Popular Culture in Hong Kong After the National Security Law, 2020–2022

Janet Ng

First published 2025

ISBN: 9781032860893 (hbk)
ISBN: 9781032860916 (pbk)
ISBN: 9781003521280 (ebk)

Introduction

(CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003521280-1

The funder of the Open Access version of this Introduction is The Professional Staff Congress - City University of New York (PSC-CUNY) Research Award Program.

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

Introduction

In 2019, Hong Kong was rocked by a series of protests—the so-called "Anti-Legislation Movement" against the proposed "Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill" that would allow the transfer of fugitives in Hong Kong, including political dissidents, to be tried in China. Critics of the law argued that it was a violation of Hong Kong's judicial sovereignty guaranteed under Hong Kong's Basic Law and the "One Country, Two Systems" arrangement with China. To many Hong Kong residents, this was another example of Beijing's increasing assertion of control over the city. A broad section of Hong Kong society, including many in the legal profession and even civil services, who were obligated by law to refrain from political activities, participated in demonstrations against the Bill. Many of the city's young people organized a series of protests against the Hong Kong government that got progressively more disruptive and violent. The normally bustling city was paralyzed for months. In response, China's central government imposed a new National Security Law (NSL) on the city by fiat. The NSL that came into effect on June 30, 2020, gave the Beijing-controlled Hong Kong government far-reaching authority, essentially outlawing any public expression of political dissent. Immediately after its implementation, a new police hotline for reporting suspected anti-national security activities was set up. Amnesty International pronounced a "human rights emergency" in Hong Kong.[1] The city's "global freedom score" measured by the political advocacy NGO, Freedom House, fell from 59/100 in 2017 to 42/100 in 2022.[2] Even by the neoliberal standards of the Fraser Institute and Cato Institute's "human freedom" index, Hong Kong lost its constant position at the top spot as the "freest" place in the world (second only to Switzerland in 2017), slipping down to the 34th place in 2022.[3] In the category of "personal freedom," Hong Kong went from 32nd in the world in 2018 to 62nd by 2022.[4] "The death of Hong Kong" was pronounced in headlines around the world on the day of the implementation of the NSL.[5] The COVID pandemic that raged from 2020 to 2022 further cast a pall over the city with the government attempting to control infection numbers through on-again–off-again regimes of lockdown, mandatory quarantine, and social restrictions. Together with the resultant serious economic downturn and mass emigration, the city's prospects could not have been gloomier.

DOI: 10.4324/9781003521280-1
This chapter has been made available under a CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0 license.

This discourse of the city's death is both unhelpful and unfair to the Hong Kong people continuing to live in the city, who were and are diligently inventing ways to adapt to the new restrictive reality, to strive for normalcy, and even to find hope and happiness. This volume examines what happened in the 2 years after the protest, how many in Hong Kong experienced and responded to the new law, and how they found ways to recover and resume their everyday life despite their political disappointments and economic setbacks.

I examine these issues over these 2 years through an analysis of a wide range of popular phenomena, cultural activities, and creative projects, from television shows, popular music, social media, and literary writings. Against all odds, the city's popular culture experienced an unexpected efflorescence even as the new law served as a powerful vise on free expression. It is my goal in this study to provide a record of the city immediately after the NSL, finding in these creative works, strategies for living in Hong Kong's new reality.

The 2 years after the implementation of the NSL, from 2020 to 2022, was an exceptional period in Hong Kong. The city had to adjust to many changes brought about by the new law. Slogans, symbols, and objects associated with the protests were banned. Books on "sensitive topics," or by dissidents, oppositional politicians, and academics, were removed from public libraries and schools. Many pro-democracy teachers and professors were sacked from their teaching posts or had their contracts rescinded. Television programs that were critical or satirical of the Hong Kong government were canceled.[6] In the atmosphere of fear, several major oppositional news media organizations were terminated. Many student, professional, and labor unions disbanded. Grassroot community and advocacy groups shut down. International NGOs and news media organizations moved out of the city. Thousands of protest participants were arrested. Lawmakers from oppositional parties were excluded from the legislature or arrested. These upheavals and the aftermath of the protests and the NSL were then exacerbated by protracted Zero COVID policies. As more and more doctors and nurses emigrated, having lost faith in the Hong Kong government, the medical system buckled under the pressures during the pandemic when the city suffered from staggering infection and death rates. Many iconic businesses succumbed to the economic consequences of the stringent COVID regulations. Many Hong Kong residents lost relatives and friends to the disease. Many lost their employment. Many were separated from families and friends as tens of thousands emigrated from the city, unable or unwilling to live under the new political conditions, or not wanting to expose their children to the new patriotic educational agenda. For 2 years, the city seemed to be bombarded daily by bad news.

Political issues notwithstanding, these were years when Hong Kong turned intensely inward, by necessity and by choice. Because of the COVID pandemic and the draconian quarantine rules, few Hong Kong people traveled out of the city; even fewer tourists came to Hong Kong. In 2018, Hong Kong's population of 7.5 million residents hosted an overwhelming 65 million tourists, with the majority from mainland China. In 2020, in contrast, Hong Kong received only 605,000 visitors.[7] The routine streams of Hollywood movies and international performers—the J-drama

[Japanese-drama] stars, the K-pop [Korean-pop] groups, or American and British pop singers—also dried up. Trapped in their city, without distraction or competition for attention from outside in these 2 years, Hongkongers focused on their own society. They reclaimed their city. They re-assessed, re-built, and re-invented. The result was an extraordinary revival of community and creative production.

The creativity of this period is a result of various groups and individuals self-consciously rejecting the official narrative of inevitability and the fatalist assessment of some domestic and overseas commentators about the future of Hong Kong. Despite these merchants of gloom and the pressure of the NSL, many still attempted to find volition to produce an alternative "Hong Kong story." New things were created. Some were strategies against despair; others were strategies to live normal lives. These new things would be invisible without understanding their creators' rejection of determinism—that "there is no alternative."

Hou hou sangwut 好好生活 Continue to Live Well

It is important to point out at the outset that this study is not about continued resistance in the political sphere. The major democracy movement in HK was defeated. The NSL functioned as a leash on dissent. For the most part, Hongkongers retreated into private lives to focus on adjusting to a new alien reality, seemingly yielding to their political fate. However, daily practices and decisions on how to live are not made in a vacuum. They are responses to the conditions of the real world. While acts of resistance in everyday life indeed do not bring about political or structural change and have variously been dismissed as mere "pragmatic resignation" or "practical acquiescence,"[8] as Michel De Certeau argues, resistance is in the act itself, as a response, and not necessarily the result or even the intent of the actors.[9] Power and resistance co-constitute each other.[10]

However, beyond the narrow understanding of resistance that assigns it solely to organized struggle, or the general assertion that living in of itself is resisting, there is another, more fine-grained way to understand it, as a force of "quiet encroachment."[11] These are strategies of living that can expose the everyday mechanisms of domination, and by so doing attenuate their power. A particular attitude toward living can destabilize power relationships; it can open up possibilities, and generate new positions, conditions, and spaces for making alternatives and choices. In this volume, I will discuss some of these efforts of "quiet encroachment" as many Hong Kong people continue to occupy the spaces of their everyday itinerary but traversing it with a renewed understanding of the effect of their everyday strategies.

