

**THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG**  
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**The Representation of Hong Kong Identity**  
**in Fruit Chan's Films**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for

**M.A. in Literary and Cultural Studies**

by

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## Declaration

I declare that this thesis represents my words except where due acknowledgement is made, that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this university, or to any other institutions for the degree, diploma or other qualifications.

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## Abstract

Fruit Chan's three films which are set in 1997, namely *Made in Hong Kong*, *The Longest Summer* and *Little Cheung* provide rich texts for discussions on the issues related to the Hong Kong identity. These three films feature a number of characters which are marginalised in the Hong Kong society. They feel being deserted by the mainstream society, and the mainstream wants to expel them from Hong Kong as well. There exists, however, an inter-dependent relationship between them. The dynamics in expelling and including these marginal characters must not be ignored in the examination of Hong Kong identity. Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection illuminates the understanding of their identities in such a situation of marginalisation. Waste matters, the most prominent abject in Kristeva's theory, appear in Fruit Chan's films like a motif. They can be read as metaphors to the situation of the marginalised characters, and so can the abject spaces. Space in the films can also be read as an arena where marginalisation takes place. Constant negotiation and struggle between the marginal and the centre in this space complicates the characters' identities. Complexities in nationality are added to their confusion over identities, for they want to expel and are being expelled by both the British and Chinese identities at a moment when Hong Kong is being returned from Britain to China.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

Fruit Chan's *Made in Hong Kong*, *The Longest Summer* and *Little Cheung*, known as the "Hong Kong 1997 Trilogy," all have their backgrounds set in 1997, the year of the handover. They provide rich texts for discussions on issues related to the Hong Kong identity. Each of the protagonists in these films, who are marginalised by the mainstream and who belong to the lower classes of Hong Kong, are facing difficulties in asserting an identity. In this paper, I shall analyse the identity crises they experienced, and draw on Kristeva's theory of abjection where appropriate to shed more light on the issue.

#### The Hong Kong 1997 Trilogy

Fruit Chan's Hong Kong Trilogy begins with the film *Made in Hong Kong*. The protagonist, a young man called Autumn Moon (*Chung Chau*), is regarded as a juvenile delinquent. He has left school but remains unemployed; he wanders around the streets and football courts, and he sometimes helps a triad head Big Brother Wing to collect debts. He comes across a girl named Ping with kidney disease when chasing Ping's mother for debts, and later he falls in love with Ping. Sylvester (*Ah Lung*) is a half-wit who follows Moon. He picks up two suicidal notes from Susan (*Shan*) on the street and gives them to

Moon. Since then Moon feels haunted by Susan, and the three youngsters, Moon, Ping and Sylvester even go the cemetery to look for Susan. Moon is almost killed in a murder planned by another gangster head Fat Chan. When he is discharged from hospital, he discovers that Ping has passed away due to her illness and Sylvester has been killed by Big Brother Wing. He revenges on Big Brother Wing and also Fat Chan before committing suicide next to Ping's grave.

The focus of the second episode of the Hong Kong 1997 Trilogy shifts from the juveniles to the middle-aged. *The Longest Summer* is about a group of Chinese soldiers retired from the British garrison. The protagonist Ga-yin and his ex-colleagues face much frustration after leaving the military service, and they finally decide to rob a bank together with Ga-yin's younger brother Ga-suen. Ga-suen has been a punk under the triad head Big Brother Wing for a long time, and he also introduces Ga-yin to work for Wing. On the day of robbery, they come across another gang, amongst them Ah Chun, Wing's daughter whom Ga-yin has met before, and Ga-yin's group gets the money even without going into the bank. Soon after 1 July when Ga-suen has fled with the money, Ga-yin breaks down and becomes insane. One year later, Ah Chun sees him again but he can no longer recognise her. His memory on her seems to have lost together with all his personal history.

After the young and the middle-aged, the protagonists change to kids in *Little Cheung*, the last episode of the Hong Kong 1997 Trilogy. Little Cheung's father is an owner of a Hong Kong style tea restaurant (*Cha Chaan Tang*) in Yau Ma Tei. He hardly has time to take care of his son Little Cheung. Thus Little Cheung is taken care of by the Filipino maid Armi who lives with Little Cheung and his grandmother. Little Cheung acquaints Ah Fan, an illegal immigrant, when she asks for a job at his tea restaurant. The two children become good friends, but their friendship ends when Ah Fan is being repatriated to Mainland China before the handover.

### **A Review of Literature on Fruit Chan's Hong Kong 1997 Trilogy**

In all the three episodes of the Hong Kong 1997 Trilogy, we can see characters being marginalised, which we can read in conjunction with Kristeva's abject theory to better understand questions on identity and identification. There have been a lot of discussions on Fruit Chan's films since *Made in Hong Kong*, but Kristeva's theory of abjection is seldom applied in the analysis of his films, despite its relevance to the characters in the Hong Kong 1997 Trilogy.

Numerous writings can be found on Fruit Chan's films. Most of them are on the use of film language (e.g. Bono Lee 1999:54, Sharp Po 1999:53-54), the depiction of political changes (e.g. Wang 2001:93-95) or the criticisms



against the social reality (e.g. Bono Lee 1997:482, Thomas Shin 1999:214-215). These pieces of film criticism seldom use a complete theoretical framework as a tool to examine Fruit Chan's films. An exception is Shum Longtin's analysis of the Trilogy. He argues that all three films in the Trilogy are pieces of patriarchal writing. According to Shum, the male desires in *Made in Hong Kong* can be put into the context of the 1997 handover (2003:140), and Ga-yin in *The Longest Summer* and Brother Cheung in *Little Cheung* are two father figures (2003:141-142) in the representation of Hong Kong.

Not many scholarly works have been done on Fruit Chan's Hong Kong 1997 Trilogy. Yingchi Chu surveys the Hong Kong cinema after the handover and, like the Hong Kong critics, puts the films into the historical context of the change of sovereignty. Both Esther Cheung and Natalia Chan focus on space in analysing Fruit Chan's films. Cheung uses Anthony Vidler's ideas to examine the how the space, especially the public housing estates, in *Made in Hong Kong* is a haunting one (2004:358). Cheung looks into the class issues and the socio-economic conditions of Hong Kong through a discussion of the representation of uncanny city. Natalia Chan, on the other hand, cites Foucault's idea of "heterotopias" (2002:131-134). She argues that the spaces represented in Fruit Chan's film belong to the Foucauldian "heterotopias," with failures and frustrations of different natures taking place. Yau Ka-fai discusses Fruit Chan's film from a different angle. Yau departs from Deleuze's logic of thirdness of cinema (2001:545). He uses the term "minor Hong Kong

cinema” to conceptualise the new cinema that responds to the new geo-historical situations. The three films in the Hong Kong 1997 Trilogy are new cinematic perspective that makes Hong Kong appear at a moment of change, as Yau’s argument goes. I shall use a completely different theoretical framework to examine Fruit Chan’s films. The next section will detail how Kristeva’s theory of abjection may be illuminating to the understanding of these texts.

### **Marginalisation and the Theory of Abjection**

A person being marginalised is likely to experience confusion over his or her identity. To reduce “identity” to the most simplistic terms, it is the answer to the question “who am I”. When a person is pushed to the margin of a group or a community, or even a city or a nation, they would question whether or not they belong to that entity. A person will undergo an identity crisis of not knowing who he or she is, if this sense of belonging collapses. On the most microscopic level, a group may consist of just a few persons, and in that case the emotional alliances or the affective bonds among them is what makes one feel belong to this relationship. The tragedy of the marginalised characters in the Hong Kong 1997 Trilogy is that they not only fail in getting accepted to the city, but also suffer from the impossibility of affectivity in their lives. It is perhaps appropriate to spark off the discussion on the characters’ identities by examining their conditions of marginality and loneliness.

Kristeva's theory of abjection is inspiring in understanding these characters' situation of facing constant exclusion. We may begin with the most ordinary and simplest biological mechanism to explain Kristeva's abject theory. A person has to excrete the waste matters from his or her body so as to survive. Kristeva's idea of abjection suggests that a person notices his or her own subjectivity in the course of expelling what is part of the body through excretion or vomiting. She says, "I expel *myself*, I spit *myself*, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which 'I' claim to establish *myself*." (Kristeva 1982:3, original emphasis)

The notion of using the Other to define oneself is not new in psychoanalytic theories. But Kristeva argues that the abject is different from an Other. It is not an object outside the subject. The only quality of an object which the abject also possesses is "that of being opposed to I" (Kristeva 1982:1). Abject is part of the subject that is expelled so that subjectivity may emerge. Abject is therefore very unsettling to the subject,

"It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite." (Kristeva 1982:4)

However, precisely because the abject does not fall into either category of the subject or object, it has the potential to subvert subjectivity. Kristeva's theory

goes, "And yet, from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master." (1982:2) One is constantly expelling the abject to allow the subjectivity to form, and the abject is continuously challenging the subject. In the end, one will be in a situation "that 'I' am in the process of becoming an other at the expense of my own death" (1982:3). To this point, the self and other can no longer be distinguished.

The theory of abjection is particularly useful in understanding Hong Kong identity because the marginalised characters can in one way or another be compared to the abject, if we apply the theory of abjection not on the level of the subjectivity of an individual but on the identity of Hong Kong people in general. Moon, Ga-yin, Ah Fan, etc. are people whom Hong Kong expels, but indeed an integral part of the community. However, they are constantly excluded from Hong Kong so that the Hong Kong identity can sustain, in particular, the grand narratives of prosperity and stability within it. An examination of the identity crises of these characters may turn out articulates more about Hong Kong identity, when the border between the centre and margin are challenged, as Kristeva's abjection theory goes.

