Space-Clearing *Flânerie*:

Remapping Hong Kong in Dung Kai-cheung's *Atlas* and My Little Airport's Songs

In the Tai Kok Tsui area of Hong Kong, the streets are named after foreign trees. The reason why is a charming mystery. There are no maples on Maple Street, nor willows on Willow Street. Strangest of all is the street between them: Sycamore Street. Glancing through all the bilingual street signs in this area, one might notice that while most of them have the same meaning in Chinese and English, Sycamore Street does not. This could be because Sycamore translates to *mou-fa-gwo* 無花果, meaning a tree that bears fruits but does not blossom and may be considered inauspicious. Sycamore Street's Chinese name is *Si-go-mo Gai* 詩歌舞街, meaning "poetry, song, and dance street," which evokes a famous passage from the preface to the *Classic of Poetry*, a canonical Chinese text. While the bilingual names of Sycamore Street are transliterations of each other, it is unclear which one is the original.

The discrepancy in meanings on the sign of Sycamore Street allures the musing gaze of the *flâneurs* who casually stroll around the city. Among them are famous Hong Kong writer Dung Kai-cheung and Hong Kong-based indie-pop band My Little Airport (hereafter MLA). Both intrigued by the mystery of Sycamore Street, Dung and MLA gave this puzzle piece a rather different treatment. In his 1997 novel *地圖集：一個想像的城市的考古學* (*Atlas: The Archaeology of an Imaginary City*, hereafter *Atlas*),[1] Dung writes a chapter titled "詩歌舞街/Sycamore Street." In *Atlas*, Dung remaps the Hong Kong streets, rewriting local history in a way that blurs the boundaries between fact and fiction. In contradistinction, MLA's 2019 song "詩歌舞街" ("Sycamore Street") concerns present local life. Lightheartedly playing with the Chinese meaning of Sycamore Street's English name, a tree that never blossoms, MLA sings

about a love that never blossomed between two urban saunterers. Dung's lexical *flânerie* and MLA's sonic *flânerie* encounter and join each other at the juncture of Sycamore Street. They both explore a huge range of creative meanings concealed and opened up by the various signs of the city. Writing/singing *as flâneurs*, Dung and MLA remap the Hong Kong streets to clear themselves a space to belong. Their postcolonial and postmodern retelling of Hong Kong stories from past, present, and (an imaginary) future complicates the spatial practice of *flânerie* by adding a temporal dimension.

Using Dung's *Atlas* and MLA's music as examples, while also drawing from postcolonial theory, this chapter views the space-clearing *flânerie* in post-1997 Hong Kong literature and culture as an act of *worlding*. The term *worlding* originates from Heideggerian phenomenology. Pheng Cheah interprets it as "how a world is held together and given unity by the force of time" (8). Stories and narratives occupy a unique space in the processes of *worlding* because, "as forms of recounting, they depend on and express the world's temporal structure" (Cheah 311). In postcolonial theory, Gayatri Spivak appropriates this concept to denote the effect of "[i]mperialism and its territorial and subject-constituting projects" (249). However, Cheah argues that imperialist cartography can only be seen as *worlding* "in a derived sense," given that "[f]or Heidegger, a world is precisely what cannot be represented on a map" (8). Cheah sees the temporal processes of discursive construction as *unworlding* rather than *worlding*, because "by reducing the world to a spatial object, they obscure its worldliness" (9). Curiously, the space-clearing *flânerie* in post-1997 Hong Kong worlds Hong Kong by reversing the logic of imperialist cartography. Instead of reducing the world to a spatial object through the temporal processes of discursive construction, Dung's lexical *flânerie* and MLA's sonic *flânerie* enact an unending openness of the world through the spatial movement of strolling, recasting familiar

signs of the city into new stories while remapping the Hong Kong streets. This chapter uses the notion of *space-clearing* as a shorthand to describe the deconstruction of imperialist cartography for the cultivation of a new Hong Kong subjectivity that is both local and cosmopolitan. The source of this idea is Kwame Anthony Appiah's influential article, "Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?", where he posits that the *post-* in both terms is a "space-clearing gesture" (348) that "challenges earlier legitimating narratives" (353). Through writing and singing postmodern counternarratives, the space-clearing *flâneurs* delegitimize the master narratives of Hong Kong history. By strolling, they reclaim the city from the hands of various cartographers, opening new possibilities to belong in different ways.

The implication of my chapter is two-fold. First, it contributes to the studies of *flânerie* in contemporary literature, art, and popular culture. By juxtaposing Dung's lexical *flânerie* and MLA's sonic *flânerie*, it becomes clear that the *flâneur* is not a bygone figure living and dying on the streets of fin-de-siècle Paris, but a critical image that takes on new meanings in the ongoing tensions in post-1997 Hong Kong. Secondly, this chapter contributes to the field of Hong Kong cultural studies, as well as postcolonialism and world literature more broadly. It continues the line of inquiry surrounding the cultural self-invention of the Hong Kong subject, from Ackbar Abbas' seminal theory of *déjà disparu* in his 1997 book *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*, to Wayne C. F. Yeung's 2021 analysis of the poetics of a "nativity without nativism" (16). The rest of this chapter is divided into three sections. The first introduces Dung's lexical *flânerie* and MLA's sonic *flânerie* through a comparative reading of their musings over Sycamore Street. The second traces the transition of the *flâneur* from solitude to solidarity, from wanderer of urban affluence to those left behind by capitalism. It juxtaposes Dung's *Atlas* chapter, "Mr. Smith's One-Day Trip," with two MLA songs written during the

2014 and 2019 protests, respectively; namely, “今夜到干諾道中一起瞓” (“Let's Go Sleep on Connaught Road Central Tonight”) and “吳小姐” (“Miss Ng”). The last section examines how Dung and MLA reclaim Hong Kong in script and sound, opening up a world that allows for pluralistic ways of belonging. It compares Dung’s *Atlas* chapter, “Possession Street,” with the soundscapes of MLA’s “憂傷的嫖客” (“Sad John,” 2012) and “今宵多珍重” (“Let’s Cherish Tonight,” 2019). Through various processes, such as deconstruction, parody, protest, and mourning, Dung and MLA express a Hong Kong cultural subjectivity that is both local and cosmopolitan.

