Troubling American Women

Narratives of Gender and Nation in Hong Kong

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A nation’s reputation depends upon the general character of its women, for they form at least half, if not more, of the population. In this respect America stands high, for the American woman is lively, open-hearted and ingenuous; she is also fearless, independent, and is almost without restraint. She is easily accessible to high and low … To a stranger, and especially to an Oriental, she is a puzzle … The American women are in some respects dissimilar to the women of other nations … They can converse on any subject with ease and resource, showing that they have a good all-round education … The persistence with which they stick to their opinions is remarkable … There is one fault I find with American women, if it can be so called, and that is their inquisitiveness; I know that this is a common fault with all women, but it is most conspicuous in the Americans …

Wu Ting-fang, America through the Spectacles of an Oriental Diplomat, 1914

This book analyzes narratives written by several European American, Chinese American, and “Americanized” Chinese women who lived in Hong Kong and Macao for substantial periods of time during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Their narratives constitute an archive of memoirs, diaries, letters, journalistic essays, fiction, interviews, and film. The study highlights the diverse ways in which the cross-cultural encounter led women to re-envision their sense of national identity. It pays particular attention to links between national, gender, and ethnic identities, cultural myths and ideologies, and historical context. It is, however, the Chinese man quoted above rather than an American woman who sets the stage for this study of performances of American womanhood and Americanness in Asia. Although American women had been living in China for nearly a century
before he published his views in 1914, Wu Ting-fang’s words underscore the centrality of gender to the project of nation building on both sides of the Sino-American encounter. He reminds us of some of the ways in which women are marked, individually and as a cohort, as bearers of culture and keepers of tradition. He also reminds us that American women who went abroad often encountered those who had already formed opinions about them.

Wu’s story illustrates the deep historical connections between many generations and nations and his experiences speak to larger themes of cultural encounter that recur throughout this study of women’s narratives. Born in the British colony of Singapore, Wu qualified as a barrister in England and moved to colonial Hong Kong, where, under his Cantonese name, Ng Choy, he distinguished himself among the local legal and business elite before going to China. As a “foreigner” in the US at the dawn of the twentieth century, Wu, by virtue of his background and wealth, would have been spared much of the American prejudice against the Chinese during the exclusion era, although it is likely that he would have been familiar with and sensitized to anti-Chinese sentiment in Hong Kong, the US, and elsewhere in the West.1 His transnational ties and cross-border movements are a reminder of the importance of paying attention to multiple meanings of Chineseness and they place Wu squarely in the flow of people, products, and ideas that scholars have come to identify with the Chinese diaspora.

It is ironic, then, that Wu, whose life countered stereotypes of “Chinese coolies” and of other orientalist tropes circulating in the West, was, to a certain extent, complicit in constructing stereotypes of American women in the East. In the passage above, Wu is, for the most part, complimentary of American women, describing them as “fearless,” “open-hearted,” “independent,” and of “pure and high character.” Yet he also asserts that American women “stick to their opinions” to a “remarkable” extent, and he flips the script on Western notions of Chinese inscrutability by declaring American women “a puzzle.” While they may be worthy of praise in many respects; for Wu, American women are “almost without restraint” and too curious (a fault Wu playfully asserts that all women share, albeit to differing degrees). At a time when women on both sides of the Pacific were claiming an expanded role in public life, Wu’s words subtly schooled them about the impressions they left on others.
For me, Wu’s words generate a mixed reaction. On one hand, I have seen (and on occasion been) “that woman” of whom Wu speaks. She “codes American” in her speech, body language, and manner in ways that are recognizable if not always easy to articulate. (The phrase “she’s just so American” usually suffices.) She is confident in her expressions of righteous indignation about a range of issues, but unaware of the reaction she generates among others. Despite her laudable attempts to point out the injustices around her (great and small), she is, seemingly, unreflective about her own assumptions, notions of nationality, biases, or privileges. She appears at academic seminars or conferences, in classrooms and boardrooms, and in a range of social settings including on the sidelines of children’s sporting events, at dinner parties, in church, or on the MTR (the Mass Transit Railway, Hong Kong’s subway).

Whether “holding forth” in a moralistic manner, asking questions that make others slightly uncomfortable, or manifesting a star-spangled sense of entitlement, she is well meaning but, as a young colleague of mine aptly notes, “high maintenance.” Although she comes in a variety of shapes and colors, the Caucasian model seems to be the one most often associated with the aforementioned behaviors. Some women who have witnessed others manifesting such behavior tell me they guard against it. A visiting professor at a university in Hong Kong says she learned early on to avoid any type of verbal confrontation with her colleagues, particularly men, because she feared being labeled a “trouble-making American woman.”

While certain American women are characterized as “trouble-making,” or they exhibit behaviors that are “troubling” to others, the use of the term “troubling” in the book’s title is a double entendre. The second meaning refers to the ways in which I hope this study will trouble, challenge, or complicate conventional views of American womanhood and Americanness that often circulate in Hong Kong history and society. In thinking about “troubling” in this way, it is clear that there are times when generalizations made about “American women” aren’t about “real” American women at all. They are, perhaps, about American women in popular culture, or about stereotypes of Americans in various non-American contexts, or even about the person making the generalizations. During nearly two decades of living in Hong Kong and teaching US history, women’s history, and American studies at the University of Hong Kong, I have heard a variety of Wu-like pronouncements from a range of sources.
For instance, at parties or other gatherings it is not uncommon to hear jokes that trade on gender and national identity in describing the best/worst women to marry. American women usually place dead last in those punch lines. In both Chinese- and English-language newspaper editorials there are subtle (and not-so-subtle) barbs about Hilary Clinton’s lack of deference to male leaders, her tendency to ask too many questions, and her proclivity for lecturing rather than listening.

Many of my students, particularly those who are Hong Kong–born Chinese or from the Chinese mainland, express a certain admiration for a particular style they associate with the “American woman.” She is seen as “trendy,” “sporty,” or “casual” in her dress and sure of herself in her approach to life. But she is often negatively characterized as “outspoken,” “aggressive,” and “too independent.” Even those students who are savvy about the potential impact of Hollywood on their impressions (Friends, Desperate Housewives, and Sex and the City seemed to be particularly influential during the period of this study) still believe that they know a fair amount about “real American women.” After all, they assure me, Hong Kong is a bustling commercial and cultural crossroads where they have frequent opportunities to observe and mingle with American women as tourists, exchange students, or friends and relatives who have become “Americanized” to various degrees as a result of travel, education, or emigration. Most have the impression that Americans in general are more willing to “speak up” and “be more direct” in professional and social settings. Many tell me that they have noticed that American women, if given the slightest opportunity, “speak their minds” while Chinese women are less inclined to do so.

A former chair of the American Chamber of Commerce (Am Cham) says that during his tenure he came to believe that women generally, and American women particularly, often “have a much tougher time of it” in Hong Kong than their male compatriots because they, more often than men, are expected to “tone down their Americanness” and conform to a strong societal preference for “harmony” over direct confrontation. He has no illusions that US society is free of gender bias, but he asserts that in Hong Kong there is a heightened suspicion of American and other Western women who are considered to be more assertive or outspoken. He speculates that Hong Kong Chinese women are as attuned as their Western counterparts to sexism in the workplace, but they are less likely to voice
their concerns, or feel compelled to “educate” their male colleagues. There are, of course, many different reactions to the nuances of gender and national identity in Hong Kong. Some Americans find the “harmony first” ethos a pleasant change from life in the US. Men seem to adjust more easily to local norms and some will sheepishly (or smugly) admit that one of the “perks” of working in Hong Kong is that they feel less pressure to be “politically correct” about gender politics than they did “back home.”

Similar impressions circulate in other parts of the region as well. Recently, at a conference in Singapore, I spoke with a woman from Korea who had just earned her doctorate in the US. She told me of her father’s disappointment that she had not learned to “act more American” as a result of her time away. His experience in the corporate world had convinced him that “if an American woman is heading up the negotiating team, the negotiations are over.” Despite his aversion to such one-sided negotiations, he nonetheless wished that a little more assertiveness had rubbed off on his daughter while she was in the US. A friend who supervises accounts for clients throughout the region is bemused by the way she is seen as a “rabid feminist” in Asia although she picks her battles with care. When she speaks out against sexist behaviors exhibited by her colleagues she is often chided for acting like “one of those American women” trying to “change the world, one man at a time.”

A Japanese friend who is familiar with my research wonders if I can explain why it is that so many of the American women she knows — in Hong Kong, Japan, and the US — seem keen to “teach her” something, even when she is merely engaging them in casual conversation.