Kristeva first published her theory of abjection in 1980 in *Powers of Horror*. Later in 1991 she published the book *Strangers to Ourselves*, in which traces of her abjection theory can still be found. *Strangers to Ourselves* is a book on foreigners, whom Kristeva defines as "the one who does not belong to the

group, who is not '*one of them,*' the *other*' (1991:95, original emphasis). We resist foreigners because they do not have the same nationality as we do. But along the line of the abject theory, what is expelled is part of oneself. Therefore, xenophobia may indeed include the Freudian uncanny (Kristeva 1991:192). In other words, our hatred and fear for the foreigners may be what we have repressed in ourselves. Xenophobia comes when the repressed familiar returns as the unfamiliar foreigners. Kristeva has stated in the beginning of her book, "*Strangely, the foreigner lives within us.*" (1991:1) It is only through a recognition of the foreignness within ourselves that she suggests can we cope with the ever-increasing differences. The case of Hong Kong may be even more complicated than those Kristeva has discussed, as both Mainland China and Britain are foreign to us. This paper will end with a discussion on nationalities of the protagonists in Fruit Chan's Hong Kong 1997 Trilogy, and see if Kristeva's theory will be illuminating to them.

## Chapter Two

### Marginalised People and Lonely Individuals

The characters in the “Hong Kong 1997 Trilogy” are facing constant exclusion and inclusion from the mainstream society. Despite the rejection they face, there exists, however, an inter-dependent relationship between them and the mainstream. The dynamics in expelling and including these marginal characters must not be ignored in the examination of Hong Kong identity in the films.

I shall begin my discussion with Autumn Moon in *Made in Hong Kong* for he provides a very interesting case for discussion on marginalised figures in Fruit Chan’s films. He is expelled from institutions, rejected by the adults, and when the plot develops, separated from his friends until he dies.

#### **Autumn Moon: Abandonment and Rejection**

In the beginning of the film, Moon’s voice-over tells the audience that he is being excluded from the Hong Kong education system. He says,

I quit school after junior high. I was no good in my study, but the education system was no better. It not only excludes me from further study, but also produces juveniles like me.

In the recent years, the term “non-engaged youth” is used to label youngsters like Moon who are neither engaged in work nor studies, and the government formulates all sorts of educational and training policies to have them positioned in some sort of institution – either schools or the labour force. However, Moon’s voice-over has pointed out that it is the same kind of institutions that is producing marginalised people like him and at the same time expelling or even eliminating them.

Throughout the film, we can also see that Moon is rejected by Ping’s mother. Moon’s first encounter with Ping is when he and Sylvester goes to Ping’s home to chase her mother for the debts which she owes Big Brother Wing. Ping’s mother laughs at Moon and Sylvester for fleeing when she calls the emergency hotline upon seeing Sylvester’s bleeding nose. Even when Moon helped Ping’s mother to discard Fat Chan and his gang, a loan shark syndicate, she shows no gratitude towards Moon but only wants to get rid of him. Same when Moon offers to help her repay the debts and to donate his kidney to Ping. After Ping’s death, She even explicitly speaks out her objection to Moon and Ping’s relationship.

However, despite her hatred towards Moon, Ping’s mother immediately recognises Moon as a good friend of her daughter when Moon is in critical situation after an assassination attempt by Fat Chan’s gang. To Ping’s mother, there are no affective relationships, but only utilitarian ones.

She excludes Moon from entering her living circle, but immediately claims to have close relationship with him when he is of use to her. This form of utilitarianism is also seen the relationship between Ping's parents. They called each other "sweethearts" when borrowing money from Fat Chan, but the wife curses the husband when being chased by Fat Chan for the debt.

Although neighbourhood in public housing estates can hardly be termed as a community where one's identity may reside (Cheung 2004:366), Ping's Mother can nevertheless be seen as a representative of Hong Kong people at large when we analyse Moon's marginal position in Hong Kong. These marginalised people may be included into the Hong Kong society when they are useful to the mainstream, but excluded from it when they are not. Straddling across the border of a society, a community or even just a group, they are excluded from it most of the time and included only occasionally. The changing attitudes of acceptance and rejection deteriorates the confusion in their sense of belonging, and hence unavoidably, their identities. This confusion is indeed shared by most marginalised characters.

Apart from the utilitarianism illustrated by Ping's Mother, we can have one more twist in the relationship between the marginal and the centre. While the elites in the community push people like Moon to the margin, they actually need the marginalised to complete their own identities. While the community wants to expel Moon from it, Miss Lee, the social worker, who



belongs to a respectable profession in the mainstream society, is looking for “juvenile delinquents” to work with. As Moon’s voice-over goes, “She asked me to put her in touch with some juvenile delinquents. But I am a juvenile delinquent!” This may remind us of a master-slave relationship, in which the master, though treating the slave as the inferior other, finds himself in an impasse if he cannot recognise his slave (Sarup 1993:18).

Moon’s situation may remind us more of Kristeva’s theory of abjection. As discussed in Chapter One, abjection comes into play when one expels part of subject in order to allow for subjectivity. Applying the abject theory on Moon, he is a member of the Hong Kong society who is constantly expelled. Hong Kong people can thus achieve an independent and so-called pure Hong Kong identity. That identity is made up of prosperity, stability and other grand narratives. To accomplish this Hong Kong identity, part of Hong Kong must be expelled. People labelled as “juvenile delinquents” like Moon hence become the abject of the Hong Kong society, and are excluded from educational and social institutions and even other communities or groups, for they threaten the purity of this Hong Kong identity. This may explain why Ping’s mother hates to see Moon so much, as she, like other Hong Kong people, may look up to those grand narratives. This may also explain why Miss Lee is so eager to turn Moon and other marginalised youngsters into students or workers, so that the abject, that is, the juvenile delinquents, will no longer exist.

## **On the Edge of the Triad World**

In *Made in Hong Kong*, the triad society may be regarded as the counterpart of the social institutions and communities in the underground world. Moon's experience in the underground world may mirror his life above-ground. Yau Ka-fai in his analysis of Fruit Chan's films points out that those triad members in other films, such as those in *Young and Dangerous Series* may be seen as certain representatives of Hong Kong (Yau 2001:550). Putting triad members into the context of Hong Kong cinema, these smart and heroic figures may represent just another grand narrative about Hong Kong identity.

In *Made in Hong Kong*, Moon is also marginalised in the triad gang headed by Big Brother Wing. He seems to be a member of the gang, collecting money from debtors and taking orders to kill. But he is no heroic triad member. With trembling hands and sweating forehead, he is too nervous to kill two mainlanders whom he has been told to murder. That is the anti-climax of the film, and also a moment when Moon fails to qualify himself as a real triad member who should fight and kill without hesitation.

When Moon's friend Keung brings him to look for a job in a knife shop, the shopkeeper's comment on the juvenile delinquents is rather remarkable.

“Triads won’t mingle with those little punks. They only know how to cheat their moms to bring them to Ocean Park.” His comment reduces little punks like Moon to merely naughty kids instead of any potential threat to the society. The little punks, although not accepted in the mainstream society, are not even qualified to become the “bad guys” either. Moon is on the threshold of the two worlds, but marginalised by both.

Moon’s experiences of simultaneous acceptance and rejection in the two worlds are very similar. The criteria of inclusion and exclusion are also utilitarian in nature. Big Brother Wing relies on him for collecting debts and even murder. But it is probable that he will exclude him from the gang when he is useless, like what he does on Sylvester. Sylvester only faces exclusion from the triad gang once, but this once is already fatal. Big Brother Wing kills him for ruining a drug transaction. Sylvester is expelled from the family and rejected by other people for being a retard. He is even patronised by Moon who sees him as the inferior other, for Moon himself is always being seen as one. The ultimate exclusion he faces from the triad gang leads to his own downfall. As a revenge for Sylvester’s death, Moon kills Big Brother Wing towards the end of the film, yelling that “kids are the greatest” when shooting him. The marginalised may become subversive, and we are reminded of the subversiveness of the abject in Kristeva’s theory.

Although the aboveground communities and the underground triad gangs seems to be two separate and binary opposing worlds, they are just the same alien adult world to Moon. For he is part of them but at the same time expelled by them. He steps on the border that divides the two binary oppositions, and is unable to really enter either one but staying at the margin of any. He refers to his parents, Fat Chan and Big Brother Wing as “adults” alike. “The adult world is far too complicated for me,” Moon’s voice-over uttered towards the end of the film. Film critic Bono Lee thinks that the film is an outcry to the adult world, and even to the Hong Kong government (Bono Lee 1997:54).

### **A Loner Failed in Emotional Alliances**

Moon is actually a loner. Not only has he been marginalised in communities and institutions, he also fails in maintaining any emotional alliances with people around him. He cannot secure a sense of belonging in any community, nor can he do so in any relationships.

Moon’s father has abandoned the family long ago and found a mistress elsewhere. His mother also chooses to leave him. However, his feeling towards his parents is not purely hatred. On the departure of his mother, Moon has the idea of taking revenge on his father for abandoning the family, but he is so shocked when he sees a youngster chopping off his father’s hands,

and Moon cannot go on with his plan although he is with his knife at hand. He may still have some emotional attachment to his father, but he knows an affective relationship with his father being impossible. To his mother, he also has a mixed feeling. "I felt scared and helpless on the day my mom left me. But now I know exactly what to do," says Moon. He thinks his mother is among those "hypocritical" adults. "That's why I hate the adults. They only tell you lies. It's all hypocrisy." He says. Moon makes this comment in the context of talking to the audience about his parents' second take of life. Critic Natalia Chan thinks that this line is an allegation against his parents (Chan 2002:139). But Moon's feeling is a more complicated one – yearning for an affective bond with parents but being left alone, emotionally and physically.