I. Roaming Hong Kong: From Archeology to Modernology, from Lexical to Sonic

The *flâneries* in Dung’s *Atlas* and MLA’s music differ greatly. The two major differences are between archeology and modernology, between the lexical and the sonic. In the preface to the 2012 English edition of *Atlas* (which Dung revised then co-translated with two other translators), Dung introduces *Atlas* as “an archaeology for the future” (xiv). He sets the story of *Atlas* in a distant future, where Hong Kong has long been lost and fallen into oblivion. A group of scholars attempt to inquire into the origin of the city by putting together its old maps, blueprints, and urban plans. Nevertheless, these archaeologists find the records constantly at odds with each other. It turns out that “Hong Kong has been a work of fiction from its very beginning” (Dung xi). This overarching narrative is told only on the back cover of the 1997 Chinese original and the author’s preface to the 2012 English version. The content, divided into four parts titled “Theory,” “The City,” “Streets,” and “Signs,” is an assemblage of short pieces of fiction written in a pseudo-academic fashion. Dung’s study of Hong Kong in *Atlas* reminds his reader of Walter Benjamin’s study of Paris in *Passagen-Werk* (*The Arcades Project*), in

particular Benjamin's comments that "[t]he Paris of [Baudelaire's] poems is a sunken city" (10) and that "[t]he street conducts the *flâneur* into a vanished time" (416; M1, 2). Benjamin notes that his project makes use of "the rags, the refuse" (460; N1a, 8). Similarly, Dung's *Atlas* emerges from the ruins of earlier historiographies. Writing *as* a *flâneur*, Dung resurrects the memories of the city in a detached manner, experiencing it as a series of reveries.

Conversely, MLA's *flâneurs* and *flâneuses* practice modernology through their perceptive and playful observations of the everyday lives of Hong Kong people. Modernology studies "contemporary customs and manners," not the "ruins and remains of ancient times" (Kon 65). The term first emerged in Japan after the 1923 Great Kantō earthquake, which set in motion the rebuilding of Tokyo as a modern metropolis. Similar to *flâneurs*, modernologists roam the city acutely observing trivial aspects of urban street life. Songwriter Lam Ah P, lead vocalist Nicole Au, and their friends formed MLA in 2003. In one of their earlier songs titled "美孚根斯堡與白田珍寶金" ("Gainsbourg in Mei Foo and Jane Birkin in Pak Tin," 2007), they self-proclaim as "香港最後一群缺乏社交技巧的詩人" ("the last group of socially awkward poets in Hong Kong") (00:00:31-00:00:40).[2] Urban walking and people watching are among their favorite topics. Roaming parks, cinemas, and shopping malls, they sing in a deliberately sweet and innocent way about Hong Kong's socioeconomical inequality, political injustice, and the younger generations' existential dread. They are immensely popular among people who came of age after the handover for their ability to capture whimsical details of local life. Their first album, *the ok thing to do on sunday afternoon is to toddle in the zoo*, was an instant success upon its release in 2004, with the title track topping the Hong Kong charts, making them a local sensation. Similar to Dung's *Atlas*, a significant feature of MLA's music is its extensive use of the names of Hong Kong's streets and districts. While Dung practices an archeology for the

future by remapping the streets of Hong Kong to rewrite local histories, MLA practices modernology by collecting stories of ordinary Hongkongers; MLA's *flâneurs* and *flâneuses* encounter these in the present, then make them into music.

A comparative reading of Dung's and MLA's respective treatments of the mystery of Sycamore Street can best demonstrate this difference. In Dung's "詩歌舞街/Sycamore Street," future archeologists discover two half-true, half-made-up narratives competing to define the origin of Sycamore Street's name (106-8). The first account is the English name came first, when the British authority named all the streets after foreign trees. Following from this, the Chinese name came second as a transliteration, out of respect for the local culture, because the sycamore is considered an inauspicious tree. Meanwhile, a fabricated document, *A Study of the Oral History of the Kowloon Area,* shows that the Chinese name came first, because on this street, a community center of Chinese art and culture existed long before British arrival. In *Atlas*, Dung uses real historical records such as *新安縣志* (*Gazetteer of Xin'an County*). However, he also fabricates historical documents, creating a "sometimes inextricable mix of history and fiction" (McDougall 858).

In *Atlas*, Dung attributes new meanings to Hong Kong's bilingual street signs through the narrative voice of future archeologists who roam the vanished city through their imagination. The future perfect tense—that Hong Kong *will have been lost*—hints at the uncomfortable existence of a deadline, capturing local people's sense of doom anticipating Hong Kong's disappearance. Abbas famously encapsulates this sentiment as *déjà disparu*: "the feeling that what is new and unique about the situation is always already gone, and we are left holding a handful of clichés, or a cluster of memories of what has never been" (25). Ceded by the Qing dynasty to the British Empire in 1842, then handed over by the United Kingdom to the People's

Republic of China in 1997, the city of Hong Kong is constantly represented as an elusive subject on the verge of disappearing, a liminal space between pernicious binaries of old and new, East and West. However, Dung's lexical *flânerie* rejects the hyper-compression of Hong Kong into an uninhabitable *point* that forecloses the possibilities of *worlding*. By deconstructing the competing discourses of powers vying to claim new territories, it illuminates Hong Kong's inter-imperial positionality on the margins of China and the British Empire. But it does not dwell on that marginality, which risks reducing Hong Kong to a doorway ("where East meets West," as the cliché goes), a timestamp ("disappeared on July 1, 1997"). Instead, Dung's *Atlas* worlds Hong Kong with a double *flânerie*: the actual strolling and research the author carries out in the process of creative writing, and his narrators' imaginary strolling and research in a distant future. While the post-handover changes in Hong Kong's name, law, and language sound all too familiar, as if the city is a palimpsest of the tastes of successive owners, Dung's lexical *flânerie* reopens the path to the past to inaugurate a new temporality, clearing old clichés for the emergence of a new subjectivity. Simultaneously *worlding* Hong Kong's past and future, *Atlas* gives its reader a critical experience of Hong Kong in the present.

Unlike Dung, who probes into the aporia of history, MLA sings about local life in the present. Singing mainly in Cantonese and Hong Kong English, they continue Dung's temporal *worlding* of Hong Kong by adding a sonic dimension. J. Hillis Miller's 2019 article "Poetics Today?" argues that poetry, or the poetic use of language, has largely migrated from printed publications to popular songs and other digitized media forms in the 21st century (101). This is particularly pertinent in the context of Hong Kong, because Cantonese as a spoken language has its own grammar and expressions that exceed what can be expressed by standard written Chinese. Cantonese sounds different from Mandarin, and Hong Kong English sounds different

from Standard British English. Written in standard Chinese and translated into standard English, *Atlas* presents itself and circulates in the languages of the mapmakers despite its critique that cartographical technologies reduce the world into a spatial object. In this critique one must pay attention to the sonic *worlding* of Hong Kong, which requires attention to the *sounds* of local languages to understand the Hong Kong subject. In this sense, Dung's lexical *flânerie* and MLA's sonic *flânerie* are complementary to each other as two methods of *worlding*.