Chinese American women in Hong Kong may bear a particular burden of representation in terms of both gender and national identity. My Caucasian features often ensure that the slightest attempt to speak Chinese will be rewarded with some affirmation, or at least amused condescension. However, most of my American-born Chinese (ABC) friends, colleagues, and students are looked upon with a degree of semi-comprehending contempt if they are not fully bilingual. They can “pass” more easily in certain Hong Kong settings than I do, but they are also subject to a certain type of scrutiny and critique that I am spared.

My consciousness has been formed not only by my experiences as an “American abroad” but, ironically, by decades of reading and research suggesting the dangers inherent in making generalizations about any group of
people or nation. The academic fields of American studies and US history have been transformed in recent years by calls to jettison the national in favor of more transnational and comparative conceptual frameworks. When I have the opportunity to do so, I respond to queries and generalizations like the aforementioned by noting the exceptions to the rule and the perniciousness of stereotypes. After all, for every “trouble-making American woman” out there, there are plenty who do not fit the stereotype. What about American men and non-American women who manifest “troubling” attitudes as well? While there are, unquestionably, American women who do indeed, in the words of my friend, “take the teaching tone” with others, there are plenty who do not.

In fact, as noted already, many American women I know speak of their ongoing effort to mask their “Americanness” and modify certain types of nationally coded behaviors, expressions, and gestures in Hong Kong. Long-term Hong Kong residents with both US passports and Hong Kong permanent identity cards are quite sensitive to the ways in which newcomers “act so American.” These Hong Kong beloners may still identify as “American” from time to time, but their sense of national identity is, generally speaking, qualitatively different and more “elastic,” to use Carolyn Smith’s phrase, than that of more recent arrivals. Issues of identity and cultural belonging are even more complex for ethnically Chinese Hong Kong–born women who have obtained US passports. While they may “code American” in the eyes of other Hong Kongers, or see themselves as “Americanized” to a certain extent, they find that often, they are not accepted as “insiders” by those who were born and raised in the US.

It is, of course, important to keep impressions and anecdotes in perspective. Not only are notions of national identity constructed, contingent, and fluid, they are often not even recognizable as distinct entities in particular situations. Readers with the slightest exposure to Hong Kong society will rightly note that American women living in Hong Kong today are often generically identified as foreigners or Westerners rather than considered to be “from” a particular place. Yet there are moments when national identity is, indeed, relevant. I am interested in those moments, and in their historical antecedents. To that end, this study looks at some of the ways American women, and self-identified “Americanized” women who lived in Hong Kong and Macao (as a prelude to Hong Kong) in various historical periods, thought about and talked about national identity, and a range of
other subjects. It is my hope that readers from various nations and cultures will place their own narratives and opinions in conversation with those considered here. I also wish to underscore that this is not a history of American women in Hong Kong. Although the study proceeds along a chronological path, it focuses on selected women’s experiences at particular points in time in order to see the way notions of national identity evolve, shift, or disappear as historical events inform individual circumstances and narratives.

One final caveat: I am aware that while American women are, at times, painted in stereotypical hues in Hong Kong, we are also, as a cohort, well accepted and, for the most part, undeniably privileged. We live in a dynamic society that offers us a rich menu of culinary, cultural, and educational opportunities. Many if not most of us enjoy greater economic security than we did before coming to Asia despite the uncertainty that dogs us all in these volatile times. We witness dramatic and miniscule changes in the cityscape that hosts an endless flow of people, products, and construction projects. As the twenty-first century swings into its second decade we have a front-row seat from which to observe economic, cultural, and political shifts in China and unrestrained access to information, technology, and entertainment. The 95 percent of Hong Kong residents who are Chinese exhibit a laudable tolerance for non-Chinese “foreigners” from many places, although white Westerners enjoy greater privilege and face less discrimination than dark-skinned foreign nationals from both Western and non-Western countries. However, as the narratives considered hereafter illustrate, privilege may be a double-edged sword, and as Judith Blau and Eric Brown have argued, following W.E.B. DuBois’s lead, “Privilege constricts perceptions and social conscience.” To that I would add that gender intersects with privilege in highly individual ways. It is, then, important in a study such as this to ask if and how privilege has constricted the perceptions and social consciences of American women living in Hong Kong. The same question can be asked of men and other Westerners but that is the subject of another study.

**Framing the Encounter: Modes of Interdisciplinary Inquiry**

This project has been an exercise in transnational American studies or what some have called the study of America in the world. In order to place
women’s narratives in conversation across various historical eras and temporal sites, I have drawn on scholarship and theoretical perspectives from women’s history, US cultural history, post-national/transnational American studies, Asian American studies, and Hong Kong history/studies. In addition, works in postcolonial and transnational feminist studies, diaspora studies, whiteness studies, and narrative research (including travel narratives) have been useful. While I understand and sympathize with those who resist using the word “America” when speaking only of the US, in the narratives, the terms “America” and “US” are, for the most part, conflated. As such, they will, at times, be used interchangeably.

My own subject position as a US American citizen with permanent resident status in Hong Kong has informed my impressions of the works discussed here. Both my experiences and my research in transnational feminist and post-national American studies have heightened my awareness of subject position in textual analysis. As narrative researcher Molly Andrews has noted, “Oftentimes, one is so immersed in one’s own culture and day-to-day life that it is difficult to discern the pull of national narrative, unless and until one steps outside of one’s home environment.” I would add that stepping outside of one’s home environment is no guarantee of enhanced discernment. While I believe it is possible to be both aware of and reflective about one’s subject position and various identities, all readings are imperfect. I make no pretenses to complete objectivity. I have however, tried to read women’s stories in a critical yet compassionate manner.

This study connects to a larger conversation about the way myths and notions of American identity and US culture circulate within or are deployed outside of the US. In recent years, works in American studies, gender and sexuality studies, ethnic studies, cultural studies, postcolonial studies, travel studies, and diaspora studies have repeatedly interrogated and challenged both the notion of American exceptionalism (the idea that there was/is something unique, special, or even divinely sanctioned about the origin and history of the US), and the very idea of the nation itself. To use Benedict Anderson’s well-worn phrase, nations are imagined communities, constructed rather than natural entities. Nonetheless, it is, I believe, important to observe and analyze the myriad ways in which stories about the nation and national identity have been and continue to be imagined, re-imagined, contested, or borrowed. Additionally, where
possible, I am keen to explore how such stories intersect with and inform (or are informed by) other axes of identity and alliances.

Let me be clear. I am not taking a stand for or against American exceptionalism. I am interested in exploring and historicizing exceptionalism as a rhetorical device and as perceived historical reality. To that end, I concur with Stephen Brooks who argues that in general

Americans simply assume that their story is the one that truly matters in the world. Their insularity is not borne of arrogance so much as from a naïve faith in the centrality of their experience to human history. Even before America became the world’s foremost economic and military power, and long before it became the cultural powerhouse of the world, Americans had incorporated this sense of destiny into their national psyche. This is the thread that connects John Winthrop’s “shining city on a hill” to the doctrine of Manifest Destiny and to the statements of every recent president expressing the belief that America has been chosen by God and history to shine a light upon the world. Those who dismiss such rhetoric as merely political and vulgarly offensive miss the point.8

As we read women’s narratives of cross-cultural encounter, paying attention to the stories they tell about themselves, their nation, and their lives in a “foreign” environment, we see that they often take a “teaching tone” in their works, manifesting what I call the “the pedagogical impulse.” In some cases the impulse blends with and amplifies certain types of exceptionalist rhetoric. This is not particularly surprising. After all, it is common to hear that one is never more “American” (or Japanese, or British, or ...) than when one leaves home. Yet such is not always the case. There are also moments of retreat from stereotypical notions of nation and well-worn performances of national identity. At times it is possible to see reconfigurations of national identity and new manifestations of exceptionalism that reflect other loyalties and affiliations.9 To that end the pedagogical impulse may be deployed in multiple settings addressing various audiences. In these narratives we find that not only do American women often take a teaching tone with “the foreign other,” they may also do so with the “folks back home,” or with less-experienced expatriates in need of a little mentoring.

I hope to show that in Hong Kong, as in many places, notions of nation, while slippery and multiply contested, have always and still do matter.
Performances of national identity have informed a range of micro and macro cross-cultural interactions. They continue to do so today. One could even argue that Hong Kong society fashioned its own quasi-national identity, including certain exceptionalist narratives about what makes Hong Kong unique, in part, from the various shards of other national, and exceptionalist, ideologies.10

Two areas that have been touched on briefly in the study merit more attention than they receive here. First, the experiences of Chinese American women and “Americanized” Hong Kong/Mainland Chinese women in Hong Kong are integral to broadening an understanding of American national identity in non-US contexts. The narratives discussed here are a select few of many that deserve more systematic and sustained scholarly attention. Chinese American women have, at times, been concurrently insiders and outsiders in both Hong Kong and the US in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They negotiated this liminal position in diverse ways depending on situational and individual circumstances.11 I acknowledge the gendered dimensions of this liminality as well as how it shifted or disappeared in particular moments of Hong Kong’s history but much more remains to be said. In significant ways, Chinese American women’s experiences rupture and redefine stereotypes of both American and Chinese womanhood in Hong Kong.