Moon's relationship with Ping is not a fulfilling one either. Throughout the film we can see the building up of their relationship. However, at a lot of moments we see that they can yet to really communicate. There is a shot where Moon and Ping seems to be making love, but the next shot reveals that they are just imitating sexual acts. Ping asks Moon to kiss her only after her death, which she thinks is romantic. Her words seem to be prophesising, for a real emotional alliance is only possible after their death. There are other moments when Ping and Moon miss the chances of seeing each other. When Moon and Sylvester are waiting for the elevator, Sylvester smells Ping coming up, but the two go into another elevator and they just cannot meet. When Ping knows that she is going to die soon, she goes to see Moon who is

hospitalised. Moon, in a coma, cannot see Ping, and when he regains consciousness, Ping has already passed away. They missed the appointments with each other, resulting in disappointments. All these remind us of Abbas's discussion on "proximity without reciprocity" (Abbas 1998:43). Although Wong Kar Wai's film which Abbas discusses in his article "Erotics of Disappointment" (Abbas 1998:39) and Fruit Chan's films goes just the opposite directions both thematically and stylistically, Abbas's discussion is insightful in understanding this almost successful intimacy and the ultimate failure of emotional alliance. Moon and Ping may be very near to each other, but their intimacy ends at this point. No further physical contact, not to mention any affective relationship. Moon's mis-spelling of feel as f-e-l-l may be a little hint of the impossibility of communication between the two on the spiritual level when they are both alive.

When Moon is discharged from hospital, before knowing the death of Ping, he is informed about Sylvester's death. As Yau Ka-fai posits, there is a "sense of accumulative loss... that the film has to resort at the end to Moon's narrative even after he is physically dead" (2001:552). Esther Cheung points out that there is a "melancholic youthful alliance" (2004:259) or an "orgiastic communion", not in the literal but psychological sense, among Moon, Ping, Sylvester and Susan (Cheung 2004:364). However, we must not forget that a real communion only exists after the death of all four. Ping's request to Moon to kiss her only after she dies seems to have foretold this tragedy. Unity

among the four is only achieved at the end of the film, when Moon, in his ghostly voice for he has already died, tells the audience, "We are all very happy now."

Death seems the only way out for these four marginalised characters. These four characters share in common a lot of experiences in being marginalised. Critic Thomas Shin points out that Moon, Ping and Susan may be the three versions of the same fate (Shin 1998:214). Moon's voice-over goes, "How many people knows how Ping, Sylvester, Susan and me actually think? No one." They face acceptance and rejection from the mainstream society, and fail to achieve any emotional attachment with people around them and among one another. To them, death is the only way to obtain an affective alliance, just as it is "the only way to obtain peace" as Chu Yingchi argues (2003:130). We will come back to this theme of death again in the next chapter.

What I would like to point out now is, being marginalised and failure in emotional alliances are posing obstacles in Moon's search for identity. Despite his claim, with much pride, which goes, "I am a lone-wolf type of person, doing whatever I like to do," he is in fact yearning for an affective bond with his buddies and his parents, a recognition (from Miss Lee for example) for joining the majority of the society by not participating in any illegal activities, and when that fails, possible but uncertain, for a recognition in the triad gang. All these attempts in getting an identity, from identifying

with the grand narrative of Hong Kong to at least finding a sense of belonging and security from a relationship, just do not work. Instead of his marginality, loneliness and even death, the identity crisis and confusion may be the utmost tragedy for Moon.

### **Ga-yin and Moon: A Parallel**

Fruit Chan's *The Longest Summer* has turned the focus to a group of middle-aged, retired Chinese soldiers in the former Hong Kong Military Service Corp, part of the British force. The juveniles in this film, such as those schoolgirls, become the negative characters. We can, however, draw a parallel between Autumn Moon in *Made in Hong Kong* and Ga-yin, one of those retired soldiers in *The Longest Summer*. Film critic Bono Lee says that both Ga-yin and Moon are people being forgotten (1999: 58), but their similarities go far beyond that.

Ga-yin feels being deserted by the British army with the disbanding of the Hong Kong Military Service Corp on 31 March 1997, four months before the handover. Ironically, the speech at the beginning of the film says that they are "an integral and vital part of the British garrison." Even when Ga-yin was serving the army, he is only at the margin of the British Force, just as Moon is at the margin of the society. Ga-yin and his buddies have no war experience. He applied to join other British soldiers in the Battle of Falkland Islands in



1982 but was rejected. Ga-yin once says, as a soldier, "No war experience is a disgrace!" No matter how proud of being a soldier Ga-yin is, he has never been in the core of the British Force. Moon is being included as an insider to Ping's Mother when he is useful to her, and this utilitarian principle applies to Ga-yin as well. The police inspector Mr. Cheung may have spoken out the gist of the rule, "Screw the British Army. They are useless.... If they were good, the Brits would take them back to Britain."

Ga-yin is marginalised in the British Force for being abandoned by the British. He is just as marginalised when he goes back to the Hong Kong community. At the beginning of film, a scene showing a passer-by rejecting Ga-yin who is helping his buddy to give out leaflets has illustrated his status in the Hong Kong society. He is always on the margin.

Like *Made in Hong Kong*, the triad society is also where marginalisation takes place. While Autumn Moon is forced to stay on the margin of triad gang as a small punk, Ga-yin himself is consciously distancing himself from the triad. Fruit Chan talks about Ga-yin, "He knows that being in the mob is only a job and he keeps his distance. But it also makes him alienated from his environment and his family." (Fong 1999:54) He even dares to tell the gang leader for whom he is working that he is going to teach his brother Ga-suen to leave the triad world. However, Ga-yin is inevitably taking up some form of triad membership in the course of working for Big Brother Wing, the gang

leader having the same name and played by the same actor as in *Made in Hong Kong*. Wing tells him that he is half a triad member, although rebuked by Ga-yin who does not take himself as such. Ga-yin even plans the robbery. A former soldier who looks up to law and order now breaks the law just like triad members. The film has never given a convincing explanation for Ga-yin's dramatic change in this regard (Po 2000:120). His activity of robbing the bank is no different from triad members as far as legality is concerned, no matter how conscious Ga-yin is in keeping a distance from the triad. Just like Autumn Moon, Ga-yin is also on the border of two worlds, included and excluded by both.

Ga-yin's decision to rob a bank, however unconvincing, makes him sharing one core *fin-de-siècle* mentality which can be captured precisely by words from Ga-yin's father, "Let's just make a bundle quickly and we don't have to worry." Although he feels alienated from his family, his brother and even the rest of Hong Kong people, he himself has taken up this form of Hong Kong mentality which he despises in the beginning. Fruit Chan says that Ga-yin is like all other Hong Kong people who want to make a sum of money. (Cinnie 1999:51) But on the other hand, Ga-yin is regarded by other Hong Kong people as the minority. Police Inspector Mr. Cheung draws a parallel between retired Chinese Soldiers in the British force and Indians and Mainlanders in Hong Kong. The schoolgirls on the tram also think that Ga-yin

and his ex-colleagues are mainlanders, and to the youngsters in disco, he is old-fashioned. All laugh at Ga-yin and his buddies for being the minority.

While Moon is abandoned by his parents, Ga-yin finds himself an alien to his parents and brother. Both Moon and Ga-yin are suffering from a failure in familial affective bonds. As Fruit Chan says in an interview, "Everything becomes so alien to a retired soldier, including his own brother who is supposed to be the closest." (Cinnie 1999:51) While memories of his parents' teaching of being honest is still fresh, Ga-yin finds his father very difficult to comprehend when he tells Ga-yin to make some fast money even by working for the triad. Ga-yin finds his brother just as difficult to understand, and vice versa. Ga-suen cannot understand why Ga-yin and his ex-colleagues are so picky in their job search. When he criticises them for having no hope for future, Ga-yin shouts at Ga-suen, "You ever been a soldier?" Obviously, these retired soldiers' experience in the military force, however marginal, has already alienated them from the majority of Hong Kong. Like Moon in *Made in Hong Kong*, Ga-yin's sense of belonging to certain affective relationships fades away with the failure in emotional alliances with family members, and his identity also goes into trouble when he finds himself not being attached emotionally to anywhere and anything.

Ga-yin and other retired soldiers are marginalised in the Hong Kong society, but Ga-yin himself becomes the abandoned one within the group.

Some of his buddies, such as Bobby and Zipper are killed. The remaining one, Pang, who used to be the only parachute instructor in Hong Kong, now works as a security guard at Tsing Ma Bridge outlook, telling Ga-yin not to think of being a hero any more.

Ga-yin's old familial affective bonds are fading. He feels alienated in the family because of the changing mentality of his parents and brother. Yingchi Chu thinks that Moon's words are very apt to describe Ga-yin, "The world is changing faster than people can adapt to it." (Chu 2003:132) On the other hand, new emotional alliances cannot develop either. His relationship with Ah Chun has never worked out, even if Ah Chun takes the initiatives to date Ga-yin. From asking Ga-suen not to lock Ah Chun in the toilet, though he has not stopped Ga-suen, to coming across Ah Chun again and revealing to her that he and his brother have once smashed her car, it may not be groundless to say that Ga-yin has a crush on Ah Chun. However, their relationship is just like the white shirt which Ah Chun throws to Ga-yin at their first encounter – it hanged in the middle of the air, as Fruit Chan says himself (Fong 1998:52). Speaking of marginality and loneliness, Ga-yin in *The Longest Summer* is actually a middle-aged version of Autumn Moon in *Made in Hong Kong*.

