



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

# Island Voices on the move

SINOPHONE RESEARCH FORUM



**HKCAL  
Workshop  
TAIWAN  
Workshop**

## CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

11th-13th June 2025  
**Clarendon Building  
University of Leeds  
103 Clarendon Road  
Woodhouse  
Leeds, LS2 9DF**



11–13 June 2025  
University of Leeds

## Island Voices on the Move

Workshops on Cultures, Arts and Languages of  
Hong Kong and Taiwan

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# Welcome!



Parkinson Building, University of Leeds

Welcome to the Sinophone Research Forum at the University of Leeds. The forum features two workshops on Hong Kong and Taiwan with the shared goal to cultivate a platform for Cultures, Arts and Languages. We extend our warmest greetings as you join us for this vibrant exploration of cultural, artistic, and linguistic expressions.

With 31 insightful talks and a global network of humanities scholars dedicated to exploring the rich heritage of Hong Kong and Taiwan, we are confident that this workshop will ignite meaningful collaboration and discussion around themes of Cultures, Arts and Languages.

We look forward to meeting each and every one of you!

# Programme

## Day 1 (Wednesday, 11th June)

09:00	09:30	<b>Registration</b>
09:30	10:00	<b>Opening &amp; Welcome Remarks</b>
10:00	11:30	<b>Panel 1 - Cantonese Language and Cultural Expression</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creativity in Cantonese Characters</li> <li>• The Phenomenon of “Muddy Chinese” in Hong Kong Drama in the 1970s and its Relationship with the Trend of Localization in Contemporary Theatre</li> <li>• The Paradox of Pride and Insecurity in Hong Kong Cantonese</li> </ul>
11:30	11:45	<b>Coffee Break</b>
11:45	13:15	<b>Panel 2 - Tracing the Cultural Politics of Taiwanese Media in Three Decades: Visibility, Policy and Entertainment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contesting Visibility: Taiwanese Independent Media’s Strategies under Platformised Audience Metrics</li> <li>• From Policy to Platform: The Evolution of Taiwan’s Audiovisual Strategies in the Streaming Era</li> <li>• Let Me Entertain You... in the Solemn Times – The Paradoxes in Taiwan’s Television Entertainments in the 1980s</li> </ul>
13:15	14:15	<b>Lunch</b>
14:15	15:45	<b>Panel 3 - Explorations of Arts Forms in Hong Kong</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship Between Objects, People and Society: Study the Pictorial Interpretation of “Made in Hong Kong” Objects by Local Young People</li> <li>• Fluidity, Mobility, and Boundlessness: an Archipelagic Reading of <i>Island of Silence</i></li> <li>• Language, Culture and Identity in Cantopop: An Exploratory Study of English Lyrics in Hong Kong</li> </ul>
15:45	16:00	<b>Coffee Break</b>
16:00	17:00	<b>Panel 4 - Gender(ed) Politics and Hong Kong Identity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forbidden Love and Fluid Identities: Computational and Stylistic Approaches to Cantopop in 1980s Hong Kong</li> <li>• Sublime with Love: <i>Jouissance</i> in Wong Kar-Wai’s <i>Happy Together</i></li> </ul>

## Day 2 (Thursday, 12th June)

09:30	10:30	<b>Digital Humanities Workshop</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Gale Digital Scholar Lab</i> Overview – Three Step Workflow: Build, Clean, Analyse</li> </ul>
10:30	10:45	<b>Coffee Break</b>
10:45	12:15	<b>Panel 5 – The Politics of Becoming: The Development of Cantonese Opera from the Perspectives of Musical, Linguistic, and Institutional Changes in Hong Kong</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Becoming of “Cantonese” Opera in 20th Century Hong Kong</li> <li>• In the Name of Heritage: The Institutionalized Nationalism Strategy of Government-Funded Hong Kong Cantonese Opera in Post-1997</li> <li>• “Learning History Through Theater”: Propaganda, Identities, and Agency in Post-2010 Hong Kong Cantonese Opera</li> </ul>
12:15	13:15	<b>Lunch</b>
13:15	14:45	<b>Panel 6 – Transcultural Representations of Hong Kong</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hong Kong Poetry: Experiments in Staged Code-Switching</li> <li>• Some Observations on the Representation of Hong Kong and Hong Kong Culture in Japanese Popular Media</li> <li>• Creativity as Memory: Preserving Place and Experience in New Music</li> </ul>
14:45	15:00	<b>Coffee Break</b>
15:00	16:30	<b>Panel 7 – Collective Memory in Popular Media</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parody Songs as a Voice of the Public Sphere and Cultural Identity in Hong Kong</li> <li>• Headless Run in a Haunted Island: Jeffrey Lau’s Nonsensical Horror Comedies in Colonial Hong Kong</li> <li>• Hong Kong as a Site of Memory: Nostalgia in Graphic Memoirs</li> </ul>
16:30	17:00	<b>Announcements</b>
18:00	21:00	<b>Conference Dinner</b>

## Day 3 (Friday, 13th June)

09:30	11:00	<b>Panel 8 – Cultural Policies and the Politics of Identity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mapping Hong Kong to the Imagining of “Asia” in the Festival of Asian Arts, Hong Kong from 1976 to early 1980s</li> <li>• Tension between Modernisation and the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage</li> <li>• “Is Hong Kong Dead?” How Diaspora’s Perception of Homeland’s Survival Impact Self-Positioning</li> </ul>
11:00	11:15	<b>Break</b>
11:15	11:30	<b>Opening Remarks</b>
11:30	12:30	<b>Panel 9 – The Making of a Multilingual Taiwan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efface or Preserve? Sinophone and Multicultural in Taiwan</li> <li>• Taiwanese Indigenous Sovereignty in the Sinophone: Precarity, Repugnance, and Confucian Humanism</li> </ul>
12:30	13:30	<b>Lunch</b>
13:30	15:00	<b>Panel 10 – Heteroglossic Literary Taiwan and Beyond</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From Script to Identity: Mahua Literature’s Other</li> <li>• The Silent Presence of Multilingualism: Travel, Emotion, and Female Identity in <i>Irrelevant Snow in Paris</i></li> <li>• The Poetics of Homophony: A Multilingual Context of Modern Poetry in Taiwan</li> </ul>
15:00	15:15	<b>Coffee Break</b>
15:15	16:45	<b>Panel 11 – Cross-Border Filming in Taiwan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articulating the Taiwanese Diaspora in Contemporary Taiwan Cinema: The Negotiations of Transnational Identities and Cross-Cultural Tensions in Fiona Roan’s <i>American Girl</i> (2021)</li> <li>• Transmediating Island Voices between Taiwan and Indonesia: Racial Impersonation and Cultural Translation of Migrant Workers in <i>Port of Lies</i></li> <li>• Resonances of Cosmopolitanism: Cold War Cinema and Transnational Networks in Taiwan</li> </ul>
16:45	17:15	<b>Roundtable &amp; Closing Remarks</b>



## **In the Name of Heritage: The Institutionalized Nationalism Strategy of Government-Funded Hong Kong Cantonese Opera in Post-1997**