In this understanding, most of the works I discuss are "resistant" texts only in so far as they demonstrate a desire to extend the limitations of daily lives, whether physical or mental, as well as create narrative possibilities for the city. The focus on the activities of ordinary people is to avoid overemphasis on the power of the state. Culture, as in the performance of reading, thinking, self-cultivation, etc., expands individual space. Moreover, the cultivation of different activities and diverse voices can foster strongly differing views without overt antagonism, even when democratic politics are forbidden. As Hongkongers constantly encouraged each

other in these years with the phrase, "*hou hou sangwut* (continue to live well)," everyday life in the city was also about preserving agency and redrawing the social and political space.

The city is a "social fact," as Kristin Ross argues via Henri Lefebvre, a space inhabited, formed, and continually being transformed through its inhabitants' everyday use.[12] No matter what government is in charge, or what kind of political structures are imposed upon the people, its space will conform to the contour of the daily use of its inhabitants. The space of Hong Kong is continually evolving according to the dedication of the inhabitants to carry on their normal lives.

Hoenggongjan 香港人 Hongkongers

As in any society, there are many stories and voices in Hong Kong. "Hong Kong people" are not a homogenous group, either ethnically or politically. Despite the surface calm under the NSL, Hong Kong people don't all share similar political goals or even ideological aspirations. Many are not necessarily anti-government, even if they are not pro-government.

Until the recent two decades, Hong Kong people's identity had been heavily inflected by their self-assumed responsibility of upholding the city's image as a neoliberal paradise. They lived in an environment designed for the smoothest transaction of goods and capital and were trained to be facilitators of these ventures. The continued stability that led to the prosperity of the city's development took precedence over individual will, freedom, and rights. The city's residents even once took pride in the orderliness of their political demonstrations as a sign of their civic sophistication. It was a city in which civic rectitude and aptitude replaced civil rights or democratic negotiations as the basis of governance, abiding by the guiding principle of "*onding faanwing* 安定繁榮 stability and prosperity."[13]

It was with their comparative affluence and more advanced urban organization that Hong Kong people distinguished themselves from the Chinese mainlanders in the past. In 1997, Hong Kong's GDP per capita at USD27,330 was over 35 times that of China at USD783. However, this distinction based on wealth became increasingly meaningless as China began its double-digit growth, while Hong Kong, suffering from the impact of major worldwide events and financial crises, had experienced a continuous decline since 2003.[14] In order to devise a new way to foster a Hong Kong Identity, to distinguish it from China, in 2004, there was an effort in the city to determine a set of so-called Hong Kong "core values."

These "*Hoenggong hatsam gaazik* 香港核心價值Hong Kong Core Values" were first presented by a group of 300 Hong Kong residents representing 42 different professions, from academics and lawyers to public intellectuals.[15] These values include freedom, democracy, respect for human rights, equality and justice, peace and humanity, trust and transparency, respect for diversity, individuality, and professionalism; rule of law; clean government; tolerance of different stances and views; respect for press freedom; and judicial independence. These values were subsequently co-opted by the government, as Dapiran explains, "to articulate

Hong Kong's competitive advantage over the rest of China, and indeed much of Asia."[16]

In 2013, the former Chief Executive of Hong Kong, Leung Chun-ying (2012–2017) affirmed their importance to the city in his policy address:

> I pledged to the Hong Kong people that I will safeguard the interests of the people, and uphold the core values of Hong Kong, including human rights, rule of law, clean government, freedom and democracy, tolerance of different stances and views, and respect for press freedom. Among them, judicial independence and the rule of law are not only our cherished core values but also the cornerstone of Hong Kong's success. The Government is steadfastly committed to upholding these core values.[17]

Although this litany of attributes evolved over the intervening years according to the different social and political concerns at the time, its key values remained unchanged. The identity of a Hongkonger is fundamentally connected to these liberal values. In 2014, the term, "HongKonger or Hong Kongese," meaning "a native or inhabitant of Hong Kong," was added to the Oxford English Dictionary. This inclusion was interpreted by mainly pro-democracy politicians and pundits in Hong Kong at the time as a sign of international recognition of the distinction between Hong Kong and China.[18]

During the fiery Anti-Extradition Legislation protests of 2019, Hong Kong's society was bitterly divided between the pro-democracy group, self-identified as the Yellow ribbons, and the pro-Beijing, pro-establishment as Blue ribbons. These distinctions were fuzzy at best. In reality, there were different strands within each group. The so-called "deep yellows," for example, tended to be more idealistic and activist. There were the "localists," such as the members of Civic Passion, or Youngspiration. Some of them held deeply xenophobic, especially anti-mainland immigrant sentiments, and socially conservative views. There were those who were not averse to using violent means, such as the "braves," who felt that rather than compromise, it would be better to all go down together in mutual immolation (*laam caau* 攬炒). They would rather see the Chinese-controlled government fail than see Hong Kong transformed into another Chinese city. There were those who had so-called "*zingzi gitpik* 政治潔癖 political mysophobia," who refused to have anything to do with mainland China even after the protests, seeing it as ceding even more to China's control. These different tribes were also at odds with each other. However, these remained a minority among the general "yellows." The "blues," in contrast, were simpler. While some were staunchly loyal to Beijing, most tended to be pro-business, supported free-market capitalism, and were against social disorder. They were willing to tolerate, even cooperate with Beijing, as long as there was money to be made and prosperity restored to the city.

Pro-Beijing politicians often cast all the "yellows" as just a small band of troublemakers, while the "silent majority" was hostage to their violence. Dapiran, however, argues that a 2019 midterm election of District Councilors in fact revealed the opposite:

> The election was seen as a referendum pitting the protest movement against Lam's government and Beijing. And speak the people did, although they did not say what Lam and Beijing had hoped they would. In a day that saw Hong Kong's highest ever election turnout—with 2.9 million people, representing seventy-one percent of eligible voters, casting a vote—the pan-democrats won in a landslide. Pan-democrat candidates won 385 seats; pro-Beijing ('establishment', pro-government) candidates won only fifty-nine seats; eight seats went to independents...Pan-democrats won control of seventeen of the eighteen district councils; previously, they had controlled none...The results were unequivocal: a clear majority of Hongkongers supported the protest movement and placed the blame for the ongoing chaos at the feet of Lam, her government, and the pro-Beijing politicians who support her.[19]

Everything became color-coded in the city. Businesses and public personalities, especially actors and performers, were constantly scrutinized for their political purity. Participation in certain events organized by the wrong parties, especially those seen to have relationship with mainland organizations, or even the Hong Kong government, would be enough to turn their "yellow" supporters against them. A performer who was popular among the "yellows" might be a target of trolling by the blues, and vice versa. Popularity among a majority of "yellows" could not protect a performer from attacks by the "deep yellows." For those advocating "mutual immolation," any success under the current government was a betrayal.

When it comes to the issue of "national identity," there might be more coherence among Hong Kong people. The majority of Hong Kong residents, even some pro-Beijing "blues," would not self-identify as a "Chinese" person. According to a poll from the Public Opinion Program of the University of Hong Kong, in 2019, the year of the protest, 52.9% of Hong Kong's residents self-identified as "Hongkongers."[20] By 2021, in another survey conducted by the university, it was discovered that "the number of people who regarded themselves as 'Hongkongers' in a broad sense grew from 69% to 72%, while those who identified themselves as 'Chinese' in a broad sense dropped from 29% to 26%." A large number of these 26% considered themselves as both "Chinese" and "Hongkongers."[21] This means only a very small group in Hong Kong would recognize themselves as a Chinese person. There is a caveat to this result. Conducted after the implementation of the NSL and during the emigration wave, those who felt most strongly against China would already have left the city. Also, some of the responses might have been influenced by the pressure of the NSL. In other words, the actual number of those who identified as "Hongkongers" could be even higher. Although it had been over two decades since Hong Kong's "return" to China, only a small minority of residents considered themselves "Chinese nationals."