### **The Border-crossers: Ah Fan and Armi**

The most obvious examples of marginalised characters in *Little Cheung* are Armi, the Filipino maid and Ah Fan, the illegal immigrant girl. They have crossed a geographical border and their relocation in Hong Kong may stimulate reactions from the Hong Kong people, for they may start to treat Hong Kong as home and subsequently claim some form of Hong Kong identity. I would call these two characters “border-crossers”. I avoid using the terms “migrants” or “sojourners” because they in one way or another hint their destinies of either staying or leaving Hong Kong. Instead of knowing where their home is, each of these characters is constantly negotiating with the mainstream Hong Kong people for some sort of Hong Kong identity. Hong Kong people, while marginalizing them, must also admit that they form an essential part of the Hong Kong.

Armi comes to Hong Kong primarily for economic reasons, and any identity issues seem unlikely to be involved. However, what they used to generate income is some kind of affectivity, which conventionally is regarded as incompatible with economic activities. Armi makes money by taking care of Little Cheung’s family. She wipes away Little Cheung’s sweat with a handkerchief, covers Grandma with a blanket, etc. She later even appears to be Little Cheung’s surrogate mother. These are actions of care and concern, yet they are what Armi does to make money. After taking care of the family even

on Sundays, she always reminds Grandma and Little Cheung's father, Uncle Kin, for the over-time pay. Taking care of people is motivated by money rather than affect. Armi may be regarded as a *homo economicus* in Aihwa Ong's terms (1993:750). To Ong, familial relationships may be fused with economic activities (Ong 753-62). Armi's experience in Hong Kong is hybrid in nature, combining economic and affective aspects. When affective bonds between Little Cheung and Armi are established, it may be not be surprising that the identity issues for both parties come into play.

To Little Cheung and his family, Armi is both an insider and outsider. Little Cheung's father, Uncle Kin, applies the same utilitarian principle as Ping's mother does in *Made in Hong Kong*. He wants her to work for the family, but does not want to hear her singing at home. Little Cheung, in the beginning, addresses her as "ghost girl" (*gwei mui*) and "Filipino girl" (*Bun mui*) which are patronizing names given to western girls and Filipino maids respectively. However, Little Cheung later establishes an emotional alliance with her, even closer than his biological mother. He runs into Armi instead of his own mother when punished by his father. After Grandma has died and Armi has left, both appear in Little Cheung's memory, and are represented in parallel in the film. Yet by then an affective bond with Armi is no longer possible because she has already left the family. Armi remains on the edge of Little Cheung's living circle, neither enters into the centre nor leaves him

completely. Little Cheung still meets Armi, but he has to go to the statue square where Filipino maids gather, as shown towards the end of the film.

Armi herself is struggling whether or not to treat herself as a member of Hong Kong. Language may reflect some changes in her identity, for the language one uses to a certain extent reflects how one perceives oneself. She talks on the phone in a Filipino dialect, which is incomprehensible to most Hong Kong people. Later in a remarkably similar scene, she uses English in her phone conversation, which is a marginal language in Hong Kong. The most interesting thing about language is that she uses some colloquial Cantonese expressions to voice out her grievances towards Hong Kong people. She regards Hong Kong people as “crazy” (*chi sin*) in a phone conversation, and even uses a colloquial abusive Cantonese phrase, “Date you mom” (*Kou nei lo mo*), to shout at a passer-by who says Little Cheung is dating a Filipino Maid. Armi also hesitates whether or not she should take up a Hong Kong identity.

It is a pity that *Little Cheung* fails to give an in-depth portrayal to Armi, because the film is too ambitious and tries to articulate too many issues as commented by film critics (Bunny Lee 2000; Bono Lee 2000:25). However, Robert Park provides one positive way out for these border-crossers in their search for home, that is, to become what he calls a “cultural hybrid”, which is

“a man living and sharing intimately in the cultural life and traditions of two distinct peoples. ... He was a man on the margin of two cultures and two societies, which never completely interpenetrated and fused.” (1969:141)

For example, Armi finally sings Filipino songs on Charter Road, a gathering place for Filipino maids in Hong Kong, and hugs Little Cheung happily at the same time. She demonstrates her potential to be a “cultural hybrid”, although Fruit Chan never goes into her inner world and thus the audience cannot be sure of that. But developing a between-worlds consciousness is nonetheless a positive possible outcome of the search for identity. The process of negotiating for a Hong Kong identity is full of “collisions, conflicts and fusion of people and culture,” as Robert Park says (Park 132).

Ah Fan’s experience of being marginalised is similar to that of Armi. Little Cheung initially thinks Ah Fan as “odd” because she “pretends to be an adult” by working in the back alley instead of going to school. Uncle Kin forbids Little Cheung to play with her because she is a “child without permit” (*mo ching yee tung*). Other Hong Kong people even call children like Ah Fan “little human snakes” (*siu yan sair*), a term which Ah Fan hates as she expresses in her note to Little Cheung. However, Little Cheung sees one thing common in him and Ah Fan right at the beginning: they are both money-oriented. In the beginning, Little Cheung’s voice-over seems to be defining Hong Kong people as *homo economicus*. Ah Fan becomes a friend of



his "also because of money." More importantly, he later develops a close friendship with Ah Fan and that emotional alliance is also important to Little Cheung's understanding of self. In the building of friendship, Little Cheung identifies with Ah Fan in some aspects, and sees the differences in others. Chris Wang argues that Little Cheung's identification originates from seeing his own differences from Ah Fan (2001:94). However, in the end, complete identification with Ah Fan is impossible. She is repatriated to Mainland China and Little Cheung mistakenly follows David's ambulance. The film ends in an absurdity of mis-recognition and a melancholy of alienation that again echoes with Abbas' idea of "disappointment" (Abbas 1998:39-48).

### **The Dynamics of Hong Kong Identity**

In *Little Cheung* we can see that a search of identity involves the dimensions of similarities and differences. Identity has "to be thought of in terms of the dialogic relationship between these two axes," as Stuart Hall says (1990:226-7). In fact for all the marginal characters in the Hong Kong 1997 Trilogy, their experiences of constantly being rejected and accepted provoke them to think about, respectively, the similarities and differences between their identities and the identities of those in the central. With the constant negotiation, identity is more a dynamic notion than a static one. Kristeva's idea of the abject is helpful in understanding this dynamics, for the act of marginalising is comparable to the expelling of what is part of a subject in

order for subjectivity to formulate. The marginalised characters are facing much confusion in their identities for they are always going back and forth a border of what is known as the “Hong Kong identity.” Adding to this confusion is their loneliness of failing to establish any form of emotional alliances, making them feel that they belong to nowhere.

Of course the marginal juvenile, the retired soldiers or the border-crossers can hardly serve as the representatives of Hong Kong people. Yet it does not necessarily mean that they are irrelevant to the discussion on Hong Kong identity. The dynamics in the negotiation between them and the mainstream Hong Kong people may be more telling of the Hong Kong identity, as we can see more clearly the dialogues between the axes of similarities and differences. Yau Ka-fai has pointed out that while these marginal characters are far from representatives, “the accustomed Hong Kong images and icons cannot fully represent Hong Kong and its people either. It is this gap of representation that presents the underrepresented in the film.” (2001:554) In Kristeva’s theory, what is being expelled is also part of the subject. As such, we cannot fully understand the subject without understanding the abject. By the same token, we can only comprehend the Hong Kong identity if we know what it is constantly thrusting out in order to perpetuate. The next chapter will examine how the abject, such as waste matters and marginal spaces, serve as metaphor for the Hong Kong identity. The excretion of waste matters and the erasure of representation of some

spaces in Hong Kong that is taking place are not much different from the mechanism of marginalizing people in Hong Kong.

## Chapter Three

### Tabooed Objects and Forgotten Spaces

Waste matters such as urine, dung, menstrual blood and semen appear in Fruit Chan's film like a motif. So are objects related to these waste matters, such as napkins and underpants, and spaces related to them, the most obvious examples being the public toilet and the cemetery. Applying Kristeva's theory, these wastes matters are part of us that we constantly expel in order to keep us survive. The process of expelling waste matters echoes well with the marginalisation of characters that is discussed in the previous chapter. Some spaces such as the public housing estates in *Made in Hong Kong* are more often than not remain unrepresentative in grand narratives of Hong Kong. But these spaces turn out to be the most dynamic ones. The representations of these spaces, again, echo with those of the marginalised characters in the films. The tabooed matters and under-represented spaces may be read allegorically to provide more insights on the understanding of Hong Kong identity.

Contrary to *Made in Hong Kong*, we can see the most glamorous infrastructures in *The Longest Summer*. However, the representations of these spaces are more melancholic than celebratory. While there are spaces being expelled from grand narratives, we also have in the film spaces which are expelling people. The Hong Kong style tea restaurant in *Little Cheung*, a space

which in the recent years is often associated to Hong Kong identity, has demonstrated the differences within Hong Kong people: a space of contestations, a space where exclusion and inclusion of the marginalised is taking place. The ordinary spaces of a tea restaurant and old Chinese building may be just as dynamic.

### **Body Fluids in Relation to Sexual Identities**

In *Made in Hong Kong*, Autumn Moon has wet dreams four times. Using Kristeva's theory, semen is the abject that is produced by the male body and expelled from it, so that a man can assert his male identity. It contains sperms that can produce offspring if combined with an ovum in the female body, and hence ejaculation during the course of sexual intercourses signifies a man's potency, and thus his male power. However, in the wet dreams, the semen ejaculated becomes the abject, something filthy and dirty. Wet dreams are essential for Moon and any other men, but Moon has to wash away the semen left in his underpants during wet dreams. His wet dreams, if read allegorically in connection with Kristeva's theory, may echoes with his own situation of being the abject of Hong Kong.