As mentioned earlier, at the juncture of Dung's lexical *flânerie* and MLA's sonic *flânerie* is the bilingual sign of Sycamore Street. MLA's song "Sycamore Street" is about an unexpected reunion between two old friends who may have had feelings for each other when they were teenagers. After bumping into one another at an indie concert, they stroll along Sycamore Street together:

完場與你去深水埗那邊

剛過身的作家 你介紹那年

寫過只有散步我們才真正聊天

再次聽你說故事

聽你說剛生的嬰兒

詩歌舞街 地上有著光點閃閃 (00:00:33-00:01:04)

(Walking with you to Sham Shui Po after the show

The author you told me about back then, she recently passed away

Heartfelt conversations can only be shared on a stroll, she wrote

On Sycamore Street I listen to you tell stories again

Hearing about your newborn baby

The lights shimmer on the ground)

Sycamore Street, with its bilingual names, becomes a metaphor for their relationship. Although the Chinese name 詩歌舞 (poetry, song, and dance) is romantic and suits the ambience, the Chinese translation of the English name 無花果 (a tree that bears fruits but never blossoms) alludes to an unrequited love. With claps from the drum machine playing lightly on the offbeat, the narrator (played by Nicole's voice) listens to his former crush reminisce about old times and new adventures. Eventually, the claps fade into silence as if he were holding his breath, and Nicole's voice sings: "我卻像當天的少年 / 但已是 能控制我所有淚腺" ("And I was just like the teenager I was when we first met / Only now, I have learned how to hold my tears") (00:02:27-00:03:07). Then, the claps spring back in, and the lights, shimmering on the ground of Sycamore Street, come into sight for the first time in the music video. At this very last moment, MLA hints that it is just his tears that make it seem like lights are shimmering on the ground.

In this song MLA does not make anything explicit. Instead, they invite their audience to use their imagination to fill in the gaps. In *Atlas*, Dung argues that to help the city tell its own stories, one needs to perform an imaginative reading of its signs that allows for "the juxtaposition of synchronic signs to produce a diachronic narrative connection" (124). Like Dung, MLA also remaps the streets of Hong Kong by attributing new meanings to familiar signs of the city,

recasting them into new narratives. In doing so, *flânerie* in post-1997 Hong Kong recaptures Hongkongers' dwindling imaginations in a highly utilitarian urban space.

II. New *Flâneurs*: Down-and-Out in the 21st Century

Dung's lexical *flânerie* and MLA's sonic *flânerie* share more than their musings about street names. Dung's *Atlas* features *a group of* archaeologists in a collective search for Hong Kong's past. MLA's songs are written and performed by *a group of flâneurs* and *flâneuses* who sing about love and friendship. While the initial version of Dung's *Atlas*—published in June 1997—fits into what Abbas describes as Hong Kong people's "last-minute collective search for a more definite identity" (4), Dung's revising and translation of *Atlas* in 2012 shows a persistent process of *worlding* that attempts to maintain a disruptive opening for the transformation of the Hong Kong subject. MLA's independent music production in the 21st century also shows how Hong Kong did not disappear after the handover but continues to be the cherished home of local people. While news media debate the "death of Hong Kong" by the National Security Law, these space-clearing *flâneries* attempt to enact a disruptive opening of a world and maintain it to cultivate new agents of social transformation. In contrast to the individualistic historical *flânerie* represented in Benjamin's review of Franz Hessel's *Spazieren in Berlin* (*Walking in Berlin*), in Dung's *Atlas* and MLA's songs, the city is still mnemonic but the walker is no longer solitary. In post-1997 Hong Kong, *flânerie* becomes a collective movement of *worlding*, creating a new kind of social intimacy.

However, Dung and MLA view the social role of art very differently, and their respective methods of *worlding* reflect those differences. Dung's lexical *flânerie* values deconstruction and contemplative silence. As Wayne Yeung perceptively observes, Dung believes that literature

must remain "ostensibly functionless" (18). Its social impact, if any, must only "come through unintentionally" (18). In response to the 2014 Occupy Central campaign, which galvanized people into "speaking out," Dung delivered a speech arguing for the "necessary silence" of writers to withdraw from public life, highlighting the "impractical wisdom" of literature vis-à-vis the "pragmatic ignorance" of action (qtd. Yeung 18-9). This is why in *Atlas*, although the archeologists are engaged in a collective project, they embark on their individual journeys to find different fragments of Hong Kong's remains and ultimately fail to piece together a unifying narrative. Through deconstruction, Dung shows his reader the irreconcilable contradictions in processes of discursive constructions, thus paving way for an imagination of a Hong Kong subject that is heterogeneous and dynamic.

Conversely, MLA calls for proactive engagement in democratic social actions. By synthesizing the rhythms of walking, talking, and singing, MLA's music reimagines *flânerie* as a genuine camaraderie in a precarious city. For example, in their song "五點鐘去天光墟" ("Going to the Dawn Market at 5 AM," 2016), the narrator calls up a group of friends to roam the dawn markets, where people living in financial precarity sell second-hand products or things collected from donations. These markets get their name because they open early before dawn and close right before 7 AM to escape government patrols. This song made its entry to Hong Kong's public broadcasting service in an episode featuring the dawn market of Sham Shui Po—one of Hong Kong's most impoverished districts (RTHK). In this song, the duet of Lam Ah P and Nicole calmly questions the existing world that dictates that the poor must strive on their own against poverty (00:01:49-00:01:55). The melody sounds simple and carefree, contrasting the lyrics depicting Hong Kong as a dying city with its people losing their dreams (00:01:36-00:01:48).

While it is crucial to maintain a space for contemplative silence to process Hong Kong's historical self-understanding, in the context of contemporary Hong Kong, arts can also inspire better-informed actions by cultivating agents of social change at the internal level of subjectivity. A comparative reading of the roaming of Hong Kong's Central District in Dung's *Atlas* chapter "Mr. Smith's One-Day Trip" and MLA's 2014 protest song "今夜到干諾道中一起瞓" ("Let's Go Sleep on Connaught Road Central Tonight") demonstrates how Dung's contemplative silence and MLA's act of enunciation accompany each other in the re-*worlding* of Hong Kong. Tracing the transition of the figure of the *flâneur* from a privileged bourgeois spectator to those who capitalism left behind, Dung's lexical *flânerie* and MLA's sonic *flânerie* disrupt imperialist cartography in their attempt to clear a space for the cultivation of a new Hong Kong subjectivity despite capitalist globalization.