Regardless of politics, the notion of a Hongkonger has long transcended a homogenous, ethnic-based definition. Hong Kong is one of the most diverse (though not necessarily inclusive) cities in East Asia, where 8.4% of the population is non-ethnic Han Chinese. Even among the ethnic Chinese, many are from different areas of the world. The Hong Kong writer, Dung Kai Cheung, cautioned against

a narrow understanding of the Hong Kong identity based on a simplistic notion of race and blood. Instead, he argued that it should be one of active "becoming," through writing, narrating, or other activities on behalf of the city.[22] It is one's relationship with the city, rather than one's blood lineage that defines one's belonging. This notion of a Hong Kong person, and even the idea of the city, is necessarily fluid, uncontrollable, and as such, full of possibilities.

In this volume, I use the term, Hongkongers, to represent the large segment of Hong Kong resident-card holders, both local-born and immigrants, regardless of ethnic background and nationality, who self-identify as a Hong Kong person, and who continue to believe in the Hong Kong core values, and as such, generally sympathetic to the city's various struggles for democracy of the past decade, even if they never participated in political activities. Despite the many internal contradictions within this group, they could probably all agree on their antipathy toward further "mainlandization" of Hong Kong's governance, an enforced Chinese nationalistic agenda in the city, and the dilution of local Cantonese language culture and social practices, seeing these as contradictory to the Hong Kong core values.

Nine years after the pledge from former Chief Executive Officer, Leung Chun-ying, to uphold Hong Kong's core values, in 2022, the then Secretary for Education, Kevin Yeung, called for the teaching of a new set of values in schools, namely, correct national history and culture, law-abidingness, empathy, diligence, perseverance, respect for others, responsibility, national identity, commitment, integrity, and care for others.[23] The original list that included attributes such as clean government, respect for human rights, freedom and democracy, etc., focused on the behavior of the government, emphasizing governmental restraint and respect for individual rights. In the list proffered by the Secretary of Education, the focus shifted to the disciplining of individuals for the sake of the nation. Loyalty to Beijing now took precedence over the protection of individual and intellectual freedoms from the arbitrary powers of the state. This dramatic revision of the city's core values was seen as a further betrayal of the political and social contract between the government and the people of Hong Kong that had defined Hong Kong's culture and identity for decades.

With the destruction of Hong Kong's former core values, the comment that Hong Kong was dead was perhaps not surprising. Perhaps it is even true—a staid, old notion of the city as the neoliberal capital of the world and a free market paradise is perhaps dying.[24] Maybe the new generation of Hongkongers, politically strangulated, had other aspirations for the city. Maybe their vision of what they needed to fight for had changed. As Foucault argues, "Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are."[25] To refuse an identity prescribed for one is a process of self-creation. It is also a form of resistance.

Jinzanzou mouliu je 認真做無聊嘢 Seriously Doing Silly Things

The refusal of one's designated identity was a direct legacy of the 2019 protest. One of the five major demands of the 2019 protestors was for the government to withdraw its characterization of the political movement and the participants as rioters.[26]

In order to delegitimize the movement, the government insistently designated the protests as riots, and the young protestors as *haak bou* 黑暴 (black rioters), black being the color of the protest. At the height of the movement in July 2019, 96.2% of the Anti-Legislation Movement participants surveyed rated the demand for the government "to retract its characterization of the June 12 protest as riot" as "very important."[27]

When the protest largely abated by the beginning of 2020, one of the most prominent young leaders of the pro-democracy movements, Agnes Chow, launched a YouTube Channel. Chow was a leader in various political movements in Hong Kong. She began her activism at 16 in the 2012 school children's protest against the implementation of "patriotic education" in the school curriculum. In 2014, she was one of the student leaders of the Umbrella Revolution against the restrictive electoral system imposed by China for the 2017 election of Hong Kong's Chief Executive. Chow also attempted to run for a seat in the Hong Kong Legislative Council. However, her candidacy was disqualified, and she was eventually jailed for her participation in the 2019 Anti-Extradition Legislation Movement. (She has been living in exile since 2023, after her release from prison.) For her courage and personal sacrifices, she was called, "Our Mulan," by many Hongkongers, or the "Real Mulan," in deliberate contrast to the Chinese actress, Liu Yifei, who played the fictional heroine in the 2020 Disney film. (Liu's public support for the Hong Kong police and their forceful suppression of the protests made her deeply unpopular in the city, resulting in a boycott of the film.)[28] Despite the martial association with Mulan, it was Chow's composure, intelligence, articulateness, as well as fluency in multiple languages—Cantonese, English, and Japanese—that made her one of the most important faces of Hong Kong's struggle for democracy.

From February 2020, after the last embers of the protest had been stamped out, until the start of her prison sentence that November, Chow posted various short videos on her YouTube channel, amassing over 330,000 subscribers within a very short period of time. This was on top of her over half a million followers on Twitter, mostly in Japan, since she tweeted in Japanese. Being such a political icon in Hong Kong, one might have expected to find discussions of serious political or social issues on her YouTube channel. Surprisingly, Chow used her social media platform, not as an extension of her activism, but for entertaining and connecting with her supporters and fans. Chow explained in her inaugural YouTube video that while most people knew her as a serious student activist, she wanted to demonstrate her other side to the world. Indeed, Chow was charming in her videos. She used the platform to talk about her everyday life. She demonstrated cooking, played games with her viewers, gave lively Japanese lessons, and answered fans' questions about herself. She talked about clothes, toys, and food, just like many young women of her age. She sometimes spoke in Cantonese, sometimes in Japanese. All her videos were supplied with subtitles in Japanese and standard Chinese for her audience in Hong Kong, Japan, and Taiwan. However, embedded in her lively banter was a vein of facetiousness. For example, knowing that she was under surveillance, she discussed issues of cyber security, ways to circumvent hacking or electronic monitoring, and how to keep personal data safe. She thanked her Japanese audience

for their support, including the #freeAnges campaign that circulated widely in Japan when she was first arrested. She showed herself purchasing a new computer when her old devices were confiscated by the police.

Similarly, another very prominent public face of pro-democracy activism in Hong Kong, the Cantopop star, Denise Ho, hosted a lively weekly podcast and YouTube talk show with actress, Wong Wing Sze. Ho and Wong invited different guests to their show, from pop singers to actors and writers. They bantered on about things in their everyday life, from pets, to travel, astrology, and personal habits, constantly joking about their "low brow" program. In episode 36, released on November 6, 2020, one month before Agnes Chow was sentenced to prison, they had her on their program as their guest. Contrary to expectations, instead of focusing on Chow's impending court appearance, the topic of their discussion was, "How to be an *otaku* goddess." Chow, being very pretty and petite, was an idol to a lot of young men in Hong Kong. However, she laughed about the many messages on her social media in simplified Chinese (i.e., from trolls from mainland China) that demanded to know why a pretty young woman like her could not just be quiet and be more obedient.[29]

In a city still reeling from high emotions and deep trauma immediately after the protests and the implementation of the NSL, these icons of the democracy movement decided to engage in what might appear to be mindless entertainment. Rather than being disappointed, their supporters embraced these other sides of their heroes.