A second area that I have only been able to explore in the briefest of terms is the diffuse but important discussion of Americanization in Asia, particularly in the twentieth century. The last two chapters shed some light on selected types of “American influence” within Hong Kong but the subject warrants greater disciplinary and interdisciplinary consideration. Here I hope to show that processes of Americanization are not as homogenous as they are often imagined to be. Americanization was one of many discourses of national culture circulating in the Hong Kong public sphere. In the post–World War II period, Hong Kong people took their cultural cues from Japan, Korea, Europe, or the Chinese mainland as well as from the US.

That being said, I believe it is necessary to pay attention to the “bits of America” that helped to shape, for better and for worse depending on one’s viewpoint, Hong Kong society.12 It is also important to see influences larger and more powerful than “bits.” The rhetoric of American exception-alism and the reach of American power were and are still evident. Yet in
twenty-first-century Hong Kong, as in many places in the region, Chinese exceptionalism is the ascendant discourse. As Ian Tyrell notes:

The United States has not been the only nation claiming exceptional status. Exceptionalism has been part of modernity’s proliferation of distinctiveness within the construction of comparable nation-state structures and nationalist beliefs across the developing world in the nineteenth century. This fact makes it desirable to treat exceptionalism as an intellectual process rather than as a description of historical reality.13

Women's stories illustrate the complex relationships between national, gender, and other aspects of identity. The texts considered here are quirky, partial, and often marked by women’s doubly marginalized perspectives: as women in a setting where men constituted the majority of the population (at least until late in the twentieth century), and as Americans in a predominantly Chinese colony of the British Empire. However, certain types of privilege inflected marginalization. As such, many American women, like their male compatriots, expressed contradictory attitudes about various matters. One thematic thread that runs throughout all of the time periods is a critique of British attitudes. Yet even as they spoke out against British colonialism, many American women colluded with the colonial project. Additionally, differences in racial and ethnic identities meant that white Americans often expressed concern about issues that were of little or no concern to Americans of Chinese or Asian descent, and vice versa. Women’s narratives reflect a dynamic and often dialogical negotiation between various nodes of identity and poles of reaction: colonial/anti-colonial, racist/anti-racist, liberal/reactionary, and elite/egalitarian.

As Molly Andrews affirms in her work on the importance of narratives of national identity: “Stories matter; they do things.”14 The women’s stories considered here matter because they shed light on how the cross-cultural encounter influenced women’s efforts to defend, trouble, and at times reconfigure myths of gender, nation, and empire. At some points, they reveal the American woman as a student of what others think about her, the US and its leaders, policies, power, and culture. Her reactions vary from the defensive to the blasé. The stories are also a collection of witty and rather profound observations about many topics, and of the changes that come with stepping outside of one’s comfort zone and into the
contact zone. In their recounting of the quotidian and the cataclysmic, they testify to the veracity of Patrick Gun Cuninghame's declaration that identity is “a narrated, multiple, negotiated construct dependent on external markers and signs, and above all on the presence of ‘others,’ who both mirror and delimit private-individual and public-collective boundaries.” In most cases, it is not possible to know how others reacted to the texts discussed here, although it would be most enlightening. It is, however, possible to view selected aspects of the cross-cultural encounter and draw reasonable conclusions about the impact many of these narratives would have had in a range of contexts.

**Changed by the Encounter: Narratives of Gender and Nation in Two Centuries**

The timeframe of this study is deliberately broad in order to explore difference and continuity across historical eras. Most of the book focuses on the twentieth century, particularly the years just prior to, during, and after World War II. The postwar period was a turning point for American citizens in Hong Kong in terms of critical mass and the deepening of US influence and neocolonialism. Americanization in Hong Kong was one of many themes discussed in media coverage of Hong Kong's reversion to Chinese sovereignty in 1997. While individual women drew varying conclusions from their cross-cultural encounters, three common themes emerge.

First, women’s narratives call attention to gendered forms of American national identity. Although notions of nation varied across time, and each woman’s sense of self reflected a specific set of circumstances, all assumed certain “burdens of nation” in Asia. Many turned homeward to expound on what they had learned from their cultural encounters. As I have noted already, the women here all manifest a certain “pedagogical impulse” in their communications with others in Hong Kong and/or with “the folks back home.” The narratives are about “teaching” (to return to my Japanese friend’s description) either to the Chinese, to other groups of Westerners in Asia, or to those who remained in the US. Second, while some narratives reinforce traditional notions of national identity, others draw on metaphors of nation to formulate new and more international, transnational, or global perspectives. Finally, women’s stories reveal the extent to which
conceptions of national womanhood — Chinese, American, and British among others — could be deployed for a range of purposes, by the women themselves and by others. Men and women often made assumptions and held forth about gender and nation as and when it seemed beneficial to do so.

American women began coming to Hong Kong and China in the early 1800s. Chapter 1, “‘American Girls’ in Three Acts: Encounters in Nineteenth-Century Macao and Hong Kong,” considers diverse models of American womanhood present in nineteenth-century China trade communities. In the twentieth century, women in many places embraced “modernity,” seeking independence and professional recognition in fields where they were not always welcome. In Hong Kong, interaction between Chinese and Western women increased through shared interests in travel, education, and social reform. Both groups found their lives changed by war. Chapter 2, “I’m in the Middle of a War, I’m in the Middle of a Life’: Women, War, and National Identity,” focuses on the way World War II, as well as the Civil War in China, facilitated greater professional opportunities and a public forum for women, particularly those who chose to remain single or who married later in life.

During the Cold War, American women were deployed as foot soldiers of Americanism in Hong Kong, countering “Ugly American” stereotypes and providing support for the growing American presence in the region. Chapter 3, “A Second Voice of America: Women’s Performances of Nation in Cold War Hong Kong,” considers postwar models of American and “Americanized” womanhood in the context of the expansion of American military, economic, political, and cultural influence in Hong Kong and throughout Asia. At the end of the twentieth century, Hong Kong’s rapid rise as an Asian Tiger led to economic prosperity, yet anxiety about the 1997 resumption of PRC sovereignty ran high, generating both a wave of outmigration and the further consolidation of a Hong Kong identity. In this period, American women reflected on the changes around them staking their claims, in diverse ways, to a place in post-1997 Hong Kong. Chapter 4, “Home for the Handover: Muted Exceptionalisms in Transnational Times,” considers gender, national identity, and the pedagogical impulse in the years prior to and immediately following Hong Kong’s reversion to Chinese sovereignty.
Hong Kong as a “Place of Flow”

Hong Kong is an ideal location for this transnational American studies project because, as Elizabeth Sinn notes, it always has been and continues to be both an “in between place” and “a place of flow.” Women’s narratives chronicle changes in Hong Kong and in the US, as well as the ascension of each to global prominence. Hong Kong’s position at the margins of three empires (Britain and China initially and the US by the mid-twentieth century) and its own complex negotiations with identity – micro and macro – render it a fascinating and highly relevant locale from which to consider the national self in global context. Additionally, recent scholarship on various non-Chinese communities in Hong Kong has shed light on multiple connections between the Chinese majority and groups of “outsiders” who came to work and settle in the region. As Caroline Knowles and Douglas Harper note in their unique sociological survey of these groups, “We lack up-close portraits of how migrants actually live in landscapes of new belonging ... Migration is as much about dwelling in the routines of travel, as travel in the routines of dwelling. Dwelling embeds connectivity and mobilities, too.”

I would add that it is essential to consider “dwelling” in a range of historical periods. Hong Kong history is, in many respects, transnational history. Individual Americans and more diffuse processes of Americanization have been part of the mix in a place that was an early exemplar of globalization. Their stories add credence to John Carroll’s assertion that Hong Kong should be considered “as its own cultural-historical place” where a clear “sense of Hong Kong identity characterized the local Chinese bourgeoisie well before 1949,” although the social worlds of Chinese and British elites were separate. Carroll calls for “more than theoretical criticisms or defenses of Orientalism, subaltern studies, and Postcolonialism” and “more local histories that both engage and challenge these approaches.” The women’s narratives discussed here are, I believe, an important source of such histories.

The use of the words “local” and “expat” in Hong Kong nomenclature signals the lingering legacy of the colonial past. As Jason Wordie has noted, such terms are, at times, rather lazy or evasive ways of saying “white” and “Chinese,” often excluding and ignoring all the other groups that do not fit within the binary categorization. Originally used to define
terms of service in government or business enterprises, “expat” and “local” were nothing more than categorizations signifying passages of accommodation, allowances, and other types of compensation. Wordie reminds us, “there were always plenty of Europeans on local terms.” Today, the terms often connote status, race, and power, masking more complex cleavages and fissures.

