have already gone. What they are debating is my future. Shouldn't I be taken as the most important figure in this play? It is not reasonable that all the light on the stage only spots to Judge Bao, and I could only stand in the dim shallow, expecting his wise judgment. Am I like a slaughtered sheep?

死者已矣，要决定的可是我的将来。难道说，不是我寿郎才是最重要的角色吗？……真奇怪，舞台上的灯光，都投射到包侍制的脸上，那象征了所有的希望和理想吗？我站在他撒下的昏暗的小粉圈里，只期待他智慧的灵光？我和一头待宰的羊有什么区别。（119）

In fact, it is not important to know who is my mother. It is more important to have the right to choose. Why don't I have the right, and why do I have to listen to others? …… I will tell you who my real mother is and who I want to follow on my

own…… I am now here, in the court and on the stage. Please, dear audience, listen to me. Sixty years have passed. Please let me grow up.

其实谁是我的亲生母亲，也已经不再重要，重要的还是选择的权利。为什么我没有选择的权利，一直要熟人摆布。……谁是我的亲娘，我愿意跟谁，我有话说……我站在这里，公堂之上，舞台之中。各位观众，请你们倾听，我有话说。六百年了，难道你们还不让我说话吗？（120）

Similar to Nezha in *The Household of the Chentang Pass Commander* , Ma Shoulang is also unsatisfied with the control imposed by his parents. Within the two adaptations, the notion of "return to family" or a "bond with parents" is deeply questioned, marking a deconstruction of their source stories. For these children, the biological parents are not a decisive factor in understanding where they really belong, and their rebelliousness could be easily justified with parental suppression.

As such, Xi Xi's adaptations present a traceable thematic change from the story which she adapts. Keeping the main plots yet shifting the narrative perspective, Xi Xi constructs different contexts for understanding the theme. From Venutti's perspective on adaptation, the changes in plot could be understood as a thematic interpretation which functions as follows:

the codes rooted primarily in the receiving situation even if in some cases they may incorporate materials specific to the source culture……it guides the process of decontextualizing and recontextualizing the source text, replacing intertextual relations in the source language and culture with a receiving intertext, with relations to the translating language and culture which are built into the translation. (2007,31)

In effect, Xi Xi enacts a dialogue between the political claims of her own time and the concealed voices in the old stories. From the viewpoint of the child characters, Xi Xi not only expands the contents of the original stories but also makes her own critical views and opinions heard. When encountering Ma Shoulang's cry for freedom of speech or Jinzha's suspicion of patriotic suppression, Hong Kong readers may also read it as a political message, and reconsider their own speechless state between two oppressive parents. Defending the autonomy of children, these two retold stories also reflect a hope to keep the right to speak of a Hong Konger who would return to the "motherland".

3.3 Polyphonous Heteroglossia: Retelling history in multiple voices

To explain her motivation and philosophy in rewriting, Xi Xi argues that:

In recent years, the feminists in Europe and America have tended to deconstruct "History", indicating that "History", with a capital "H", is a result of male-centered narratives. In the other word, that is only "his" memory which can be arbitrary. They further argued to reconstruct "Herstory", as resistance. For authors, from the point of view of creative writing, we encountered the history from so many other narratives, saying "Hi, story." A story, is just a tale written in the past, in the past tense.

晚近若干英美女性主义者把 History 一字拆读，引申出所谓"历史"就是男性霸权中心的产物，换言之，即是偏颇的、他的记忆；扬言另塑 Herstory 一字，表示抗衡，作者呢，从事写作角度着眼，却似众里寻它千百度，忽尔重逢，禁不说声 Hi，story：故事，你好。 故事，就是过去的事情，时态是过去式的。(1998, i)

With this notion, Xi Xi expresses her sceptical attitude to the grand narratives of History, emphasized the importance of individual voices in narration. Structurally, Xi Xi deploys decentred, multiple, fluid and counter voices in a story, which dramatically breaks down linear narratives and monolithic interpretation. In her retold version of Nezha's story, she deploys 13 different characters to tell the story. These characters include Nezha's father, the servants in the Nezha's family, Li Jing's horse, Nezha's mother, and some original characters designated by Xi Xi, who are not given a chance to speak in the traditional Nezha tale. As they are involved in different events, their narration is fragmentary, subjective, and dialogical. Relating to Nezha's death and his conflicts with his father Li Jing, their voices are posed in the novel respectively. From Nezha's mother's viewpoint, Nezha is still her son no matter what happened; Meanwhile, Li Jing expresses his anger and disappointment at Ne Zhe's rebellion and justifies his suppression. Jinzha's perspective, as discussed in the aforementioned example, raises doubts on Li Jing's suppressive behaviors. As such, readers need to construct the image of the story on their own since there is no single interpretation given by the author.