Like many young people, Chow was labeled a "rioter," legally branded a criminal and a threat to the Chinese state. However, in her videos, she revealed herself to be a young woman like any other of her age, who liked pretty things, was deeply immersed in the world of Japanese anime and youth culture, liked to eat fun foods, and was cheerful, smart, and confident. One can't help but question, after watching her videos, what led such an otherwise lively and likable young person in Hong Kong to butt against the powerful state machine at such great cost to her own life. One can't help but wonder about a government that labeled an intelligent, fun-loving, and sweet young woman a threat to the state.

Denise Ho was similarly accused of being a traitor when she called attention to the plight of the protestors at the United Nations Human Rights Council and her non-violent political activities were considered a threat to the state. She had been blacklisted in China, forbidden to perform there since her participation in the 2014 Umbrella Movement. Her music was removed from all platforms in China. In her YouTube videos, Ho revealed herself to be funny, self-deprecating, and someone who enjoyed the ordinariness of life. One can't help but wonder as well, what was wrong with a society that led a Cantopop diva, adored by legions, to sacrifice her career in order to challenge the state. Whether it was their intention or not, Chow and Ho's online activities disputed their official characterizations. Their insistence on continuing with normal lives, pursuing their interest, and ignoring the constant legal threats against them allowed them to reclaim control over their own stories and identity, as well as rectify the distorted images created by the dominant media about them. In many ways, Chow and Ho's experiences and strategies mirrored

that of the city. Hongkongers were also eager to take back the narrative of their city, through creatively living their everyday lives, and telling their stories in their own ways.

Why Popular Culture?

In 2019, Beijing released the blueprint for the development of a megalopolis. Hong Kong was to be officially incorporated into the so-called Greater Bay Area, which also includes Macao and nine cities in China's Guangdong province. China proclaimed that this Greater Bay Area would be the next world-class business and tech hub. Many Hongkongers, however, regarded the city's new geographical designation with suspicion and cynicism and viewed this as another process of "mainlandization" by Beijing to diminish, and even destroy Hong Kong's uniqueness.

The efforts to "mainlandize" Hong Kong were multivarious, from the inculcation of patriotism (through ceremonial performances, such as flag-raising and nightly broadcasting of the anthem), to requiring Hong Kong's Cantonese-speaking population to study and use Putonghua (China's official language), to allowing more and more mainland Chinese to visit or settle in Hong Kong, etc. Many Hong Kong people are fearful that the incursion of mainland culture in Hong Kong will eventually obliterate their own culture and destroy the city's values. A strong localist sentiment developed in response, especially among the younger people. This localism played a large part in the 2019 protests, but it also promoted a renewed attention to local customs and material and popular culture.

Popular culture in Hong Kong has always played an outsized role in constructing the local identity since the 1970s. In the 2020s, popular culture, for many young people, became a defense against the forces of "mainlandization." In many ways, Hong Kong is similar to South Korea where popular culture is also a focus of identity. John Lie argues that because of South Korea's complex political history, first as a Japanese colony, followed by a catastrophic fratricidal war, before an all-out adoption of American capitalism, there is very little sense of a tradition on which South Koreans can base their identity:

> In Korea, what has replaced tradition, with its function of providing a sense of continuity and coherence, is popular culture. The bonds of proverbial imagined community of South Koreans are to be found in television waves and cyberspace, where common cultural contents are disseminated and national discussion takes place.[30]

Hong Kong as a British colony played an important role as a Cold War stalwart against communism, receiving hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing China after 1949. In its dedicated development as a free market bastion, the city had always identified itself against China. It was what China was not. With a population of about seven million packed into a small space, and lacking identification with a "traditional" culture, the idea of Hong Kong is generated through its popular

culture. It is not possible to discuss Hong Kong's identity without consideration of its popular culture.

From the 1970s to the 1990s, it was Hong Kong's television dramas, especially from Hong Kong's predominant broadcaster, Television Broadcasts Ltd. (TVB), that accompanied families at their dinners.[31] At the same time, it was Hong Kong's Cantopop music that provided a common soundtrack to the major and minor events in the city, as well as individual lives. In the 1990s, many sang together in Karaoke clubs, the love songs or inspirational songs that were popular at the time. This music did not just give expression but also helped shape and define individuals' emotional responses to their social and political conditions. At the same time, Hong Kong's cinema articulated a distinct image and generated mythologies for the city. All the different strains of popular culture together created, not just the city's stories, but a local lexicon in which a collective narrative was formed, delineating a very particular cultural identity among Hong Kong's residents.[32]

Hong Kong's unique Cantonese language culture had, by the 1980s and 1990s, created one of the most vibrant entertainment industries` in the world, exerting an important cultural influence in Asia and the world through its films and Cantopop music. These industries, however, suffered from almost a decade and a half of serious contraction beginning in the early 2000s. The Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) between Hong Kong and China in 2003, to foster Hong Kong's economic integration with China, gave Hong Kong entertainment companies and performers access to China's vast market through co-productions. The major entertainment corporations, production companies, and established performers, indeed, almost all the biggest names in Cantopop and Hong Kong cinema moved their bases to China to focus on this market. Since then, these stars rarely appeared in local films, or issued new Cantopop songs, having switched to singing in Putonghua (Mandarin) for their mainland audience. Hong Kong's entertainment industry lost a whole generation of talent to the mainland market, from production technicians to performers.[33] During the 2019 protests, whether out of self-preservation or genuine patriotism, many of these actors and singers openly pledged support for the Beijing-controlled Hong Kong government and backed the police suppression of the protestors, earning the contempt of many Hongkongers. Since then, many of them have become unwelcome back in their home territory.

However, even if the creative industry in the city had declined, creativity itself certainly did not. This was on flamboyant display in all the political movements, especially beginning with the 2014 Umbrella Movement. The activists were keenly aware of the visual impact of their actions in the media. Political demonstrations were no longer just marching with individual signs with witty slogans. They were about large public spectacles and sounds.[34] If the explosiveness of the 2019 Anti-Legislation protests put Hong Kong's decade-long struggle for democracy on the international stage, it was the visual impact from the extensive use of popular culture, such as graphic art, performances, film, and music, often professionally and beautifully produced, sometimes on a monumental scale, that garnered worldwide interest, as well as captured hearts and minds at home and abroad. One of the most spectacular images of the 2019 movement was a 30-mile-long glowing human chain

called the Hong Kong Way, formed by tens of thousands of participants holding hands and flashing their cell phone lights. The chain stretched from Hong Kong Island to Kowloon, to the New Territories, picking out the iconic outline of Lion Rock Hill. The protest anthem, "Glory to Hong Kong," topped all Hong Kong's music charts in 2019. The MV, professionally produced and artfully designed, depicts a "Blorchestra (Black Orchestra)"—musicians in black clothes, yellow hard hats, and gasmasks (the uniform of the protest) performing in billowing smoke to represent both the "white terror" and tear gas enveloping the city. The producers and members of the orchestra also released different versions of the anthem sung in different languages that attracted international media as well as millions of views worldwide. "Glory to Hong Kong" became so closely associated with Hong Kong that a search for "Hong Kong national anthem" on Google a few years after the movement consistently yielded this song in the top results, much to the chagrin of the Hong Kong government. This protest song was broadcast erroneously as Hong Kong's national anthem during several international sporting events, causing great embarrassment to the Hong Kong government. The song was banned and removed from different media platforms, including YouTube, in 2024.

The high emotions of the Anti-Extradition Legislation Movement of 2019 unleashed tremendous creativity. The end of the movement might have meant the halting of all kinds of overt political expression. However, what came afterward in Hong Kong's popular culture was in many ways a continuation of this creative energy, re-directed and re-defined.