Since the early 2000s, intangible cultural heritage has become a key focus across Mainland China. Following the 1997 handover, the Hong Kong government has actively promoted Cantonese opera through policy initiatives, funding mechanisms, and educational programs, positioning it as both a cultural asset and a tool for fostering national identity. Aligned with the Chinese Communist Party's broader cultural-political strategy, Cantonese opera has been leveraged as a medium for embedding nationalism in Hong Kong society. By drawing on Cantonese cultural identity, the government has integrated nationalistic elements into this traditional art form, investing substantial resources – including theatres, sponsorships, and human capital – to develop and sustain the Cantonese opera industry. Following UNESCO's recognition of Cantonese opera as intangible cultural heritage in 2009, the Hong Kong government has allocated extensive funding to support Cantonese opera performances. What has been the impact of over 15 years of financial support? Why has the government prioritized funding for this particular art form? What organizations collaborate with the government in promoting nationalism through Cantonese opera? Why has the Chinese government chosen a relatively niche art form to advance its nationalistic agenda? This study explores how government-funded institutions and projects have been instrumental in fostering a state-endorsed heritage identity. Through an analysis of policy documents, funding structures, and performance programming, this paper investigates how these efforts reinforce a specific form of cultural nationalism while navigating both local and transnational influences.

**Keywords:** *Cantonese opera, nationalism, cultural heritage*

## Sublime with Love: *Jouissance* in Wong Kar-Wai's *Happy Together*

Wong Kar-Wai's ethic code of erotic aesthetics in his films is renowned for his artistic visual style as well as the mobile thinking toward time and space in love. Through fragmented narratives, non-linear storytelling, and the fluidity of past and present, his treatment of time and space deepens the emotional and psychological complexity of his characters' relationships. In *Happy Together*, love is portrayed as a repetitive longing subject, filled with forbidden satisfaction. In such sense love, Wong Kar-Wai represents the lovers' complex psychology in which the sublime of love is both attractive and repulsive. From a psychological perspective, *Happy Together* expresses thought of Lacan's *jouissance*, namely loving together with the opposite tension of desire and death drive. Also, love between Fai and Po-Wing is the sublimation of the object, transformed into something unattainable and sublime. The sublime in love becomes an explicit representation of the true love that gay men suffer for and yearn to experience. This paper argues that through the painful joy of fulfilling their desires within the symbolic order of psychology, Fai's and Po-Wing's sexual dignities sustain their inner desires, ultimately leading to a sublime love. This love, full of potential, allows for the individual development of subjectivity and presents an opportunity for a real reunion despite the fact that their relationship is never fully stable or resolved.

**Keywords:** Wong Kar-Wai, *Happy Together*, *Jouissance*, love, sublime

## **“Is Hong Kong Dead?” How Diaspora’s Perception of Homeland’s Survival Impact Self-Positioning**

Drawing on discourse analysis, in-depth interviews, and field observations, this paper explores how Hong Kong diasporic intellectuals and activists – those forced to leave or reluctant to return to their homeland following the 2019-20 Hong Kong protests – view themselves and the Hong Kong diaspora vis-à-vis Hong Kong and Hong Kong activism. Using them as a microcosm of the increasingly complex Hong Kong diaspora, this paper highlights how they approach the debates over whether “Hong Kong is dead.” This metaphorical notion can be interpreted in various ways, including economically (the loss of Hong Kong’s status as an international financial centre), politically (the erosion of autonomy), socially (the curtailment of rights and freedoms), and culturally (the diminishment of a unique cultural identity). These debates, which provoke diverse and polarized views both within and beyond Hong Kong, highlight diasporic Hongkongers’ conflicting understandings of where the essence of Hong Kong, both cultural, political, and existential, lies now and in the future. Building on existing diaspora studies literature that explores how ties between diasporas and their homelands shape diaspora politics, this paper contributes to the field by demonstrating how a diaspora’s perceptions of their homeland’s “survival” influence their self-conception, forms of mobilization, and long-term strategies.

**Keywords:** *Anti-Extradition Bill Movement, diaspora politics, diaspora identity, transborder social movements*

## Mapping Hong Kong to the Imagining of “Asia” in the Festival of Asian Arts, Hong Kong from 1976 to Early 1980s

In 1973, while still under British rule, Hong Kong’s Urban Council gained financial autonomy and transitioned into a semi-elected body. This restructuring expanded its mandate beyond public housing to include cultural development, setting the stage for new cultural initiatives. In 1976, the Urban Council launched the inaugural Festival of Asian Arts, which primarily showcased folk and traditional performances but also featured visual art exhibitions, such as Lui Shou Kwan’s modern ink art. This festival followed the launch of the Hong Kong Arts Festival in 1973, established by Ian Hunter, a former director of the Edinburgh and Commonwealth Arts Festivals, to highlight high art and classical Western performances.

By analysing the program curation, festival catalogues, and publicity materials of the festival, this paper examines the Festival of Asian Arts as a site for cultural representation amidst the rapid modernisation of East and Southeast Asia in the 1970s. While much of Hong Kong’s modernisation narrative centres on its economic growth, this study underscores how the local authority curated art and culture in response to the region’s modern development.

The paper argues that despite lacking political sovereignty during the post-war decolonisation wave, Hong Kong sought to cultivate a distinct cultural identity separate from Britain and China by mapping out its imagined cultural roots and mapping itself to its imagining of Asia. However, as illustrated by Lui Shou Kwan’s modern ink art, influenced by Zen philosophy, this identity did not conform to rigid nationalistic definitions. Instead, I argue that it proposes a transregional cultural perspective.

**Keywords:** *modern art, cultural identity, cultural production and circulation, the imagining of Asia*

## Hong Kong as a Site of Memory: Nostalgia in Graphic Memoirs

Nostalgia is a prominent theme in comics and contemporary popular culture. Recognized as a bittersweet emotion and a longing for irretrievable things and moments, nostalgia is more frequently evoked in times of change and uncertainty. Hong Kong, undergoing a profound and continual transformation due to political, social and cultural shifts, is an ideal site for exploring cultural memory and identity as well as nostalgic sentiments.

Graphic memoirs, as a genre of comics, are a fertile ground to preserve, negotiate and reimagine Hong Kong as a site of memory. This paper delves into the articulation of Hong Kong nostalgia and a site of memory in two graphic memoirs: *How Blue Was My Valley* (2006) by Yeung Hok-tak and *Fu Chong Chok Lok* (2011) by Ko Sing.

Through visual storytelling, these autobiographical graphic memoirs document the author-artists' childhood memories living in public housing, evoking a sense of longing for a bygone era, past ways of life, and former urban landscape.

By analyzing the narratives and visual symbols, this paper explores how these works bridge the gap between personal and collective memories, and engage in the preservation and negotiation of cultural memories and identity.