In "The Painter of Modern Life," Charles Baudelaire muses that to be the perfect *flâneur* is "[t]o be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world … The spectator is a *prince* who everywhere rejoices in his incognito" (9). Following this tradition, Keith Tester defines *flânerie* as "the activity of the sovereign spectator going about the city in order to find the things which will occupy his gaze and thus complete his otherwise incomplete identity; satisfy his otherwise dissatisfied existence" (7). From a postcolonial perspective, these quotations underscore how imperialist cartography facilitated the aesthetic pleasures enjoyed by the *flâneur*. As a "man of the world" (Baudelaire 5), the *flâneur* did not simply soak in the sights of Paris but travelled globally with capitalist expansions. The notion of the "sovereign spectator" acquires another layer of significance when the *flâneur* travels from the metropole to the colony, turning his ability to impose order and attribute meaning into mapmaking and travel writing.

Dung parodies imperialist cartography in "Mr. Smith's One-Day Trip," satirically portraying a leisurely walk of a traveling *flâneur* on the Hong Kong Island in 1907. In this story, the archaeologists find a sketch map of Hong Kong's Central area in a fabricated travelogue titled *Round the World on the Sunrise*, written by Englishman John Smith during his voyage from England to the British colonies of India, Singapore, and Hong Kong. The narrator reads about Mr. Smith's strolling in Hong Kong's Central area as an excursion to the shore, tracing his circuitous movement "from the junction of D'Aguilar Street and Queen's Road in the west to the cricket club between Queen's Road and Chater Road in the east and from Ice House Street and Battery Path in the south to Connaught Road and the newly reclaimed waterfront in the north" (64). In this story, names of streets, shops, and iconic buildings appear one after another in a dazzling manner. The colonial *flâneur* not only strolls around the city, but also collects it in the forms of souvenirs, discursively constructs it through travelogues, reduces it into a sketch map.

As products of cartographical technologies, maps cannot substitute themselves for the world as the field of real human interactions. As discussed previously, contemporary discussions of *world* and *worlding* usually trace themselves to the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. As Cheah notes, "[f]or Heidegger, a world is precisely what cannot be represented on a map" (8). Reversing the logic of imperialist cartography, Dung's *Atlas* temporalizes the spatial objects of maps to execute the artistic power of worldmaking. In "Mr. Smith's One Day Trip," Dung opens a world through a space-clearing *flânerie* strolling through Central across past, present, and future: The route of Mr. Smith's leisurely walk is detailed on the map that came with his 1907 travelogue; the group of archaeologists remap those streets one after another in a distant future; and the author roams Central in present time, linking past and future in his creative process. In his writing, Dung not only deconstructs imperialist discourses on, and their territorial claims

over, Hong Kong, but also relentlessly deconstructs his own artistic construction of the city. This is achieved through self-reflexively blending reality with fiction to the effect that "all 'origin-myths' of Hong Kong identity become suspicious" (Yeung 20). As a *flâneur* who immerses himself in the sights of the city while maintaining a critical distance, Dung worlds Hong Kong while casting a critical eye on the discursive power of language. His lexical *flânerie* hence conjures up a world through strolling, seeing, and meaning making, holding the world together through both the unifying force of time and the dynamic force of deconstruction. As such, his *worlding* of Hong Kong enables its inhabitants to belong in a way that does not close off possibilities but "makes possible" (Dung xiv).

Similar to Dung's lexical *flânerie*, MLA's sonic *flânerie* also roams Central—Hong Kong's heart of capital and power—as an attempt to reclaim it from the cartographers. Connaught Road, the northern border of the area charted on Mr. Smith's sketch map, is another street that is at the junction of Dung's and MLA's *flâneries*. In 2014, a month after the beginning of the Umbrella Movement, MLA released a song titled "今夜到干諾道中一起瞓" ("Tonight Let's Go Sleep on Connaught Road Central"), depicting how participants of the sit-in movement go from one street to another in response to police clearance operations:

今夜到干諾道中一起瞓

這是我最可負擔的租金

以後會否改變都不要問

起碼這夜你我同行

明天到登打士街那邊瞓

明知半夜或會被嗌起身

到處也是睡醒了的人

只怕洗手間不太近

失眠只為路燈

防暴使你我心更近

大會的咪可否細聲一陣？

我聽不到愛人的聲音 (00:00:00-00:00:50)

(Tonight, let’s go sleep on Connaught Road Central

That’s the only rent I can afford

Don’t ask if things will change in the future

At least, tonight, we walk together

Tomorrow, let’s go sleep on Dundas Street

Knowing we’ll be wrestled awake in the middle of the night

Everywhere we turn we see others awaken

I only fear the bathroom won’t be nearby

The only cause of my insomnia is the streetlights

The presence of riot police brings our hearts closer

Could someone turn the mic volume lower?

I can't hear the voice of my lover)

These lines demonstrate how the social class of the *flâneur* has changed from the bourgeoisie to a position of financial and political precarity. The *flâneur* of 19th century Paris, who wandered to reap aesthetic meanings because he did not have to work, has turned into MLA's *flâneurs* and *flâneuses* of 21st century Hong Kong—who are either out of work or deliberately slacking as an act to resist capitalist alienation. Susan Buck-Morss' "The Flaneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore" examines the dichotomy between the oppressed and the elite *flâneur*. The elite feel "totally at home on the streets" because "[t]he rulers feel public space to be an extension of their own personal one," while the oppressed are "totally homeless" (118). She remarks that "[t]o inhabit the streets as one's living room, is quite a different thing from needing them as a bedroom, bathroom or kitchen, where the most intimate aspects of one's life are not protected from the view of strangers and ultimately, the police" (118). Similarly, MLA's *flâneurs* and *flâneuses* turn the streets of Central into their bedroom and bathroom not because they feel safe at home in these places. Unlike Dung's traveling *flâneur* who seeks danger on foreign streets knowing that it is still safe, MLA's demonstrating *flâneurs* and *flâneuses* expose themselves to riot police. Yet they sing about it in such a lighthearted and playful way, reframing being forcibly evicted by police as casually and proactively strolling to another street with a loved one. As a result, MLA's *flâneurs* and *flâneuses* turn Hong Kong's political and financial center into a

personal space for daily activities and artistic creations, transgressing the boundaries between public and private to clear themselves a space amid tightening political and social restrictions.