Ce joeng ngomun jyulok zi se 且讓我們娛樂至死 **Let Us Amuse Ourselves to Death**

In the new NSL era, when they felt their identity was under threat, Hongkongers once again looked to the city's popular culture and rallied behind it. It was in the city's darkest moments in 2020 that Hong Kong's popular culture began an unexpected and brilliant resurgence. Replacing much of the old order, the monopolies, and the dominance of established and bankable mega stars, the industry in Hong Kong was now also driven by newer companies, collectives, and independent industry workers and artists. There was more flexibility and tolerance for innovation and change. New actors and directors brought new vigor and freshness to films, television programs, and other innovative visual media projects. The new generation of young performers had not merely revived interest in Cantopop but had whipped up so much fervor that they had veritably transformed the whole cultural landscape of the city. Also unprecedented was the spirit of collaboration and openness among these artists from across genres and styles, which resulted in a reinvigoration of music. Indirectly, they also brought attention to many other forms of popular culture, from dance to animation and illustration, to stage drama, and even to different kinds of sports.

Without a doubt, Hong Kong's new entertainment industry offered the public much escape and enjoyment, especially in the grim reality of the city. However, being entertained alone was no longer enough. The new audience saw themselves

as playing roles that were more than just passive consumers. They believed they had a part to play in supporting and championing this local cultural revival.

In 2016, the Chinese translation of Neil Postman's 1985 book, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, was reissued for the 20th anniversary of its publication, attracting a new generation of readers. Despite the fact that Postman's book was already over 30 years old, for obvious reasons, after the implementation of the NSL, it became one of the most talked-about books in Hong Kong, together with George Orwell's *1984* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. In 2020, the still independent public broadcaster, Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK), aired a discussion of these books in the episode, "*Ce joeng ngomun jyulok zisei* 且讓我們娛樂至死 (Let us amuse ourselves to death)," in the popular philosophy talk show series, "Z*it hok jau gai king*哲學有偈傾 (There's much to talk about in philosophy)."[35]

In his work, Postman argues it is not merely Orwell's dystopic totalitarian world of mass surveillance that one should worry about. One should also be concerned about the scenario described in Huxley's *Brave New World*, in which people are so enraptured by mass entertainment they no longer read or think critically, becoming manipulable and acquiescent. In addition, the information we receive through mass media is often distorted. The presenters or actors, eager to hold our attention, design their delivery of information through manipulations of images, behavior, tone of voice, and general performance, in order to condition our reception of it. The scenario that Postman presents is a frightening one of mass distraction and manipulation.[36]

The attention Postman's book received reflected an anxiety among some Hongkongers in 2020 that despite the political idealism of the previous decades, the society would now fall into political complacence and social indifference under the enthrallment of mass entertainment. Considering the blatantly pro-establishment track record of major media corporations in recent years, the distrust of mass media was understandable. However, this worry about the effect of mass entertainment underestimates the power of pop culture as well as the agency and ingenuity of the consumers of entertainment. Postman and many in Hong Kong could not have foreseen the complexity and multidimensionality of recent fan culture. Fan activities in Hong Kong, especially surrounding the super group, MIRROR, which rose to popularity in 2021, defy the simplistic notion of the consumption of entertainment as exploitation and manipulation. In fact, these consumers of pop entertainment wield enormous cultural power in Hong Kong as will be obvious in the discussions in this volume.

The phenomenon of audiences of popular culture taking an active role in shaping the city's cultural and social conditions was not limited to music lovers but was also extended to film and television audiences. The public's active support for individual actors or production teams was often critical for the success of a production. In response, actors and directors of a movie often personally appeared in cinemas where their film was shown, to literally, thank the audience for buying tickets to their film, in a now routine practice of "*ze piu* 謝票 (Thanking the audience for buying tickets)." In these events, audience members felt the personal effect of their act of consumption that they were contributing directly to the survival and health of

the industry. By the same token, many performers were no longer satisfied with just entertaining a mass audience. The artists who had chosen to remain in Hong Kong, usually younger and newer to the business, were eager to introduce new musical and artistic styles and content to distinguish their music from older Cantopop. They felt a deep sense of commitment to Hong Kong society and their audiences, not just to entertain but also to comfort, encourage, and give expression to their listener's concerns, especially in the difficult post-protest and COVID years. Sandy Ip of the pop duo, Per Se, explains:

> Because everyone has gone through very similar experiences, as we sing, we feel we are keeping our audience company, and the audience is keeping us company...We never had this sense of community before. Our songs were purely about how we feel about the world. It was from the time of [our album], "*character/character* (2021)," on that we started having fans telling us how our songs affected them or helped them through difficult times. We were going through similar experiences together with them.[37]

Baak faa cai fong 百花齊放 Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom

The revival of Cantopop in 2021 is one of the most interesting developments in Hong Kong culture. What differentiates Cantopop from other kinds of popular music, such as K-pop [Korean pop], J-pop [Japanese pop], American and British pop, and even Mando-pop [Mandarin pop] that dominated Hong Kong's entertainment before 2019, is its emphasis on lyrics. Some might even argue that in Cantopop, the lyrics are more important than the music (*ci dai gwo kuk* 詞大過曲). Cantopop lyrics are arguably one of Hong Kong's most distinct cultural forms. Because they are widely transmitted through popular music, it is a literary form that touches most people in the city. One of Hong Kong's veteran lyricists, Poon Yuen Leung 潘源良, calls Cantopop lyrics Hong Kong's "secret garden."[38] A successful lyricist is able to capture and give expression to the sentiments and thoughts of a particular moment in society, create a sense of collective belonging, and sometimes even inspire and give hope. In this sense, Cantopop is the city's common language, and it has been especially significant in the NSL and COVID years, pulling people together amid differences, separations, social isolation, and general feelings of alienation. The lyricist, Siu Hak小克, explains:

> Perhaps, subconsciously, there is a feeling that Hong Kong people are all bound together. I think because there are a lot of things we can no longer say directly, we are now getting used to saying them in a circuitous way. There are no longer songs that are a hundred-percent love songs. All songs are connected with the emotions of the society...Till now, it is an artistic format that still retains its independence and has not yet been pressed into political service. Also, the scale of a song's production is much smaller than films, and a song has more mass appeal than literature or drama. It is as if every Cantopop song is telling everyone, "Hong Kong is still here."[39]

When most Hong Kong people stopped listening to Cantopop for almost 20 years, what that meant was not only the decline of local music but also a serious threat to a unique cultural form. Listening to Cantopop was more than indulging in entertainment. This was why when Cantopop made a comeback in 2021, many Hongkongers felt a keen sense of duty to keep it alive, to keep nurturing and supporting it. Invested in the new Cantopop and the young singers was a whole host of complex feelings and aspirations, as well as hope for Hong Kong's future.