Film critic Shum Longtin argues that the whole *Made in Hong Kong* is a piece of patriarchal writing, and he relates Moon's wet dreams to the primitive male desires (2003:138). He thinks that the Susan's jump from the

roof is symbolic of the orgasm experienced by the male (2003:139). In Moon's dream, the white blood from Susan's body is actually his semen (2003:138). Whether Shum Longtin's claim is justified or not is out of the scope of the present project. But departing from his reading of *Made in Hong Kong*, we can see the connection between ejaculation and death. If ejaculation in sexual intercourse, which Moon has never done in the film, is an act of expelling part of the male subject to assert the male subjectivity and male identity, then his repeated wet dreams may be read as failed attempts to claim an identity. Every time Moon has a wet dream, he sees Susan committing suicide. Ejaculation, an essential process is completing the male identity, along Kristeva's theory, becomes a haunting experience. A process of reassuring identity is associated with death in Moon's dream world, and in reality only till death can Moon's search for identity end. The irony that remains is, while Moon thrust out his semen in the course of asserting his male identity, what is left behind after his death is only his underpants once stained with his semen, hanging by the windows. With a close-up of his underpants towards the end of the film, this object becomes what occupies the space where Moon once lived. Death is the ultimate process of abjection when the subject, the "I" is expelled (1982:4). While the expelled "I" disappears from the space, what "I" have once expelled remains.

While we can elaborate the abject related to the male body into discussions on Moon's male identity, we may not be able to do the same on

object related to the female body, in particular, the menstrual blood. Cultural critic Natalia Chan even thinks that the prevalence of menstruation as a motif in Fruit Chan's films is in one way or another a patriarchal mockery against the female sex (Chan 2002:155). In *The Longest Summer*, the nasty schoolgirls leave used napkins in a taxi to make fun of the driver. In *Made in Hong Kong*, Moon uses his mother's napkin as a substitute of bandages to treat Sylvester's wounds on the face. Fruit Chan seems to be deliberate in showing how the sanitary napkins, which are tabooed objects related to the menstrual blood or the abject, can turn out to have powers in destruction as well as construction. The used napkin in *The Longest Summer* is associated with an almost denigrating portrayal of the schoolgirls, but it has nevertheless demonstrated the power of horror the abject has, at least on the negative side.

The appearance of a used sanitary napkin in *Little Cheung* may better illustrate Kristeva's abject theory, as it does not connote a strong negative portrayal of the female sex. A prostitute's menstrual blood and Little Cheung's urine are mixed into a gangster David's drink as a weapon to fight against this gangster. Since then David has been on his way to downfall. To read this scenario allegorically again, the marginalised characters are just like the abject in Kristeva's theory, unwanted but potentially subversive. While Hong Kong people want to expel the marginalised people so as to attain a pure Hong Kong identity as progression, prosperity, etc., these characters may turn out to be subversive and eventually change the Hong Kong identity. Such dynamics

is the most obvious in *Little Cheung* and we will come back to this dynamics in *Little Cheung* later in this chapter.

Urine is another filthy waste matter that appears in Fruit Chan's films. In *Little Cheung*, urine is mixed into the lemon tea for David, and in *Made in Hong Kong*, Ping who has kidney disease is often carrying, apparently, a bag of urine. Ping's kidney disease is a very good example showing the failure of abjection. Failure to excrete waste can kill. Ping's case and Kristeva's abject theory are just two faces of the same token. The key to survival is to expel the unwanted parts of yourself; otherwise you will die. At the end after Ping's death, only that bag used to contain Ping's urine is left. The close-up of that is remarkably similar to the close-up shot of Moon's underpants. Both have once carried what the protagonists expel, and they are the only remains after their death. When they can no longer expel, as Kristeva says, they themselves are ultimately expelled. Only the expelled remains.

The issue of organ donation in the film provides a further twist to the abject theory. While urine, menstrual blood, semen, etc. are matters that we expel in order to survive, organs such as kidneys are what we have to keep so that we will not die. If Moon were killed by Fat Chan's gang and his kidney were transplanted to Ping, then, instead of expelling part of herself to survive, Ping will survive by including into her body what is not part of herself. All these twists to the abject theory are insightful in understanding Hong Kong



identity, as Hong Kong is constantly rejecting and assimilating different people. There are people whom Hong Kong wants to assimilate. Those who conform to the grand narratives of Hong Kong identity are welcome, such as David's brother Kenny who returns with his money in *Little Cheung*.

### **The Forgotten Spaces in *Made in Hong Kong***

Film critic Lam Keeto (2000) says that Fruit Chan's film is presenting to the audience a world that "had not been whitewashed by detergent". In fact, a lot of forgotten spaces are represented in Fruit Chan's films. One of these spaces that are closely related to waste matters is the public toilet. Fruit Chan seems to be obsessed with it so much that he later directed a film titled *Public Toilet* in 2003. Public toilets are the space for excretion, and in *Made in Hong Kong*, they are where Moon witnessed a violence against a father and also where Sylvester becomes the victim of a sexual assault, being forced to masturbate.

Despite their associations with the abject, public toilets are important spaces represented in *Made in Hong Kong*. Public toilets are seldom mentioned in most peoples' lives, perhaps for the association with the excrements and the filthiness. But that does not mean these spaces are of no significance. When Moon is about to take revenge on his father, witnessing a youngster chopping of his incestuous father's hand in a public toilet has changed Moon's

mind. The most violent act in the film takes place in a least talked-about space. What happens in the public toilet is also the most powerful in stopping Moon from taking revenge. The recurring theme of the marginalised being subversive comes up again, but this time, the marginalised space. Another scene with the public toilet in *Made in Hong Kong* is the toilet in a police station. Moon goes there to get a gun for his assassination mission. The marginalised space in a police station, which is supposed to be a place of law and order, is the site for outlaw activities. This irony is one of the most obvious examples to show the subversion and dilemma of the marginalised space, which may be of a similar nature to the experiences of the marginalised characters.

Both public toilets and back alleys are spaces for disposing the waste matters, excrements from human bodies and from the city respectively. A city is constantly producing garbage in order to function. Back alleys are also abject spaces that are not represented in the "Asia's World City" but appear in Fruit Chan's films. However unsettling Hong Kong people find the spaces of back alleys, they are the spaces with much vitality in *Made in Hong Kong* and *Little Cheung*. The back alley is the arena for justice to be done in *Made in Hong Kong*, when Moon punishes the secondary school boys for victimising Sylvester. In *Little Cheung*, the back alley is where economic activities take place, for Ah Fan and her mother are washing dishes to make a living in Hong

Kong. As abject spaces, the back alleys are remarkably similar to the public toilets.

Another abject space in *Made in Hong Kong* is the cemetery. Cemetery is a space for the dead, and the corpse “is the utmost abjection” according to Kristeva (1982:4). Quoting from Kristeva, “It is no longer I who expel, ‘I’ is expelled.” (1982:4) Death is a moment when the border of the subject completely collapses. The corpse therefore has this power of horror, and death is therefore tabooed in our society. Moon, like many others, fear for death. So he asks Ping not to speak of death when she says she is dying soon. He also fails to jump off from the roof of the building like Susan has done. He immediately refuted himself after saying that death requires no courage. At that moment, Moon cannot transgress the border of his own subjectivity. They failed to turn himself into the expelled. However, at the end of the film, Moon eventually committed suicide in the cemetery. Death has been following him, and following Sylvester and Ping, right from the beginning, as Natalia Chan states (2002:137). In fact, the shot of Moon using a gun to penetrate a mooncake, apart from a form of patriarchal narcissism as Shum argues (2003:139), can also be read as a self-prophecy of his own suicide, as “mooncake” is the nickname given to Moon by Ping. As Yingchi Chu points out, “the death theme runs deep throughout the film.” (2003:130) The film starts from Susan’s suicide and ends with Moon’s.

The cemetery can of course be read in conjunction with other marginalised spaces, and treated as an analogy to the marginalised characters in the society. This analogy should not be difficult to understand, for marginalised characters are occupying marginalised spaces. Natalia Chan has used Foucault's idea of "heterotopia" to analyse the cemetery in details (2002:137). Foucault's words may be worth quoting as it echoes well with the discussion on abjection here,

the curious heterotopia of the cemetery... is certainly an 'other' place... and yet it is connected with all the locations of the city... since every family has some relative there." (1997:353)

However, as death is the only way out for the marginalised characters to obtain peace, as discussed in the previous chapter, then cemetery is more than just an abject space. *Made in Hong Kong* has given a twist to death, making this theme something more than merely a process of abjection. "The only happy moments of these teenagers occur in the graveyard." (Chu 2003:130) As such, cemetery does not only connote our negative abject feeling to the corpses, but paradoxically, it is a space that brings about positive emotions of peace and joy.

Natalia Chan thinks that both the cemetery and the public housing estates are the Foucauldian "heterotopia", which are both marginalised spaces but subverting social and moral paradigms (Chan 2002:138). The graves lining up one next to another, densely distributed, are just like apartments in the

public housing estates, compartmentalised by the crowd. A long shot on the graves and that on housing estates are very much alike: with a person or family, living or dead, occupying one little square in the crowded matrix. If the film is deliberate in comparing the public housing estates with the cemetery, then the director may be attempting to criticise the indifference of the people living therein. If they have never considered the border between their subjectivities and their own identities, then they may already be considered as living corpses. There are, of course, other ways of looking into the comparison between public housing estates and cemetery. Ping's mother's words to Moon may be another interpretation of this comparison. She tells Moon that only dying young can one be forever young, and those who survive have a hard time ahead. She may find her life more hellish than in hell. This may be another way to make sense of the comparison between cemetery and public housing estates in the film.