The Fertile Town Chalk Circle, likewise, embeds drama verses into the novel structure, displaying the voices of different characters. The multi-layered narration, as I would like to argue, further reinforces the effect of polyphonic heteroglossia.

Defined by Bakhtin, polyphony and heteroglossia are two crucial notions in his theory of dialogism. Literary polyphony refers to many-voices and heteroglossia refers to multiple languages. Bakhtin defines heteroglossia as "another's speech in another's language, serving to express authorial intentions, but in a refracted way. Such speech

constitutes a special type of double-voiced discourse" (1981, 324). These terms further emphasize the combining of different statements and thoughts to construct a text, aiming at rejecting authoritative discourse and adopting the Others' perspective (who can be minor, marginal, and excluded characters from the mainstream or dominant discourse).

In order to display the multiple layers of cultural and ideological values via language and voices, polyphonic heteroglossia indeed promises the right to process self-activity in the formation of one's perspective. It also reveals a multivocal plurality of meanings that is often riotous and cacophonic, as opposed to a uni-accentual singleness of meaning. In this way, it challenges monolithic narration and draws the authoritative into question, allowing the minor voices of counterpoints.

Promoting polyphonic heteroglossia in adaptations, Xi Xi strongly provides more possibilities in storytelling. It furthermore constitutes a space of abundant dialogue in which the liberty of expressing, the liberty of thinking, and the liberty of doubting, are allowed, and releases the characters from the confinement of the narratives of monologue. Instead of rewriting how the story *should* be, Xi Xi indeed attempts to answer how story *can* be. And written in 1986 and 1987, just after the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, Xi Xi's adaptations not only take creative license to make it more experimental in aesthetics, but also closely associate with collective sentiment in Hong Kong.

In her adaptation of old stories, Xi Xi conveys her uncertainty and anxiety facing tomorrow to modern readers. Reading Xi Xi's adaptations within such background, her preference for criticizing parental suppression should be further justified. The child characters who fail to control their own lives and live with liberty could be interpreted as a signifier of Hong Kong which lived apart from its motherland and was colonized by the UK for 150 years. Similar to Ma Shoulang's experience, Hong Kong, as an abandoned child of China, could neither decide its future on its own, but was negotiated between the former metropole and its motherland, neither of which could represent "Hong Kongness" properly.

The deep doubt posed by Jinzha and Ma Shoulang on the "right to speak" and "the right to rebel", make the adaptations reflexive to modern readers, and give it a flavor of the new century in Hong Kong. The ironic tone indeed destabilizes our conventional understanding of these classics. To deconstruct the bond between children and parents, these two rewritings lead the reader to reconsider the experience of the suppressed. By giving the side characters—who have always been concealed and misrepresented— a

chance to speak, Xi Xi suggests anti-centered, multiple, and dynamic interpretations of history, which may release Hong Kong from its subaltern position in the grand narrative of modern Chinese history. It poses an alternative perspective to explore whether it is necessary to glorify Chineseness as the cultural root of Hong Kong, and how a new future for Hong Kong should be envisioned and examined from its own historical narratives.

Just as Tymoczko argues, adaptation is a place of enunciation, by which adapters can better fulfill their social and ideological goals for their own time and space (2006). It is hard to identity whether Xi Xi's thematic choices or literary innovations in structure in her adaptation are made to achieve a particular ideological "goal" or follow a political agenda. Yet, reading such structure in 1984, at least, we can hear multiple voices, multiple ideas, and multiple emotions; we hear disappointment, dissatisfaction, and resistance, all of which have been covered, concealed or denied by monologue in source narrations and commentaries. It is still quite clear that Xi Xi's adaptations reflect a widespread collective anxiety over politics in her time, which she echoes in a literary way.

Chapter 4: Will the Future Be Better? Tortured Women, Incarnate Violence, and Fin-de-Siècle Splendor in Li Bihua's *Green Snake*, *The Reincarnation of Golden Lotus*, and *Kawashima Yoshiko*

Li Bihua is one of the most popular yet controversial writers of Hong Kong from the 1990s onwards. Recreating Chinese ancient stories and adapting her rewritings into cinematic forms, Li has acquired quite a large number of fans worldwide. Li's rewritings always deal with female characters who are marginalized, ignored or criticized by grand historical narratives. Revisiting their life experience and placing them in modern times, Li also enacts another interpretative vision of history.