The vibrance of the city's popular culture revealed a spirit of perseverance despite everything. Through their creative endeavors, artists, writers, and performers attempted to spin new tales for the city, and in doing so, design the city's future. Even "if it turns out that the world is not as [they] had expected," to quote Charmaine Fong's 2019 popular song, "*Gaasi saigaai jyunloi bat zoeng nei jyukei* 假使世界原來不像你預期,"[40] Hongkongers tried to adapt the new reality into one in which they could not just live a normal life, but "continue to live well," as a common post-2019 greeting exhorted. Stephen Mok, the other half of the duo, Per Se, commented,

> There are a lot of unknowns. We don't know what the future holds. At least what we have learned here is to *adapt*. Once you get used to it, you will still be able to do what you like. We should value this.[41]

Language Subterfuge

The Hong Kong government was determined to manage the city's narrative after years of unrest. New ordinances and rules were implemented. Unacceptable ideas were censored. The use of some words had suddenly become a crime. Certain symbols and images could land one in jail. Political slogans and graffiti around the city had all been wiped away. Pieces of protest art that expressed public sentiments were taken down. The "Lennon Walls" that recorded the public's political aspirations were destroyed. There were no more critical commentaries or alternative views in the media. In general, there were no longer oppositional voices in the city. In essence, the Chinese state and the Hong Kong government had shut down the "textual public space" in the city, monopolized narratives, and declared war against civil discourse.[42]

Opposition to state power, to a large extent, is about loosening this grip over language and meaning.[43] On the day the new NSL came into effect, a protest banner was unfurled across a pedestrian bridge, emblazoned with the first line of the Chinese national anthem: "Arise ye who refuse to be slaves!" At the same time, a Maoist slogan, "Those who suppress student movements will not come to a good end," went viral on social media. Most Hongkongers recognized the irony and humor behind such appropriation of the slogans of the Chinese Communist Party. They not only highlighted Hongkongers' new state of subjugation but also reflected the hypocrisy of the Chinese state in its betrayal of its own early revolutionary ideals. Despite this blatant challenge to the Chinese Communist Party, even

the most faithful pro-Beijing official would be hard-pressed to find an issue with these sayings.

When certain slogans such as “Liberate Hong Kong; Revolution of our Times” were outlawed, protesters resorted to an oblique representation—3, 2, 1, 9, 0, 2, 4, 6—a series of numbers that are the same in rhythm and tone to the forbidden phrase when read out loud in Cantonese. “Liberate Hong Kong” became “Seize back the banana,” using “*hoengziu* banana” as a close homophone to “*Hoenggong* Hong Kong.” These puns and wordplays were neither subtle nor opaque. However, the Hong Kong government could hardly begin to outlaw numbers or the mention of a common fruit. This use of language subterfuge in the face of state censorship and effort to direct conversations in the city, though playful and irreverent, seemed to have little practical function or actual effect on reality. These small impertinences, nevertheless, made a mockery of and demonstrate the futility of the attempt to control meaning.

Hong Kong Cantonese is known for its wildly colorful expressions, gallows humor, and swear words. Each chapter in this volume is centered on a few popular or particularly representative slang phrases or viral sayings of these years—the so-called *ciujyu* 潮語. These phrases were widely circulated and used in both everyday conversations and social media and were particularly representative of the city in the 2 years in this study. This means most people in Hong Kong would immediately understand the complex reality behind these concise and often humorous usages. These expressions were evocative at a time when words had become more and more politicized, and speech more hazardous. In each chapter, I explain how these phrases were used or came about and describe the specific contexts of their usages in order to reveal the world of emotions and ideological issues embedded in them. Sometimes, they were spirited reactions to the political situation or certain social phenomena. Sometimes, they represented the social attitudes and expectations of individuals. Often, they captured the collective moods and emotions in the city. Each chapter is then an analysis of the conditions, context, and issues behind these sayings.

There was a lot of anger, anxiety, and fear in Hong Kong under the NSL. However, faced with threats to their history, values, and identity, many Hongkongers decided to forge ahead anyway, to shape their reality, push back against a monolithic state-imposed narrative, and, as much as possible, take charge of their own future. The popular culture from Hong Kong in the 2 years after the implementation of the NSL reflects immense creativity and vivaciousness, producing a new narrative that is multifarious, heterogeneous, and diverse. The phrase most popular in these couple of years to celebrate and to affirm this vibrant creativity in the city was originally from Mao Zedong during the notorious, short-lived free-speech campaign in China from 1956 to 1957: “*baak faa cai fong* 百花齊放 (Let a hundred flowers bloom).” Whereas the Maoist campaign ended in betrayals and repression, Hongkongers demonstrated how it could be done.

Finally, a note on proper names: All the transcriptions of Chinese titles and terms in this volume are based on Cantonese, the *lingua franca* of Hong Kong and the mother tongue of close to 90% of the population. *Pinyin* is used when

referencing non-Cantonese speakers, such as mainland Chinese officials, e.g., the Chinese premier, Xi Jinping. I have used the *Jyutping* system in the transcription of Cantonese into English, save for common words and names, such as Kowloon rather than *Gaulung*. In general, I use the preferred spelling of individuals' names where known, except for aliases or monikers. Consistent with common practice, surnames come first in East Asian names, and last in European names, for example, Leung Ka Yan 梁嘉蒽, where Leung is the surname, and Agnus Chow, where Chow is the surname. All translations are mine unless otherwise specified.

Notes

1 "Hong Kong: National Security Law has created a human rights emergency," *Amnesty International*, June 30, 2021, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/06/hong-kong-national-security-law-has-created-a-human-rights-emergency-2/.
2 "Freedom in the world, 2022," https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world.
3 The ranking include measuring the heaviness of tax burden in the territory, openness of borders, ease of doing business, as well as civil liberty, right to association, free expression, as well as items such as number of terrorist fatalities and female genital mutilations, etc. See Quinn Slobodian, *Crack-Up Capitalism: Market Radicals and the Dream of a World Without Democracy* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003), 33–35.
4 Ian Vasquez and Tanja Porčnik, "The Human Freedom Index," 2018. www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/human-freedom-index-2018.pdf. Ian Vasquez, et al., "The Human Freedom Index: A Global Measurement of Personal, Civil and Economic Freedoms," 2022. www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/human-freedom-index-2022.pdf.
5 "Who lost Hong Kong on June 30?" *The Japan Times*, June 30, 2020, www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2020/07/06/commentary/japan-commentary/lost-hong-kong-june-30/. Benedict Rogers and Johnny Patterson, "The death of Hong Kong," *The Spectator*, July 1, 2020, www.spectator.co.uk/article/the-death-of-hong-kong/. William Yang, "National security law is Beijing's death knell for HK," *Deutsche Welle*, June 29, 2020, www.dw.com/en/jimmy-lai-national-security-law-is-beijings-death-knell-for-hong-kong/a-53981830. Eryk Bagshaw, "The end of the Hong Kong the world knew," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, June 30, 2020, www.smh.com.au/world/asia/the-end-of-the-hong-kong-we-knew-20200630-p557ma.html.
6 For example, the popular show, 頭條新聞 (Headliner), that often made fun of politicians or satirized current affairs, ran from 1989 till it was withdrawn in 2020. Its existence had often been regarded as a symbol of Hong Kong's press freedom and political tolerance.
7 "Facts and Statistics," Hong Kong Tourism Commission, www.tourism.gov.hk/en/tourism-statistics.php.
8 The former term is used by Gutmann in critique of Scott's notion of resistance, and the latter from Scott's defense. Matthew C. Gutmann, "Rituals of resistance: A critique of the theory of everyday forms of resistance," *Latin American Perspectives* 20, no. 2 (1993): 74–92, https://doi.org/:10.1177/0094582X9302000206. James C. Scott, "Rituals of resistance: A critique of the theory of everyday forms of resistance: Reply," *Latin American Perspectives* 20, no. 2 (1993): 93–94, www.jstor.org/stable/2633595.
9 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). Claire Colebrook, "The Politics and Potential of Everyday Life," *New Literary History* 33, no. 4 (2002): 687–706, http://doi.org:10.1353/NLH.2002.0036.