**Keywords:** *nostalgia, Hong Kong comics, graphic memoirs*

## Hong Kong Poetry: Experiments in Staged Code-Switching

This paper analyses current experimentation in Hong Kong poetry, focussing on the mixed-use of codes in performance poetry. Using the term “staged code-switching” as defined by Rainier Gutman, I expand on the double meaning inherent in his wording by utilising the live performance element of “staged,” as well as the intentionality he focusses on. Codes are not only languages for this paper, but also registers of formality, slang, and accents – all of which are combined in various ways in the three poems discussed in this paper: “A Pigeon to Deliver a Creole” by Lian-Hee Wee, “Brew Sky” by Louise Leung Fung Yee, and “Free Flow is the Zero” by Vishal Nanda. The use of these codes, I argue, is central to the relationship with and impact upon the audience regarding these poems. In the mixing of languages present in everyday Hong Kong life, these poets call the audience’s attention to the poetic power of everyday life, and heighten this further by making use of the spoken and physical modes of communication in performance. The print versions of these poems are also of interest in their varying requests for reader interaction, variously utilising romanisations, implied accents via diacritical markers, and Chinese characters. With Grutman’s expository paper taken as a key analytical approach, I incorporate the new methodology of the literary interview, discussed by Rebecca Roach, to ascertain details of the overt and subconscious conversations between the poet and community, revealing aspects of support and artistic intention, as well as the effects of community on the literary development of Hong Kong poetry.

**Keywords:** *Hong Kong poetry, performance poetry, code-switching, accent, live performance*

## Taiwanese Indigenous Sovereignty in the Sinophone: Precarity, Repugnance, and Confucian Humanism

In the international indigenous context, the term “sovereignty” has emerged as an extremely useful and now nearly ubiquitous term utilized in the fight for the social, political, and economic rights of self-determination. The Taiwanese Indigenous community has also taken to using the term sovereignty. The Indigenous Taiwanese community has successfully leveraged internationally legible neoliberal scripts for the sovereign rights of indigenous people, especially when compared to the treatment of other indigenous in the context of East Asia. Yet, the Indigenous adoption of “sovereignty” is not a direct import from the international (Western) community. It emerges from the specific Sinophone and politically contentious region of Taiwan. Given both the historical roots and present political conditions, Taiwanese Indigenous understandings of the term sovereignty are markedly different and hold different potentials for activism. As such, this paper begins by historically and politically contextualizing the term “sovereignty” in Taiwan given the region’s Confucian influences, Sun Yat Sen’s transition to nationhood, and the ROC’s current precarious sovereignty. Under a distinctly non-Western, non-Christian, and politically unstable backdrop, this paper looks at Indigenous Taiwanese attempts at sovereignty. This paper then looks at the struggle for Taiwanese indigenous sovereignty within the politically contested region of Taiwan. It first considers the recognition of Indigenous rights in an East Asian context, then considers some differences between individual rights and collective rights, and closes by looking at the limitations of Indigenous sovereignty in Taiwan. Ultimately, I argue that given its own sovereign precarity, the Republic of China (ROC) recognizes Taiwanese indigenous cultural identity, but ceases recognition of sovereignty when in conflict with the ROC’s international image as a liberal democracy. To conclude, this paper looks briefly at potential methods toward greater indigenous sovereignty given concepts from Confucian humanism and proposes a radical reversal of nested sovereignty.

**Keywords:** *sovereignty, indigeneity, nationalism, Confucian Humanism*

## Transmediating Island Voices Between Taiwan and Indonesia: Racial Impersonation and Cultural Translation of Migrant Workers in *Port of Lies*

In 21st-century Taiwan, the increasing number of Southeast Asian migrant workers has made labor migration a prominent theme in contemporary cultural production. While documentaries frequently address the human rights and social issues faced by migrant workers, it is essential to examine other narrative forms that portray these experiences. *Port of Lies* (2023), directed by Freddy Tang, is a literary adaptation TV series broadcast on Taiwan Public Television Service and Netflix. The series not only depicts Indonesian migrant workers' journeys to Taiwan for employment in pelagic fisheries and domestic work but also interweaves complex narratives involving Indonesian migrant workers, Amis indigenous communities, and Han Taiwanese society to unravel the murder of an Amis captain. This paper explores how the series navigates representations of ethnicity and language through legal drama, focusing on the racial impersonation of characters by Taiwanese and Singaporean actors. It examines the challenges and strategies of linguistic and cultural translation in crafting on-screen portrayals of indigenous and migrant communities. By analyzing these representations, this study argues that *Port of Lies* effectively highlights migrant rights and racial dynamics, reflecting the social and political tensions of contemporary Taiwan. Moreover, the series reveals an emerging inter-racial alliance between indigenous groups and migrant workers through narrative strategies that intertwine Sinophone, Austronesian, and Malayo-Polynesian languages. This study proposes that such transmediations not only expand public discourse on migrant issues but also illuminate Taiwan's evolving cultural and linguistic landscape, shaped by its historical and on-going interactions between Sinophone and other communities.

**Keywords:** labor migration, Indonesia, Amis, *Port of Lies*, racial impersonation



## Language, Culture and Identity in Cantopop: An Exploratory Study of English Lyrics in Hong Kong

Hong Kong's pop music, known as Cantopop, emerged as a significant cultural phenomenon in the 1970s, largely due to the influential work of singer-songwriter Sam Hui, often referred to as the "God of Cantopop." Hui's compositions, written in vernacular Cantonese, quickly resonated with the local population by addressing pressing social issues. Over the years, Cantopop has intricately woven together language, culture, and identity, often portraying stories within local contexts and incorporating contemporary Cantonese expressions. This unique blend has made Cantopop distinctly "Hong Kong," as it reflects shared linguistic, cultural, and aspirational commonalities among its audience.

With the advent of music streaming platforms and shifts in music consumption habits, Cantopop underwent a quiet phase until the resurgence of boy bands and independent music from 2018 onwards. Notably, some recent Cantopop songs feature lyrics entirely in English, one of Hong Kong's lingua franca. Despite English being extensively used in business and education since the colonial era, its usage has gradually declined over the past two decades. The emergence of English lyrics in Cantopop by contemporary Hong Kong singer-songwriters and independent artists suggests an evolving relationship between language, culture, and identity.

This study adopts a qualitative methodology to analyze the English lyrics in Cantopop created by Hong Kong singer-songwriters. By employing audience reception and social identity theories, the research aims to explore the interplay between this pop culture genre and the identities of its audience. It aspires to illuminate the dynamic landscape of language, culture, and identity in Hong Kong.

**Keywords:** *Cantopop, lyrics, pop culture, audience reception, social identity*

## Headless Run in a Haunted Island: Jeffrey Lau's Nonsensical Horror Comedies in Colonial Hong Kong

While comedian-director Stephen Chow has been recognised as an icon of Hong Kong nonsensical comedies since the 1990s, we should not overlook the contribution of filmmaker Jeffrey Lau, one of the directors who made Stephen Chow a superstar in Greater China. Notably, Lau's horror parodies show that he is not only a credit to nonsensical comedy, but also to horror comedy in Hong Kong.