Where does national identity fit in these types of divisions and classifications? How do those who have been born and raised in Hong Kong but who have spent a significant amount of time in the US see themselves? Peter Hays Gries asserts, “National identity is both dependent upon interactions with other nations, and constituted in part by the stories we tell about our national pasts. Like all forms of identity, national identity does not arise in isolation, but develops and changes in encounters with other groups.” Although Gries is talking about Chinese national identity I believe his point is relevant to the American example as well. In the lives of individuals who live in Hong Kong, narratives of nation inform, clash, or mesh with narratives of race, region, language, religion, and culture. Hong Kong is a fascinating place for thinking about the construction and reconstruction of various types of national identities over time. Here the emphasis is on the ways in which certain aspects of “Americanness” circulated and were appropriated for a variety of purposes in Hong Kong. Hopefully, this case study will inspire other approaches, interpretations, and considerations of national identity in a range of settings within and beyond Hong Kong.
The narratives considered in this study prove that there is no such thing as a “typical American woman.” Yet there are threads of connection. All of the texts enrich our understanding of the ways in which notions of gender and national identity are shaped, in part, by the cross-cultural encounter, albeit in highly individual ways. In addition, each story within this diverse archive attests to both the plasticity and the rigidity of American national identity across time and place. In Macao, young Harriet Low's defensive rhetoric seems rooted, to a certain extent, in her own insecurities. Yet, by the end of her stay, she confidently declares that “the Americans have much to learn,” and she wishes they would be more cognizant of the ways others perceive them both at home and abroad. Henrietta Shuck, a missionary wife in 1840s Macao and Hong Kong, identifies more strongly with her religious than her national identity but even she finds herself bristling at British barbs regarding American slavery. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, prostitutes from the US were stripped of citizenship rights and rendered invisible by government officials in Washington, Shanghai, and Hong Kong even as the sobriquet “American Girl” bequeathed a certain exceptionalist cachet on them and on other non-Americans who appropriated a Yankee identity in various China trade and gold rush societies.

If nineteenth-century American women like Low and Shuck were defensive about their nascent national identity, things had changed a century later. Gwen Dew and Emily Hahn bear witness to the rise of American influence in Asia as well as to the trauma of war. Eleanor Thom draws on her own hybridized upbringing and education to create a blueprint for a girls' school in southern China that aims to integrate the best of American education with Chinese culture. In the postwar/Cold War period, ideologies
of nation bolster allegiances, particularly pro- and anti-Communist loy-
alties. Yet Hong Kong’s fluid demographic and economic realities often
rupture rather than reinforce certainties about nation, ideology, political
affiliation, and gender. The Hong Kong American Women’s Association
declares itself to be a “second voice of America” in this era, but the label is
equally applicable to a generation of ethnically Chinese women who travel
or study in the US and then return to Hong Kong transformed by their
encounters on the other side of the Pacific. As Woo Mo-Han’s memoir
illustrates, sometimes women change and “Americanize” in ways that sur-
prise and/or displease parents and family members.

The second half of the book hints at the complex but undeniable rela-
tionship between real and imagined American women as popular culture
supersized a growing American presence in the region. “Americanization”
was embraced by some, and excoriated by others. In Hong Kong, it was
one of many discourses of modernity and, as we have seen, it could, liter-
ally, be chopped into “bits” and used for diverse purposes by individual
women themselves, by organizations such as the AWA, or by cultural pro-
ducers who marketed images of “Americanized women” as ideals or foils
in Hong Kong films.

The women who appear throughout the preceding pages occasionally
refer to US hard power as exercised through diplomatic and military might.
However, they have much more to say about soft power, most often exer-
cised in Hong Kong through education, social events, press coverage, and
popular culture. Their views shed light on anxieties and challenges within
Hong Kong society in various historical periods. Even those women who
came to Asia for similar reasons (such as missionary work) had very dif-
ferent experiences depending on who they were as individuals, when they
were in Hong Kong, and how they viewed themselves within the com-
munities they inhabited. Henrietta Shuck was on the cusp of an American
missionary migration bringing Christianity and “American values” to
China and Asia. Her letters home offer a glimpse into the earliest days
of colonial Hong Kong and they reveal her attitudes about Christianity,
Chinese society, and the cultural encounter. Her views differ dramatically
from those expressed by missionaries such as Gladis DePree and Ruth Epp
a century later. Read in chronological order, the narratives offer a certain
historical perspective on a range of issues including the development of
the China trade, the mission movement, the circulation of people and
products via migration, American experiences under British colonial rule, domestic and transnational women’s movements, US involvement in wars and political conflicts in Asia, the growth of Hong Kong in the postwar era, the rise of American neocolonialism throughout the twentieth century, and the shift in perceptions of the US in Greater China (and vice versa) as a result of globalization and economic turmoil.

Many of the narratives engage the issue of gender imbalance and its impact on Macao and Hong Kong. Harriett Low, Henrietta Shuck, “American Girls” Belle Emerson and Eva Saunders, Emily Hahn, Eleanor Wai-Chun Thom, and Gwen Dew lived in a world where men greatly outnumbered women. Betty Wei, whose generation saw the demographic shift to a more gender-balanced population, nonetheless reminds her readers that Hong Kong has always been, and to a large extent still is, a “masculine society.” Even Crystal Kwok, whose film flips the script on stereotypes of nation, gender, and various sub-ethnic groups within the Chinese diaspora, daring women to embrace their sexual desires, playfully reminds them that doing so will not eradicate generations of gender socialization, cultural expectations, colonial mentalities, or the objectification of women as consumers and commodities in a highly competitive, capitalist and misogynistic marketplace. The transition to Chinese sovereignty has, in fact, changed very little in terms of the gender politics that have marked so much of Hong Kong’s past. That this is so seems particularly ironic given the fact that the new regime once vigorously maintained that “women hold up half of the sky.”

For me, the most significant point of connection between all of these narratives is their didactic style or what has been called here the pedagogical impulse. The complex interaction of the aforementioned factors—a shift in one’s sense of national belonging or “Americanness,” a particular historical circumstance, a reaction to gender inequality, a desire to be useful while feeling rather marginal albeit privileged—often leads these American and “Americanized” women to narrate their experiences as a series of teaching moments. These “lessons,” at times, take on an exceptionalist tone. However, the utterances are, ultimately, glimpses of the ways in which women are changed by their cross-cultural encounters. They reflect individual subjectivities, and shifting notions of self and nation. Not infrequently, the pedagogical impulse is turned back on other
Americans and/or Westerners within their circles, or even on “the folks back home.”

While there is little evidence of how women’s pedagogical utterances were received by others, in recounting their stories, many seem to have found a greater sense of purpose in a place where their numbers were few, where they were often seen as aliens or outsiders, and where many felt they needed to justify their presence or prove that they were not, to use the AWA phrase, “all chit chat and mahjong.” Women invoked the pedagogical impulse, and at times the rhetoric of American (and later Hong Kong or Chinese) exceptionalism, not only because of their cultural conditioning in American ideals and national myths, but also in order to overcome insecurity, cope with culture shock, or craft a space of “usefulness” in a setting where they were not, at least initially, particularly welcome. Eavesdropping on their cultural encounters is, perhaps, an opportunity for us to think in new ways about our own.
Introduction

1 Thanks to John Carroll and Jason Wordie for information about Wu. See also Linda Pomerantz-Zhang, Wu Tingfang (1842–1922): Reform and Modernization in Modern Chinese History (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1992).


6 There is a rich body of work on American exceptionalism in many disciplines including American literature, politics and international relations, history, sociology, psychology, and economics, as well as in the interdisciplinary fields of American studies, cultural studies, media studies, ethnic studies, and gender studies. Journalistic surveys and “best sellers” that promote exceptionalist views of US history and identity seem to be in vogue again as this book goes to press. In American studies, many scholars have sought to complicate or move beyond notions of exceptionalism (and many are often unfairly characterized as being “anti-American” for doing so). In the field of American studies, this intellectual tradition is sometimes called “post-nationalist” and some of its proponents are often referred to as “New Americanists” (there are differences between the two but there is some overlap in perspective as well). John Carlos Rowe, Donald Pease, Amy Kaplan, and Lisa Lowe (who addresses Asian American as well as
New Americanist tropes) have written particularly influential works in this vein. Although the debates are not new, they have taken on a particular intensity in the post-2001 era. There is also interesting work contextualizing exceptionalism in a more comparative and transnational frame. See the publications and collaborative projects of Richard Horwitz, Jane Desmond, and Rob Kroes for examples of this type of scholarship. The bibliography lists specific works by the aforementioned authors and others as well. I have tried to offer a sampling from a range of fields and ideological perspectives. During the final stages of copyediting I read an excellent collection on the current debates vis-à-vis exceptionalism and American studies. I was not able to incorporate its insights into this introduction but it is essential reading for anybody interested in the topic. See Brian T. Edwards and Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, eds., Globalizing American Studies (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010). See particularly the introduction by Edwards and Gaonkar.