In this final case-study chapter, I would like to further my discussion centered on adaptations written around 1997, the time of Hong Kong's return to China as a Special Administrative Region. By particularly focusing on Li Bihua's three adaptation works, *Green Snake* [青蛇 1986]，*The Reincarnation of the Golden Lotus* [潘金莲之前世今生，1989], and *Kawashima Yoshiko* [川岛芳子，1990], I propose to argue that Hong Kong authors revisit historical traumas and political turbulence via their adaptations, and that these adaptations present their attitude and mentality towards the upcoming handover.

4.1 Li Bihua and Hong Kong in 1997

July 1, 1997, the date when Hong Kong finally transited from being a British colony to one of China's Special Administrative Regions [特别行政区], "an ultimate deadline recording the relationship between the past, the present, and the future", has been the cause of much analysis, debates, and laments (Ren, 2010, 130). The sentiment of losing self-determination and autonomy which had been spreading among Hong Kongers in the 1980s continues to be intensified during the early 1990s, the period of the countdown (Abbas 1997). Particularly because of the events of Tiananmen— the Chinese military's brutal crackdown on pro-democracy protesters in Beijing on June 4th 1989— Hong Kongers' anxiety over the handover became visible, and a resistance to self-identify as Chinese was enhanced (Lagerkvist and Rühlig 2016). The upcoming political transfer and its particular "one country, two systems"[一国两制] arrangement to be implemented in Hong Kong for the following 50 years did not convince Hong Kongers that they would be liberated from colonial rule, but rather further reinforced their worries and fears over whether the civic society and the political liberties which had taken root in Hong Kong society would be broken.

In such a background, writing in Hong Kong serves as an important mediation for envisioning the negotiations and conflicts between ideologies, culture, and languages (Abbas 1997). One such writer is Li Bihua, who is one of the most reputed best-selling Hong Kong writers from the 1980s onwards, having gradually achieved fame among young readers both in mainland China and Hong Kong.

Li has been regarded as a pioneering figure in the literary development of Hong Kong consciousness and postcolonial mentality. The famous academic essay collection *Literary Hong Kong and Li Bihua* [文学香港与李碧华, 2000] , edited by Hong Kong scholar Kwok Kou Leonard Chan [陈国球], shows her significance in relation to Hong Kong literature. Li Bihua's work *Rouge* [胭脂扣, 1984], in particular, has caught the attention of scholars around the world, such as Rey Chow based in America and Fujii Shozo in Japan, and has been taken as an important lens to trace back the sense of nostalgia of Hong Kong people facing the countdown to the handover (Chow 1993; Fujii 2000). On the other hand, since most of her fictions are love stories, her writings have also been criticized for their old-fashioned and stereotypical settings, and thus Li's works have been also negatively regarded as literature under the literary tradition of the Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies school [鸳鸯蝴蝶派], a popular genre of Chinese traditional fiction in the first half of the 20th century, characterized for its sentimental romance and lack of depth (Chow 1986; Chow 1993). As such, Li's success, as a unique phenomenon in Hong Kong literary and cultural studies, is quite controversial, and such controversy is essentially a debate over Hong Kong literature and culture (Zhu 2007). Considering these debates, we should not simply reduce Li as a popular novelist who merely wrote for commercial success but rather take Li Bihua as one of the most notable cultural figures of Hong Kong at the end of twentieth century.

4.2 Gender, trauma, and identity: close reading of Li Bihua's *Green Snake*, *The Reincarnation of Golden Lotus*, and *Kawashima Yoshiko*

Adaptations indeed played a central role in Li's success as a popular writer. Along with being adapted into a hit film, Li's book would be republished into new versions with some film stills in order to attract more readers. Especially after she devoted herself to screenwriting film adaptations of her own works and collaborated with famous directors such as Chen Kaige [陈凯歌], Tsui Hark [徐克] , and Stanley Kwan [关锦鹏] her popularity among young readership in Hong Kong rose even more. However, with this cinematic success, it is also easy to ignore that originally her novels had controversially been adapted from Chinese classic folktales and historical tales, as was the case of *Green Snake* [青蛇，1986], *The Reincarnation of the Golden Lotus* [潘金莲之前世今生, 1989], *Kawashima Yoshiko* [川岛芳子, 1990], *Temptation of a*

Monk [诱僧,1991], and *Farewell To My Concubine* [霸王别姬, 1992], With regards to the study of adaptations, many research projects have focused on how film adaptations –*Rouge* [胭脂扣] released in1987 and *Farewell To My Concubine* [霸王别姬] released in 1993 in particular— represent a cultural negotiation between players of different positionalities, through a collaborative cross-border film industry (Lee, 2009). Yet, questions remain over how literary adaptation, from classic tales to a modern version, contributes as an attempt to respond to the political turbulence of 1997.