This space-clearing gesture appears again in MLA's song "吳小姐" ("Miss Ng") during the 2019 protests. MLA wrote this song in highly colloquial Cantonese, and the lyrics do not rhyme. The song is about Miss Ng walking without purpose along Nathan Road on the day of the strike. In the face of tear gas, she ends up joining the protest. The song has three parts. In part one, Miss Ng is a solitary *flâneuse* strolling from Nathan Road to Soy Street. She is not a member of the crowd, but a spectator of it. She observes how "成條馬路都係黑衫嘅年輕人行嚟行去" ("the entire street is filled with young people dressed in black") (00:00:20-00:00-24) and walks on and on while listening to the demonstrators' live broadcast on her phone (00:00:28-00:00:33). Then, in part two, the distance between Miss Ng and the crowd starts to shorten as others reach out to her, asking whether she needs water and if she is also heading to the site of the protest at the Sham Shui Po Police Station (00:01:15-00:01:25). She decides to go and look, and when she arrives, the safe distance between the spectator and the crowd collapses completely, as the police fire tear gas indiscriminately at everyone:

然後 佢第一次

親眼見到催淚彈

佢跟住大家

向後褪

開遮

踮低

行返前

來來回回

幾粒催淚彈之後

佢有種從未試過嘅感覺

時間突然好慢

周圍好靜

佢覺得呢個瞬間

最前線嘅人係自己

後面用士巴拿拆緊鐵欄嘅人又係自己

旁邊鬧緊街坊唔好影相嘅人又係自己

遠處坐緊監嘅人又係自己 (00:01:35-00:02:13)

(And then, for the first time

She sees tear gas fired with her own eyes

She follows the others

Retreat

Open the umbrella

Duck down

March forward

Back and forth

After several canisters of tear gas

She feels something she has never felt before

Time suddenly seems to slow down

Her surroundings seem so quiet

She feels at this very moment

Those fighting at the forefront were her

Those on the back using spanners to break metal fences were her

Those on the side yelling at neighbors not to take pictures were her

Those faraway captured and imprisoned were also her)

Finally, in the last line of part three, she resolves to join the demonstrations from this moment onwards.

In the above-quoted verses, we see the formation of a Hongkonger subject in a process that reminds the audience of Benedict Anderson's classic formulation of the imagined community. Anderson uses the opening scene of Filipino writer José Rizal's novel *Noli Me Tángere* (*Touch Me Not*) to illustrate how vernacular literature facilitated the imagining of the nation. He demonstrates that Rizal's depiction of a dinner party being discussed simultaneously

by “hundreds of unnamed people, who do not know each other, in quite different parts of Manila, in a particular month of a particular decade, immediately conjures up the imagined community” (27). In a similar process, MLA creates an imagined community of Hongkongers with Miss Ng feeling that she is all the unnamed demonstrators, simultaneously carrying out all those actions across Hong Kong. Furthermore, Anderson observes how Rizal’s depiction of a familiar streetscape enables “the casual progression” of it “from the ‘interior’ time of the novel to the ‘exterior’ time of the [Manila] reader’s everyday life,” thus “giving a hypnotic confirmation of the solidity of a single community” (27). MLA also unfolds for its audience a familiar streetscape by detailing Miss Ng’s route from Nathan Road to Soy Street to the Sham Shui Po Police Station. Moreover, it throws its audience into a familiar *soundscape* by speaking about how Miss Ng listens to the demonstrators’ live broadcast and converses with her fellow walkers in colloquial Cantonese. In this way, MLA’s “Miss Ng” fuses the world in the song with the world outside, linking the streets of Hong Kong, the sound of the Cantonese language, and the historical moment together. One can also interpret the surname Ng (吳) as a play on a homophone that means “not to have something” (無). In this sense, Miss Ng means a young woman who does not have a name, an anonymous *flâneuse* of a demonstrating crowd where people converse with and look out for each other with a sense of camaraderie.

But it would be wrong to assume that the imagined community formed by MLA’s sonic *flânerie* is a community of nationalism or nativism. Instead, it is a community of a “nativity without nativism” (16), to borrow Wayne Yeung’s term in his insightful analysis of Umbrella Movement-related literature and artworks, in which “cosmopolitanism never fails to find expressions through localism, and vice versa” (33). Anderson argues that the imagined community of the nation is inherently limited: It requires imagining oneself within the borders of

a particular nation while being linked to others through what Benjamin calls a "homogenous, empty time" (Benjamin 265, qtd. Anderson 24), a time measured by clocks and calendars in which every moment is equivalent and empty. Conversely, MLA's sonic *flânerie* imagines a community that is both local and cosmopolitan. The imagining of the local is achieved through the sonic strolls describing familiar streetscapes that immediately surround one's physical existence, while using the sound of Cantonese to conjure up the imagination of a dynamic linguistic community. Simultaneously, the imagining of the cosmopolitan in MLA's songs is achieved through a multilingual *flânerie* roaming the world, which intervenes in the imagining of the local by viewing oneself as part of a deterritorialized world that is shared with others regardless of one's place of origin.

Although the *flâneurs* and *flâneuses* of MLA have never explained why they named their band "my little airport," the imagery of the airport is a fitting one given its liminality between the home and the unhomely, with the *unhomely* meaning both not-being-at-home and "a paradigmatic colonial and post-colonial condition" following Homi Bhabha's formulation (13). In their songs, they frequently use languages that are neither Chinese nor English, reference other cultures, and travel to other places. Through their imagination, they roam from places which are near such as India, Okinawa, Taiwan, to those which are far such as Egypt, Greece, and Peru. In their 2019 live concert "催淚的滋味/the taste of tears," MLA performed a song titled "今夜雪糕" ("Tonight, Ice-cream" or "Tonight, We Should Go"),[3] expressing a wish for the arrested demonstrators to be pardoned. At the beginning of this song, MLA appropriates Mozart's *Lacrimosa* as prelude, with Nicole calmly repeating "I have nothing to say" in five different languages (Japanese, Italian, German, Spanish, and French) (00:23:17-00:23:45). After singing two verses, Nicole's voice recites a touching line of Lu Xun in Cantonese: "外面的進行著的

夜，無窮的遠方，無數的人們，都和我有關" ("The night is going by outside, somewhere countless miles away, and countless people too, are related to me somehow," MLA's translation) (00:24:45-00:24:55).[4] While "Miss Ng" illustrates the invention of Hongkonger subjectivity as a process of being at home in the local, "Tonight, Ice-cream" illustrates how this subjectivity is also cosmopolitan, with an outward movement from oneself to the local group to territorial states to the world "to embrace the whole of deterritorialized humanity" (Cheah 3). This outward movement is why MLA practices *flânerie* in its ideal sense: "To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world" (Baudelaire 9). The world of deterritorialized humanity is an unending constellation of distinctive local worlds, unified through the force of time yet heterogeneous with local particularities. This understanding is imperative to the processes of *worlding* Hong Kong as inhabited by a pluralistically defined community of Hongkongers who identity with the city either by their life trajectories (i.e., asylum seeking, birth, immigration, migration, etc.), by linguistic and cultural heritage, or by residential ties.