This paper uses three horror comedies directed by Lau – *The Haunted Cop Shop* (1987), *Operation Pink Squad II* (1987), and *Out of the Dark* (1995) – as case studies. These comedies appear to be found funny primarily by the local audience but perplexing by foreigners in that these films' nonsensical features are heavily integrated with culturally-bound parodies. Parody's effectiveness relies on the audience's pre-existing knowledge of the targeted cultural reference and Lau's parodies draw on the audience's familiarity with Hong Kong culture and society.

In these films, police officers or security guards appear as targets of jokes. While these figures often represent security and authority, they are portrayed as filthy and stealthy buffoons. Their encounters with demons often transform working places into haunted attractions as well as isolated islands, and the constant shift between comedy and horror creates a roller-coaster-like excitement for the audience. These horror comedies also emphasise materiality, even when the horror subject is a ghost, inducing excitement from bodily grotesque excess. In this way, Lau's horror comedies engage with Luke White's grotesque body in kung-fu comedies, Esther Cheung's "spectral analysis," and Erin Huang's "urban horror" regarding the Hong Kong as a "zone of exception."

These haunted spaces resemble horror-themed parks, and the characters' isolation suggest the anxiety of Hong Kong people about being abandoned during the Transition Period before the 1997 handover. As tactical responses to such condition, parody draws on pop culture to utilise internal cultural resources, while nonsensical jokes induce a creative sense of thrill to overcome the fear. These horror comedies show that parody is a building block of Hong Kong nonsensical comedy, employing meta-cinematic devices to joke at authorities and generic horror conventions.

**Keywords:** *Hong Kong cinema, comedy, horror, nonsensical humour, film studies*

## **Creativity as Memory: Preserving Place and Experience in New Music**

This presentation is a reflection on my creative practice as a Hongkonger composer, since settling in the UK. The bulk of my compositional output has been centred around my relationship towards my Hongkonger identity and the fact that it is no longer my home. The representation of memory and experience is manifested in the themes of my work, as well as the musical and creative strategies that they adopt.

I divide this body of work into several categories, based on how they represent this link. One common theme is place, where the music portrays recollections of physical locations in Hong Kong, reduced to impressions and highlights, and their significance. These include a string quartet outlining a river's geography, a work that juxtaposes urban soundscapes, and multiple works related to harbours. Another category is interpretations of cultural elements, such as idioms and folklore, which arise as a result of self-questioning and identity crises during the process of migration. The last category consists of works that directly contemplate the meaning and implications of resettlement, including cultural clashes and survivor's guilt.

After a survey of the works, complete with music examples and discussions, I will conclude by discussing how these strategies form a unified block of creative output that outlines the stages, twists and turns on a journey of redefining self-identity.

**Keywords:** *music composition, new music, place, soundscape, identity*

## Parody Songs as a Voice of the Public Sphere and Cultural Identity in Hong Kong

This study traces the themes and motifs of parody songs across various generations, an understudied area in humor and Hong Kong identity. Drawing on previous research (Gardiner, 2004; Hariman, 2008), this study highlights how parody songs have been a site of the public sphere and facilitated discussions on social and political life of Hong Kong, fostering a sense of community beyond geographical boundaries and generational divides.

Representative examples were investigated in this study, including skits from *Enjoy Yourself Tonight* 歡樂今宵, parody lyrics from internet fora such as HKGolden and LIHKG, parody commercials from TVmost 毛記電視, and social media channels with strong presence of parody songs. Preliminary results indicate that parody songs since the 1980s, such as those performed in *Enjoy Yourself Tonight*, have been part of the collective cultural memory, contributing to the formation and preservation of Hong Kong cultural identity, as indicated in recent user-generated comments from archived videos. In addition to the absurdist, Bakhtinian humor, these parody songs also promoted dialogues on public concerns, challenging societal taboos or political narratives, in particular in the 2000s and 2010s written and produced by internet forum users. The rise of digital media has also witnessed how parody songs have transitioned from traditional TV programs to internet platforms, where users can engage and participate in not only the consumption but the production of parody.

Taken together, the evolution of parody themes suggests that parody songs democratize public discourse, making complex sociopolitical issues accessible and inviting participation from diverse groups through humor. The present work on parody songs offers valuable insights into the intersection of humor, politics, and media, contributing to interdisciplinary conversations in cultural and media studies of Hong Kong.

**Keywords:** *humor, parody, derivative art, collective memory*

## The Paradox of Pride and Insecurity in Hong Kong Cantonese

Hong Kong speakers commonly hold an idealised view of Cantonese. On the one hand, it is regarded with pride, considered a tongue intrinsically linked to modern Hong Kong identity. Speakers take pride in its perceived complexity, viewing it as one of the world's most difficult languages, with a sound system that is exceptionally challenging to master by learners. Cantonese is lauded for its expressiveness, with a wide lexicon capable of fine-grained distinctions and unique slang not found in other languages. On the other hand, a widespread lack of confidence prevails; native speakers often feel self-conscious about minor accents or word choice, and question their own orthographic knowledge.

Through analysing posts on Threads, the talk argues that much of this linguistic pride, even among those with more liberal or local-oriented political views, stems from a traditionalist, purist mindset. This perspective construes Cantonese as a modernised, educated linguistic practice, positively viewed for its capacity to coin words or absorb new concepts, whilst preserving classical Tang rhymes, Traditional characters, and the perceived elegance of Modern Standard Chinese. This pride, thus, partially rests on Cantonese being “the good descendant” rather than on its inherent localness.

This narrowly defined Cantonese exhibits almost absolute intolerance for variation, whether regional, dialectal, learner-based, or generational. It represents an unachievable standard, creating constant struggle for both learners and heritage speakers. Emphasising the “classical” or “elegant” aspects of Cantonese diminishes the space for colloquial text, thereby limiting experimentation with Written Cantonese and new creative works.

To ensure Hong Kong Cantonese remains learnable, usable, and adaptive, this idealised perception must be dismantled. Recognising it as an ordinary language, developing practical tools, and promoting knowledge about Cantonese variation are crucial. A realistic understanding can foster open conversations, thereby rendering the language transmissible to future generations.

**Keywords:** *Cantonese, language ideology, linguistic purism, codification, Jyutping*

## **Relationship Between Objects, People and Society: Study the Pictorial Interpretation of “Made in Hong Kong” Objects by Local Young People**

The investigation of the relationship between objects, people, and society is a crucial area of study that examines how material culture reflects and shapes social identities, values, and interactions. Objects possess symbolic and cultural significance, imbuing them with meanings that extend beyond their mere physical attributes. Investigating the interpretation of the “Made in Hong Kong” object serves as a valuable avenue for understanding the symbolic meanings attributed to it by local youth. When one considers objects associated with Hong Kong, a range of items comes to mind, including artificial flowers, red, white, and blue bags, plastic watermelon balls, “Red A” buckets, and other industrial products mass-produced by Hong Kong’s industries during the post-war period. Although some of these items are no longer in use or production in Hong Kong, they represent significant milestones in the region’s industrial development. These objects are often embraced as cultural symbols, encapsulating the history, memories, and imagination of Hong Kong.