Li's source texts for adaptation cover a wide range of themes and topics, including Chinese folk tales, Chinese classics, or even the life stories of real historical figures. Rather than merely adding new details or changing some plotlines based on the original, Li displayed a particular interest for gender issues in her renewed versions. In general, through these adaptations, Li salvages the female characters— Pan Jinlian, Xiao Qing, Yoshijima—who were seductive, extremely beautiful, yet often negatively viewed as evil women for their acts of eroticism, betrayal, and killing.

Green Snake, written in 1986, retells the "Legend of the White Snake" [白蛇传], which was first fictionalized in Feng Menglong's [冯梦龙, 1574-1646] *Stories to Caution the World* [警世通言, 1624], which is known as one of the most celebrated vernacular story collections in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). The tale recounts how a white snake and a green snake, disguised as two beautiful maidens named Bai Suzhen and Xiao Qing respectively, are attracted to a young scholar, Xu Xian, in West Lake in Hang Zhou. The marriage and sexual relationship between Bai Suzhen and Xu Xian are accused of violating the boundary between human and non-human by the monk Fa Hai, who plays the role of a defender of social norms and a hunter of the non-human demons. Portrayed as a coward, Xu Xian obeys Fa Hai and leaves Bai Shuzhen confined by the Leifeng Pagoda.

Since the tale was first written four hundred years ago, the characters have been transformed into different versions in different art forms (Luo, 2017). In Li's version, she retains this same storyline, yet makes Xiao Qing, who had been a side character in most versions, the storyteller and a participant in the love relationship between Xu Xian and Bai Suzhen. As a spectator who witnesses Bai Suzhen's suffering— being betrayed by the human male and suppressed by the pagoda for her un-human-ness— Xiao Qing narrates the story with a focus on their exclusion from human love. Furthermore, another notable transformation in the plot is the extension of the timeline of the story. It does not give this tale an end, but instead makes it continue in modern times. The Cultural Revolution [文化大革命, 1966-1976], the darkest and most violent period in China's modern history, offers a historical and dramatic background for storytelling. Li

designs a plot by which the Red Guards, under the command of Bai Suzhen's son's reincarnation, Xu Shilin, pull down the Leifeng Pagoda which have kept Bai Suzhen for hundreds of years and thus releases Bai free from the suppression. With the Red Guards screaming the political slogan, "Long Live Cultural Revolution", Xiao Qing, as a spectator, appears uninterested, saying that:

> Please pull down the Leifeng Pagoda. What are you waiting for? It is so troublesome. What is "Chairman Mao"?　What is "the Party Central Committee"? I have no idea. I only hope they will unite and release my sister.

> 快动手推到雷峰塔吧，还在等什么呢？真麻烦。这"毛主席"，"党中央"是啥？我一点一不知道，只希望他们万众一心，把我姊姊间接地放出来。（Li 2013,126）

When Bai has been finally freed from the pagoda, the following dialogue with Xiao Qing further presents their disinterest to political changes in modern times.

"What is the dynasty now?"

"I don't know."

"Who is the emperor then?"

"I don't know neither. But it seems that they call him chairman rather than emperor."

"Chairman?"

"These is none of our business. Let's go home."

如今是什么朝代了？

不晓得啊

谁当皇帝

也不晓得，不过好像不叫"皇帝"叫"主席"。

主席？

别管这些闲事了，我俩回家去吧。(128)

From a historical perspective, the transformation from Emperor to Chairman signifies a regime change, indicating that China has gone forward to a socialist democracy in contrast to feudal autocracy in imperial period [封建专制]. As Xiao Qing regards this political change as irrelevant to their lives, this dialogue further reveals Li

Bihua's ironic attitude towards political transition, and a satirical laugh at the democracy it promises.

The interweaving of fictional time and historical time, individual sufferings and historical traumas can be also found in *The Reincarnation of the Golden Lotus*. This work is adapted from a story about another evil woman named Pan Jinlian. The story of Pan Jinlian has been briefly portrayed in *Water Margin* [水浒传] and further elaborated in *The Golden Lotus* [金瓶梅], a 16th-century Chinese vernacular literature attributed to Lanling Xiaoxiaosheng [兰陵笑笑生, 1530-1600], which has been known for its high literary quality and sexual frankness. As these two classics have introduced, Pan Jinlian, born with extreme beauty, is raped by a landlord, Zhang Dahu, who she serves in her young age. She later gets married to a physically short person seen as the ugliest man of town named Wu Dalang. Unsatisfied with her marriage, Pan soon seduces Xi Menqing, the town's infamous playboy. In addition to this sexual affair, Pan is also attracted to Wu Song, the younger brother of Wu Dalang, who came to visit. Intrigued by this pimp figure, Pan Jinlian poisons Wu Dalang, for which she and Xi Menqing are cruelly killed by Wu Song in revenge.