9 The doctoral thesis on which this study builds argued that one could see a gendered form of exceptionalism, which I called “maternal exceptionalism” at the time, in many, if not most of the narratives. See Stacilee Ford Hosford, Gendered Exceptionalism: American Women in Hong Kong and Macao, 1830–2000, Ph.D. Thesis, The University of Hong Kong, 2002. In the process of revising the thesis I have added new narratives and seen other themes emerge but exceptionalism is still a key factor in many of the texts and is an important element in the discussion of national identity. Some scholars have argued that interrogating exceptionalism is problematic because it often serves to breathe new life into a nationalistic and ethnocentric trope. However, in Hong Kong where Chinese, as well as American exceptionalism(s) are resurgent, it is ever more important to understand how various types of the trope are in conversation with other discourses in the public sphere.

10 Chu Yingchi coined the term “quasi nation” in reference to Hong Kong cinema. I find it helpful in thinking about Hong Kong identity and the ways in which it is both similar to and different from conventional definitions of nation and national identities. See Chu Yingchi, Hong Kong Cinema: Coloniser, Motherland and Self (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

Beng Huat Chua uses the phrase in his work on Americanization and cultural studies. He speaks of growing up with “bits of American Culture” in Southeast Asia and he links his micro narrative to the larger macro context. See Beng Huat Chua, “Growing Up with Bits of American Culture,” paper presented at the International Conference on “American Popular Culture in Asia,” Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, February 19–20, 2009.


Andrews, Shaping History, 12.


John M. Carroll, Edge of Empires: Chinese Elites and British Colonials in Hong Kong (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), 4–5.

Carroll, Edge of Empires, 9.

Interview with Hong Kong historian Jason Wordie, June 14, 2010. Wordie offered several helpful suggestions in the final stages of revising this introduction and the early chapters of the book.

Peter Hays Gries, China’s New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, and Diplomacy (Berkeley: University of California Press 2004), 135.

Chapter 1

1 Anne McClintock, Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context (New York: Routledge, 1995), 6.

2 Paul A. Van Dyke, The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700–1845 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007), 161.

3 Examples include Van Dyke (above); Jacques M. Downs, The Golden Ghetto: The American Commercial Community at Canton and the Shaping of American China Policy, 1784–1844 (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 1997); John Rogers Haddad, The Romance of China: Excursions to China in
Notes to pp. 18–21


5 Stockwell, Westerners in China, 89–90.


10 Amasa Delano, A Narrative of Voyages and Travels in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, Comprising Three Voyages around the World (Boston: E.G. House, 1818), 541.


12 See Nan P. Hodges and Arthur W. Hummel, eds., Lights and Shadows of a Macao Life: The Journal of Harriett Low, Travelling Spinster, 2 vols., 1829–1834 (Woodville, WA: The History Bank, 2002); and Rosemarie W.N. Lamas, Everything in Style: Harriett Low’s Macau (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press/Instituto Cultural do Governo da R.A.E. de Macau, 2006). Hodges claims that the Low women were the first American women to live in China but it is difficult to substantiate such a claim. See Lamas, Everything in Style, 2.

13 Hodges and Hummel, Lights and Shadows, Vol. 1, 3.


16 Katharine Hillard, ed., My Mother’s Journal: A Young Lady’s Diary of Five Years Spent in Manila, Macao, and The Cape of Good Hope (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1900), Introduction.


Low in Hilliard, October 1829. Unless otherwise indicated, all diary entries and letters are from the Hilliard edition of Low’s papers. Later editions of the diary fill in some of the omissions in the Hilliard version but in terms of utterances related to gender and national identity, the differences are not significant.

Low, December 14, 1832.

Low, September 12, 1829.

Low, November 9, 1829.

Low, October 11, 1829.

Low, March 11, 1832.

Low, March 6, 1830.


Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 7.

Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 60.

Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 69, 71, 171.

Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 123.

Twain as quoted in Neville-Sington, “Introduction,” xxxvi.

Low, September 1, 1832.

Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 275.


See Shaw, “Harriett Low,” 296. Shaw also writes of Low’s attitudes towards the Dutch in the Cape of Good Hope, comparing their informality to similar American attitudes but also speaking critically of what she believed was a Dutch tendency to overimbibe.

Low, February 17, 1832.

Low, February 17, 1832.

Low, February 17, 1832.


Low, November 18, 1829.

Low, November 6, 1830.
This excerpt from Low’s diary appears in Donald Pittis and Susan J. Henders, *Macao: Mysterious Decay and Romance* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1997), 157–158.

Low, September 4, 1831.

Low, June 17, 1832.

Low, January 28, 1833.


Low, August 13, 1832.

Rebecca Kinsman to her family in Salem, December 12, 1844, in *The Essex Institute Historical Collections* (hereafter *Essex Institute*), Vol. 86 (1950): 324. Kimberly Alexander sees Kinsman and her husband as significant models of companionate marriage in early American culture. She also argues that the marriage defied conventional notions of gender. She writes: “These letters and diaries reveal Nathaniel as a sensitive, romantic figure, who was ill at ease in the public sphere of business and who sought solace in the private sphere of family. Rebecca, on the other hand, was the stronger partner, supervising a household of Chinese servants, arranging travel, and even organizing a reception for visiting plenipotentiary Caleb Cushing in 1844 for the signing of the first trade treaty between China and America.” See Kimberly Sayre Alexander, “Demure Quakeress': Rebecca Chase Kinsman in China, 1843–1847,” in *In Our Own Words: New England Diaries, 1600 to the Present*, Vol. 2, 2006, 104.


Damian Shaw, “‘Were It Worth Knowing’: What Rebecca Kinsman Can and

Shaw, “Were It Worth Knowing,” 250.


Shaw’s analysis of Low is thoughtful, textured, and critical of Low’s attitudes toward slavery and people of African descent as well as the Chinese. While he notes that there were others who shared Low’s views, he makes the case that by the early 1830s many in Britain and America had taken strong stands against slavery. Shaw deftly illuminates the ways in which Low deploys science, reason, and biblical passages to support her notions of racial superiority. See Shaw, “Harriett Low,” 296–299.

Low, August 26, 1832.

Low, November 13, 1832.

Low, September 21, 1833 (Hodges/Hummel, *Lights and Shadows*, 789).

Low, November 12, 1833.

Low, November 16, 1833.

Hilliard, Vol. 1, Preface.


journals, diaries, and memoirs. Several of the examples she uses are edited by men.

76 Jeter, Memoir, 14.
77 Jeter, Memoir, Preface.
78 See Beth Branyon, Miss Henrietta: Lady of Many Firsts (Franklin, Tennessee: Providence House Publishers, 1996), 8, 9.
79 Jeter, Memoir, 22.
80 Branyon, Miss Henrietta, 11.
82 Jeter, Memoir, 36. [Emphasis in the original text.]
83 Henrietta Shuck as quoted in Jeter, Memoir, 44.
84 Rebecca Kinsman to her sister Annie, May 22, 1846, Essex Institute, 87 (1951): 396.
85 Shuck to Mrs. Keeling, November 29, 1836 as cited in Jeter, Memoir.
86 Robert, American Women in Mission, 37.
87 Jeter, Memoir, 122.
89 In this period the name of the paper was The Friend of China and Hongkong Gazette as it originally incorporated the Gazette. Christopher Munn writes that the paper began in 1842 as “a joint merchant-missionary-government enterprise. With its bombastic and jocular style, the Friend embodied the buoyant spirit of early Hong Kong.” See Munn, Anglo China: Chinese People and British Rule in Hong Kong, 1941–1880 (Hong Kong: Echoes Series, Hong Kong University Press, 2009), 36.
90 There is some debate about this. Carl Smith asserts that the Shucks opened the first Christian Church in Hong Kong. However, it is clear that there were other denominational groups meeting in Hong Kong as well and the first Anglican Church opened in 1841. At the very least one can say that the Shucks opened the first structure under American auspices.
92 Jeter, Memoir, 145.
93 Shuck to her father, Reverend Hall, May 2, 1842. As quoted in Jeter, Memoir, 178–182.
94 Shuck in Jeter, Memoir, 146.
95 Shuck in Jeter, Memoir, 183.
96 William Maxwell Wood, Fankwei; or the San Jacinto in the Seas of India, China and Japan (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1859), 16–17.
Letter from Rebecca Kinsman to her sister in Salem, July 30, 1845, Esser Institute, Vol. 87 (1951): 143.