III. Reclaiming Hong Kong in Script and Sound

It is important to state that the space-clearing *flânerie* of post-1997 Hong Kong writers and artists do *not* succumb to a right-wing localism that looks up to the West while trampling Mainlanders. Instead of falling into the binarism of Self and Other that Appiah describes as "the last of the shibboleths of the modernizers that we must learn to live without" (354), both Dung and MLA reject the dusty old clichés of cold war politics. One can find those clichés in how some western media oversimplify the plight of Hong Kong as local people fighting against China's totalitarianism, as well as in how some Mainland Chinese media magnify the presence

of the British Hong Kong flag to castigate Hong Kong people's nostalgia for colonial times. These binary ways of thinking are symptoms of and lead further to an increasingly divisive political climate in Hong Kong and beyond.

In his 1997 book, Abbas had the foresight to predict the political conundrum for a post-handover Hong Kong amid intensifying geo-political confrontations, cautioning Hong Kong people against "the temptation of the local, the marginal, the cosmopolitan" in their search for a postcolonial identity (11). He argues that the local and the marginal risk reifying binary oppositions, whereas the cosmopolitan is a "trap of an optimistic universalism" that tends to "forget the unequal historical conditions of cultural productions and reception" (14). Therefore, he suggests the development of a new Hong Kong *subjectivity* instead of *identity*, a subjectivity that is "constructed in the very process of negotiating the mutations and permutations of colonialism, nationalism, and capitalism" (11). Dung's and MLA's space-clearing *flâneries* contribute to the development of the Hong Kong subjectivity that Abbas called for. Curiously, as a result of the artists playfully syncopating a postcolonial struggle with a postmodern rejection of exclusivity, this subjectivity turns out to be a process that is local, marginal, and cosmopolitan all at once.

A comparative reading of the chance encounters in Dung's *Atlas* chapter "Possession Street" and MLA's song "憂傷的嫖客" ("Sad John," 2012) helps illustrate the development of this new Hong Kong subjectivity. In "Possession Street," Dung brings his reader back in time to the first days of Hong Kong's colonization through the narrative voice of his future scholars. As in the case of Sycamore Street, these archaeologists are intrigued by the mismatch between the English and Chinese names of Possession Street/水坑口街 (*Shui-Hang-Hau Gai*, meaning "mouth of a water course street"). Possession Street is the oldest street in Hong Kong, named

after Possession Point on the northwestern shore, where the British occupying forces first landed. Dung opens his chapter with an excerpt from a real historical document written by a British captain in January 1841 boasting about the British Empire being the "bona fide first possessors" of the Hong Kong island (103). However, beneath the glorious victory of possession lies the undercurrents of another meaning of the word "possession": The state of being possessed by a demon or spirit. British soldiers stationed at Possession Point suffered from a mysterious yet deadly epidemic of fever. Lurking in the darkness is the witchcraft of the natives: Some historical records take note of rumors of local people cursing the water supply. Some note an even more sensational story: A British officer fell madly in love with a Chinese courtesan named Butterfly (a parody of *Madame Butterfly*), and the spirit of Butterfly's deceased father "possessed" him in a rage and drowned him by forcing his body into the water (104-5). After recounting this ghostly and violent encounter, the chapter ends mischievously with yet another anecdote: Professor Clark, a fabricated character who was a history professor at the University of Hong Kong,

> maintained in his *The ABCs of Chinese Fortune-Telling and Its Application to Hong Kong* that the English word "possession" was highly inauspicious. He proposed changing the name to Exorcism Street in order to restore good fung shui. The Chinese equivalent of "exorcism" is *gon gwai*, literally meaning "expelling ghosts" or "expelling devils"; it is not known if Clark was aware that foreigners are referred to colloquially in Chinese as "foreign devils." (105)

This fabricated reference adds another layer of humor to Dung's parody of *Madame Butterfly*, using local linguistic quirks to disrupt the colonizer's discursive construction. The romance in "Possession Street" is a hilarious cautionary tale for both sides of the encounter. On the one

hand, the narrator mockingly points out that the British officer asked for his misfortune by "forsaking the red-light district for Westerners in Lyndhurst Terrace in Central" for "the Chinese brothels in Shui Hang Hau" (104). On the other hand, the raging ghost of Butterfly's father reminds the reader of Benedict Anderson's pointed description of nationalism as "ghostly" (9) given that it uniquely concerns itself with ideas of death and immortality. This satirical story displays a multidirectional parody at both the colonizer's Orientalist fetishization of local women, and the local men's patriarchal nationalism, which views women as objects that can be sold to them but not to foreigners. As a result, Dung rewrites the violent encounter between the British Empire and the Qing dynasty during the 19th century—commonly known as an earthshaking "clash of the empires"—into a comical clash between possession and exorcism, ironically poking fun at Hong Kong's inter-imperial positionality.

This story also raises the issue of multilingualism in Hong Kong. How, for example, did Butterfly communicate with the British officer, given that one spoke Cantonese and the other English? Likewise, what does it mean for Hongkongers to communicate across Cantonese, English, and Mandarin today? While Dung's "Possession Street" imagines an encounter between a Cantonese-speaking courtesan and an English-speaking client, MLA's 2012 song "憂傷的嫖客" ("Sad John") imagines a chance encounter between a Mandarin-speaking migrant sex worker and a Cantonese-speaking john. In this song, Lam Ah P plays the Cantonese-speaking john and Nicole the Mandarin-speaking Fung. Fung (鳳, literally meaning "phoenix") is a Cantonese euphemism for sex workers. Here I present the lyrics of this song in its entirety. In the original lyrics, MLA puts the lines spoken in Mandarin in quotation marks, signifying their difference from other lines performed in Cantonese. For clarity, I use square brackets in my English translation to point out the language used in each sentence.