In Li Bihua's *The Reincarnation of the Golden Lotus*, this plot serves as an overture to Pan Jinlian's seeking of revenge for her death. Li also creates a new female character named Shan Yulian, a ballet dancer in the Maoist China, as the reincarnation of Pan Jinlian in modern China. Likewise, Wu Dalang, Wu Song, and Xi Menqing, are also incarnated in modern times, under similar names— Wu Ruda, A Long, and Simon. Li Bihua deploys an intertextual style by which the story of Pan Jinlian and the story of Shan Yulian are presented as parallel. By inserting verses of Pan Jinlian's story, which has been inscribed in Chinese classics, into her own rewriting, Li makes the memory of Pan Jinlian ghostly follow Shan Yulian and appear at key moments of her life.

Raped by her ballet school principal, Shan Yulian undergoes similar traumas as Pan Jinlian. The principal is depicted as a follower of Maoism who stands before the picture of Mao, "reporting" his everyday life. In the rape scene, which takes place within a fanatical crowd yelling "Long live the Cultural Revolution" [文化大革命万岁] (Li 2001, 18), Shan's pained voice has been covered, revealing the violence of history in a dramatic yet ironic way. Fighting the principal with a statue of Mao which results in his impotence, Shan Yulian is further accused as a counter-revolutionary, by which her life-long hardship begins. Portraying Wu Ruda (the incarnation of Wu Dalang) as a wealthy businessman in Hong Kong, who further brings Shan Yulian a better life, the novel also confers a geopolitical dimension to historical traumas. Coming to Hong Kong, where the revolutionary scene is replaced by capitalist modernity may

refer to a new start in Shan's life. However, just repeating Pan Jinlian's destiny, Shan Yulian also suffers from the plight of desire and Pan Jianlian's tragedy caused by love affairs did not come to an end in the modern time in Hong Kong. As such, objectifying the injured and suffering female bodies as the symbol of historical trauma in modern China could be seen as a strategy of adaptation in Li Bihua's work.

In another example, *Kawashima Yoshiko* is adapted from the true story of the historical person of this name [川岛芳子, 1906-1948] who was accused of being a traitor at the end of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). At age seven, Kawashima Yoshiko shifted her identity from being the Manchurian Princess Xianzi [爱新觉罗显玗] to being the stepdaughter of Kawashima, a Japanese politician who promised to help revive the lost Qing dynasty, though his real intention was to take over control. Yoshiko was taken as the final hope of her royal family, and after growing up, she returned to China, under the name Jin Dehui [金碧辉], as a military commander in charge of five thousand soldiers, in collaboration with the Japanese army's invasion. The final reference list which Li put at the end of her book might indicate that her writing is largely based on the historical "realities". Yet, by shifting her focus from Yoshiko's political ambition to her struggles with sexuality, desire, and identity, Li Bihua introduces a new possibility in interpreting her life story. In Li's rewriting, she was raped by her stepfather Kawashima, which makes her romantic prospect for the future broken. With this tragic start, her political life is always burdened by this painful memory. As a female politician who takes advantage of her seductiveness and eroticism, Yoshiko's desire for politics and sex is intertwined, yet neither of them is fulfilled.

Throughout the whole story, Yoshiko is presented as excluded by and estranged from both Japanese and her Chinese peers. In the prologue of the story, Li Bihua depicts the court after the war when Yoshiko was accused for serving for Japanese army. However, in this part, Li inserts several authorial comments on the charge, challenging the negative moral judgement which have been imposed on Yoshiko's treacherous behavior before. Yoshiko refuses to accept her charge, arguing that "I am not a traitor" [我不算"汉奸"] (Li 1995, 11), and then switching into Japanese to emphasize it again that, "I am Japanese! I am not Chinese" [我是日本人！我不是中国人！] (11). Following this historical fact, Li poses her own question over Yoshiko's self-identification after a dash mark: "China abandoned her first, didn't it?" [是中国先不承认她的吗？] (12). Interestingly, in the beginning of next chapter, in which Li Bihua traces back the childhood of Yoshiko, Yoshiko cries that "I am Chinese. I am not Japanese." [我是中国人，我不是日本人。] (15) before she is sent to Japan. The paradoxical self-identifications further affirm Yoshiko's mental dilemma.