Public housing estates are also important spaces in *Made in Hong Kong*, and in fact most of the activities in the film take place in public housing estates. Whether living in these public housing estates are like living in hell, I cannot say. Fruit Chan himself has the following comments,

In my mind, the public housing estate is the dark shadow of life.

Either you do your best to get out, or your future is hell. The housing estates that appear in my film now actually look much

less morbid and sleazy than what I used to know. (Susanna T. 1998:57)

There are a lot of shots of the inside of these estates in *Made in Hong Kong* that remind us of the prison. Esther Cheung has summed up the depiction of the apartments in the housing estates,

“The barred windows, barb-wired fence of the playground and the grid-patterned walls of the corridor all foster a *mise-en-scene* of entrapment and imprisonment.” (2004:359)

Different critics have also pointed out that public housing estates are represented as enclosed and confined spaces (Natalia Chan 2002:136, William Cheung 1999:213, Bono Lee 1997:54, Sharp Po 1999:54).

Esther Cheung has provided a detail analysis of the public housing estates as the uncanny and haunting spaces (Cheung 2004:358-368), and Natalia Chan again uses the Foucauldian concept of “heterotopia” to examine these spaces. I am not going to elaborate on the public housing estate because Cheung and Chan have already done so. Instead, I will just relate this space back to the discussion on the marginalised characters in the previous chapter. Public housing estates themselves are the spaces marginalised in the city. Although they once signified progress when they first emerged in Hong Kong, the old estates now signifies otherwise where only the old and poor are still living. However, that does not mean these spaces are not subversive. At least,

Moon makes his outcry to the adult world, the established institutions, and the majority of Hong Kong people in and through this space.

### **The Melancholic Spaces in *The Longest Summer***

Public housing estates in *Made in Hong Kong* are one of those under-represented spaces, whereas the spaces in *The Longest Summer* are the over-represented ones. In *The Longest Summer*, the Hong Kong cityscape seems to be a celebratory space, filled with fireworks, decorations for the handover, new infrastructures, etc. But upon closer examination, this glamour is juxtaposed with all sorts of undercurrents, undermining the celebratory atmosphere and turning the space into a violent and melancholic one. A depressed tone is being poured into the cinematic space just like the heavy rain pouring on Hong Kong on 30 June 1997. The prosperity symbolised by fireworks (Chan 2002:142) vanishes when people under the sky with fireworks are dealing with their own problems. Ga-suen carries out his mission of murder during the opening of the Tsing Ma Bridge; Big Brother Wing feels aggrieved for being confined in the hotel room during the fireworks show on 1 July. At the same time, Ga-yin feels frustrated in the traffic jam in search of Ga-suen, and Ga-yin's friends are in search of Ga-yin for they are in doubt of being betrayed. A similar juxtaposition is seen in the disco. While the people are feeling so high, Ga-yin and his friends are criticised of being old-fashioned; and the gangsters are working on their

killing. The celebratory atmosphere in the city becomes so ironic with all these frustration experienced by the characters and with the violence that is taking place. The dilemmas beneath the space of carnival give rise to a strong sense of melancholy. Yau Ka-fai quotes Freud in explaining the melancholy in *The Longest Summer* as a sense of loss without knowing the object of loss, and the retired soldiers' melancholy actually originates from being "a bunch of lost selves in a new society" (2001:553).

The celebratory elements are just too prevalent in the film. One can name numerous examples: the dragon in Tsim Sha Tsui, the lights on the street celebrating the handover, a poster featuring Deng Xiao Ping in the disco, etc. Above all, almost in every scene can one find the red flag of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. This little red flag seems to be omnipresent in the film: in the taxi, in Big Brother Wing's car, outside the bank, on the road, in the pub, etc. This symbol of the handover is too prevalent to catch the audience' attention. Similarly, when the fireworks are shown six times in 1997, compared with once a year in the previous year, Hong Kong people have already lost their interests in watching this symbol of prosperity. Big Brother Wing complains to the police inspector that he has watched the fireworks three times already, and Ga-yin has no interest in watching the fireworks on 1 July despite the taxi driver's invitation. On the other hand, some other characters imagine all sorts of gimmicks to keep their interests in the fireworks, such as imagining that the fireworks sing or write in



the air. But this precisely articulates people's loss of interest in them. Feeling suffocated in a monotonous space of celebration may prompt us to put the monotonous narratives of Hong Kong identity as prosperity and progression into question. Ga-yin in *The Longest Summer* has, in fact, never ceased his struggle on identity. The melancholy of his frustration is highlighted in a space filled with festive ingredients.

One cannot ignore the spaces of highways and railways when speaking of the melancholic space in *The Longest Summer*. The audience repeatedly sees the infrastructures of Hong Kong, which are often used to represent the prosperity of Hong Kong, from the older image of the Mass Transit Railways to the latest construction such as the West Kowloon highways and the Tsing Ma Bridge. The unidirectional flow of traffic on the highways and railways and the uniform celebratory atmosphere both indicate the lack of choice in the space. Ga-yin and other retired soldiers, no matter how reluctant, must without choice face the celebration over the change of the sovereignty. In the beginning, when Ga-yin and Ga-suen are riding on the motorbike and encounter Ah Chun, they cannot but lose touch with her. On a highway or railway, you cannot choose where to go. Instead you can only follow the direction of the traffic or the rails to where they lead. The Mass Transit Railway trail that kicks off the film maybe reminding us of this. A fast-motion scene showing the crowd moving on the roads and footbridges has the same melancholic effect. The association of railway tracks and highways with a

sense of melancholy is so strong that they even appear in Ga-yin's nightmares. This melancholic feeling does not come from the mourning over a lost object, but the lack of choices and the unknown future that the only option is leading to. The melancholy is perhaps that the whole city space of Hong Kong is metaphorically a battlefield, full of potential but unknown danger and violence. As Bobby says in the film, while they have no war experience, they are living in a real battlefield like Hong Kong where they have to fight for survival. They are stepping on a path of no return.

One will be in great trouble if he does not follow the flow of the traffic on a highway, or if he does not give up part of his own identity and conforms to the grand narratives by following the majority. Towards the end of the film, Ga-yin throws away his helmet from the Tsing Ma Bridge, and this may be read as a symbolic act of giving up his identity at least partially. Throwing away the helmet, something that protects the brain of a man where memory resides, at a highway where one has no option of where to go, may be pointing to Ga-yin's choice or his fate of amnesia. Eventually Ga-yin has lost his memory in exchange of a happier life, and the film ends with him in a bright sunny day, a space of brightness that has never existed throughout the film.

## Space of Contestation in *Little Cheung*

While different spaces in *Made in Hong Kong* and *The Longest Summer* can be read allegorically to shed light on the understanding of identity, spaces in *Little Cheung* may provide more insights on the issue if seen as an arena of contestation. Some spaces may be expelled, but some other are expelling. Natalia Chan again uses Foucault's heterotopias to analyse the space in *Little Cheung*, which "presuppose a system of opening and closing" or "conceal curious exclusion" (Foucault 1997:355). Natalia Chan says that the spaces of the Cantonese tea restaurant (*Cha Chaan Tang*) and the Chinese style buildings (*Tong Lau*) are manifestation of a collective memory of Hong Kong which connotes a strong sense of nostalgia (2002:144). Below I shall set aside this issue of nostalgia and focus on how these two spaces play the role of an arena for the inclusion and exclusion of people, especially the border-crossers whose complications in identity issues have already been discussed in Chapter Two.

The apartment in the old Chinese style building where Little Cheung lives is a space about Hong Kong identity. His grandmother is already a walking history. In particular, she claims to have a special relationship with Brother Cheung (*Sun Ma See Tsang*), a Cantonese opera singer whose death in 1997 has aroused more attention than the handover. Some critics agree that Brother Cheung in the film is a reference to the local history of Hong Kong

(Chan 2002:146, Wang 2001:94, Yau 2001:355). Brother Cheung already symbolises part of the Hong Kong identity. Thus, a space filled with references to Brother Cheung will in fact alienate those who are foreign to Hong Kong. For example, Ah Fan knows nothing about Brother Cheung, and she shows no interests in this hot topic as well. There is a shot which shows Armi singing on the right, and on the left hand side, Brother Cheung singing on TV. The two images and voices are sharing the space of Little Cheung's home, yet the two songs do not go in harmony with each other. Their incompatible coexistence may be pointing to the fact that this space is the ground for Armi and Little Cheung's family to negotiate and struggle. But Armi, unlike Ah Fan, is indeed very interested in Brother Cheung's family affairs. She talks on the phone with her friends that Brother Cheung's family disputes are more exciting than soap operas. Such conversation also takes place in this space where Armi is included to and excluded from the family.

This old apartment is where Armi and Little Cheung connect and disconnect. In this space Armi takes care of Little Cheung and becomes his surrogate mother. But it is also in this space that she parts with Little Cheung. She seems very indifferent to Little Cheung, so much so that she seems to have no emotional alliance with him. She does not cry when she leaves him, nor has she done so when Grandma dies. This is also the space where Little Cheung bids farewell to his grandmother, where Little Cheung's long lost

brother Little Hang has been abandoned. In other words, this is a space where affectivity ends and people are forced to depart.

Another important space for negotiation of identity is the tea restaurant. Again we can see Armi is on the edge of this space not on a literal but a metaphorical level. She feels exploited by Uncle Kin, for she is required to work on Sundays without getting overtime pay. She argues with Uncle Kin in the restaurant for the money. But when the local gangster David tries to extort “protection fee” from the family’s restaurant, Armi suggests to Kin’s wife calling the police to protect the family. In face of an external enemy, Armi seems to belong to this space, resisting the threat from David. To Ah Fan, the tea restaurant is also a space of exclusion. Because of her illegal status in Hong Kong, she feels somewhat uneasy in entering Hong Kong’s public space. She immediately turns away when seeing policemen in Little Cheung’s restaurant. Her mother also tells her, “You cannot go out.” In a scene depicting the arrest of illegal immigrants, the camera shots behind the fences, as if the children are behind bars. We are reminded of the image of a prison in the public housing estate in *Made in Hong Kong*, also constructed by fences and iron bars.

