

A C K B A R A B B A S

Hong Kong

*Culture and the
Politics of Disappearance*



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1

Introduction: Culture in a Space of Disappearance

Living in interesting times is a dubious advantage, in fact, a curse according to an old Chinese saying. Interesting times are periods of violent transitions and uncertainty. People in Hong Kong, faced with the prospect of 1997, clearly live in interesting times. The city's history has always followed an unexpected course—from fishing village to British colony to global city to one of China's Special Administrative Regions, from 1 July 1997, onward. "With cities, it is as with dreams: everything imaginable can be dreamed," Italo Calvino's *Marco Polo* asserts, in a remark strikingly apropos of Hong Kong. "But even the most unexpected dream is a rebus that conceals a desire or, its reverse, a fear."¹ Cultural forms, too, can perhaps also be regarded as a rebus that projects a city's desires and fears, although it is likely to be a rebus of a particularly complex kind. This book concerns the manifold relations between cultural forms in Hong Kong—particularly cinema, architecture, and writing—and the changing cultural space of the city. It will not give a general and exhaustive survey of these cultural forms but will use them to pursue a particular theme: the cultural self-invention of the Hong Kong subject in a cultural space that I will be calling a space of disappearance.

Any discussion of Hong Kong culture must sooner or later raise the question of its relation to colonialism. But *colonialism*, at least in Hong

Kong, is less an explanatory term than a term that needs explaining. There are a number of factors specific to Hong Kong that must be considered in a discussion of colonialism. For example, in contrast to other colonial cities (say, in India, Africa, or South America) Hong Kong has no precolonial past to speak of. It is true that in a sense Hong Kong did have a history before 1841, when it was ceded to the British; there are records of human settlement on the island going back at least to the Sung dynasty; but the history of Hong Kong, in terms that are relevant to what it has become today, has effectively been a history of colonialism. Another point to note is that while 98 percent of the population is ethnic Chinese, history (both colonial history and history on the mainland) has seen to it that the Hong Kong Chinese are now culturally and politically quite distinct from mainlanders; two peoples separated by a common ethnicity, a first example of disappearance. This has produced many instances of mutual mistrust and misunderstanding, with one side demonizing the other. It is not true, as some might wish to believe, that if you scratch the surface of a Hong Kong person you will find a Chinese identity waiting to be reborn. The Hong Kong person is now a bird of a different feather, perhaps a kind of Maltese Falcon. This suggests that 1997 will not be simply the moment of liberation from colonial rule; it will also mark a moment of transition to a form of governance that has no clear historical precedents.

Besides these already quite complex local and specific factors that are relevant to colonialism in Hong Kong, there are also wider issues to bear in mind, particularly the fact that on a world scale colonialism itself is a changing paradigm that takes one form in the era of imperialism and a different and more paradoxical form in the era of globalism. The original title of this book was *The Last Emporium*, a title that calls attention, perhaps a little too obliquely, to this changing paradigm in relation to Hong Kong. It points not only to the end of empire, to the fact that Hong Kong is formally one of Britain's last colonies in the old-fashioned sense; it is also meant to suggest more indirectly that the end of empire does not mean the end of capitalism (of which imperialism was one manifestation), merely that capitalism has entered a new phase. In other words, 1997 will not mark the double demise of capitalism and colonialism. The last emporium will be, and in fact already has been, replaced by other forms produced by a mutation in the capitalist system. Such a mutation has been variously described. For example, Scott Lash and John Urry see it as a movement from "organised capitalism" to what they call "disorganised capital," while Manuel Castells thinks of it as a movement toward the space of flows of the "informational city."² Most accounts, however, put the stress on the

fluidity, flexibility, and decentralized nature of the new form of capital. The Hong Kong economy has benefited very much from these developments that have allowed it to change from a trading post in the nineteenth century to its present position as a premier financial center of Southeast Asia, from a colonial city to a global city.

In this respect, the intriguing argument put forward by Anthony King of a connection between the colonial city and the global city deserves serious consideration. He points out that it is colonialism itself that has pioneered methods of incorporating precapitalist, preindustrial, and non-European societies into the world economy and found ways of dealing with ethnically, racially, and culturally different societies. The surprising consequence of this "historically significant phenomenon" is that "colonial cities can be viewed as the *forerunners* of what the contemporary capitalist world city would eventually become."³ One of the implications of this argument is that *colonialism* in a number of instances is the surprising middle term that allows imperialism to make the leap to globalism. It is imperialism that produces by definition the colonial city, but the colonial city can also prefigure the global city. The rise of globalism spells the end of the old empires, but not before the offsprings of these empires, the previous colonial cities, have been primed to perform well as global cities. This makes it possible to explain why, with the end of imperialism, colonialism could take a global form, and why it could decisively abandon the old imperial attitudes and even take on benign characteristics, as in the case of Hong Kong, thus seeming to contradict more orthodox understandings of colonialism as necessarily exploitative. The presence of these strange historical loops implies a more complex kind of colonial space produced by the unclear breaks and unclear connections between imperialism and globalism, which is how colonialism in Hong Kong must now be considered. This in turn has important consequences for the study of Hong Kong culture: culture in Hong Kong cannot just be related to "colonialism"; it must be related to this changed and changing space, this colonial space of disappearance, which in many respects does not resemble the old colonialisms at all.

There is, however, yet another factor to consider. Just at the moment in the late seventies and early eighties when Hong Kong seemed to have successfully remade itself into a global city, the situation took a new turn. It was at this juncture that China reclaimed Hong Kong, as if it were a new Atlantis. In 1984, with the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration returning Hong Kong to Chinese rule in 1997, the long goodbye of Britain to its "last emporium" began in earnest. It is with cultural changes taking

place in Hong Kong during this critical period, intimately related to social and political changes, that we will be concerned. It is possible to think of this period as a period when an "older" but still operative politics of national legitimacy and geophysical boundaries comes into conflict with a "newer" politics of global flows, information, and the devalorization of physical boundaries. But it is also possible to think of the period as a time when categories like "old" and "new" lose some of their force, as the old forms are placed in new configurations. This amounts to saying that the cultural space of Hong Kong now presents us with a number of unusual and even paradoxical features, some of which I shall try to describe in a preliminary way.

