

Comparative Cultural Research: Hong Kong/Western Sydney Exchanges

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Preface

In July 2002 the CCR hosted the inaugural joint workshop with the Department of Cultural Studies at Lingnan University, Hong Kong, as part of a Memorandum of Understanding to enhance international collaboration in research development between the two institutions. A small delegation of staff and graduate students from Lingnan attended, including internationally renowned cultural theorist Professor Meaghan Morris, who gave a public lecture, 'From criticism to research: textual work in the new academy.' The workshop, which focused on the possibilities and challenges for comparative cultural research, was held over five days (22 – 26 July) and included seminars, tours of cultural sites around metropolitan Sydney, guest speakers and discussion workshops.

Introduction: Exploring The How of Cultural Research, by Ien Ang

First of all, let me welcome you all to the Parramatta campus of the University of Western Sydney. I particularly would like to welcome those of you who have travelled all the way from Lingnan University in Hong Kong, to participate in this week-long workshop. This event is the beginning of a program of collaborative intellectual exchange in which the group from Lingnan, consisting of some senior researchers, but also some junior researchers and research students from the Department of Cultural Studies, will interact with students and staff from the Centre for Cultural Research here at UWS. This is very much an experiment, part of an exchange program that Meaghan Morris, Stephen Chan and I have set up and that we are going to explore in the coming few years. The idea was to join forces in developing a programme where we can talk in greater detail about what it means to do cultural research in the early 21st century. When we first discussed what we would do, we decided that a group of Lingnan people would come to Western Sydney first, and next year hopefully a group of UWS people will go to Lingnan.

So it is very exploratory, and the idea is very much to look at the 'how' of cultural studies research. What are the prospects of doing cultural research in this time and age, especially in the kind of universities that we are, namely new universities, where the research culture is very much in development rather than established? I believe that precisely this emerging status provides us with opportunities to be innovative, to not be tied to long-held assumptions and entrenched academic practices – for example, those that insist on the sanctity of disciplinary boundaries. At both the CCR and at Cultural Studies Lingnan we have a very interesting mix of people coming from different disciplinary backgrounds, so the issue of exchange across boundaries is an inevitable one. How you can actually work together and communicate meaningfully across disciplinary boundaries? I will come back to this later and Meaghan will also talk about this.

In this exchange program we are also going to explore – in a much more profound way than is generally the case – what it means to engage in international exchange. In this era of globalisation international exchange has become a kind of buzzword, but how do we do it in a meaningful way? Too often international academic gatherings are limited to some conventional international seminar where everyone presents a paper on his or her own research. The ‘exchange’ element is limited to the brief period of questions and discussion after each presentation, quickly to be followed by the next presentation. We want our workshop to lead to a much more engaged exchange of ideas and perspectives. For this reason, an important part of the workshop is going to consist of a cultural tour around Sydney, particularly Western Sydney, so that our Lingnan colleagues get a much more grounded sense of the social and cultural fabric of this part of the world that is possible through listening to a series of academic papers.

One of the things that is often overlooked in any exchange activity is the fact that there is a need to find a common ground on the basis of which exchange – dialogue, discussion, sharing of experiences and ideas – is possible. The fact that we all do cultural studies is not enough for that. Often ‘theory’ is used as the anchor for such a common ground (for example, we all may have read Stuart Hall or Meaghan Morris), but I have always been very dissatisfied with this strategy for establishing commonality, because it often remains disembodied and decontextualised, not connected to any ‘real world’ concerns. Choosing a common theme is also difficult, because cultural studies encompasses such a broad range of empirical topics. At the CCR alone we are dealing with very diverse objects of research: health, tourism, national identity, museums, ethnicity and migration, new technologies.... to name but a few. For this reason, this workshop will attempt to establish commonality by focusing on the methodological (in the broad sense of that word): how do we cultural researchers approach a particular object of study? Or perhaps even more fundamentally, how do we come to define what our object of study is? These are ‘how’ questions – and they involve theory and method, subjective perspective and material context, historical antecedents as well as issues of formal training and skills development. In other words, focusing on ‘how’ allows us to reflect on the processes of doing cultural research – something we all could gain from whatever our research topic, disciplinary background or social location.

This is one reason why I think promoting the idea of cultural research is important rather than just cultural studies. Cultural studies is of course where we have come from and what we practise as scholars, but at the same time the term cultural studies has now gained unfortunate narrow meanings: too theory-driven, too focused on an internal academic world of specialist scholars, too distant from concrete social concerns. At the very least, research implies going out there and finding out, being open to the world, seeing whom we can work together with, not being inward looking.

We at the CCR have been forced to address these issues urgently because we are faced with enormous changes in the conditions in which the production of knowledge is organised in contemporary society, and the place of our kind of work within it. We are all experiencing the effects of the increasing commercialisation, bureaucratisation and corporatisation of universities. As academic researchers we are all worried about the dwindling resources for university research provided by government. But these changes, which are related to broader changes in the economic and political environment, are structural and not likely to be reversed any time soon. So we need to respond creatively to these changing circumstances, and not retreat from them. This would mean, at the very least, taking the notion of ‘research’ seriously and addressing what it means as we continue to think through our own position as knowledge producers in society.