Norman Miners, Hong Kong under Imperial Rule, 1912–1941 (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1987), 191.

Hoe, Private Life, 144.

Maria Jaschok and Suzanne Miers, Women and Chinese Patriarchy: Submission, Servitude and Escape (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1994), 21.

John Carroll, A Concise History of Hong Kong (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007), 36.


Helen Legge, James Legge, 122.

Kinsman to her father, Macao, August 3, 1844, as sited in Alexander, “Demure Quakeress,” 111.


Hoe, Private Life, 87.

Hoe, Private Life, 47.

Jeter, Memoir, 189.

Shuck in Jeter, Memoir, 199.

Shuck to her sister, Isabella, June 14, 1842. See Jeter, 186.

Shuck in Jeter, Memoir, 205. [Emphasis in the original.]


Shuck in Jeter, Memoir, 167–168.

120 Shuck, *Scenes in China*, 168.
123 Jeter, *Memoir*, 210. [Emphasis in original.]
125 Jeter, *Memoir*, 231.
126 In addition to her writings there is an institutional remembrance of Shuck’s life. A school in Hong Kong, The Henrietta Secondary School in North Point, is named after her.
129 Smith, “The Protestant Church,” 114.
131 Smith, “The Protestant Church,” 114.
136 Scully, “Prostitution as Privilege,” 856.
137 For an early example of the stereotype in Hollywood see the 1928 silent film *Sadie Thompson* starring Gloria Swanson. The film was based on the short story “Rain” by W. Somerset Maugham and on the 1923 play by John Cotton and Clemence Randolph. Representations of the “sexually available American girl/woman” are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.
139 Pfeiffer, *A Woman’s Journey*, 46.


Hoe, *Private Life*, 144.

Miners, *Hong Kong under Imperial Rule*, 191. In 1867 the existing ordinance was replaced by a new one modeled on the Contagious Diseases Act in Britain. Miners notes that the new ordinance left current conditions relatively unchanged except that there was an expansion of police authority over prostitutes. He writes: “Brothels were confined to certain designated localities with separate districts for those catering for European and Chinese clients, and penalties were imposed for keeping a brothel outside these areas or an unlicensed brothel within them” (192). In fact, most of the Chinese women were unwilling to be examined by a European doctor so the medical examinations were imposed on prostitutes catering to European men. As such, Miners writes, “The control system achieved its main objective, which was not the protection of women from exploitation but, as it was commonly expressed in Hong Kong, ‘the provision of clean Chinese women for the use of the British soldiers and the sailors of the Royal Navy’” (193). From the late nineteenth century until the mid-1930s, which saw the end of licensed prostitution in Hong Kong, moral reformers in Britain and in Hong Kong exerted pressure on colonial authorities to repeal the Contagious Diseases Ordinance but there was strong resistance from both colonial officials and the local population. When the ordinance was repealed in 1890 the official edict did little to alter circumstances. Although prostitutes were no longer compelled to undergo examinations, many did so voluntarily. In 1894, Hong Kong could no longer resist pressure from moral reformers in Britain. Certain types of official oversight were discontinued but a system of “sly brothels” sprang up where officially licensed establishments had once existed (193–205). The subject of Western prostitutes in this larger history is often given short shrift. They were not regulated as closely as Chinese women and reformers were either embarrassed or unconcerned about their presence in China trade communities.

Scully, “Prostitution as Privilege,” 859.


*Hong Kong Daily Press*, January 10, 1891.

Scully, “Prostitution as Privilege,” 861.


Scully, “Prostitution as Privilege,” 859. Scully notes that American prostitutes were present in Shanghai from the 1860s although they were not usually identified as sex workers (860). She also notes that the numbers of American prostitutes may be inflated because “many Western prostitutes tried to pass themselves off as American citizens and had little difficulty in doing so: at a time when passports were not generally required, and Americans arriving in China required no documents, US consuls did not rigorously authenticate documents such as birth, marriage, or naturalization certificates that purportedly proved US citizenship” (862). On the topic of prostitution and regulation in Hong Kong see also Henry Lethbridge, *Hong Kong: Stability and Change* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1978), 198, and Miners, *Hong Kong under Imperial Rule*.

Hoe, “Queen’s Women,” 8.

Hoe, “Queen’s Women,” 7.

*Hong Kong Telegraph*, as cited in Gillingham, *At the Peak*, 112.


This point is made most clearly in Eileen P. Scully, *Bargaining with the State from Afar: American Citizenship in Treaty Port China, 1844–1942* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001). Much of what is known about prostitutes is filtered through others’ impressions of them. However, there are ways to locate them in Hong Kong history. Court and consular records, newspaper clippings, and anecdotes written about individual women in other accounts of Hong Kong in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries can be woven together to gain a sense, albeit limited, of what their lives were like. Scully’s work is a model of this type of research.


Scully, *Bargaining with the State*, 96. Scully writes, “Some [prostitutes] came to the business directly from the United States by way of established procurement rings linking leading American cities (such as Chicago and San Francisco) with the Asian prostitution market.”

Carl Smith, *Personal File: European Prostitutes in Hong Kong*.

See Pierce Evans to Hattie DeWolfe, 18 December 1874, enclosed in US Hong Kong Consul (Mosby) to State Department (Hay), 26 February 1881, No. 114, “Despatches from United States Consuls in Hong Kong, 1844–1906.” National Archives Records Administration (NARA) Microfilm. RG059/M108, Reel No. 13. Other documents including the certification of marriage between DeWolfe and Evans in New Bedford are in the same file. Sincere thanks to Eileen Scully who (literally) led me to this material, particularly Evans's extraordinary letter. For specific references to DeWolfe and Kate Jessop see Scully's appended listing at the conclusion of “Prostitution as Privilege.”

Scully, *Bargaining with the State*, 96.

Scully, “Prostitution as Privilege,” 859.

Smith, *European Prostitutes*.

Scully, “Prostitution as Privilege,” 861.


Hoe, “Queen’s Women,” 11.


Scully, “Prostitution as Privilege,” 867.


Shaw, “Harriett Low,” 301.

**Chapter 2**


Hahn published her first essay with *The New Yorker* at age twenty-four. Her last piece for the magazine was a poem written decades earlier but published in 1996 when she was ninety-one.


See Yoshihara’s chapter on Smedley in *Embracing the East*. There are many reasons that Smedley did not enjoy the same popularity as Buck, including Smedley’s more radical political views. Her story is told elsewhere but more remains to be said about Smedley’s sense of national identity and different use of the pedagogical impulse. However, because her time in Hong Kong was limited, I have not discussed her in detail here.


12 Snow, *My China Years*, 149.
16 See “The Outbreak of War in China to 1941,” in *Xianggang bainian (A Hundred Years of Hong Kong)*, as cited in David Faure, ed., *A Documentary History of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1997), 211.
18 Hahn as quoted in Horne, *Race War*, 34.
19 Hong Kong Census data (1940), Hong Kong Collection, Hong Kong University. Due to their marginal status, the Eurasian population was not always accurately accounted for in population statistics. For more on the Eurasian experience in Hong Kong see Vicki Lee, *Being Eurasian: Memoires across Racial Divides* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), and John Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007), 44.
20 Hahn, *China to Me*, 206.
21 Hahn, *China to Me*.
23 Compare Hahn, *Hong Kong Holiday*, chapters 1–4 with *Times and Places*, 284.
24 Hahn, *China to Me*, 10.
29 Hoe, *The Private Life of Old Hong Kong*, 277. There are those who believe that Hahn collaborated with the Japanese and that she and Boxer made enemies as a result.
31 Hahn, *Hong Kong Holiday*, 1–11.
32 Hahn, *Hong Kong Holiday*, 16.
33 Hahn, *Hong Kong Holiday*, 185.
35 Hahn, *Hong Kong Holiday*, 41.
36 Hahn, *Hong Kong Holiday*, 43.
37 Hahn, *Hong Kong Holiday*, 42.
38 Hahn, *Hong Kong Holiday*, 42.
40 Hahn, *Hong Kong Holiday*, 47.
41 Hahn, *No Hurry to Get Home* (Originally published as *Times and Places*), 283–284.
42 Hahn, *Hong Kong Holiday*, 246.
43 Hahn, *Hong Kong Holiday*, 251.
44 Hahn, *Hong Kong Holiday*, 259.
45 Hahn, *Hong Kong Holiday*, 221.
48 Frank Passic “Around the World with Gwen Dew.”
49 *Detroit Free Press*, May 27, 1922.
50 Passic, “Around the World with Gwen Dew.”
57 Passic, “Around the World with Gwen Dew.”
60 Dew, *Prisoner*, 72.
64 Dew, *Prisoner*, 83.
Notes to pp. 75–79