To begin with, there is the uneasy relationship between remaining content with a "floating" identity that has served Hong Kong so well in the past, and the need to establish something more definite in response to current political exigencies. Hong Kong has up to quite recently been a city of transients. Much of the population was made up of refugees or expatriates who thought of Hong Kong as a temporary stop, no matter how long they stayed. The sense of the temporary is very strong, even if it can be entirely counterfactual. The city is not so much a place as a space of transit. It has always been, and will perhaps always be, a port in the most literal sense—a doorway, a point in between—even though the nature of the port has changed. A port city that used to be located at the intersections of different spaces, Hong Kong will increasingly be at the intersections of different times or speeds. There are already signs of this happening. It is not by accident that the largest current project is the construction of the new airport on Lantau, one of Hong Kong's outlying islands. When completed, the airport will be a kind of city within a city, but a city without citizens, a semiotic or informational city populated by travelers and service personnel. For the port mentality, everything is provisional, ad hoc; everything floats—currencies, values, human relations. But such a mentality was only viable before anxieties over 1997, and before events at Tiananmen 1989. Now faced with the uncomfortable possibility of an alien identity about to be imposed on it from China, Hong Kong is experiencing a kind of last-minute collective search for a more definite identity.

A second observation on Hong Kong's cultural space concerns what I would like to call decadence and its relationship to the development of Hong Kong culture. There is something about Hong Kong's famous "energy and vitality" that could be related to decadence—a useful concept once it is shorn of all moralistic and *fin de siècle* overtones. The energy here is an energy that gets largely channeled into one direction: that is

what I understand by decadence. One of the effects of a very efficient colonial administration is that it provides almost no outlet for political idealism (until perhaps quite recently); as a result, most of the energy is directed toward the economic sphere. Historical imagination, the citizens' belief that they might have a hand in shaping their own history, gets replaced by speculation on the property or stock markets, or by an obsession with fashion or consumerism. If you cannot choose your political leaders, you can at least choose your own clothes. We find therefore not an atmosphere of doom and gloom, but the more paradoxical phenomenon of *doom and boom*: the more frustrated or blocked the aspirations to "democracy" are, the more the market booms. By the same logic, the only form of political idealism that has a chance is that which can go together with economic self-interest, when "freedom," for example, could be made synonymous with the "free market." This, I believe, is how one can understand the unprecedented mass demonstrations over the Tiananmen Massacre by the hundreds of thousands of the middle class who had never before marched in the streets. June 1989 in Hong Kong was a rare moment when economic self-interest could so easily misrecognize itself as political idealism. There was certainly genuine emotion and outrage, which does not preclude the possibility that many of the marchers were moved by how much they were moved. In any event, the patriotic fervor in most cases was short-lived and without political outcome. In the aftermath to Tiananmen, amazingly complacent bumper stickers appeared for a while decorating the automobiles of the bourgeoisie, which read: "Motoring in dignity, for freedom and democracy." If the situation I have been describing can be called decadent, it is decadent not in the sense of decline (because we see what looks like progress everywhere) but in the sense of a one-dimensional development in a closed field. It is such decadence that has made it difficult to recognize the existence of a Hong Kong culture.

A third point involves the strange dialectic between autonomy and dependency that we see in Hong Kong's relation both to Britain and China. The end of British rule in Hong Kong and the passing of sovereignty back into the hands of China is not a simple return of Chinese territory to the Chinese. Ironically, it is Hong Kong's colonial history, the only history it has known and a history that cannot be forgotten overnight, that has distanced Hong Kong culturally and politically from China and that will make their relationship not simply one of reunification. When sovereignty reverts to China, we may expect to find a situation that is quasi-colonial, but with an important historical twist: the colonized state, while politically subordinate, is in many other crucial respects *not* in a dependent sub-

altern position but is in fact more advanced—in terms of education, technology, access to international networks, and so forth—than the colonizing state. This amounts to saying that colonialism will not merely be Hong Kong's chronic condition; it will be accompanied by displaced chronologies or achronicities. Such a situation may well be unprecedented in the history of colonialism, and it might justify the use of the term *postcoloniality* in a special sense: a postcoloniality that precedes decolonization. Some foreshadowings are already evident in Hong Kong's present relation to Britain: it is the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank that has recently taken over the British Midlands Bank and not vice versa. As for China, administering the Hong Kong "special administrative region" after 1997 may be for the Chinese authorities a little like handling a gadget from the future. For example, one of the hiccups about the new airport, besides the huge cost, is anxiety on the Chinese side about whether they will be able to handle the extremely high-tech sophistication of the project. The historical ironies will only become more accentuated as China continues on its reformist course, as it looks likely to do, making the formula of "one country, two systems" so much more easy to dismantle: what we will find will not be two systems (socialist, capitalist) but one system at different stages of development—a difference in times and speeds.

Finally, perhaps the most striking feature of all about Hong Kong's cultural space today is the radically changed status of culture itself. One of the effects of colonialism was that until as late as the seventies, Hong Kong did not realize it could have a culture. The import mentality saw culture, like everything else, as that which came from elsewhere: from Chinese tradition, more legitimately located in mainland China and Taiwan, or from the West. As for Hong Kong, it was, in a favorite phrase, "a cultural desert." Not that there was nothing going on in cinema, architecture, and writing; it was just not recognized to be culture as such. This refusal to see what is there is an example of reverse hallucination, or what Sigmund Freud in his essay on Wilhelm Jensen's "Gradiva" called "negative hallucination." If hallucination means seeing ghosts and apparitions, that is, something that is not there, reverse hallucination means *not* seeing what *is* there. Thus Norbert Hanold the archaeologist, obsessed with the Greek statue Gradiva who walks with a particular gait, cannot see the living woman Zoe Bertgang: "Hanold, who . . . had the gift of 'negative hallucination,' who possessed the art of not seeing and not recognizing people who were actually present."⁴ What changed the largely negative attitude to Hong Kong culture was not just Hong Kong's growing affluence; more important, it was the double trauma of the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration of

1984 followed by the Tiananmen Massacre of 1989. These two events confirmed a lot of people's fears that the Hong Kong way of life with its mixture of colonialist and democratic trappings was in imminent danger of disappearing. "Anything about which one knows that one soon will not have it around becomes an image," Walter Benjamin wrote.⁵ The imminence of its disappearance, I would argue, was what precipitated an intense and unprecedented interest in Hong Kong culture. The anticipated end of Hong Kong as people knew it was the beginning of a profound concern with its historical and cultural specificity. But then the cause of this interest in Hong Kong culture—1997—may also cause its demise. The change in status of culture in Hong Kong can be described as follows: from reverse hallucination, which sees only desert, to a culture of disappearance, whose appearance is posited on the imminence of its disappearance.