This study explores the pictorial interpretation of Hong Kong-made objects by local young people, viewing these items as cultural symbols. The study is grounded in posters designed by a group of creative arts students from the Hong Kong Metropolitan University, who selected a meaningful and representative object from the plethora of locally produced items to serve as the focal point of their poster designs. In this context, the chosen object becomes a conduit for these young adults, reflecting their expressions and imaginings of their own Hong Kong identity. Employing image analysis and semiotics, this study seeks to uncover the symbols and meanings that are frequently associated with the representation of Hong Kong. Furthermore, the posters created by these young individuals contribute to a deeper understanding of their connections to and imaginings of Hong Kong.

**Keywords:** *object meaning, interpretation, image analysis and semiotics*

## **Fluidity, Mobility, and Boundlessness: An Archipelagically Reading of *Island of Silence***

In 1994, Su Wei-chen penned *Island of Silence* where two non-crossing storylines intertwine to narrate the female protagonist(s), Huo Chenmian(s), against the backdrop of multiple islands such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, Britain, and Singapore. This novel serves as a venue for island literature, blending the themes of isolation and connection within its narratives. The confined spaces of these small islands offer the protagonist refuge and foster diverse avenues of discovery. Simultaneously, the ebb and flow of these islands hint at the possibilities of exodus and return. Furthermore, themes of lust, self-discovery, and migration play significant roles, drifting and flowing beyond the limitless archipelago. Islands stand as central figures and major metaphors in this novel; various island settings grant the protagonist different levels of autonomy, ultimately shaping a dual psyche. The fluidity of movement among these islands enables an openness to an archipelagic reading of the text, the mobility of the protagonist(s) also reveals the boundlessness of the island. This paper argues the intricate relationships and interconnections among island spaces, shedding light on a novel way to interpret the literary interreactions among island states (sovereignties) within Archipelagic Asia, as discussed by Volland & Ching (2024). To this end, this island-island relationalities narration counters the island-mainland binarism. I argue that Su utilises the concept of the “island” as both a figure and a metaphor, portraying vivid pictures of how lust, gender and psyche can fluidly transcend island boundaries. The alternative expression of the body via the mobility of sexual agency likewise finds articulation through migration among the islands.

**Keywords:** *island writing, Hong Kong literature, archipelagic thinking, relationality, Sinophone literary circle inter-connectivity*

## From Script to Identity: Mahua Literature's Other

Ng Kim Chew, an ethnically Chinese author from Malaysia, shot to fame in Mahua literary circles with his 1990 story "The Disappearance of M." Revolving around a reporter's investigation of the ethnic identity of a disappeared author M whose novel *Kristmas* has gathered enough interest to exalt Mahua literature's international profile, Ng's story exemplifies a debate over language and literature as postcolonial praxes in a nuanced Southeastern Asian context. The search for M implies an equation (work→author→nation) that metonymically transfigures language/script to represent ethnicity and ethnicity to symbolize national identity. However, this equation is continuously challenged: as reporter Huang conducts his investigation across Singapore and Taiwan, he realizes the hybridity of Mahua literature and its script. This paper grapples with this equation's operation and reconfiguration to mediate the question of Mahua literature's postcolonial task. After debunking the equation through metonymic examination, this paper transitions to the raveled history of this literary strand. Its colonized and imperialized past has left an inherent mark on Mahua texts, a mark that devalues them for embodying ambivalent linguistic, cultural, and national characteristics. Yet it is also by scrutinizing this mark that Ng raises a provocative question: who is capable of terming Mahua literature as unique or unoriginal? In remaking the equation, this paper finds itself confronted with Mahua literature's immanent existential crisis and seeks to do justice to this literature strand via a more radical abolition that focalizes on oneself instead of the Other. It reveals a deeper root of the equation's failure and envisions possible insights into the postcolonial task for Mahua writers and critics.

**Keywords:** *Mahua literature, Sinitic script, postcoloniality*



## Creativity in Cantonese Characters

**Introduction:** Cantonese, primarily a spoken variety, has been historically considered unsuitable for serious written expression. This has led to its suppression in education and official communication. Despite these challenges, written Cantonese has evolved and thrived in informal settings (Snow, 2004; Bauer, 2018; Li and Wong 2024). This paper investigates the creative ways Cantonese specific characters are formed.

**Data:** Most of the currently available Cantonese corpora focus on spoken Cantonese, which is subsequently transcribed into written form. Our goal was to create a corpus consisting of naturally occurring written Cantonese data. Our data come from (i) Hong Kong internet chat forums: these platforms are more likely to show non-standard language use, since there is virtually no post-production done to the output. (ii) linguistic landscape research: written Cantonese in Hong Kong public spaces. Data on online platforms are restricted by Chinese input systems. The linguistic landscape research serves to supplement such data.

**Results:** The current still-growing corpus (from online data) consists of 319,938 characters, among which 216,051 Chinese characters, with a high frequency of words based on romanisation. Around 5,000 tagged tokens are Cantonese specific characters (lexemes not shared with Mandarin). The Cantonese specific characters were analysed using the classification in Bauer (2018). Character variants of the same lexeme are noted for their frequencies, as a way to gauge any emerging community standard online. The linguistic landscape research also shows instances of creative characters (characters not present in Unicode) being used in street signs and graffiti.

**Keywords:** *written Cantonese, Cantonese characters, corpus analysis, linguistic landscape*

## **Articulating the Taiwanese Diaspora in Contemporary Taiwan Cinema: The Negotiations of Transnational Identities and Cross-Cultural Tensions in Fiona Roan's *American Girl* (2021)**

This article explores the dynamics of Taiwanese diasporic experience, transnational identities, and cross-cultural negotiations in Fiona Roan's debut film, *American Girl* (2021). Having premiered at the 34th Tokyo International Film Festival in 2021 and shortlisted for the Asian Future section, the film also received critical acclaim at the 58th Golden Horse Awards. Through an autobiographical lens, Roan's narrative articulates the complexities of transnational migration and the resulting cultural dislocations, situating the film within the context of contemporary Taiwan cinema. Roan's personal history, marked by her migration from Taiwan to the United States at the age of seven, followed by a return to Taiwan at twelve due to her mother's illness, shapes not only Roan's personal identity but also influences the thematic concerns of her work. *American Girl* is set against the backdrop of the early 2000s, a period of significant economic transformation in Taiwan and the pervasive influence of the American Dream on Taiwanese society. The film poignantly depicts the disillusionment with this idealized pursuit, as experienced by Roan's semi-autobiographical protagonist, who struggles with the challenges of reintegration into Taiwanese culture after years spent in the United States. This article argues that *American Girl* transcends its autobiographical origins to engage with broader discourses on the negotiations of transnational identities and cross-cultural tensions. The film acts as a critical observation of the experiences of the Taiwanese diaspora, reflecting on how transborder movements reconstruct the notions of identity, belonging, and cultural integration. Roan's narratives illustrate the fragmented nature of transnational identities, as the characters experience the shifting landscapes of cultural norms and expectations across different national contexts. Crucially, *American Girl* offers a unique contribution to contemporary Taiwan cinema in the globalized age, highlighting the impact of diasporic experiences on the formation and negotiations of transnational identities within and beyond the Sinophone world.