4.3 How Cultural Others Read Modern Chinese History: Fin-de-Siècle and Post-97

In *Literary Hong Kong and Li Bihua*, several scholars have explored how the themes of gender and revolution have been played as a central role in Li's writing (Chan 2014). In the three stories discussed above, although their core plots contain distinctive differences from each other, Li shows her keen interest in the gender relationships depicted in the source stories, and always portrays female figures who are ambitious, in love, and resist patriarchal control, thus celebrating women's independence and self-determination (Fujii 2000). In another respect, female bodies, suppressed by politics and authorities, also construct a reflexive space to envision historical violence, which has been concealed from the past (Zhu 2007). In this sense, Li Bihua actually exemplifies a gendered adaptation, by which she manipulates source materials with a feminist interpretation. As a female adapter, her sympathy with her female protagonist is always explicit. By positing males as oppressors, she attempts to salvage females from a humiliated past and reinterprets their "sin" as a result of male suppression, and thereby questions the very reliability of the historical record. With a particular focus on gender and identity, Li Bihua's rewriting not only "updates" the previous works for the Hong Kong audience, but also presents clearly Li Bihua's composition— a presence telling the story as a female author in Hong Kong who is marginalized by the political and cultural center.

In translation/adaptation, "the focus on gender, and more recently on its diversification or pluralization……threatens unity, tradition, belief systems, and power structures" (Von Flotow 2014, 48). Such perception may better explain the relationships between gender and identity in Li's rewritings. As discussed above, strong female characters are all regarded by others as traitors to the (Chinese) Han nation [汉奸], sluts [淫妇], and foreigners [异族], all indicating their offense to the traditional ideals of Chinese values and social mores. The rebellion against such insulting names in fact exemplifies how the cultural others fight for the legitimacy of their own existence against the backdrop of alienation, oppression, and exclusion. Writing from this perspective that repositions the cultural others on the center stage of the historical narrative, Li Bihua also could be seen as a rebellious writer who reads history from the marginal stance.

Different from Li's previous works, such as *Rouge*, which explicitly touched upon the historical consciousness of Hong Kong, namely Hong Kong cultures, identity, literature, or cultural history through the portrayal of the speeches, gestures, and lifestyle of Hong Kong in 1997, Li's adaptation works, instead, put more focus on the

historical configuration of mainland China. Reimagining cultural others who have been exclusively displaced in a time and space which do not belong to them, the fight against their destiny (as a snake, a daughter of a descendent of the royal family, or a woman who is punished for her desire) seems to be intensely painful. Altogether with the traumatic historical moments, such as the wartime and the Cultural Revolution, their personal suffering mirrors the violence of history and signifies how trauma may spread across time and space.

However, Li Bihua does not propose a heavy, sentimental, and pessimistic vision for the future of these traumatized characters. Instead, Li Bihua's rewriting projects always end with subversive twists. In *Green Snake,* Xiao Qing and Bai Suzhen live in seclusion until the turbulent period passes [江山移易] (129). Bai Suzhen returns to the human world of the 1980s, actively seeking her new life in the modern world in high fashions, dating a western-educated young man. Kawashima Yoshiko, after her fake death, reappears in Ginza, one of the busiest commercial hubs in Japan, where most department stores, and crowded shoppers are located. In *The Reincarnation of the Golden Lotus*, Shan Yulian loses her memory, always holding an innocent smile on her face. She will be cared for under the faithful love of Wu Ruda, ending with a Chinese romantic promise, "Love is ever-lasting"[天长地久] (Li 2001, 148). Yet under the superficial material surface, Li also reveals unease over their future. Bai Suzhen finds love as an attempt to release her loneliness; Shan Yulian suffers from a mental disorder and loses her ability to speak . In *Kawashima Yoshioko*, the protagonist disappears into the noisy crowd, leaving a view of her back that is "at once peaceful and bleak" [平静又荒凉] (Li 1995, 178).

The paradoxes between "boom" and "doom" in Hong Kong at the end of the twentieth century might offer a background to understand the paradoxes. As Abbas argued,

"The citizens' belief that they might have a hand in shaping their own history, gets replaced by speculations on the property or stock market, or by an obsession with fashion or consumerism……the more frustrated or blocked the aspirations to democracy are, the more market booms." (1997, 5)

In Li's rewriting, the prosperity of the reality seems to somehow compensate for the characters' losses and pain of their physical displacement and failure in self-identification. Li Bihua has her protagonists treat the traumatic past with ignorance, forgetfulness, and illusions, exemplifying an escapist attitude towards the future. Looking at the traumatic Chinese history as a repetitive game, and imagining her

protagonists as the players who enter with ambition and quit with failures, Li refuses to promise a positive life for these female cultural others. When they finally leave from the center of political disturbance, releasing themselves from the trauma of the past, they are not able to negotiate their identity with the changing environment and their existence is indeed under the crisis of disappearance and decadence.