These remarks can be compared with some points that Fredric Jameson makes toward the end of his essay on postmodernism about the new status of culture in relation to social life today:

Everything in the previous discussion suggests that what we have been calling postmodernism is inseparable from, and unthinkable without the hypothesis of, some fundamental mutation of the sphere of culture in the world of late capitalism, which includes a momentous modification of its social function. . . . Yet to argue that culture is today no longer endowed with the relative autonomy it once enjoyed as one level among others in earlier moments of capitalism (let alone in precapitalist societies) is not necessarily to imply its disappearance or extinction. Quite the contrary; we must go on to affirm that the dissolution of an autonomous sphere of culture is rather to be imagined in terms of an explosion: a prodigious expansion of culture throughout the social realm, to the point at which everything in our social life—from economic value and state power to practices and to the very structure of the psyche itself—can be said to have become "cultural" in some original and yet untheorized sense.⁶

In the case of Hong Kong, there has indeed been "an expansion of culture throughout the social realm" amounting to an "explosion." We are witnessing certainly not the disappearance of culture, but "some original and yet untheorized" form of culture, what I propose to describe as *a culture of disappearance*. This requires a preliminary word of explanation.

In the first place, disappearance here does not imply nonappearance, absence, or lack of presence. It is not even nonrecognition—it is more a question of misrecognition, of recognizing a thing as something else. One of the clearest examples, if one can put it this way, of this first sense of dis-

appearance is what we have discussed as reverse hallucination, which as we shall see in subsequent chapters is not restricted to an earlier phase of Hong Kong culture but is still with us today. There is something very definite about dis-appearance, a kind of pathology of presence. This brings us to our second point about disappearance, its relationship to representation, including questions of self-representation. For example, if Hong Kong is now a focus of attention because its very existence is under threat, nevertheless, the way the city has been made to appear in many representations in fact works to make it disappear, most perniciously through the use of old binaries like East-West "differences." We will see many instances of this in cinema, architecture, and writing, where disappearance is not a matter of effacement but of replacement and substitution, where the perceived danger is recontained through representations that are familiar and plausible. But there is also a third sense of disappearance that we find in the innovative examples of Hong Kong culture, which accounts to a large extent for why Hong Kong cultural productions today are in a position to be so provocative and exciting to an international audience: we only have to think of filmmakers like Stanley Kwan and Wong Kar-wai. This third aspect of disappearance consists of developing techniques of disappearance that respond to, without being absorbed by, a space of disappearance. These are not techniques that go against disappearance; they cannot even be usefully thought of in terms of "critical strategies of resistance." Rather, it is a question of working with disappearance and taking it elsewhere, of using disappearance to deal with disappearance. For example, if reverse hallucination is the problem, then Stanley Kwan will use the figure of a ghost in his film *Rouge* to reverse these reversals. If visual representations make images disappear in clichés, it will be a matter of inventing a form of visuality that problematizes the visual, as in the films of Wong Kar-wai.

It is also possible to situate the concept of disappearance that I am developing in terms of textual, social, and urban theory, which will allow us to touch on three other aspects of this elusive concept: its relation to the ephemeral, to speed, and to abstraction.

We can introduce the relation of disappearance to the ephemeral by considering Louis Aragon's novel *Paris Peasant*, a text that so impressed Benjamin. Speaking about the Paris arcades that were fast disappearing as a result of modern city planning in terms that would seem at first sight quite relevant to present-day Hong Kong, he wrote: "It is only today, when the pickaxe menaces them, that they have at last become the true sanctuaries of a cult of the ephemeral. . . . Places that were incomprehensible yester-

day, and that tomorrow will never know."⁷ What Aragon calls the cult of the ephemeral is a mode of attention directed at a disappearing space, a way of understanding what he called "the disquieting atmosphere of places . . . peopled with unrecognised sphinxes." This would lead to an allegorical reading of space that attends not only to what is there but also to what is no longer or not yet there. The sense of the ephemeral that might have still sufficed for Paris in the 1920s, however, can no longer deal with the kinds of changes that take place in present-day Hong Kong, where we come across phenomena that do not merely disturb our sense of time but that completely upset and reverse it. For example, the apparently permanent—like buildings and even whole towns—can be temporary, while the temporary—like abode in Hong Kong—could be very permanent.

To explain phenomena like these, we need something more than Aragon's cult of the ephemeral or the reflective looking before and after of allegory. We need something like Paul Virilio's argument about the relation of disappearance to speed, the kind of speed that comes in the wake of electronic technology and the mediatization of the real, and the spatial distortions produced by this kind of speed. In *The Lost Dimension*, Virilio describes how under conditions of speed our concept of physical dimensions loses all meaning through sensory overload, the fusion and confusion of the fast and the slow, the absence of transition between the big and the small. The result is the breakdown of the analogical in favor of the digital, the preference for the abstract dot (the pixel) over the analogical line, plane, or solid. "In this most recent experience of space that upsets the order of the visible that began in the Quattrocento," Virilio writes, "we are directly or indirectly witnessing a kind of tele-conquest of appearance."⁸ Disappearance then is a consequence of speed.

We come finally to the relation between disappearance and abstraction that is implied in Henri Lefebvre's concept of social space.⁹ We can approach the argument through Virilio. One consequence of the "tele-conquest of appearance" is that something happens to our experience of space. It becomes more varied and multifarious, oversaturated with signs and images, at the same time as it becomes more abstract and ungraspable. This brings us to the relation between disappearance and abstraction, to abstraction as the contemporary mode of disappearance. Consider as one aspect of this problematic the status of the image. The more abstract the space, the more important the image becomes (a point the Situationists also made), and the more dominant becomes the visual as a mode. This relation between abstraction and the image, however, must be understood in a specific way. The image is not a compensation for abstraction, an ame-

lioration of its lack of the concrete; rather, it is the "concrete" form that abstraction now takes, what Lefebvre calls a "concrete abstraction." This paradox of a "richness" and "concreteness" that go together with abstraction is also the paradox of disappearance, which we can now suggest is of crucial importance to an understanding of social space, in Hong Kong as much as elsewhere.