10 Mikael Baaz, et al., "Defining and analyzing "Resistance": Possible entrances to the study of subversive practices," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 41, no. 3 (2017): 137–153: 139, https://doi.org/10.1177/0304375417700170.
11 Asef Bayat, "From 'Dangerous Classes' to 'Quiet Rebels': Politics of urban subaltern in the Global South," *International Sociology* 15, no. 3 (2000): 533–557, doi:10.1177/026858000015003005.
12 Kristin Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 8.
13 Janet Ng, *Paradigm, City: Space, Culture and Capitalism in Hong Kong* (New York, SUNY, 2009), 11.
14 Antony Dapiran, "Hong Kong's Reckoning," Golley, Jaivin, Hillman & Strange edits., *China Dreams* (Canberra, Australian National University Press, 2020), 54, accessed December 12, 2022, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv12sdxmk.9. Also, Hung Ho-Fung, *City on the Edge: Hong Kong Under Chinese Rule* (UK, Cambridge University Press, 2022).
15 Yew Chiew Ping and Kwong Kin-ming, "Hong Kong Identity on the Rise," *Asian Survey* 54, no. 6 (2014): 1088–1112: 1102–3, https://doi.org/:10.1525/as.2014.54.6.1088.
16 Antony Dapiran, 54.
17 Leung Chun-ying, "Policy Address," 2013, www.policyaddress.gov.hk/2013/eng/.
18 Jeffie Lam, "Hongkonger' makes it to world stage with place in the Oxford English Dictionary," *South China Morning Post*, March 19, 2014, www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1451929/finally-hongkonger-arrives-world-stage.
19 Antony Dapiran, 50–67: 66.
20 Niall McCarthy, "Fewer people in Hong Kong tend to identify as Chinese," *Statista*, September 9, 2019, www.statista.com/chart/19186/would-you-identify-yourself-as-a-hongkonger-or-chinese/.
21 Yang Zhenfei, "Survey: More Hong Kong people feel they are both 'Hongkongers' and 'Chinese'," *TYR*, June 22, 2021, https://tyr-jour.hkbu.edu.hk/2021/06/22/survey-more-hong-kong-people-feel-they-are-both-hongkongers-and-chinese/.
22 Dung Kai-Cheung, *在世界中寫作, 為世界而 寫 (Writing in the World, Writing for the World)* (Taipei, Lianjing chuban shiyegongsi), 2011.
23 "Hong Kong students must 'love motherland' under new values curriculum," *South China Morning Post*, November 30, 2021, www.scmp.com/yp/discover/news/hong-kong/article/3157978/hong-kong-students-must-love-motherland-under-new-values.
24 Stephen Roach, "It pains me to say Hong Kong is over," *Financial Times*, February 12, 2024, www.ft.com/stream/b8e1a08c-1c66-3235-b074-a90d8a482f71.
25 Quoted in Brent L. Pickett, "Foucault and the politics of resistance," *Polity* 28, no. 4 (1996): 445–466: 464.
26 The others include complete withdrawal of the extradition bill, exoneration of arrested protesters, an independent investigation into police conduct, and universal suffrage.
27 Olivier Krischer, "Thinking of art as informal life politics in Hong Kong," in Morris-Suzuki and Eun, edits., *New Worlds from Below: Informal Life Politics and Grassroots Action in Twenty-First-Century Northeast Asia* (Canberra, Australian National University Press, 2017), https://doi.org/10.22459/nwfb.03.2017.08.
28 "Mulan: Why Disney's latest reboot is facing boycott calls," *BBC* online, September 4, 2020, www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-54024810.
29 Denise Ho, "如何成為宅男女神 (How to become an Otaku goddess)?" 菇武門*Gumoumun*, Ep. 39, September 6, 2020, Podcast, 120.0, www.youtube.com/watch?v=tIGFlNopFYU). All of Agnus Chow's YouTube films from before her jail sentence have been removed.

30 John Lie, *K-Pop: Popular Music, Cultural Amnesia, and Economic Innovation in South Korea* (California, University of California Press, 2014), 158.
31 Eric Kit-wai Ma and Ma and Chieh-Wei, *Culture, Politics, and Television in Hong Kong* (UK, Routledge, 1999).
32 Janet Ng, chapter 6.
33 Stephen Yiu-wai Chu, "Before and after the Fall: Mapping Hong Kong Cantopop in the Global Era," Hong Kong: LEWI Working Paper Series 63 (2007), https://scholars.hkbu.edu.hk/ws/portalfiles/portal/55416356/RO_lewi_wp-10.pdf. See also Chu's discussion of the effect of CEPA and the "Mainlandization" of Hong Kong films, television, and Cantopop. *Lost in Translation: Hong Kong Culture in the Age of China* (SUNY Press, 2013).
34 Sebastian Veg, "Creating a textual public space: Slogans and texts from Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 75, no. 3 (2016): 673–702: 699, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911816000565.
35 "且讓我們娛樂至死 (Let us amuse ourselves to death)," 哲學有偈傾 (There's much to talk about in philosophy), RTHK, November 9, 2020, video, 52.05, www.archive.org/details/philosophynight2020. Corrupt the Youth, November 28, 2020, YouTube, www.youtube.com/watch?v=sTaITDkai1I.
36 Neil Postman, *Amusing ourselves to Death* (USA, Viking Penguin, 1985).
37 Wong zing mei zi zi黃靜美智子, "在廢托邦築樂園: Per Se十年的變與不變. 願音樂可上太空：沒有想過放棄Per Se, (Building a paradise in dystopia: The change and non-change of Per Se in the last ten years. Hoping their music could go to space. Never thought of giving up), *Ming Pao Weekly*, August 12, 2022, www.mpweekly.com/culture/%E8%97%9D%E6%96%87/per-se-per-se-%E6%96%B0%E6%AD%8C-%E7%AB%8A%E7%AB%8A%E8%A9%A9-209418, www.mpweekly.com/culture.
38 Quoted from Zeng Jau-zing, 鄭又禎, "潘源良x鍾永豐：香港粵語與台灣客語，如何用「自己的語言」寫流行歌？(Poon Yuen Leung x Chung Yung Fang: Hong Kong Cantonese and Taiwan Hakka. How to use 'one's own language' to write popular songs?)," *The Initium*, August 14, 2022, https://theinitium.com/article/20220814-culture-poon-and-chung-dialogue-pop-music-lyrics.
39 Wong Zing Mei Zi Zi 黃靜美智子.
40 Charmaine Fong, "假使世界原來不像你預期 (If it turns out that the world is not as you had expected)," music and lyrics by Charmaine Fong, Strawberry Fields, 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=4sg-K53kODE.
41 WongZing MeiZiZi黃靜美智子.
42 Sebastian Veg, "Creating a textual public space: Slogans and texts from Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 75, no. 3 (2016): 673–702: 699, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911816000565.
43 Michel Foucault most notably studies how dominance is asserted through creation of particular discourses and institutions that have the power to define, for example, madness, sexual deviation, or criminality. To diffuse or disassemble these definitions is a way to destabilize such power.

References

Baaz, Mikael, Mona Lilja, Michael Schulz, and Stellan Vinthagen. "Defining and analyzing 'Resistance': Possible entrances to the study of subversive practices." *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 41, no. 3 (2016): 137–153: 139, https://doi.org/10.1177/0304375417700170.

Bayat, Asef. “From ‘Dangerous Classes’ to ‘Quiet Rebels’: Politics of urban subaltern in the Global South.” *International Sociology* 15, no. 3 (2000): 533–557. doi:10.1177/026858000015003005.