Different spaces in *Little Cheung* provide an arena for contestation. The characters negotiate and grapple with each other for an identity that each can claim as their own. In face of the 1997 handover, the national identity issue is

obviously playing a part in the space. The next chapter will start with a discussion on nationality, and from that point explore if there is a way out for all those grappling on identities.

## Chapter Four

### Ambiguous Nationality and Confused Identity

In *The Longest Summer*, Ga-yin and his group has this confused nationality of being abandoned by Britain, yet feeling alien to China (and the triad gang associated with China). The complications in the senses of belonging to China and Britain have driven Ga-yin almost crazy. The complexities in nationality multiply in this film when Ga-yin wants to expel and is being expelled by both the British and Chinese identity. In *Little Cheung*, we can see Hong Kong people's complexes towards Mainland China through Little Cheung and Ah Fan. In *Made in Hong Kong*, while no explicit reference is made to nationality, Moon's relationships with his parents may serve as a metaphor for a confused national identity in face of the 1997 handover.

#### Between Nationalities

References are made explicitly to issues in nationality in *The Longest Summer*. Film critic Bono Lee even thinks that the film is "too symbolic" (1999:58). Fruit Chan himself also admits, "I have to be obvious with the things I say." (Fong 1999:54) Putting aside whether the film is good at dealing with big issues, it is a rich text for discussion on national identity. The protagonists of this film are a group of retired Chinese soldiers in the British Force. The term "Chinese soldiers in the British Force" is already an

oxymoron *per se*. Ga-yin is being scolded by his ex-colleague Pang towards the end of the film that being a member of the British garrison on the Chinese soil is not normal. Because of this special position, Ga-yin and his buddies face much confusion over their national identity, a love-hate relationship to both the British and Chinese nationality.

Ga-yin and his buddies hate Britain for Britain abandoned them. Bobby, one of the retired soldiers, says he would only target the British Banks when the group is planning the bank robbery. They choose the bank where Bobby is working, whose name is "Manchester", a big city in North England. They yelled "Goddamn the Brits!" in one of their meetings. They blame Britain for not occupying Hong Kong for longer. But this rationale precisely spells a love-hate relationship towards Britain. In this logic, hatred of being abandoned by the British is followed by a love of being under British rule. Ga-yin tells Ah Chun on her departure to Britain, "A lot of people want to go to England." Yet he himself does not really have the guts to follow Ah Chun there. The British nationality may be a repressed desire within Ga-yin. Along Kristeva' idea of "strangers to ourselves", the British identity may be what is foreign within Ga-yin. His memory of being a soldier under the British Force has already changed his national identity, no matter how marginal he is in the force as discussed in chapter two, although he may not be aware of the shaping of his own identity.



However, Ga-yin sees Chinese identity as foreign as well. The film deliberately associates the Chinese identity with triad society. Big Brother Wing has the Chinese National flag in his car, and an enlarged Chinese banknote decorating his office. Ga-yin's father also remarks that the Chinese Communist Party used to be an illegal organisation in history. When the retired soldiers, once adhered to law and order, decide to commit a crime, they use Chinese cities (including Hong Kong which shall be integrated into China shortly thereafter) as their pseudonyms. On the contrary, Ga-suen, who has never experienced identity crisis in the film, uses a detailed local address in Mong Kok. The film connects Chinese identity to the triads and the outlaws. As such, the complexities of Ga-yin's view on his own Chinese identity multiply as he is also on the margin of being a member of the triad and outlaws. Despite critics' comments on the unconvincing change of Ga-yin from a soldier to an outlaw, being a robber may be just another stranger within Ga-yin, and so is his Chinese identity.

I would like to interrupt the discussion on *The Longest Summer* with that of *Made in Hong Kong*, for the connection between triad activities and Chinese identity is almost the same. In *Made in Hong Kong*, Big Brother Wing, bearing the same name as the triad head in *The Longest Summer* and even played by the same actor, often uses Mandarin to speak on the phone and he is conscious that he speaks like a mainlander even when using Cantonese for he uses terms that are peculiar to Mainland China. His office also has a lot of

certificates and awards from the mainland. Nonetheless, Big Brother Wing in *Made in Hong Kong* is not simply a symbol of Mainland China. He also has a mixed feeling towards China. Big Brother Wing feels annoyed for a sub-ordinate of his sets all sorts of barriers so that he finds it difficult to page him. The idea of using "hallelujah 1997" as the password to escape the police's cracking is of course ironic (Chan 2002:140). When he scolds the lady at the paging station, the lady replies that he will get used to it. Later he himself sets the very same barriers when Moon pages him. He does get used to it. His views on Chinese identity may be the same, hates it but gets used to it at the same time. His paradoxical statement on the people from Mainland China is more telling, "You are right in hating them [Mainlanders]. It provides an emotional drive for you and gives you a sense of self-assurance." To Big Brother Wing in *Made in Hong Kong*, Chinese identity is also the other within himself.

Turning back to Big Brother Wing in *The Longest Summer*, he says that on 1 July everything will become new just like newborn babies, including he himself and Ga-yin. But on another occasion Ga-yin and his friends say that on 1 July, "everything will become second hand, except the People's Liberation Army." British Military Supplies are sold on second hand flea market, as shown in a clip that has no connection to the rest of the film in terms of plot. British identity is already outdated in Hong Kong in face of the 1997 handover. For those who regard themselves as British will think their

nationality has become second-hand, but for those who sees themselves to be Chinese will think otherwise. Of course there are many others who are indifferent about the change of sovereignty on 1 July. For example, Police Inspector Mr. Cheung instructs his subordinates only to obey rules and no need to consider who the boss is. In other words, being a Chinese or a British is not an issue to him. But for those who are in search of their national identity, like Ga-yin, they will become perplexed about their nationality. They feel they are both Chinese and British, and yet neither Chinese nor British. Being a Chinese by ethnicity who has served in the British Force for years, Ga-yin's search for national identity therefore swings between being British and Chinese when the Hong Kong Military Service Corp has disbanded and Hong Kong is about to be integrated as part of China. Rey Chow has scrutinised the national identification in her article "Between Colonizers." She thinks Hong Kong is freed from a coloniser, namely Britain, and forced to return to a mother country which is just as imperialistic (1992:153). She thinks that "one cannot but problematize 'China' at the same as one dismantles 'Britain'" (1992:156).

With confusion in his nationality, that is in his sense of belonging to a country, in addition to the confusion in his sense of belonging to a group or a affective bond as discussed earlier, Ga-yin's identity crisis has deteriorated to a point of no return. He fails to see himself in the mirror, and hysterically shouts, "Who am I?" This is a most significant question he cannot answer, and

this is also the key question in all the three episodes of the Hong Kong 1997 Trilogy. Ga-yin throws away his helmet at the Tsing Ma Bridge, the interpretation of which has been given in Chapter Three, and his later act of holding a tablecloth resembles the hoisting of a white flag of surrender. He gives up his identity search. From that point onwards, he becomes crazy and all his negative emotions explode. His grievances and frustration and his rejection against triad punks are directed towards one unfortunate young gangster; his frustration in the alienation from Ga-suen is also projected on this kid when he addresses the kid as his brother. In the end, the Ga-yin who bears the struggles on identity dies, as Natalia Chan says that the final flashback of his memories carry the taste of a funeral, after which Ga-yin lives on without the burden of his past, but also his identity.

### **Mainlanders: Akin and Alienated**

While Ga-yin has a whole memory with Britain and China which he cannot resolve but to give up, Little Cheung, as a nine-year-old kid, has no such burden at all. Yet like Ga-yin, he is also asking himself whether or not he should identify himself as a Chinese by nationality. There is a scene showing Little Cheung's school teaching Putonghua, the national language in Mainland China. His school is also teaching the Hong Kong kids how to hoist the Chinese national flag and also how to salute in the manner of a Young Pioneer (*Shao Xian Dui*). But Little Cheung and his classmates cannot acquire

those skills well, and turn those actions into jokes. Little Cheung behaves that way not because he has any bad experiences with the Mainlanders in the past, but those mainland practices are just foreign to him.

In the relationship between Little Cheung and Ah Fan, we can see more clearly the Chinese identity in Little Cheung. Bike in *Little Cheung* is something symbolic. Initially Little Cheung finds the big bike very difficult to control but Ah Fan seems to ride on it at ease. The prevalence of bikes in Mainland China has made it an icon of Mainlanders. But when Little Cheung is riding on this big bike, which he previously regarded as foreign, to chase Ah Fan in the last scene, he has already taken up some form of Chinese identity by taking up skills of a Mainland Chinese. Of course his emotional alliance with Ah Fan is another indicator of his Chinese identity. Chinese identity, no matter how alien to Little Cheung, may already have its seeds sown in him, and that is the strangeness to himself. Little Cheung fails to catch Ah Fan, and their separation is ironically juxtaposed with the reintegration of Hong Kong to China. The moment when Little Cheung thinks he can identify with a Mainlander is when he has to give up that identity.