If disappearance problematizes representation, it also problematizes self-representation. A central issue that Hong Kong culture implicitly or explicitly poses is the question of subjectivity in a space of disappearance. What happens to our subjectivity under these conditions? The problem is usually posed more misleadingly as a question of "Hong Kong identity" or "postcolonial identity."

In the case of Hong Kong, and for reasons already given, postcoloniality can only be understood in a nonliteralist sense. Postcoloniality does not take the physical departure of the colonial power (or even the subject's own departure) as its point of origin, just as colonialism in its effects does not end with the signing of a treaty. Postcoloniality begins, it has already begun, when subjects find themselves thinking and acting in a certain way; in other words, postcoloniality is a tactic and a practice, not a legal-political contract, or a historical accident. It means finding ways of operating under a set of difficult conditions that threatens to appropriate us as subjects, an appropriation that can work just as well by way of acceptance as it can by rejection. Dealing with such conditions may involve, for example, thinking about emigration in a certain way, emigration not in the diasporic sense of finding another space, of relocating, with all the pathos of departure, but in the sense of remaking a given space that for whatever reason one cannot leave, of dis-locating—emigration, that is to say, before the exit visas have been issued. In this regard, it is worth considering Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's distinction between the nomad and the migrant. The nomad, they point out, is essentially different from the migrant who moves *elsewhere*, while it is

false to define the nomad by movement. [Arnold] Toynbee is profoundly right to suggest that the nomad is on the contrary *he who does not move*. Whereas the migrant leaves behind a milieu that has become amorphous or hostile, the nomad is one who does not depart, does not want to depart, who clings to the smooth space left by the receding forest, where the steppe or the desert advance, and who invents nomadism as a response to this challenge.¹⁰

Migrant and nomad are two very different forms of disappearance and different ways of dealing with it.

Another problem with the question of postcolonial identity in Hong Kong is that it cannot be usefully posed by taking our bearings from the old binarisms (like the difference between "East" and "West," "tradition" and "modernity," and other similarly moldy chestnuts)—if for no other reason because the local and the global are becoming more and more intimately imbricated with each other. In fact, the available binarisms tend to confuse more than they clarify questions of identity. To take one example, Hong Kong culture cannot simply mean focusing on Hong Kong as a subject, laudable as that may be, in an attempt to fathom the mysteries of its identity. What is both culturally and politically more important is the development of a new Hong Kong subjectivity, that is, a subjectivity constructed not narcissistically but in the very process of negotiating the mutations and permutations of colonialism, nationalism, and capitalism. Anything short of such a subjectivity and all that we will ever find will be predictable variations of discourses on "Western images of Hong Kong this and that," compendia of orientalist kitsch produced by compradorist mentalities. It should be noted, too, that this new subjectivity that we are trying to describe and invent at the same time is not a mere psychologicistic category. It is, rather, an affective, political, and social category all at once. It is, I am trying to suggest, a subjectivity that is coaxed into being by the disappearance of old cultural bearings and orientations, which is to say that it is a subjectivity that develops precisely out of a space of disappearance.

Let me turn now to three options, which are really three temptations, that seem to hold out the promise of overcoming the colonial condition, none of which goes far enough: the temptation of the local, the marginal, the cosmopolitan, or what we might call the fallacies of three worldism, two worldism, and one worldism. In each case, some off-the-shelf identity impedes the movement of subjectivity.

It is easy to understand the temptation of the local. Devalued, ignored or subordinated under the hegemonic regimes, the local is now reasserted as a mark of independence. However much one sympathizes with such an attitude (and it is an attitude and not yet a position), there are certain real difficulties involved. One difficulty is related to the fact that the history of colonialism has a hangover effect. What Frantz Fanon and others have analyzed as the psychic mutilations and self-mutilations produced by a colonial episteme do not vanish overnight; a postcolonial subjectivity is not developed without a struggle. For example, the "local" in Hong Kong is

not just a matter of adopting Cantonese, the local dialect, instead of English, for the simple reason that the colonialist mentality can find expression in Cantonese just as well as in English. The local is not so easily localized; it is not so much what language we use, as what we use language for. The difficulty with the local, therefore, is in locating it, and this is particularly tricky in a place like Hong Kong with its significant proportion of refugees, migrants, and transients, all of whom could claim local status. Or take the example of architecture: what is local architecture? Is it the Chinese nineteenth-century-style domestic buildings, some of which still exist in the less overbuilt parts of the territory? Or is it the colonial-style monuments like the old Supreme Court building in the Central District, whose preservation is a rare concession to Hong Kong history, that is, history as nostalgia? Or is it also something else that has not yet been perceived and certainly not celebrated as local: the ubiquitous slab-like buildings that represent a local interpretation of the modernist idea of "form follows function" to mean putting up the cheapest, most cost-effective buildings, the minimalism of modernism translated as the maximum in profit margins? What I am suggesting is that the local is *already a translation* (and this is true not only in the last-mentioned case), so that the question of the local cannot be separated from the question of cultural translation itself.

Another temptation for the postcolonial is the lure of the marginal, one version of which is the argument that Jean-François Lyotard makes in *The Postmodern Condition* about little narratives, local knowledge, and paralogies as so many strategies for resisting the master discourses, scientific and legitimated, of the center. In Lyotard's well-known argument, the scientist, operating from the center, questions the "narrative statements" that are on the margins of knowledge and concludes "that they are never subject to argumentation or proof [and hence are not legitimate]. . . . This unequal relationship is an intrinsic effect of the rules specific to each game. We all know its symptoms. It is the entire history of cultural imperialism from the dawn of Western civilization."¹¹ As this last comment indicates, marginality in Lyotard is the positive link between the postmodern and the postcolonial. As a figure for the self-invention of the postcolonial subject, however, marginality is of doubtful value, an avant-garde romance. First of all, there is a mechanism by which the center can acknowledge and defuse the marginal, namely, by the mechanism of the token. The marginal is acknowledged as a token and so placed and stabilized. Furthermore, the discourse of marginality runs the constant risk of reifying the opposition between margin and center. The marginal then becomes what Jean Baudrillard calls a form of deterrence that reconfirms the center as center,

not a form of resistance or a movement elsewhere.¹² Marginality does not necessarily shake up the center or initiate a process of decentering. It merely exercises the center and in so doing strengthens it, by providing a form of political isometrics.