66 Horne, Race War, 93.
67 Dew, Prisoner, 123.
68 Dew, Prisoner, 145.
69 Dew, Prisoner, 104.
70 Dew, Prisoner, Foreword.
71 Dew, Prisoner, 112.
72 See Keith, Three Came Home, as well as Bernice Archer, The Internment of Western Civilians under the Japanese 1941–1945: A Patchwork of Internment (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008. Original RoutledgeCurzon edition, 2004), and Theresa Kaminski, Prisoners in Paradise: American Women in the Wartime South Pacific (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2000). Archer notes that Hong Kong’s tropical climate spared internees from extreme weather and the need for warm clothing during the winter. Not only were men, women, and children interned together at Stanley (although women were in the minority) interviews and memoirs indicate that Japanese officials were less involved in the daily operation of Stanley Camp. (See Archer, Internment, 68, 134.)
73 Dew, Prisoner, 231.
74 Jean Gittins, Stanley: Behind Barbed Wire (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1982), 32.
75 Horne, Race War, 85.
76 Norman Briggs, Taken in Hong Kong: December 8, 1941. Compiled by Carol Briggs Waite. (Baltimore: Publish America, 2006).
77 Dew, Prisoner, 232.
78 Dew, Prisoner, 243.
79 Historian Jason Wordie affirms what many internment memoirs assert, that the Americans were “hugely resented due to their relative affluence and general refusal to share what they had.” (Interview with Jason Wordie, June 28, 2010.)
80 Wordie notes that part of the reason for gender segregation was “to prevent unwanted pregnancies and the consequent strain on medical and dietary resources that more children would bring. Over 50 were born in camp, and towards the end there were a number of abortions performed simply because of the food situation. Also, as women were still menstruating, the dietary conditions were clearly not that bad.” (Interview with Jason Wordie, June 28, 2010.)
81 Archer, Internment.
82 Waterford, Van, Prisoners of the Japanese in World War II: Statistical History, Personal Narratives and Memorials Concerning POW’s in Camps and on Hellships, Civilian Internees, Asian Slave Laborers and Others
In the introduction to her study Archer notes the importance of looking at the way the period in which internment narratives were published shaped their presentation and viewpoint.


Hahn, *Hong Kong Holiday*, 66.

Hahn, *Hong Kong Holiday*, 67.

Hahn, *Hong Kong Holiday*, 52–53.


Irene Cheng, *Intercultural Reminiscences* (Hong Kong: David C. Lam Center for East-West Studies, Hong Kong Baptist University, 1997), 260. Cheng offers her impressions of colonial attitudes and racism against the Chinese in Hong Kong, including her experiences living as a member of the only Eurasian family on the Peak. For a more academic discussion of the Peak Ordinance and the way it underpinned racial exclusion against Eurasians and the Chinese, as well as a discussion of the Ordinance in its various forms, see John Carroll, *Edge of Empires: Chinese Elites and British Colonials in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press Echoes Series, 2007), 90–97. Original edition published by Harvard University Press in 2005.


Passic, Albion Historical Society Online Archive.


Another example of this viewpoint is Helen Foster Snow’s discussion of her return to the US in 1941. She writes: “I think back to December of 1940 and the President liner going out of the Whangpoo River for Honolulu and San Francisco. A thin, pale, sickly American female weighing about one hundred pounds huddles at the rail, freezing in her old fur coat. The tide is retreating, running out, Japanese warships own the harbor and Japanese planes are already poised for Pearl Harbor the next year … We have ‘lost China.’ I have lost nearly ten years so it seems, as I realize none of my own work has been finished. Yes, I look like a dowdy missionary who has given up material things for higher purposes. … In the winter of 1940, I remember the healthy, self-confident, all-American Girl Scout ingénue of 1931 whom Edgar Snow made fun of in the Chocolate Shop. I remember how hard she worked at any job, how much effort she put into being liked and attractive, how diplomatic, careful, and constructive she was, how often an unpaid civic or social worker. This girl gave up material things and never counted the cost. What did she receive in exchange? In 1931, I intended maximum development of the individual in all ways, but I was torn away from my goals by the typhoons of history. The individual was sacrificed for the common good. Or was I? I liked the principle of individual development. I didn’t lose my sense of humor, though this was rare for those who lived in the East. I could still smile with Benjamin Franklin: She lived much and suffered much, most of which never happened – the rest of which happened to other people.” See Snow, My China Years, 34.

Thanks to Peter Cunich who has preserved important documents and information on Eleanor Thom in his alumni files located in the Department of History and in the University Archives, University of Hong Kong. Dr. Cunich was kind enough to introduce me to Thom’s story and to Dr. Thom’s nephew, Anthony Lo, who graciously shared his recollections of Dr. Thom during a phone conversation and e-mail exchange in the fall of 2005. There is some uncertainty about Thom’s wartime work in Chongqing. It is not clear whether she worked for the American Consulate or the British Ministry of Information. See Peter Cunich, Eleanor Thom Tribute, HKU Files, “Eleanor Thom.”


Peter Cunich, Eleanor Thom File.

Telephone conversation with Canossian Sisters Rosana Cesanti and Susanna Yu of the Canossian Order, Hong Kong, Fall 2005.

See Thom’s obituary in the South China Morning Post, June 18, 2003. This information was taken from interviews with Dr. Peter Cunich, Department of History, HKU and Canossian Sisters Susanna Yu and Rosana Cesanti.

As noted above and in the introduction to this study, the phrase “in-between place” is Elizabeth Sinn’s.


Thom Thesis, 8.

Chapter 3

1. Andrew J. Whitfield, *Hong Kong, Empire and the Anglo-American Alliance at War, 1941–45* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2001), 220.

2. See Cindy Yik-Yi Chu, *The Maryknoll Sisters in Hong Kong, 1921–1969: In Love with the Chinese* (New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2004), and Chu, *The Diaries of the Maryknoll Sisters in Hong Kong, 1921–1966* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). There are, of course, non-American Maryknolls but many of the Chinese people the Maryknolls worked with identified them as American. Several Maryknolls were interned in Stanley and they provided invaluable service to the Hong Kong community via social service, education, and enterprise. Chu’s work is a deep case study that I cite here rather than integrate into this book as she has devoted significant attention to doing interviews of her own and she provides a separate and more detailed look at a group of women who are an important community in their own right.

3. See Donald E. Pease, *The New American Exceptionalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 7. Pease argues that American exceptionalism was, until the end of the Cold War, the “encompassing state of fantasy” that “had regulated US citizens’ relationship to the political order for the preceding half century.” Pease’s use of the term “state fantasy” does not refer to a mystification but to the dominant structure of desire out of which U.S. citizens imagined their national identity.” (1) For Pease,
who references Jacqueline Rose’s work on fantasy, the term should not be associated with delusion but as a key trope that organizes particular ideals about nation and national identity.

Chua, who is a cultural studies scholar at the National University of Singapore, writes of his own encounters with American culture as a young man growing up in Southeast Asia. He makes the point that it is difficult to know exactly how “bits of American Culture” inflect one’s overall sense of identity, but there is a relationship between self-concept and processes of Americanization in the postwar/Cold War period. Chua points to the importance of American consumer products, Hollywood films, and American music as significant parts of his past that helped to inform his worldview. See Beng Huat Chua, “Growing Up with Bits of American Culture,” paper presented at the International Conference on “American Popular Culture in Asia,” Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, February 19–20, 2009.


Klein, Cold War Orientalism, 105.


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The Overseas Americans, 52–51.


22 James Hayes, *Friends and Teachers: Hong Kong and Its People, 1953–87* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press), 10.


24 Tucker, *Taiwan*, 226.


28 In the editorial pages of the English-language press there was a lively debate about whether or not HKIS was entitled to a loan from the Hong Kong government. See HKIS Clip File Archives, Hong Kong International School, Tai Tam, Hong Kong.


30 See the essays on Hong Kong in this period in Andrea Riemenschneider and Deborah L. Madsen, eds., *Diasporic Histories: Cultural Archives of Chinese Transnationalism* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009).


35 Gretchen K. Kelsch, “Introduction,” in *AWA Annual Report* (Hong Kong: AWA, 1961–1962). At the beginning of each annual report there is a president’s message. Although charter members formulated the AWA mission statement, the respective presidents seem to have had significant influence in terms of shaping organizational goals and communicating them to members and to the general public.


37 Clippings of the coverage of the “Maid of Cotton” visit are in the AWA Scrapbooks. The event received substantial coverage both in the Chinese and English-language presses. See *AWA Annual Report and Accounts 1958–1959* (Hong Kong: AWA, 1959), 1 and 5. The Maid of Cotton’s visit was an annual event that continued into the 1960s. She was treated as a celebrity and was considered to be a role model for young women in Hong Kong. As such, she made public appearances at local schools and social events.