客: 我就這樣痛哭一場

在陌生女子懷內失常

鳳: 你說我長得跟你舊愛很像

才令你突然這樣憂傷

鳳:「你不用那麼傷心，早晚你會找到一個喜歡你的人」

客:「不是，是我自己不想再跟人一起，我覺得我跟其他人不能相處」

鳳:「如果不合適就早點分開，以後的日子還長呢」

鳳: 我說人生的經歷總無常

你又何必介懷心上？

一切苦與樂最終都一樣

是為旅途增添花樣

客: 我一路喊，你一路安慰我

鳳:「你跟她一起多久？為什麼要分開？」

客: 我愈講愈激動，直到走嘅時候，你問．．．

鳳:「哎，小費可以多給一點嗎？」

客: 我先突然無咁傷心

由不相識再到交心一場

然後又回復正常

四十分鐘的關係似夢一樣

人生經歷總無常

你又何必介懷心上？

John [in Cantonese]: I cried my heart out just like that

in the arms of a stranger, I lost my composure

Fung [in Cantonese]: You said I look a lot like your old lover

and when you realized, it made you sad

Fung [in Mandarin]: “Don’t be so sad, sooner or later you’ll find someone who likes you”

John [in Mandarin]: “No, it’s me who doesn’t want to be with anyone again. I don’t think I can get along with anybody”

Fung [in Mandarin]: “If it’s a mismatch then break up early, you have a long life ahead”

Fung [in Cantonese]: I said life is always so transient

Why be so serious?

Ultimately, suffering and happiness are the same

They are just there to add to the trip

John [in Cantonese]: As I cried, you comforted me

Fung [in Mandarin]: "How long were you with her? Why break up?"

John [in Cantonese]: I felt my emotions becoming stronger as I spoke. Until when I left, you asked…

Fung [in Mandarin]: "Hey, could you tip a little extra?"

John [in Cantonese]: And I suddenly became less sad

[in Cantonese] From complete strangers to opening our hearts to each other

And then back to things as usual

This 40-minute relationship is like a dream

Life is always so transient

Why be so serious?

Both Dung's "Possession Street" and MLA's "Sad John" use the image of the prostitute in their imaginations of cross-cultural encounters. However, unlike the Chinese courtesan and the British

officer, who fell madly in love in Dung's story, nothing dramatic happens between Fung and her john. After the transaction, they peacefully part ways, as if nothing has happened.

This song reminds its audience of Hong Kong writer Chan Koonchung's 1998 novella *什麼都沒有發生* (*Nothing Has Happened*). Chan sets his story exactly one year after the handover, portraying a protagonist who loves to use the phrase "nothing has happened" to emphasize that he is a nonchalant person living a carefree life. But something has happened after all: He discovers that a woman from the Mainland, whom he encountered years ago and with whom he spent a night, turns out to have given birth to his son. David Der-wei Wang reads Chan's title phrase "nothing has happened" as an ironic allusion to how the first Chief Executive reassured the Hong Kong public that after the handover everything would be just "as usual": The dancehalls will be open and the horses will race; the transition from a Crown Colony to a Special Administrative Region would be as if nothing has happened (141). Of course, that overly optimistic promise was unfulfilled. As Abbas observes:

> … 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. … 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. (2)

In the post-1997 era, conflicts between Hong Kong and the Mainland regarding issues such as immigration, birth tourism, parallel traders, language policy, and national education intensified. Fast forward to the 2010s, and Beijing government retreats from its 50-year pledge of honoring Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy by pre-screening candidates for the election of a chief executive and disqualifying legislators who it sees as unpatriotic. The demonstrations in 2019-20—which continued even after the unpopular extradition bill was withdrawn—manifest younger generations' disillusionment with the post-handover situation where they are left with stagnating social mobility, soaring living costs, and tightening political constraints. One should also not overlook the surging xenophobic discourse that blames Mainlanders for Hongkongers' plight instead of reflecting critically upon capitalist globalization. In these shifting dynamics between Hong Kong and the Mainland, how can one address the cultural subjectivity of Hongkongers without reproducing a Manichean binarism that makes Mainlanders the enemy? Between these linguistic and cultural barriers, can there be room for mutual understandings between Cantonese and Mandarin speakers?

MLA's "Sad John" might provide a preliminary response to these difficult questions, allowing for an alternative interpretation of the slippery notion of empathy by telling a story where "nothing has happened." While Benjamin is fascinated with "the intoxication of empathy felt by the flâneur" (449; M17a), as noted by Susan Buck-Morss, this empathy (*Einfühlung*) turns out to be a problematic one. Buck-Morss notes that the dialectical image of the prostitute—a commodity and seller in one—is the most significant female image in Benjamin's *Arcades* as it embodies the condition for "all wage-laborers under capitalism" and "[i]ntellectual workers [who] are no less prostituted" (122). However, the *flâneur*'s "projection onto women passing by, as onto commodities in store windows," reduces a woman to a sign (Buck-Morss 123). This

makes the anticlimax of MLA's "Sad John" an especially compelling moment, as it is a moment of being awakened from one's erotic desires and narcissistic projections rather than a moment of incorporating the Other into one's daydreams. When Fung asks for an extra big tip in Mandarin, it disrupts the john's self-serving sentimentalism. The john then thinks to himself, in Cantonese, that he suddenly feels less sad. Here, the misunderstanding between Fung and her john does not close off the possibility of understanding, but rather opens it up. Awakened from his desires and projections by hearing Fung as a (silenced) subject speaking her own needs, the john realizes that the Other, just like his Self, is a person who works under capitalist conditions to make ends meet. Despite one speaking Mandarin and the other Cantonese, the sex worker and her client are simply two equal parties in this transaction. No one is better than the other, given that sex workers, wage-laborers, and intellectual workers all prostitute themselves under capitalism. Although the john seems to regret that Fung does not fully grasp his feelings, the innocently sweet and refreshingly simple melody conveys a subtle sense of relief and reconciliation in this urban chance encounter where "nothing has happened."

The sonic arrangement of "Sad John" enables the audience to hear the different sounds of Cantonese and Mandarin in a clear and immediate manner. The effects are two-fold: On the one hand, dissonance created by juxtaposing the two different sounds breaks the illusion of post-1997 Hong Kong's stability and harmony, alluding to the "many instances of mutual mistrust and misunderstanding" (to borrow from Abbas) between the Cantonese-speaking and the Mandarin-speaking peoples; on the other hand, MLA does not expulse Mandarin to give Cantonese all the sonic space in its construction of an alternative narrative. Instead, we hear the coexistence of the two languages in the same soundscape as Fung and her john try to embrace each other in the Other's language. No matter how brief this encounter between the Cantonese-speaking local and

the Mandarin-speaking migrant is, it provides a hope for overcoming the binarism of Self and Other, *worlding* Hong Kong as inhabited by a pluralistically defined community of Hongkongers who identify with the city by their life trajectories, linguistic and cultural heritage, or residential ties.