Let me turn now to the model of cosmopolitanism, which for the post-colonial may be the most tempting figure of all. It offers the hope of breaking away from local ghettos and entering the world in full cultural equality. An essay by Ulf Hannerz distinguishes the cosmopolitan from the tourist, the exile, and the expatriate.¹³ Hannerz represents cosmopolitanism positively as a state of mind, consisting largely of an interest in and a toleration for otherness, and concludes that such a stance is indispensable at a time of "one world culture." This is a slippery phrase, and we have only to turn to Jorge Luis Borges's classic essay "The Argentine Writer and Tradition" to see both the ambiguity and allure of cosmopolitanism for a postcolonial subject. Borges begins with an ironic argument against localism. He quotes an observation by Edward Gibbon in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* to the effect that in the Koran, the most Arabian of Arabian books, there are no camels:

I believe if there were any doubts as to the authenticity of the Koran, this absence of camels would be sufficient to prove it is an Arabian work. It was written by Mohammed, and Mohammed, as an Arab, had no reason to know that camels were especially Arabian; for him they were a part of reality, he had no reason to emphasize them; on the other hand, the first thing a falsifier, a tourist, an Arab nationalist would do is have a surfeit of camels, caravans of camels, on every page.¹⁴

By contrast, the fallacy of localism is "the idea that Argentine poetry should abound in differential Argentine traits and Argentine local colour."

As an example of poetry representative of Argentine national culture, Borges cites the sonnets in Enrique Banchs's *La Urna*, specifically the lines "the sun shines on the slanting roof / and on the windows. Nightingales / try to say they are in love." Borges points out immediately that in the suburbs of Buenos Aires, the roofs are flat not slanting, while the nightingale is a thoroughly compromised literary image, not a real bird:

However, I would say that in the use of these conventional images, in these anomalous roofs and nightingales, Argentine architecture and ornithology are of course absent, but we do find in them the Argentine's reticence, his constraint; the fact that Banchs, when speaking of this great suffering, which overwhelms him, when speaking of this woman who has left him and

has left the world empty for him, should have recourse to foreign and conventional images like slanted roofs and nightingales, is significant: significant of Argentine reserve, distrust and reticence, of the difficulty we have in making confessions, in revealing our intimate nature.

Borges scores a point here against simplistic, unmediated notions of the local.

What is dubious, however, is the conclusion that follows: "I believe our tradition is all of Western culture, and I also believe we have a right to this tradition, greater than that which the inhabitants of one or another Western nation might have." In trying to avoid the narrow philistinism of the local, Borges falls into the trap of an optimistic universalism of the cosmopolitan. Is it coincidence that Buenos Aires is also a port city like Hong Kong? In any case, such universalism sees all culture as one in a utopian assertion of equality, but such an assertion tends to ignore or forget the unequal historical conditions of cultural production and reception. What Hannerz puts together in the portmanteau phrase "one world culture" needs separating: world culture (globalism) is not the same as one culture (with its implication that everyone has an equal place).

The ambiguity of the figures of the native, the marginal, and the cosmopolitan as figures of the postcolonial serves to remind us of the problems of representation. In an attempt to appear as a subject in these figures, the postcolonial in fact disappears in these representations and self-representations. This is because these representations of the postcolonial are by now too stable, and a process of immunization has already set in against their power to provoke or to redefine institutional parameters. These representations are now absorbed in the system of signification of the colonial imaginary, and they have no power to shake up that imaginary. Disappearance does not just intentionally wipe out the possibility of postcolonial identity: what is significant is how this wiping out is done. It can wipe out identity precisely by *conferring* plausible identities on the postcolonial—like the native, the marginal, the cosmopolitan. A culture of disappearance gives us identities to take away our subjectivity, emotions to take away our affectivity, a voice to take away representation. However, and this is the interesting point, such a situation can be turned against itself: the wiping out of identity may not be an entirely negative thing, *if it can be taken far enough*. Not all identities are worth preserving. This is to say that disappearance is not only a threat—it is also an opportunity. The moment of asignification when models of identity disappear is also the moment when a postcolonial subject is invented—although the dangers of

such a game should not be underestimated. There is one essential condition, however, that must be there if the postcolonial subject is not to be reabsorbed and assimilated: it must not be another stable appearance, another stable identity. It must learn how to survive a culture of disappearance by adopting strategies of disappearance as its own, by giving disappearance itself a different inflection. Making a virtue out of necessity—this could be a working definition of strategy.

The very process of negotiating the mutations and permutations of colonialism, nationalism, and capitalism would require the development of new cultural strategies. Where then can these strategies be found? They will have to be in the new Hong Kong cinema, in certain kinds of writing, in ways of understanding urban space, in theoretically and empirically informed discourses on Hong Kong. This book is not intended to be a survey of Hong Kong culture that tries to include as much as possible; rather, it is intended as a study of Hong Kong culture in a space of disappearance. My subject is a specific cultural space that I hope to evoke through a discussion of cultural forms and practices.

A brief word about method. It is not immediately obvious, even to myself, that every text I have chosen to discuss—whether film, building, or writing—merits close attention. But this is very much the nature of the enterprise, that in the space I am evoking the distinction between the meritorious and the meretricious is frequently indiscernible. Very often, I can develop the hints of what I find to be fascinating in my chosen texts only by first bracketing the question of merit. Nevertheless, we should remember that it was precisely by setting aside the question of merit that Sigfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin were able to develop the crucial concept of *distraction* as a means of opening up to analysis the problematic cultural space of their own time.¹⁵ In their hands, distraction was not an idealization of absent-mindedness, but a strategy of perception in a rapidly changing cultural situation that threatened to outpace critical understanding of a more orthodox kind. The strategy allowed them to change the objects of attention and to attend to the trivial and the superficial as signifiers of culture as well. It is in this spirit but with necessarily different methods that I will be trying to read the Hong Kong cultural texts. Both their perfections and imperfections may tell us something more about the elusiveness of colonial space as a space of disappearance than “theories of colonialism” developed under different sociopolitical circumstances.

Coda: Hyphenation and Postculture

Hong Kong culture as something that engages the urgencies in the life of its people is a recent phenomenon. Its accelerated development in the last decade or so, I have been suggesting, is largely a response to a social and political situation that has few clear precedents. We need to say a word in conclusion about this nascent culture and the sociopolitical context out of which, necessarily, it has evolved. We can begin by taking some bearings from Frantz Fanon—although we may have to let them go and find different ones for ourselves almost immediately.