38 *South China Morning Post (SCMP)*, June 1, 1969.

39 *Hong Kong Star*, July 15, 1969.

44 See *Eagles and Dragons*, 184.
46 *SCMP*, October 10, 1972.
47 *SCMP*, October 13, 1972.
55 Loretta Lee, *Domestic Servants Survey, The American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: American Chamber of Commerce), September 1977.
56 See interview with DePree titled, “This Housewife Writes Novels,” in *The Hong Kong Star*, March 22, 1971.
58 DePree, *The Spring Wind*, “A Note to the Reader.”
65 DePree, *The Spring Wind*, 27.
69 DePree, *The Spring Wind*, 83.
74 Stanley S.K. Kwan, and Nicole Kwan, *The Dragon and the Crown: Hong Kong Memoirs* (Hong Kong: Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Studies Series, Hong Kong University Press, 2009), 96–97.
76 Tucker, *Taiwan*, 228.
83 NSC 5717, July 17, 1957, 7.
84 NSC 5717, July 17, 1957, 7.
86 Although several scholars such as Stephen Teo, Law Kar, and Elaine Ho acknowledge Chang’s ties with the USIS, it remains unclear what, if any, influence such ties had on her work.
87 Poshek Fu, “Modernity, Cold War and Hong Kong Mandarin Cinema,” in *The Cathay Story* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2009), 28.
88 Fu, “Modernity, Cold War,” 25.
89 Fu, “Modernity, Cold War,” 31. Fu also writes about the ideological and artistic influences of studio moguls Loke Wan Tho and General Manager Robert Chung.
90 Fu, “Modernity, Cold War,” 29.
91 Fu, “Modernity, Cold War,” 31.
94 Yen Mah, *Falling Leaves*, 141.
95 Yen Mah, *Falling Leaves*, 150.
99 Woo Mo-Han, *A Hong Kong Story before 1997* (Cremorne, Australia: Jeff Toghill, 1997), 1.
100 Woo, *A Hong Kong Story*, 28.
101 Woo, *A Hong Kong Story*, 33.
102 Woo, *A Hong Kong Story*, 33.
103 Woo, *A Hong Kong Story*, 33–34.
104 Woo, *A Hong Kong Story*, 33–34.
106 Woo, *A Hong Kong Story*, 51.
107 Woo, *A Hong Kong Story*, 57.
110 Woo, *A Hong Kong Story*, 70.
111 Woo, *A Hong Kong Story*, 94.
Chapter 4

1 The number of US citizens living in Hong Kong more than doubled in the years between 1992 and 1997. They outnumbered British foreign nationals by the mid-1990s and constituted the second largest non-Chinese population in Hong Kong. The largest was the predominantly female population from the Philippines, most of whom were employed as domestic helpers or in the hospitality industry.


3 These stores are no longer in business as larger supermarket chains such as Park N Shop, Wellcome/Olivers, Seibu’s “Great” Food halls, and City Super offer the same and more to a broader cross-section of consumers interested in a wide range of products including but not limited to foods connected with American/Western/European or Japanese products or cuisines.

4 See work by Laikwan Pang, Law Kar, Esther Yau, Gina Marchetti, and Stephen Teo on various aspects of the film industry in the years leading up to and since the handover. For overviews and anthologies that address a range of issues related to the handover as well as the political economy of Hong Kong/Mainland/US film, see Esther C. M. Yau, ed., At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); Poshek Fu and David Desser, eds., The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and Gina Marchetti, From Tian’anmen to Times Square: Transnational China and the Chinese Diaspora on Global Screens, 1989–1997 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006).

5 There are many works on women’s movements in Hong Kong and events leading up to 1997. In addition to those mentioned previously, a few that discuss Western and Chinese interactions on matters related to gender and women’s issues are: Veronica Pearson and Benjamin K.P. Leung, eds., Women in Hong Kong (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1995); Eliza W.Y. Lee, ed., Gender and Change in Hong Kong: Globalization, Postcolonialism, and Chinese Patriarchy (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003); and Helen F. Siu, ed., Merchants’ Daughters: Women, Commerce, and Regional Culture in South China (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010).

6 Mayfair Mei-Hui Yang, ed., Spaces of Their Own: Women’s Public Sphere in Transnational China (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), “Introduction,” 15. The 1995 UN Conference on Women held in Beijing energized Hong Kong women’s groups (although there was disagreement about the level of influence pro/anti-China factions should exercise). Activists rallied around rural women living in Hong Kong’s New Territories and the movement to challenge laws prohibiting women from inheriting
family property. In the mid-1990s Hong Kong adopted the United Nations CEDAW treaty (the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), something both China and Britain had done years earlier. Additionally, several women were elected to the most prominent governing body in Hong Kong, the Legislative Council. Some, such as Anna Wu, Emily Lau, and Christine Loh were early advocates of gender equality.


8 A typical example is the article in the *AWARE* Profile section by Marti Mattia, “A ‘Mom at Home’ in Hong Kong,” *AWARE* (December 1992): 30–31.

9 Interview with Betty Wei, Hong Kong, December 2001.


11 Wei, SCMP, November 16, 1980.

12 Wei, SCMP, March 8, 1981.

13 Wei, SCMP, March 8, 1981.

14 Wei, SCMP, September 27, 1981.

15 Wei, SCMP, September 27, 1981.

16 Wei, SCMP, September 27, 1981.


20 Interview with Betty Wei, Hong Kong, December 2001.


24 Wei and Li, 69.

25 Wei and Li, 74–75.

26 Wei and Li, 135.

27 Wei and Li, 66.

28 Wei and Li, 78.

29 Wei and Li, 196.


33 Larry Wang, *The New Gold Mountain: The Success of Chinese Americans*
in Greater China ... and What You Need to Know to Get There (Hong Kong: Andiremar Publications, 1998), Introduction.

41 Eng, Warrior Lessons, Introduction.
43 Smith, Strangers at Home, 195.
45 Epp, Countdown Collage, 2.
46 Epp, Countdown Collage, 2.
47 Epp, Countdown Collage, 17.
50 Epp, Countdown Collage, 26.
51 Epp, Countdown Collage, 48.
52 Epp, Countdown Collage, 2.
53 Epp, Countdown Collage, 57.
54 Epp, Countdown Collage, 77.
55 Epp, Countdown Collage, 109–110.
56 Epp, Countdown Collage, 116.
57 Epp, Countdown Collage, 118.
58 Epp, Countdown Collage, 252.
67 The description of the play as typifying the handover period and the script of the play itself are found in the volume edited by Mike Ingham and Xu Xi, City Stage: Hong Kong Playwriting in English (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), 94–106.
68 See Nicole Constable, Maid to Order in Hong Kong: Stories of Migrant Workers, 2nd ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007) and Isabel Taylor Escoda, Hong Kong Postscript: Radio, Press and Fictional Reflections on Life in Hong Kong (Hong Kong: Media Mark, 1994).
70 One of several criticisms of white, middle-class women involved in the second-wave women’s movement was that they relied on women’s labor, often provided by women of color (who did not have the same access to education and economic mobility that their employers had) but did not acknowledge how they themselves were implicated in hierarchies of oppression. In Hong Kong, women’s groups and gender activists have pressured the Hong Kong government to be more sensitive to both racism and sexism and to the ways in which the two are intertwined in a marketplace that relies heavily on women’s labor but does little to guarantee their rights.
71 Shu-mei Shih, “Gender and a Geopolitics of Desire: The Seduction of Mainland Women in Taiwan and Hong Kong Media,” in Yang, ed., Spaces of Their Own, 297.
72 Stacilee Ford, Mabel Chueng Yuen-Ting’s An Autumn’s Tale (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007).
75 Badt, Interview with Crystal Kwok.
76 South China Morning Post, March 7, 2007.
77 “William,” HKU student reflection excerpt, HIST 2016 (November 2009). Student names have been changed to protect anonymity.
78 “Anna,” HKU student reflection excerpt, HIST 2016 (November 2009).
Conclusion

1  A nice accompaniment to Kwok’s film is the literary work of Xu Xi, whose stories about Hong Kong at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century engage many of the themes and issues discussed in this study via fiction and personal essay. I have written about her 1990s novels elsewhere. See Staci Ford, “Claiming the Space: Fictionalizing Feminism in Xu Xi’s 1990s Hong Kong Novels,” *Lilith: A Feminist History Journal*, No. 14 (2005): 52–64. Her most recent novel, which was published just as this book went to press, is an excellent but certainly not the only example of mining women’s experiences to illuminate various aspects of Hong Kong history, society, and culture in a transnational context. See Xu Xi, *Habit of a Foreign Sky: A Novel* (Hong Kong: Haven Books, 2010).
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