As such, in Li's rewriting, the endings of stories are presented paradoxically. She tends to bring her protagonists a peaceful return to normal and restart a new passage of life, yet does not offer new possibilities or hope. To borrow David Der-wei Wang's words,

> this return is a symptom of the uncanny. The ambivalence between home and no-home would further lead to their deeper anxiety.
>
> 我们可说这一回归引发一种诡秘（uncanny）的征候，"家"及"非家"的感受混淆不清，因此引起回归者最深层的不安。(2004,16)

To borrow the term *fin-de-siècle splendor*, which was brought forward by David Der-wei Wang and has been widely applied in Sinophone literary studies, I would like to conclude my reading of Li Bihua's adaptation. *Fin-de-siècle* originally means an anxious mood when anticipating the being of the new age (Wang, 1992). In the context of modern Chinese literature, Wang cited the following words from female author Zhang Ailing for further explanation:

> In this age, the old things are falling apart, while the new is yet to be born. Before the high tide of the time comes, anything definite is but an exception. . . We are living in a time which is itself sinking like a shadow; we feel we have been deserted……Between memory and reality, there appear embarrassing incompatibilities, giving rise to a solemn but gentle agitation, a serious but unnamable struggle. (Zhang 2005, 15-16)

I find this quote also provides an angle to better understand how Li's adaptation strategically serves as her response to political transition. Expressing herself through the perspective of female characters, Li reconstructs legendary narratives and imagine spaces in which envision history. Her endings which posit decadence and prosperity, fantasy and reality, temporality and eternity, illusion and disillusion, existence and disappearance, release a power to challenge the doomed future. They mimic historical records and canons in order to subvert them, thus standing apart from grand narratives in a form of rebellion. Writing at the twentieth century's own *fin de siècle*, at a moment when Hong Kong was turning to the next page of its future, Li Bihua presents her

ambiguous attitude towards the upcoming change —deep uncertainty, loneliness, and disillusionment. Instead of reinforcing a nostalgia for lost Hong Kong, Li Bihua indeed expressed her anxiety on facing the "new era" by deploying self-exile and self-displacement from the grand historical landscape and an escapist attitude towards coming political troubles.

Li Bihua's rewritings could be seen as a complicated case of Old Tales Retold fiction in the sense that her sensibility on history and gender constitute a power to drive her to read the source stories in a deconstructive way. In the present context, "adaptation" for Li Bihua points to the extension and subversion of the source stories she adapts. Indeed, the intertextual citations and references could be explicitly found throughout Li Bihua's rewritings by which the narrators introduce how their stories have been told in different versions by different authors. However, Li refuses to takes these sources as something with superior authority, but rather interprets the source stories and previous retellings as nightmares, lies or curses which trap her protagonists who are reborn in the modern context.

Her refusal to be faithful to the existing texts also marks her own authorship in rewritings, and articulates her subjectivity as an adapter. On the one hand, her literary taste in sentimental romance pushes her manipulation of prior materials to a romantic extreme. Discussions on female desire and its tragic fate in Li's adaptation projects dramatically romanticizes the historical turbulence and made the books more readable and competitive in the market of popular literature in the 1990s. On the other hand, her adaptation of old stories and historical materials is dependent on the context that emphasizes personal identity during the political transition. As a female adapter, Li Bihua locates and understands the source materials in very specific personal environment, namely Hong Kong in 1997, with its focus on gender, subjectivity and personal politics, with its interest in the power of rewriting and the power of narrating history.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The present thesis has analyzed some of the main works of Old Tales Retold fiction in Hong Kong from the 1960s to the new millennium. By viewing these cases through the lens of adaptation theory, this thesis examines how these retellings reflect the cultural identity of Hong Kong in the second half of the twentieth century, in relation to the changing geopolitical tensions between Hong Kong and China. Examing works by four authors— Liu Yichang, Ye Si, Xi Xi and Li Bihua— whose writing trajectories are completely different, this thesis covers authors of different cultural positions and Hong Kong literature of different times. Through the prism of " adaptation," I draw attention to the interactions between authors, texts, and contexts, by which I argue that Old Tale Retold fiction in Hong Kong should never been described and evaluated as second-order creations on the basis of its relative "faithfulness" to the source stories, but a device of reinterpretation which considerably transforms the source stories in accordance with the values and ideologies in the cultural and political realities of Hong Kong.