Fanon located very precisely the ambiguities of using culture, particularly "native culture," in struggles for national liberation, as well as the ambiguous position of "native intellectuals" in these struggles:

The native intellectual . . . sooner or later will realize that you do not show proof of your nation from its culture. . . . At the very moment when the native intellectual is anxiously trying to create a cultural work he fails to realize that he is utilizing techniques and language which are borrowed from the strangers in his country. He contents himself with stamping these instruments with a hall-mark which he wishes to be national, but which is strangely reminiscent of exoticism. The native intellectual who comes back to his people by way of cultural achievements behaves in fact like a foreigner.¹

Fanon's argument, then, is that a national culture—by which he means a postcolonial culture—can develop only after national liberation, and that culture without liberation, or even culture as the privileged means to liberation, is meaningless, reflecting only the intellectual's biased viewpoint about the political efficacy of culture. How then can a study of Hong Kong culture avoid the charges of nativism and intellectualism?

This is possible, I believe, because the situation of Hong Kong is not the same as the one Fanon analyzed. As I indicated earlier, the nature of colonialism has changed in the era of the end of empires and the rise of globalism. The "last emporium" is a colonial city that has acquired some of the mannerisms of the global city—after the last emporium, the mall. At the same time, culture itself in Hong Kong has undergone a structural transmutation since the early eighties. Before that time, when it was seen as a separate or semiautonomous activity that was of interest only to a relatively small group of people, culture in Hong Kong was slow to develop. What has changed now is a willingness, amounting almost to a necessity, shown by a much larger cross section of the people to address issues of culture. And this change of heart is made possible by the perception even among the hard-nosed that culture cannot be separated from more realist disciplines like politics and economics, if for no other reason than the growing conviction, in the wake of Tiananmen Square, that some sense of "cultural identity" is a kind of first-line defense against total political absorption. In this conjuncture, culture is no longer an intellectual mug's game.

But the most radical difference between Hong Kong and the situation Fanon analyzed lies in the concept of "nation" and "national liberation." It is a concept inoperative for Hong Kong, which has never been and will never be in any sense a nation. This is obviously true as regards its colonial relation with Britain, while the relation it will have with China may very likely be no more than an original variation on a quasi-colonial theme. However, if Hong Kong is never going to achieve the status of a nation (on the model, for example, of Singapore), it has already been for some time now something more paradoxical—a *hyphenation*. The fact that it can aspire to being both autonomous and dependent at the same time, where autonomy is in some strange way a function of dependency, indicates that Hong Kong may well be a *mutant political entity*.

Han Suyin once described Hong Kong in a poignant phrase that has since been much repeated, like a popular tune that refuses to go out of our heads, as a city living "on borrowed time in a borrowed place." This phrase, for all its poignancy, has no paradox to it—in that it still assumes a

view of history, and of life, where what is borrowed must be returned. It does not describe mutations. Hyphenation has very different implications. It points precisely to the city's attempts to go beyond such historical determinations by developing a tendency toward timelessness (achronicity) and placelessness (the inter-national, the para-sitic), a tendency to live its own version of the "floating world." Whether the delicate balance of hyphenation can survive the exigent demands of the present moment is of course a relevant question, but even China has in effect tacitly acknowledged Hong Kong's hyphenated status by proposing the formula of "one country, two systems," which is a formula not free from paradox. We will have to think of hyphenation then not as a "third space" that can be located somewhere; not as a neither-nor space that is nowhere; not even as a mixed or in-between space, if by that we understand that the various elements that make it up are separable. Above all, hyphenation refers not to the conjunctures of "East" and "West," but to the disjunctures of colonialism and globalism. Hong Kong as hyphenation has to be thought of as the result of a very specific set of historical circumstances that has produced a historically anomalous space that I have called a space of disappearance.

Hyphenation and disappearance raise a number of spatial issues that cultural forms in Hong Kong cannot afford to ignore. Hong Kong's hyphenated status entails a situation where some radical alteration of cultural grids and matrices has already taken place, but in such a way as to be hardly discernible. On the other hand, what is readily discernible derives from the survival of older paradigms that ensure a kind of fake continuity and regulates even our sense of discontinuity. Dislocations now are everywhere, but the novel feature is that we either misrecognize or fail to recognize them. This is what allows us to speak of a spatial unconscious, which is another way of speaking of the elusive presence of colonialism inscribed in Hong Kong's cultural forms. If we pay close attention to these forms whose merits are not guaranteed in advance, it is not a kind of advocacy or nativism, nor a desire to stamp borrowed "techniques and language" with a national hallmark (Fanon), but, rather, a way of thinking through the dislocations of culture.

When we consider some of the major cultural forms in Hong Kong, we see that it is especially through the ambiguities of visuality that spatial issues are raised. These cultural forms either exploit or critique such ambiguities. Take the example of mall space, which by now can be found almost anywhere in Hong Kong. After the last emporium, as we said earlier, the mall. Like emporiums, malls are commercial spaces, but this is where the resemblance ends. Malls do not so much replace emporiums as dis-locate

them, through a mutation in the relation of visibility to commodities. Compared to the emporium, mall space is both much more highly visual and basically contradictory. It is a space that allows visitors to believe that they are really "just looking."² It manages therefore to delink the activities of looking and buying, but only in order to reinforce them all the more strongly: we no longer see what we buy—we buy what we see. Malls are yet another instance of a space of disappearance.

It is in relation to the ambiguities of visibility that mall space can be compared to the two most important cultural forms in Hong Kong today, architecture and cinema. When we reflect on the architectural examples—whether it is the Cultural Center with its ambiguous attempt at self-definition, or the symbolic landscapes of power of Central, or the appropriations of the vernacular in spaces like Lan Kwei Fong—it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Hong Kong architecture still tends to draw very much on the authority of the visual. When it comes to the question of cultural self-definition, it understands only the false image of power. That is why, as I have noted before, the greater the number of powerful but placeless international buildings that get built, the more the urban vernacular remains anonymous and characterless. In this concentration on prestige and monumentalism, everyday life is not transformed, but only made to look more banal. All of this underlines the urgent need for Hong Kong architecture to develop a critique of space by addressing the problematics of hyphenation and disappearance. The new Hong Kong cinema presents a contrasting example. It starts in the midst of mediocrity, constrained by genre and commercialism. Yet in its more distinguished examples, the Hong Kong cinema presents us with forms of visibility that problematize the visual and provide a critique of space.