**Keywords:** *Taiwanese diaspora, transnational identities, cross-cultural tensions, American Girl (2021), contemporary Taiwan cinema*

## The Poetics of Homophony: A Multilingual Context of Modern Poetry in Taiwan

In 2018, Taiwan passed the National Languages Development Act, recognizing Hakka, Taiwanese language, indigenous languages as “national languages 國家語言.” Although these officially recognized national languages each have their own written forms, Mandarin – historically designated as the “national language 國語” – remains the dominant medium for literary creation. Unlike the multilingual hybrid poetry that emerged in the 20th-century Taiwan, a new form of poetics has developed, reflecting Taiwan’s contemporary sociolinguistic landscape. By vocalizing texts primarily written in Mandarin, these works create phonetic ambiguities that generate alternative meanings across languages. Through oral performance and linguistic translation, a unique form of “translated literariness” emerges, embodying the values of the present era. For instance, Tang Juan’s 唐娟 poem *Is This Love 難道這就是愛*, published in the 2019 Taipei Metro & Bus Poetry project, features the phrase “看山小” (kàn sān xiǎo), which phonetically resembles the Taiwanese-language phrase “看啥湍” (khuànn siánn-siâu), a vulgar expression. Similarly, Hong Wan-da’s 洪萬達 poem *一袋米要扛幾樓* (yídàimǐyàokángjǐlóu, *How Many Floors Must a Sack of Rice Be Carried Up*), which won the First Prize in Modern Poetry at the 2022 Taipei Literature Awards, employs *soramimi* – a phenomenon where foreign phrases are misheard as similar-sounding words in one’s native language for comedic effect. The poem’s title is derived from the misinterpretation of the Japanese line in the *Naruto* anime “Itami o kanjiro” (Feel the pain). This paper explores the linguistic and cultural contexts of this emerging “the poetics of homophony,” examining how social media platforms and popular culture shape the evolution of Modern poetry in Taiwan. It argues that these influences have given rise to a postmodern linguistic playfulness at the core of Taiwan’s new phonetic poetics.

**Keywords:** *multilingual, poetry, soramimi, translation*

## From Policy to Platform: The Evolution of Taiwan's Audiovisual Strategies in the Streaming Era

Netflix entered the Taiwanese market in 2016 and began coproducing Taiwanese Netflix Originals in 2019. Although these initial productions were not commercially successful, Netflix's presence has significantly reshaped Taiwan's audiovisual ecosystem, influencing production strategies, policy initiatives, and the OTT (over-the-top) industry. The Taiwanese government has actively recognized transnational streaming platforms as a strategic opportunity to enhance the international visibility of Taiwanese dramas.

In response to this shift, the Taiwan Creative Content Agency (TAICCA) was established in 2019 under the Ministry of Culture to support and cultivate Taiwan's cultural industries. TAICCA has played a crucial role in fostering collaboration between Netflix and Taiwanese drama producers, implementing initiatives such as industry workshops and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs). Furthermore, the Ministry of Culture has introduced the "One Plus Four T-Content Plan" (文化黑潮計畫), a major funding initiative aimed at strengthening the global reach of Taiwanese content. This policy allocates NT\$3 billion (US\$94.1 million) for the upcoming year and NT\$10 billion from 2024 to 2027 to subsidize Taiwanese drama productions seeking international distribution.

The central objective of these policies is to amplify the global presence of Taiwanese dramas through their availability on transnational streaming platforms, particularly Netflix. However, this raises critical questions about the intersection of governmental policy, cultural subjectivity, and global media dynamic. This paper critically examines Taiwan's evolving audiovisual policies concerning its drama industry, with a particular focus on governmental responses to and interactions with global streaming giants like Netflix. By employing document analysis of official policy papers, government reports, and Netflix's corporate statements, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Taiwan navigates cultural policy within the broader landscape of global and local media dynamics.

**Keywords:** *Netflix, TAICCA, The Minister of Culture, Netflix original*

## Tension between modernisation and the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage

Cantonese Opera is a traditional genre of Chinese Xiqu and was included on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list in 2009. Similar to other traditional art genres, Cantonese opera development has faced challenges regarding modernisation.

The impact of modernisation has been evident throughout the development of Cantonese opera in recent decades, particularly in its performance settings, shifting from bamboo theatres to modern theatre halls. With the development of technology in modern society, there has been integration of various technologies into Cantonese opera performances in recent years. Some practitioners believe that collaboration can attract a wider audience to appreciate Cantonese opera by enhancing the theatrical experience, thus promoting the sustainability of this traditional art form. However, some have expressed concerns that such integration may impact the traditional characteristics of the art.

This research aims to investigate how the audience perceives Cantonese opera performances with the integration of immersive technology and discusses the maintenance of the traditional essence of Cantonese opera with the assistance of immersive technology.

The study is structured with a theoretical framework using Carpentier's (2011) audience theory. We have employed the convergent parallel design within a mixed-method approach for data collection, covering self-administered surveys and semi-structured interviews with the audience participants. The questionnaire and interview questions were designed based on Carpentier's theoretical framework. Participants were engaged in an immersive Cantonese opera concert organised by our research team. At the end of the concert, we distributed self-administered surveys for the audience to indicate their willingness to participate in semi-structured interviews.

This study sheds light on the understanding of engagement and perceptions of Cantonese opera when integrated with such technology, while also examining how to achieve a balance between preserving the traditions of these art forms and attracting a broader audience.

**Keywords:** *Cantonese opera, cultural heritage, immersive technology, modernisation*

## Efface or Preserve? Sinophone and Multicultural in Taiwan

Since the Qing Dynasty ceded Taiwan and the Pescadores Islands (Penghu) to Japan in 1895, Taiwan entered the period of Japanese colonial rule, during which Japanese was gradually established as the official language. Born in 1911, Long Ying-Zong has a Hakka and Cantonese family background, he gained prominence with his novel “The Town with Papaya Trees” which won a Japanese magazine literary award during the Japanese colonial era. However, after 1945, with the arrival of the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, KMT) from China, he became one of a generation characterized by literary aphasia. Despite this, he later emerged as a cross-lingual writer following the publication of his novel written in traditional Chinese. In 2020, a heritage building was officially opened to the public as the “Long Ying-Zong Literary Memorial Museum.” Not only as a memorial museum of the writer and the literature, but also as a cultural center for ethnic groups. Language has served as a cornerstone of culture across different eras, has also become a determining factor in politics and policy promotion in the times. Taiwan has gone from the “Mandarin Speaking Movement” in the 1950s to the “Return My Mother Tongue” movement initiated by the Hakka people in 1988. (Later, the indigenous languages are also included.) In just 50 years, people on this land took direct actions to speak out for their own ethnic groups. In 2007, the law of “National Language Development Act” was first proposed then became the national law in 2018, as legal basis for the language policy of the Republic of China to explicitly protects the inheritance, revitalization and development of the natural languages in order to respect the linguistic and cultural diversity. This paper will explore Sinophone and multiculturalism in Taiwan. Furthermore, how the literary museum engages in the preservation of minority cultures will consider “Long Ying-Zong Literary Memorial Museum” as an example.