In one significant scene, both Ah Fan and Little Cheung want to claim Hong Kong. They both say, "Hong Kong is ours, not yours." The uses of the plural "we" and "you" in their dialogues are actually tempting us to project argument between two kids to the larger issue on identity. Little Cheung

thinks that Chinese nationality does not constitute Hong Kong identity, and so he thinks Hong Kong does not belong to a Mainlander Ah Fan. On the contrary, Ah Fan thinks that Hong Kong belongs to Mainland China with the handover of sovereignty from Britain to China approaching, and so the nationality of the Hong Kong people is no doubt Chinese. The film gives no conclusion to the debate between Ah Fan and Little Cheung. Some may argue that Ah Fan wins the debate. Natalia Chan thinks that the change of the voice-over from Little Cheung to Ah Fan signifies the end of an epoch (2002:150), and Shum Longtin even thinks that it denotes the domination by Mainlanders in Hong Kong after 1997 (2003:144). Despite these comments, we must not forget that Ah Fan is eventually repatriated from Hong Kong before the handover, and in *Durian Durian*, the continuation of this film, Ah Fan decides to stay in Mainland and treats Shenzhen as her home. It might be fairer to say that the question of whether Hong Kong people are Chinese by nationality remains open, and the confusion over nationality still prevails.

### **Nationalities and Parents**

*Made in Hong Kong* on surface has never touched on the issue of identity. However, Moon's relationship with his parents can be read metaphorically as Hong Kong's relationship with Britain and China. Moon is abandoned by his parents. His father is absent throughout the film and his mother leaves him when the film develops. Moon hates his father so much

that he wants to take revenge, for he has found a mistress in Mainland China. However, Moon's mother actually knows about the mistress and even allows her husband to do so in exchange of money. Later on, Moon's mother left Moon to start her new life, which Moon says is the "Take Two" of her life. Moon, apparently has calmed down and done away with his anger and hatred against his father after seeing a youngster chopping his own father. Towards the end of the film, Moon even tries to visit his father but only to have seen his mistress.

The purpose of summing up the development of Moon's relationships with his parents is to compare his parents to the two sovereigns of Hong Kong, namely, Britain and China. Moon's complicated feelings towards his father are just like many Hong Kong people's views on Mainland China. Although not that much caused by a sense of abandonment, Hong Kong people have this hatred, contempt or even phobia to Mainland China and her people for years. But in the late 1990s, and more so in recently years, when Hong Kong people are going frequently to southern China and other costal cities like Shanghai for business and leisure, they may see Mainland China differently. They may be indifferent, or may still dislike, the Beijing Government, but they are now having close relationships with a lot of cities in the Mainland. In *Made in Hong Kong*, Moon goes to visit his father's mistress originates from southern China, where Hong Kong people now frequently visit. The mistress even invites Moon to have soup from time to time, but the

father is still absent. The scenario invites us to compare the familial relationships with that between Hong Kong people and Mainland China. While they still have much reservation in claiming a Chinese identity because of the past negative feelings towards Beijing Government, particular still with the memory of the June Fourth Incident, they are feeling more and more akin with the Mainlanders in the costal cities such as Guangzhou and Shanghai in the recent years. Hong Kong people's mixed feeling towards a Chinese identity is just like Moon's confusion over his relationship with his father and the father's new family.

Moon also has a mixed feeling towards his mother, as we have already discussed in Chapter Two. The mother-son relationship can also be read allegorically. When Moon's mother lives with him, she is a source of financial support to Moon, but also the one to punish him when he steals money from her. While Moon's mixed feeling towards his father reminds us of Hong Kong people's relationship to China, a mixed feeling towards his mother invites us to think of Britain. In the 150 years before 1997, Hong Kong has flourished in terms of economy under the British rule. During the period, there are of course a lot of occasions when Hong Kong, as the colonised, is being oppressed by the coloniser. While Moon's mother is making some deals with the father without letting Moon know, arrangements concerning Hong Kong are made between Britain and China at different levels with Hong Kong people having no say. Despite Moon's grievances for being beaten up by his



mother, a sense of nostalgia emerges when his mother can no longer be found. This may be hinting that we can only miss our former coloniser after she has pulled her feet out of Hong Kong. The slightest wish to claim the British identity only comes when that is no longer possible, despite the many occasions where Hong Kong people are oppressed.

At the end of the film, the official tone from an imaginary radio station quoting Mao Zedong's speech is the only explicit reference made to national identity in *Made in Hong Kong*. But that speech pushes the film to the most ironic and melancholic point. Only when all Moon, Ping, Sylvester and Susana are dead are the young people referred to as the "morning sun" by an official tone that resembles the Mainland spokesman (Yau 2001:552) using a quote from Chairman Mao of the Chinese Communist Party. The young people in the film all died before the handover. Yingchi Chu argues that the death theme, contrary to Mao's words at the end, "presents the colony as a dying community." (Chu 2003:131). But instead of being vibrant, the Hong Kong after 1997 is also a fearful world. Right before Mao's speech, Moon says that they are immune from "an unknown world". One cannot but relate this "unknown world" to a Hong Kong under Chinese rule. Hong Kong under Chinese rule after 1997, as presented by this ending of *Made in Hong Kong*, will be an unknown and a frightening world.

## **“Who am I?”**

In face of the 1997 handover, among all other changes that Hong Kong faces, different characters in Fruit Chan’s films are suffering from identity crises. They feel confused, perplexed and even lost in the midst of changes. Shum Longtin argues that Moon and his friends cannot survive the transition, and Ga-yin has to rely on amnesia to have a brand new start after the handover; only the film *Little Cheung* has presented to us a picture of transition in an ordinary manner (Shum 2003:143). I doubt whether Shum has romanticised *Little Cheung*, for confusion and struggle are constantly going on and the film ends with both Little Cheung and Ah Fan having a sense of loss.

Seemingly, there exists no nationality, no community, no space or even nobody to which the marginalised characters can be emotionally attached. In the films, they have never asserted any stable identities that they feel comfortable with. Constant negotiation and even violent struggles are taking place, but most fail in answering the question that troubled Ga-yin, “Who am I?” For Moon, Ping, Sylvester and Susan, the only way in our searching for the answer to this question is death. Only till death can their identity issues be settled. The way out for Ga-yin is amnesia, putting down all his burden of his past experience and past identity, so that he can have the “Take Two” of his life, like Moon’s parents. As Yingchi Chu says, “His loss of memory makes him a happy person... Pain and crisis of identity can be solved only after the

loss of memories of the past.” (2003:132) As far as identity is concerned, amnesia, or even just to wipe out one’s own history, is no different from death, for that is the end of an independent subject. Little Cheung and Ah Fan may be more fortunate to face these changes as kids. For Little Cheung, we do not know what will be the outcome of his identity search, or if he will continue to pursue one in the first place. Ah Fan’s search for identity ends in *Durian Durian*, the continuation of *Little Cheung*, that she retreats from this space of contestation and decide to remain a member of Shenzhen. Armi, on the contrary, may be possible to find a more positive way out for her identity as a “cultural hybrid”, although we are not told of her story in details.

For other people in Fruit Chan’s Hong Kong 1997 Trilogy, identity issues seem not a puzzle, for they are so indifferent to what nationality they claim, to which community they belong and with whom they are connected. Ping’s mother is so indifferent to Moon and other people in the neighbourhood. For most of them, as Little Cheung’s voice-over tells us, they only concerns about money-making and just do not care about where their home is. Although they may or may not have crossed any geographical borders, Aihwa Ong’s idea of *homo economicus* (1993:750) may still be illuminating. Ga-yin’s parents only want to make a fortune and they think they will have no worries by then. Big Brother Wing, in both *Made in Hong Kong* and *The Longest Summer* is also only interested in money making. He does not care who his business partner is, provided he will not lose money.

Police Inspector Mr. Cheung shows his indifference to nationality in face of the handover. He obeys his boss, be his boss from British or China. Again we may be reminded of Ong's "flexible citizenship" in her analysis of Chinese Diaspora (Ong 1993:745), in which nationality is never a concern.

The representation of Hong Kong identity in Fruit Chan's Hong Kong 1997 Trilogy seems to be a pessimistic story, one either has to give up the search for identity or is doomed to fail. Nevertheless the films have demonstrated to us that there is at least a space for negotiation and the space is with much potential. The failures in the identity crises of the characters, apart from discouraging us in re-considering identity issues, may as well provoke us to explore other alternative ways out. Fruit Chan says in the interview that he thinks that it is necessary to keep the "spirit of the old taxi driver" (Fong 1999:52), although his actions may be too violent. With the tragic endings of the protagonists in *Made in Hong Kong* and *The Longest Summer*, who actually appears in the ending of *Little Cheung*, the last episode of the trilogy has given Hong Kong audience some hope. Little Cheung as a nine-year-old boy, despite his forced farewell with Ah Fan, still has a lot of choices in his future. There is still a long way ahead with numerous possibilities in his search for identity. There is still a silver lining in the cloud.

Julia Kristeva's abject theory is illuminating in understanding the confusion and dilemma in yearning for an identity, given the constant

negotiation and struggle between those in the centre and those on the margin. While the latter is potentially subversive and threatens the former, they are also constantly being marginalised. Identity becomes something unsettling for both. To find a way out of this whirlpool and resolve the identity crisis, one must first learn to settle in the unsettling. Kristeva has hinted a direction for us in face of all the struggling of excluding the other, that is, to recognise the strangers within ourselves. In a space changing rapidly like Hong Kong, it is inevitable to face all sorts of strangers who are different from us and threatens our identity. Only when we see our own foreignness can we settle our own identity crises. May I end the my discussion by quoting Kristeva, whose words are highly relevant to present Hong Kong,

We must live with different people while relying on our personal moral codes, without the assistance of a set that would include our particularities while transcending them. A paradoxical community is emerging, made up of foreigners who are reconciled with themselves as foreigners. (Kristeva 1991:195)

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