When we look at the more important cultural forms that are available in Hong Kong at the present moment, we find there is some reason for at least a guarded optimism. We might note in passing a quite remarkable performance group that calls itself by the name *Zuni Icosahedron* (to underline its "many faces"), which under its director Danny Yung has miraculously been in existence for more than a decade. The group has been accused of avant-gardism and pretentiousness, but it is energetic, committed to local culture, willing to innovate, and eager to defend minority interests. More important, it provides a kind of counterinstitutional framework that gives young people an opportunity to discover their talents. *Zuni* is not just a group of "semiprofessionals"; in fact, one of its achievements is to systematically blur the distinction between amateurism and professionalism. Yet *Zuni*, too, is not without its own contradictions. On the one hand,

their productions, which often thematize inertia and paralysis, can sometimes overwhelm by their heavy repetitiveness; on the other hand, the group is well organized, adept at fund-raising and the use of media for self-promotion. These contradictions reflect perhaps the paradoxes of Hong Kong culture. Yet in spite of a group like *Zuni* and other hopeful signs, it must be recognized that the more important cultural forms available are at different stages of development. In the case of writing, there are some very good stories and poetry, but perhaps "the great Hong Kong novel" still remains to be written.

These uneven cultural developments underline the need at this point to develop a critical discourse on Hong Kong culture. Such a discourse will have to attend to the peculiarities of Hong Kong's cultural space, so that its cultural productions may not be judged by false or inappropriate standards. It will have to recognize, it seems to me, that Hong Kong culture is an example of a *postculture*, by which I understand the following: it is a culture that has developed in a situation where the available models of culture no longer work. In such a situation, culture cannot wait or follow social change in order to represent it; it must *anticipate* the paradoxes of hyphenation. A postculture, therefore, is not postmodernist culture, or post-Marxist culture, or post-Cultural Revolution culture, or even post-colonial culture, insofar as each of these has a set of established themes and an alternative orthodoxy. In a postculture, on the other hand, culture itself is experienced as a field of instabilities.

Postculture provides some kind of response to Fanon's skepticism regarding the relation of culture to national liberation, which in the Hong Kong case must be thought of in a more limited sense as the possibilities of hyphenation. The response of postculture is that there is no question of waiting for "liberation" before we can see the genuine development of a Hong Kong culture. On this question, Michel Foucault makes a useful distinction between the political act of liberation and what he calls "practices of freedom":

When a colonial people tries to free itself of its colonizer, that is truly an act of liberation, in the strict sense of the word. But as we also know . . . this act of liberation is not sufficient to establish the practices of liberty that later on will be necessary for this people . . . that is why I insist on the practices of freedom.³

The important role of postculture in Hong Kong today, it seems to me, is to take part in the development of these practices of freedom. Given the kinds of spatial and temporal distortions that we have, these practices are

not something that "later on will be necessary"; they are necessary now. Furthermore, the emphasis must be on the *practices* of freedom, which is very different from an *idea* of freedom or an abstract concept of "democracy." In terms of culture, these practices can be located in the development of cultural forms that are responsive to historical change.

Because it is a set of anticipations, postculture can be a preparation for cultural survival. Perhaps in the case of Hong Kong more than anywhere else, there is no chance of cultural survival unless we radicalize our understanding of culture itself. Thus cultural survival is not the same as surviving culture, that is, living within the assumptions of what culture is and stubbornly defending it. Nor is it the same as holding on to a cultural identity. Cultural texts are valuable for cultural survival on the condition that the old cultural myths do not survive in them. Cultural survival will also depend on our understanding of space or spatial history. One of the most important implications of colonialism in the era of globalism is simply that there is no longer a space elsewhere. This means that instead of thinking in terms of displacements, a movement somewhere else, it is important to think in terms of dislocation, which is the transformation of place. Such transformations, even after they have taken place, are often indiscernible and hence challenge recognition. That is why cultural survival is also a matter of changing the forms of attention and seeing the importance of even decadent or degenerate cultural objects. Finally, cultural survival will depend on our recognizing that there is today a politics of the indiscernible as much as a politics of the discernible. One has not completely replaced the other, but each acts as the other's silent support. Whether Hong Kong culture as postculture can survive will depend on whether it recognizes a politics of disappearance.

Notes

1. INTRODUCTION: CULTURE IN A SPACE OF DISAPPEARANCE

1. Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), 44.
2. Scott Lash and John Urry, *The End of Organized Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987); Manuel Castells, *The Informational City* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).
3. Anthony D. King, *Global Cities* (London: Routledge, 1990), 38.
4. Sigmund Freud, *Art and Literature*, Pelican Freud Library, vol. 14 (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), 90.
5. Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: New Left Books, 1973), 87.
6. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 47–48.
7. Louis Aragon, *Paris Peasant* (London: Picador, 1971), 28.
8. Paul Virilio, *The Lost Dimension* (New York: Semiotext[e], 1991), 31.
9. See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).
10. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Nomadology* (New York: Semiotext[e], 1986), 51.
11. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 27.
12. On deterrence, see Jean Baudrillard, "The Beaubourg Effect: Implosion and Deterrence," trans. Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson, *October* 20 (Spring 1982), 3–13.
13. Ulf Hannerz, "Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture," in *Global Culture*, ed. Mike Featherstone (London: Sage, 1990), 237–51.
14. In Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths*, trans. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), 211–20.
15. See Sigfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament*, trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge,

Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995); and Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1968).