In the Introduction I framed and debated Old Tales Retold fiction as it is found throughout modern Chinese literature and presented the theory of adaptation from different respects. A brief review of the historical complexities both of Hong Kong and its literature further reminds us that we should bring the previous discussions into a cross-border scope. Chapter 2 reconfigures the literary scene of the 1960s and 70s in Hong Kong to demonstrate how capitalist modernity, which results in high commercialization and an identity crisis, influences Liu Yichang's and Ye Si's approaches to Chinese myths and romantic tales. Both of the writers deconstruct the positive image of mythical and fictional male heroes and show them suffering from mental crashes caused by displacement, alienation, and exclusion from the social environment, alluding to their own suppressed experiences as intellectuals in Hong Kong. Chapter 3 re-locates Xi Xi's two adaptations back to post-1984 when the Sino-British Joint Declaration was signed, arguing that Xi Xi's Old Tales Retold fiction critically deconstructs monothetic historical narratives. Challenging monothetic historical interpretations and constituting a new site for suppressed voices, Xi Xi articulates her anxiety of losing autonomy and self-determination in Hong Kong's future. In chapter 4, I examine the work of Li Bihua, one of the most controversial writers of Hong Kong at the end of the twentieth century. The interweaving of history and fiction, past and present, memory and illusions in her rewritings dramatically reflect her uncertainty facing the upcoming political transition. Taking different stances, as newcomers or as locals, as literary critics or as commercial writers, these authors

discussed in this study indeed present different political engagements, literary ideals, and aesthetic pursuits. Yet, crucially, they all reflexively interpret the ancient literary world according to their own experience in Hong Kong, and their work is held together by distinctly "Hong Kong" features as much as by its anchorage in a longer Chinese tradition.

In the case studies, this study has attempted to established a link between adaptations and cultural identity. The processes through which Hong Kong authors revisit ancient Chines stories are never entirely self-evident or transparent. Although they do follow core elements which readers may already feel familiar with, their authentic literary sensitivity and innovation and their reflexive thinking to social realities and personal experience further marks how different these rewriting are from any version we read before. By and large, Old Tales Retold fiction in Hong Kong, as a particular kind of literary adaptation, is a complicated phenomenon writing which recognizes and punctuating differences, serving as a site of conflict and negotiations involving languages, social mores, ideologies, and cultural identities, between Hong Kong and mainland China.

The examples largely support and exemplify the previous theory of adaptations, particularly as put forward by Venuti and Lefevere, that adaptation is an interpretive act, and that adapters may pick up one of many possible interpretations of the source materials according to their own cultural register. They also invite us to think reflexively about what the motivations and cultural implications of adaptation are, and what kind of role the adapters play in a particular cultural milieu. These questions significantly reveal that in an adaptation, fidelity and creativity, referentiality and reflexivity do not necessarily conflict with each other, but rather interweave and interact, altogether constituting a literary space for the acknowledgement of otherness, for a logic of difference, for a process of ongoing negotiation in which they tell the story on the one hand, but also tell us who they are and *where* they write, on the other.

The reappearance of the imperative to adapt traditional Chinese tales into modern Hong Kong literature is intriguing evidence of intensified anxiety in identity formation. My discussion of Old Tales Retold fictions in Hong Kong is far more than an exploration of literary phenomena per se. It also functions as a prism through which to observe the paradoxical relation between Hong Kong and China in our time, and how the geopolitical tensions between the two play an influence in the literary imagination of the second half of the twentieth century. A city shaped by the cultural flux between East and West and its transition from British colony to a part of China, Hong Kong in this period is full of conflict, turbulence, fear, as well as rebellion, resistance, and

struggle. Compared to its counterpart in mainland China, Old Tales Retold fiction in Hong Kong enacts an ongoing discussion and negotiation with the Chinese culture, values, and history they adapt. Through the transformations in plot and structure, Hong Kong authors show off their presence and permeate their rewritings with their own aesthetic pursuits and political concerns. In this sense, we may also say that Old Tales Retold fiction in Hong Kong demonstrates how Hong Kong literature responds to the cultural ties to China and Chineseness in a reflexive manner.

Without a doubt, this study could not exhaust all the Old Tales Retold fiction of Hong Kong, and could not cover all the literary techniques and effects that are deployed in the selected works. Yet it demonstrates the complexities and heterogeneousness of Hong Kong literature, and reveals that "marginality" and "hybridity", the most common keywords in Hong Kong studies, might not be enough to summarize Hong Kong literature as a whole.

Even today, the struggling for identity in Hong Kong, and other Sinophone regions as well, have not come to an end. Particularly, after the implementation of the Hong Kong National Security Law [香港国家安全法] in June of 2020, which further places Hong Kong sovereignty under the control of the central governance of CCP, the conflicts between Hong Kong and the mainland have further intensified dramatically. We may well encounter other works of adaptation in the near future, and ask how they echo the current-day turbulence, just as Liu Yichang, Ye Si, Xi Xi, and Li Bihua did in the last century.

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