**Keywords:** *Sinophone, Taiwan, Hakka, museum, multicultural*

## Contesting Visibility: Taiwanese Independent Media's Strategies Under Platformised Audience Metrics

In an era where digital platforms dominate the media landscape, independent media face unprecedented challenges in reaching and engaging their audiences. This study critically examines how Taiwanese independent media negotiate platformised audience metrics, contesting visibility shaped by algorithmic prioritisation, engagement-driven content policies, and the logic of datafication. By analysing four media types – liberal professional journalism (The Reporter), environmental NGOs (Environmental Information Centre), radical left media (Events in Focus), and community-focused outlets (News & Market) – this research explores how these media outlets adapt to, resist, and innovate within platform-dominated information flows.

Platform algorithms and audience engagement metrics increasingly dictate visibility, often favouring viral and commercially viable content over public interest journalism. This study interrogates the extent to which Taiwanese independent media align with, challenge, or circumvent these algorithmic biases to sustain their editorial autonomy while ensuring audience reach. Key strategies include algorithmic optimisation, audience co-production models, alternative funding structures, and counter-platform initiatives, each reflecting different degrees of compliance, adaptation, or resistance to platform logic.

By employing a qualitative research framework, including in-depth interviews with media practitioners and content analysis of platform performance data, this study maps the tensions between platform standardisation and editorial independence. Theoretically, this research engages with the political economy of communication, critical data studies, and cultural studies, drawing on concepts such as articulation, conjuncture, and power asymmetries in digital media landscapes.

This research contributes to broader discussions on media sustainability and digital platform governance, offering insights into how independent media contest visibility and audience control in the face of platform-imposed constraints. Ultimately, the study highlights the importance of adaptability, alternative distribution strategies, and audience engagement innovations in preserving democratic journalism amid digital platform hegemony.

**Keywords:** *platformisation, contesting visibility, algorithmic metrics, digital journalism, independent media*

## Some Observations on the Representation of Hong Kong and Hong Kong Culture in Japanese Popular Media

In pretty much the same way as Hongkongers imagine Japan through stereotypical motifs, Japan and its media, too, imagine its surrounding Asian counterparts, including Hong Kong, in fixated tropes. This paper examines how Hong Kong and its culture are represented in Japanese popular media, particularly in its manga and anime series, such as *Crying Freeman* (1988), *Card Captor Sakura* (anime; 1998–2000), *Don't Cry Hong Kong* (1995), as well as films. In analysing these works, emphasis is not only paid to microscopic depiction of Hong Kong or Hongkonger characters, but also to the influence of broader geopolitical factors on such depiction. Drawing on Amy Shirong Lu's concept of 'self-orientalising internationalisation' (2008), this paper will highlight Japan's own project of Orientalising/othering Asian cultures: in short, Hong Kong is either conflated with China, or its 1997 Handover becomes a fascinating topic for the Japanese, and all in all, Hong Kong is often known stereotypically for its crime and martial arts image. Moreover, post-1997 Hong Kong does not often get enough attention, if at all. Raising questions rather than providing easy answers, this paper aims to suggest an alternative understanding to the conference theme – by taking stock of a current and enormous challenge surrounding the circulation of Hong Kong culture: that beyond the Sinophone and beyond the Handover, Hong Kong culture is often fixated in stagnation.

**Keywords:** *Hong Kong culture; Japan; Japanese popular culture; post-1997*



## **“Learning History Through Theater”: Propaganda, Identities, and Agency in Post-2010 Hong Kong Cantonese Opera**

“Literature carrying the way” (文以載道) is a classic principle in Chinese literary tradition. “The way” refers to Confucian principles and values. Chinese opera (戲曲), as a performed form of literature, has served as a powerful vehicle for imparting moral values (高台教化) in both imperial and modern times. Yet, theater also functions as a space where different ideologies and cultural ideals are negotiated and mediated.

Although Cantonese opera (粵劇) is no longer a mainstream entertainment form in 21st-century Hong Kong, it remains a compelling example of theater as a contested space. To complement Yu’s paper on the making of distinctively Hong Kong Cantonese opera and Chan’s insights into the role of post-1997 Cantonese opera in the cultural engineering of nationalistic agendas, this paper explores both top-down and bottom-up responses to recent sociocultural changes within the Cantonese opera community since 2010. By examining recent productions of “Cantonese opera of modern Chinese history” (近代史粵劇), initiatives that integrate Cantonese opera into history and national education, and interviews with performers, this ethnographic study delves into practitioners’ agency in navigating evolving identities alongside the changing sociocultural significance of the opera.

**Keywords:** *propaganda; agency; identities*

## Resonances of Cosmopolitanism: Cold War Cinema and Transnational Networks in Taiwan

This paper explores Japanese director Kinji Fukasaku's *Kamikaze Man* (1966) as a case study of Cold War "cosmopolitan cinema." A Taiwan-Japan co-production infused with mysteries, assassinations, action, and adventure, the film is examined for its negotiation of Cold War cultural dynamics. Central to the analysis is the portrayal of female star Bai Lan, whose character diverges from the established archetypes in Taiwanese-language cinema. The study investigates how the film constructs a network that connects the notion of a "Free Asia" with Cold War cosmopolitanism, emphasizing its exoticized narrative of investigation.

Building on Felicia Chan's concept of "cosmopolitanism," this paper does not frame it as a replacement for "transnational cinema" or "global cinema." Rather, it conceptualizes cosmopolitanism as "a critical mode of understanding cultural practices and relations," maintaining its own structure of feeling across diverse perspectives. This approach allows for nuanced articulations within the broader discourse of cosmopolitanism. Through an analysis of *Kamikaze Man*, the paper examines how the film encapsulates the intricacies of cosmopolitan culture by focusing on stardom, genre conventions, and mise-en-scène. Positioned within the larger framework of Cold War cultural diplomacy, it argues that cinema operates as an audiovisual space that transcends both national and cultural boundaries, offering new dimensions for reimagining social, historical, and critical relationships.

**Keywords:** cold war, cosmopolitanism, transnational network, Bai Lan, Kinji Fukasaku

## Let Me Entertain You... in the Solemn Times – The Paradoxes in Taiwan's Television Entertainments in the 1980s

The 1980s was a very special period for Taiwan. Both externally and internally, the island was in a political and social unrest. The most important communication medium at the time, television, also experienced a critical period of transformation. Firstly, after a prosperous development in the 1970s, the three terrestrial television organisations, owned by the party-state, had entered the mature stage of the industry. Not only had their output value and profits reached a peak, but the competition in terms of ratings and advertising revenues had become extremely intense.

However, the mainstream discourses on Taiwanese television history, or even media history, regard the lifting of martial-law in 1987 as a kind of “the end of history” epochal point. The television was a conservative ideological apparatus under control of the party-state before 1987. Then there came the vulgarised and homogenised competition under the dominance of the neo-liberalist market after the lifting of the martial-laws.