2. THE NEW HONG KONG CINEMA AND THE *DÉJÀ DISPARU*

1. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema I*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 211.
2. Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths*, ed. and trans. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), 169.
3. Paul Fonoroff, "A Brief History of Hong Kong Cinema," *Renditions*. 29/30 (Spring and Autumn 1988), 308.
4. Li Cheuk-to, "A Review of Hong Kong Cinema, 1988–1989," presented at the ninth Hawaii International Film Festival 1989, East-West Center, Hawaii.
5. Jeffrey Ressler, "Hong Kong's Flashy Films Battle for American Fans," *New York Times*, 9 May 1993, 18.
6. Geoffrey O'Brien, "Blazing Passions," *New York Review of Books*, 24 September 1992, 38–43.
7. See Walter Benjamin, "Central Park," trans. Lloyd Spencer, *New German Critique* 34 (Winter 1985), 42.
8. Quoted in a guest chapter by George S. Semsel, in John Lent, *The Asian Film Industry* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 28.
9. Quoted in *ibid.*, 113.
10. Paul Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, trans. Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext[e], 1991), 20.
11. See I. C. Jarvie, *Window on Hong Kong: A Sociological Study of the Hong Kong Film Industry and Its Audience* (Hong Kong: Centre for Asian Studies, 1977).
12. See David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge and Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).
13. Paul Virilio, *The Lost Dimension* (New York: Semiotext[e], 1991), 30–31.
14. Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, 54.

3. WONG KAR-WAI: HONG KONG FILMMAKER

1. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 286.
2. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema II*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 19.
3. Méliès's remark is quoted in Paul Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, trans. Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext[e], 1991), 15.

4. BUILDING ON DISAPPEARANCE: HONG KONG ARCHITECTURE AND COLONIAL SPACE

1. See Sharon Zukin, "Postmodern Urban Landscapes: Mapping Culture and Power," in *Modernity and Identity*, ed. Scott Lash and Jonathan Friedman (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992).
2. Walter Benjamin, *Reflections*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 162.
3. See Diana I. Agrest, *Architecture from Without* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), 137.
4. See Greg Girard and Ian Lambot, eds., *City of Darkness: Life in Kowloon Walled City* (United Kingdom: Watermark Publications, 1993).

5. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967), 195.
6. Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, trans. Michael Henry Heim (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), 248.
7. See Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977).
8. Paul Virilio, *The Lost Dimension*, trans. Daniel Moshenberg (New York: Semiotext[e], 1991), 13, 15.
9. Manuel Castells, *The Informational City* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 2.
10. Virilio, *The Lost Dimension*, 36. See also *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, trans. Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext[e], 1991).
11. By decadence, I understand a problematics not of decline but of one-sided development. See pages 4–5 for further discussion.
12. See Dick Wilson, *Hong Kong! Hong Kong!* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 146.
13. Alain Robbe-Grillet, *La Maison de rendez-vous*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Grove Press, 1966).
14. Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths*, ed. and trans. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970). See also chapter 2 for further discussion of this story.
15. Saskia Sassen identifies these cities as the new type of international or "global" city. See *The Global City* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991). She also suggests that "transformations in cities ranging from Paris to Frankfurt to Hong Kong and Sao Paulo have responded to the same dynamic" of globalization (4). My concern, however, has been to describe one form of insertion into global processes with some specificity, by focusing on the interplay between local history and global processes.
16. Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity*, trans. Jon R. Snyder (Cambridge and Oxford: Polity Press, 1988), 7.
17. *South China Morning Post*, 28 February 1993.
18. Constant, "The Great Game to Come," in *Architecture Culture 1943–1968*, ed. Joan Ockman (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), 315.
19. See Arata Isozaki and Akira Asada, "Anywhere—Problems of Space," in *Anywhere*, ed. Isozaki and Asada (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), 16–17.
20. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 286.
21. For an account of the relevance of the uncanny to an understanding of urban space, see Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992).
22. Louis Aragon, *Paris Peasant*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (London: Picador, 1980), 29.
23. Virilio, *The Lost Dimension*, 31.
24. Wilson, *Hong Kong! Hong Kong!*, 179.
25. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 142.
26. Roland Barthes, "Semiology and Urbanism," in *Architecture Culture 1943–1968*, 417.
27. See *Contemporary Architecture in Hong Kong*, ed. Chung Wah Nan (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 1989), 10–21.
28. Anthony King, *Urbanism, Colonialism, and the World Economy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 56.
29. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 143.

30. See Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley, *Deconstructivist Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Arts, 1988), 68–79.
31. For a good summary and discussion of these issues, see Alan Smart, *Making Room: Squatter Clearance in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, 1992), 30–65.
32. For a discussion of the hyperdensity issue in Hong Kong, see A. R. Cuthbert, "Architecture, Society and Space—the High-Density Question Re-Examined," in *Progress in Planning*, ed. D. Diamond and J. B. McLoughlin, 71–160 (New York and Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1985); chapter 6 on Hong Kong is especially relevant. See also Smart, *Making Room*.
33. Zukin, "Postmodern Urban Landscapes."
34. See the March 1992 issue of *Space Design* (no. 330) with its special feature on "Hong Kong: Alternative Metropolis."
35. For example, they explain that "the fact that Hong Kong lacks urban sprawl today is somehow similar to the walled village's condition against the surroundings. In both cases, inhabitants have chosen to live in a limited area at high-density" (*ibid.*, 58).

6. WRITING HONG KONG

1. Lu Xun, "On Hong Kong," in *Renditions* 29/30 (Spring and Autumn 1988), 47–53.
2. Quoted in Kevin Rafferty, *City on the Rocks* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1991), 138.
3. In *Renditions*, 29/30 (Spring and Autumn 1988), 26.
4. The anthology is the *Renditions* special volume on Hong Kong. See note 1 above. Page numbers for further citations to contributions in this anthology will appear parenthetically in the text.
5. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (New York: Atheneum, 1974), 17.
6. See Georg Simmel's classic essay, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," in *Georg Simmel: On Individuality and Social Forms*, ed. Donald N. Levine (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 324–39.
7. The story appears in *Renditions*, 19 / 20 (Spring and Autumn 1983), 107–14.
8. Louise Ho, *Local Habitation* (Hong Kong: Twilight Books, 1994). Further references to poems in this collection will be cited by page number in the text parenthetically.
9. Leung Ping-kwan, *City at the End of Time* (Hong Kong: Twilight Books, 1992). Further references to poems in this volume will be cited by page number in the text parenthetically.
10. See Michelangelo Antonioni, *That Bowling Alley on the Tiber: Tales of a Director*, trans. William Arrowsmith (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), xix.
11. *A Minor Apocalypse* is the title of one of Konwicki's novels.

7. CODA: HYPHENATION AND POSTCULTURE

1. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967), 179–80.
2. On the question of the visual nature of malls and the relation between malls and cinema, see Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993).
3. See *The Final Foucault*, ed. James Bernauer and David Rasmussen (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), 2–3.

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