Chow, Vivienne. “The rise and fall of Canto-pop and, with it, Hong Kong’s cultural identity.” *South China Morning Post*, January 5, 2018. www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/2126956/rise-and-fall-canto-pop-and-it-hong-kongs-cultural-identity.

Chu, Stephen Yiu-wai. *Before and after the Fall: Mapping Hong Kong Cantopop in the Global Era*. Hong Kong: LEWI Working Paper Series 63 (2007). https://scholars.hkbu.edu.hk/ws/portalfiles/portal/55416356/RO_lewi_wp-10.pdf.

Chu, Stephen Yiu-wai. *Lost in Translation: Hong Kong Culture in the Age of China*. New York: SUNY Press, 2013.

Colebrook, Claire. “The politics and potential of everyday life.” *New Literary History* 33, no. 4 (2002): 687–706. http://doi.org:10.1353/NLH.2002.0036.

Dapiran, Antony. “Hong Kong’s Reckoning.” Golley, Jaivin, Hillman & Strange Edits., *China Dreams*, Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2020. Accessed December 12, 2022. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv12sdxmk.9.

De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

Dung Kai-Cheung, *在世界中寫作, 為世界而 寫 (Writing in the World, Writing for the World*). Taipei: Lianjing chuban shiyegongsi, 2011.

Fong, Charmaine. “假使世界原來不像你預期 (If it turns out that the world is not as you had expected).” Music and lyrics by Charmaine Fong. Strawberry Fields, 2019. www.youtube.com/watch?v=4sg-K53kODE.

“Freedom in the world, 2022.” https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world.

Gutmann, Matthew C. “Rituals of resistance: A critique of the theory of everyday forms of resistance,” *Latin American Perspectives* 20, no. 2 (1993): 74–92. https://doi.org/:10.1177/0094582X9302000206.

Ho, Denise. “如何成為宅男女神 (How to become an Otaku goddess)?” 菇武門*Gumoumun*, Episode 39. September 6, 2020. Podcast, 120.0. www.youtube.com/watch?v=tIGFlNopFYU).

“Hong Kong: National Security Law has created a human rights emergency.” *Amnesty International*, June 30, 2021. www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/06/hong-kong-national-security-law-has-created-a-human-rights-emergency-2/.

“Hong Kong students must ‘love motherland’ under new values curriculum.” *South China Morning Post*, November 30, 2021. www.scmp.com/yp/discover/news/hong-kong/article/3157978/hong-kong-students-must-love-motherland-under-new-values.

Hong Kong Tourism Commission. *Facts and Statistics*. www.tourism.gov.hk/en/tourism-statistics.php.

Hung Ho-Fung. *City on the Edge: Hong Kong Under Chinese Rule*. UK: Cambridge University Press, 2022.

Krischer, Olivier. “Thinking of art as informal life politics in Hong Kong.” Tessa Morris-Suzuki and Eun Jeong Soh Edits., *New Worlds from Below: Informal Life Politics and Grassroots Action in Twenty-First-Century Northeast Asia*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2017. https://doi.org/10.22459/nwfb.03.2017.08.

Lam, Jeffie. “Hongkonger’ makes it to world stage with place in the Oxford English Dictionary.” *South China Morning Post*, March 19, 2014. www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1451929/finally-hongkonger-arrives-world-stage.

Leung Chun-ying. *Policy Address*, 2013. www.policyaddress.gov.hk/2013/eng/.

Lie, John. *K-Pop: Popular Music, Cultural Amnesia, and Economic Innovation in South Korea*. California: University of California Press, 2014.

Ma, Eric Kit-wai and Ma and Chieh-Wei. *Culture, Politics, and Television in Hong Kong*. UK: Routledge, 1999.

Masse, Kaper. "Popular culture, 'Resistance,' 'Cultural Radicalism,' and 'Self-Formation'. Comments on the development of a theory: Subjects, representations, contexts." Martin Butler, Paul Mecheril and Lea Brenningmeyer Edits., *Resistance*. Transcript Verlag, 2017. http://DOI:10.14361/9783839431498-004.

McCarthy, Niall. "Fewer people in Hong Kong tend to identify as Chinese." *Statista*, September 9, 2019. www.statista.com/chart/19186/would-you-identify-yourself-as-a-hongkonger-or-chinese/.

"Mulan: Why Disney's latest reboot is facing boycott calls." *BBC* online, September 4, 2020. www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-54024810.

Ng, Janet. *Paradigm City: Space, Culture and Capitalism in Hong Kong*. New York: SUNY, 2009.

Per Se, featuring Serrini. "粉碎糖果屋 (Hansel and Gretel)." Music by Per Se, lyrics by Serrini, Frenzi Music Limited, 2020, www.youtube.com/watch?v=FjS50ATT1v0.

Pickett, Brent L. "Foucault and the politics of resistance." *Polity* 28, no. 4 (1996): 445–466: 464.

Postman, Neil. *Amusing Ourselves to Death.* USA: Viking Penguin, 1985.

Roach, Stephen. "It pains me to say Hong Kong is over." *Financial Times*, February 12, 2024. www.ft.com/stream/b8e1a08c-1c66-3235-b074-a90d8a482f71.

Ross, Kristin. *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988.

Scott, James C. "Rituals of resistance: A critique of the theory of everyday forms of resistance: Reply." *Latin American Perspectives* 20, no. 2 (1993): 93–94. www.jstor.org/stable/2633595.

Slobodian, Quinn. *Crack-Up Capitalism: Market Radicals and the Dream of a World Without Democracy*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003.

Vasquez, Ian and Tanja Porčnik. *The Human Freedom Index*, 2018. www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/human-freedom-index-2018.pdf.

Vasquez, Ian, et al. *The Human Freedom Index: A Global Measurement of Personal, Civil and Economic Freedoms,* 2022. www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/human-freedom-index-2022.pdf.

Veg, Sebastian. "Creating a textual public space: Slogans and texts from Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 75, no. 3 (2016): 673–702: 699. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911816000565.

Wongzing meizizi黃靜美智子. "在廢托邦築樂園: Per Se十年的變與不變. 願音樂可上太空：沒有想過放棄Per Se, (Building a paradise in dystopia: The change and non-change of Per Se in the last ten years. Hoping their music could go to space. Never thought of giving up)." *Ming Pao Weekly*, August 12, 2022. www.mpweekly.com/culture.

Yang Zhenfei, "Survey: More Hong Kong people feel they are both 'Hongkongers' and 'Chinese'." *TYR*, June 22, 2021. https://tyr-jour.hkbu.edu.hk/2021/06/22/survey-more-hong-kong-people-feel-they-are-both-hongkongers-and-chinese/.

Yew Chiew Ping and Kwong Kin-ming. "Hong Kong identity on the rise." *Asian Survey* 54, no. 6 (2014): 1088–1112: 1102–3. https://doi.org/:10.1525/as.2014.54.6.1088.

Zeng Jau-zing, 鄭又禎. "潘源良x鍾永豐：香港粵語與台灣客語，如何用「自己的語言」寫流行歌？(Poon Yuen Leung x Chung Yung Fang: Hong Kong Cantonese and Taiwan Hakka. How to use 'one's own language' to write popular songs?)." *The Initium*, August 14, 2022. https://theinitium.com/article/20220814-culture-poon-and-chung-dialogue-pop-music-lyrics.

"且讓我們娛樂至死 (Let us amuse ourselves to death)." 哲學有偈傾 (There's much to talk about in philosophy). RTHK. November 9, 2020. Video, 52.05. www.archive.org/details/philosophynight2020.