This article aims to avoid the simplified version of Taiwanese media history, and uses the perspective of critical political economy of communication and a dialectical and holistic analysis to explore Taiwan's television landscape in the 1980s, especially the characteristics, changes and social impact of its entertainment content, starting from the special domestic and international political and economic context mentioned above.

Based on these empirical studies, the article attempts to argue that the complex interactions between television entertainment, party-state control, and ordinary people's lives cannot be properly understood through a simplified explanatory framework, but must be comprehended from the perspective of a intertwined network of the specific time, space, society, and media entangled in the local realm. Such dialectical inquiry will also help us understand the current social landscape of East Asia societies under the changes in “newer” communication technologies.

**Keywords:** *authoritarian regime, ordinary people's daily lives, Taiwanese television, popular entertainment, the 1980s*

## Forbidden Love and Fluid Identities: Computational and Stylistic Approaches to Cantopop in 1980s Hong Kong

This paper explores the intersection of political allegory, gender representation, and Hong Kong identity in the 1980s through the lyrics of Cantopop icons Anita Mui, Leslie Cheung, and Tat Ming Pair. Known for their rebellious artistry, these artists challenge societal norms, offering alternative perspectives on love, gender, and identity amid a politically charged era. Their audacious performances and sexually ambiguous lyrics serve as a lens to examine Hong Kong's complex identity during the pre-1997 period.

As Anthony Wong, vocalist of Tat Ming Pair, remarked, “Hong Kong always cherishes this: freedom. This city has many valuable things, like its openness and tolerance. But at the same time, it is always confused about its identity” (Lee & Wu, 2012), a reflection interpreted as emblematic of Hong Kong's broader identity crisis during its transitional era. This study contextualises these artists within larger socio-political discourses, considering identity politics, local and national identity imbrications, and resistance to fixed identity categories (Kam, 2013; Chow, 2024). The lyrics of Mui, Cheung, and Tat Ming Pair subvert traditional gender and relationship norms, expressing rebellion, freedom, and nonconformity, while reflecting the tension between personal agency and hegemonic interpellation.

Common motifs such as “bad lovers,” casual love relationships, wind, flight, and gender ambivalence serve not only to challenge established norms but also to articulate the artists' pursuit of fluidity and resistance. These recurring themes offer a critique of Hong Kong's socio-political situation, reflecting the city's identity crisis leading up to the 1997 handover.

This study combines corpus linguistics, stylistic analysis, and natural language processing (NLP) to analyse the lyrics and uncover patterns of gender and identity. This multi-method approach reveals how the artists' cultural productions engage with Hong Kong's identity crisis, positioning their work as vital artefacts of both personal and collective meaning-making during a period of identity flux.

**Keywords:** *Cantopop; digital humanities; subversion; gender representation; identity*

## The Silent Presence of Multilingualism: Travel, Emotion, and Female Identity in *Irrelevant Snow in Paris*

Against the backdrop of accelerating globalisation and cross-cultural exchanges, multilingualism in travel literature transcends mere linguistic diversity to function as a medium for identity construction, cultural dialogue, and emotional expression. For women writers, multilingualism opens new avenues for exploring subjectivity by engaging with diverse cultural contexts and self-reflective narratives. Drawing on de Beauvoir's Liberal Feminism and Cixous's concept of *écriture féminine* (women's writing), this study investigates how multilingual elements – such as symbolic references to foreign languages and cultural markers – shape women's emotional narratives and cultural connections in travel writing. Through a close reading of *Irrelevant Snow in Paris* 《無關巴黎的雪》 by Jade Y. Chen 陳玉慧, this paper reveals how Chen reconstructs her cross-cultural experiences in Chinese, illustrating the intricate interplay between foreign cultural settings and personal identity. Her work demonstrates that multicultural encounters promote self-discovery and fluid identity, engaging the literary tradition of female subjectivity with expressive and transformative language. This research offers a new theoretical lens for analysing how contemporary Taiwan's multilingual context empowers women writers to reshape memory, identity, and voice, enriching our understanding of cultural production in a globalised yet locally rooted society.

**Keywords:** *multilingualism, travel literature, female subjectivity, cross-cultural narrative*

## The Phenomenon of “Muddy Chinese” in Hong Kong Drama in the 1970s and its Relationship with the Trend of Localization in Contemporary Theatre

The period from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s has seen the professionalization of Hong Kong theatre companies and the alleged awakening of “local awareness” in Hong Kong drama. Seen from another perspective, however, a distinct trend of localization had already begun as early as the 1970s. During this period, some plays were written in a mixture of modern vernacular Chinese (*baihua*) and Cantonese, with themes focusing on contemporary social and livelihood issues. This reflects an early emergence of the localization of Hong Kong theatre, both in its language and subject matter. In terms of language, these plays show several key features: First, the dialogue blends vernacular Chinese with Cantonese, with stage directions written entirely in *baihua*; second, the dialogue includes both vernacular Chinese sentence structures and Cantonese sentence structures; third, vernacular Chinese sentences are often interspersed with Cantonese vocabulary, particularly local idioms, everyday expressions and phrases, with occasional use of English terms; fourth, though not a general rule, some local Cantonese expressions are used in quotation marks. Linguistic scholars in the 1990s described this phenomenon as “Cantonese-infused writing,” while others referred to it as “muddy Chinese.” This essay seeks to explore why this specific language phenomenon emerged in Hong Kong theatre in the 1970s and examine how “muddy Chinese” relates to the broader trend of localization in contemporary Hong Kong theatre.

**Keywords:** *Hong Kong theatre, Cantonese-infused writing, muddy Chinese, localization*

## The Becoming of “Cantonese” Opera in 20th Century Hong Kong

It has long been taken for granted that Cantonese opera is sung in Cantonese. However, its early history reveals that it was not true. In fact, most of its music have non-Cantonese origins and had been performed in *guanhua*, a *lingua franca* used by officials and traveling performing troupes in dynastic China. The genre began to localize, or “Cantonize,” gradually shifted toward performance in Cantonese, both in Canton and in Hong Kong in the 1910s (Qiu He Chou 1916, 1920, 1921, 1923, 1928, 1932, 1934).

Although historically it shares common origins with its counterparts in China in terms of performance practice, repertoire, languages, stories and music, the Cantonese opera of Hong Kong has evolved into a category of its own style since the early 1950s when its frontiers with China (the PRC) turned substantial.

With its standard repertoire of non-Cantonese origins as foundation, the genre in Hong Kong has also been open to influence from Peking Opera, Mandarin popular songs from Shanghai, instrumental music of various regions, movies songs, and big-band music of nightclubs. Its music can be seen as a reorganization of pre-existing melodies and melodic frameworks, incorporating various imported and indigenous genres, in response to the social and cultural changes of 20th Century Hong Kong. Such processes result in a series of medleys with newly written Cantonese lyrics replacing *guanhua* and Mandarin, and they are well supported by the conventional language of gongs and drums in Chinese music theatre.

This paper focuses on how the genre absorbs and assimilates new elements into its existing framework and re-invents itself to become a Cantonese opera that is distinctly Hong Kong.

**Keywords:** *Cantonese opera, language, music and social changes*

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