In addition to Cantonese and Mandarin, English also exists in the past and present of the Hong Kong soundscape. While "Sad John" surreptitiously tears open the illusion of China as a linguistic and cultural unity, MLA also appropriates various symbols from the UK. In "今宵多珍重" ("Let's Cherish Tonight," 2019), MLA rearranges Hong Kong hip-hop band LMF's 2009 song of the same title. MLA's sonic rearrangement keeps parts of LMF's original lyrics, reinterpreting the song by mixing Nicole's gentle voice with various sound clips from Hong Kong's past and present. It opens with the British Army's drill commands as they prepare to leave after the handover ceremony on the night of June 30, 1997 (00:00:00-00:00:05). This marked the end of 156 years of British colonial rule. It then uses two famous sound clips—the farewell speech of Prince Charles on behalf of the Queen (00:00:49-00:01:0:6) and a speech by departing Governor Chris Patten (00:01:36-00:02:03)—as transitions between the three Cantonese verses. It ends with another English sound clip of a French journalist's raving at a protest site, where the riot police fired tear gas at the press: "You shoot the journalist! You shoot journalists motherfuckers! You shoot them!" (00:02:19-00:02:39) (MLA takes this sound clip from a YouTube video, which went viral on June 12, 2019). When mixing sounds from the site of protests into the song, MLA chooses to amplify the deterritorialized voice of the unnamed French journalist in broken English rather than the sound of the explosion of tear gas being fired, an arrangement that refuses ritualizing or normalizing the sound of violence.

In this song, MLA uses repeated chanting of the title phrase "今宵多珍重" ("Let's cherish tonight") to create an ambience of mourning. When Governor Chris Patten announces loudly and clearly in Standard British English that "Now Hong Kong people are to run Hong Kong. That is the promise, and that is the unshakable destiny," Nicole's voice immediately responds softly in Cantonese that "今宵多珍重 / 聽日又未必會係咁 / 今宵多珍重 / 聽日又另外一個樣" ("Let's cherish tonight / tomorrow might not be the same / Let's cherish tonight / tomorrow it will be different" (00:01:50-00:02:23). She expresses a sentiment of public distrust for the old colonizer, as well as the Hong Kong government and the Beijing government that it had come to represent. While listening to Prince Charles' reassurance and Chris Patten's promise in formal English, the audience hears simultaneously Nicole's mournful voice in colloquial Cantonese. She raps, sings, and whispers, telling the story of an unnamed young Hongkonger who grew up in poverty and despair, attempting to dissuade this person from committing suicide. In the live performance of this song in MLA's November 2019 concert, the line "今宵多珍重" ("Let's cherish tonight") was repeated 12 times respectively at the beginning and at the end (00:33:45-00:36:50), echoing the street scenes of the performative mourning of local people at Prince Edward station (a major site of clashes between police and protestors) where people set up traditional mourning shrines and continuously filled them with offerings and bouquets. As a result, MLA's sonic *flânerie* fuses its soundscape with the street scenes in the Prince Edward region, transforming mourning into an expression of dissidence and an attempt to coalesce the community amid political division. The community that MLA imagines is as cosmopolitan as it is local. Its inclusion of English sound clips demonstrates that the gesture of space-clearing does not imply a clean break from historical conditions, and its multilingual *flânerie* defies border-closing self-isolation. By constructing an imagined community knowing that it is *constructed*, MLA's songs open new worlds without

galvanizing people with sounds of violence and hatred. It is in this sense that MLA's space-clearing *flânerie* worlds a post-handover Hong Kong as an unending process of local and cosmopolitan belonging.

To conclude, in post-1997 Hong Kong, *flânerie* has a unique power in the processes of *worlding* that can disrupt imperialist cartography, because it synthesizes the spatial practice of strolling and the temporal process of recasting the familiar signs of the city into new narratives. It also has a critical power by roaming the liminal space between the home and the unhomely, keeping a critical eye on the imagined construction of the city while living and being immersed in it. This does not imply that the *flâneurs* should refrain from action: As observed by Keith Tester, the ontological basis of the *flâneur* "resides in *doing* not *being*" and "it requires *doing* over and over again" (5). As a result, the space-clearing *flânerie* in post-1997 Hong Kong, as exemplified by Dung Kai-cheung's *Atlas* and My Little Airport's songs, demonstrates that Hong Kong has not disappeared after the handover. The *flâneurs* and *flâneuses*, in their continuous strolling as an attempt to clear themselves a space, open and hold together a world in a postcolonial and postmodern fashion. This means that their *worlding* of Hong Kong relentlessly deconstructs itself by exposing its own constructedness, while deconstructing the discursive constructions by vying powers. In doing so, it provides the necessary conditions for the emergence of a dynamic Hong Kong subjectivity amid competing discourses of imperialism, nationalism, and nativism, a subjectivity that is both local and cosmopolitan. Overall, the *worlding* of Hong Kong is first and foremost a process of local belonging, providing a home for a pluralistically defined community of Hongkongers who identify with the city either by their life trajectories, by linguistic and cultural heritage, or by residential ties. Secondly, it draws from

Hong Kong's marginality in relation to the English-speaking and Mandarin-speaking worlds to critique the unequal historical conditions of cross-cultural encounters and use it as a source to maintain a critical distance from being assimilated into capitalist globalization. Finally, the *worlding* of Hong Kong is a cosmopolitan process of an outward movement, transforming the local from a place of origin to a point of departure.

Notes

1. *Atlas* was first published in Chinese in 1997, then revised and published in English in 2012. Dung Kai-cheung co-translated the text with Anders Hansson and Bonnie S. McDougall, and he made multiple revisions to the original Chinese version. In this chapter, the page numbers and direct quotations of *Atlas* are from the 2012 English edition.
2. All translations of My Little Airport's lyrics are mine. The English translation is included in parentheses after the original lyrics.
3. "雪糕" ("ice-cream") and "should go" are homophones in Cantonese and Hong Kong English.
4. MLA takes this quote from Lu Xun 魯迅's famous 1936 essay "'這也是生活'……" ("'C'est la vie'…), which can be found in *魯迅自編文集 19：且介亭雜文末編* (Beijing United Publishing, 2014) among many other Lu Xun anthologies.

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