Research is generally defined, not least in bureaucratic circles of research and higher education policy, as the systematic production and dissemination of new knowledge. I’m talking here especially to research students who are currently doing their PhD work, because it is really important to think about these issues in the broader context rather than just your own project. You have to think about your own project as being part of a whole enterprise or industry that is now called research. It is important to realise that in the Australian context as well as in Hong Kong there is presently a lot of policy-making at government level that will impact on our work, both at the CCR and at the Department of Cultural Studies at Lingnan. Whatever we do in our intellectual inquiry, if we want it to be recognised as research – which I propose we do, not least because of its financial implications but also because it is the only way in which our intellectual work will be seen as institutionally

legitimate – we have to think much more explicitly about what it is we do when we do cultural research.

What then is cultural research? Here the problem of defining ‘cultural’ comes into play, and most of you who are here probably have some idea of how the term culture is used in cultural studies. Culture in the theoretical legacy of cultural studies is not seen as a fixed entity but as a process, the complex range of processes of meaning making, circulation of meanings, contestation of meanings, exchange of meanings and social uptake of meanings. Culture is not just an add-on to material social reality but intrinsic to it; it is that realm of human life that constitutes it as meaningful. It is through cultural processes that we live our lives as having meaning and value, through which we construct our identities and make sense of ourselves, of others, and of the wider world we live in. In a very basic sense, here we can locate the difference between cultural research and what is generally considered social research. Social research usually starts out with categories which are assumed to have fixed, static and objective meanings, for example a group that is called ‘the Lebanese’ or ‘the Chinese,’ ‘Australians’, or whatever. To put it crudely – and I am deliberately exaggerating the difference here to make the point clear – social research would stereotypically take the objective existence and meaning of these categories as a starting point for analysis, whereas in cultural research it is the very constitution of that category, of that group, and how that particular group comes to see itself as a group with that name, is part and parcel of how we understand things. That is to say, the production and circulation of meanings – which is often a very conflictive process deeply infused in the play of power, whether social, economic or political – is always part and parcel of the way in which the real world operates. It makes a difference how we come to define the term Australian, who or what is or is not included in it. It makes a difference, for example, for disparate issues such as how we look at the national past, for our policies around asylum seekers and refugees, or for that matter for the way the country is represented for tourism purposes. Culture, in the sense of how the world is made to mean, is essential in all these instances.

This is of course a very general and simple starting point for thinking about cultural research as distinct from other kinds of research. At the same time, there are always relations between culture and the social, the economic, and so on, which makes it always very

complicated, so that's why I think cultural researchers, and cultural studies people more generally, always have great difficulty defining their object, defining their field of study. Precisely because we tend to think relationally and conjuncturally about things, how apparently distinct realities are articulated in specific contexts, rather than in terms of static entities that can be studied in isolation. That also means that our methodologies are quite impure and sometimes eclectic – we do not predetermine which methods we are going to use to study something, we tend to look in many different directions and decide in very context-specific ways which ways we are going to go about analysing something, and that's something which can lead, especially what I have noticed with students, to a certain confusion: what are we supposed to do, and how are we going to go about studying something?

So that's one of the things that we need to become much clearer about – that the question of how to do cultural research is an object of ongoing reflection, discussion and decision making. Terms like interdisciplinarity are often used, but in my opinion in far too vague ways, not precise enough when it comes to understanding what it means to bring insights and approaches from different disciplines together. In my view, this is much more difficult than we generally assume. I hope we will come to understand a bit more about how different strategies of knowledge production relate to each other during this week. We will probably realise that certain perspectives do not necessarily come together neatly; there are also certain contradictions and tensions between different perspectives, for example between a textual analysis approach and, say, an ethnographic approach. How do you bring those together? A crucial aspect about collaboration, whether under the heading of interdisciplinarity or international exchange, is to have a clear sense of the particular input of different backgrounds, specialisms, local conditions. This is a slow process, but worth developing precisely in ways that are not predetermined, in experimental and exploratory ways. This is what this workshop aims to do. And hopefully, in the process of international, interdisciplinary exchange, we will establish surprising connections and, who knows, lasting friendships.

From “Criticism” to “Research”: the Textual in the Academy, by Meaghan Morris

It is a source of great satisfaction to me to introduce the first joint workshop between the University of Western Sydney’s Centre for Cultural Research (CCR), and my own Department of Cultural Studies at Lingnan University, Hong Kong. I have been looking forward to this for a long time; there is no better context than the CCR for visitors to explore the new research practices coming out of our field in Australia. Yet now that we’re all here together I must admit to a little uncertainty. It is a novel experience for me to speak in Sydney as a member of a foreign delegation, and I’ve spent some anxious moments wondering how I should pitch these remarks: am I here to tell old friends from UWS about what we are doing at Lingnan, or do I introduce my new friends from Hong Kong to the Parramatta-based environment where they—we—will be spending the next few days? Since I probably know even less about “Parramatta” than I do now about “Hong Kong”, I’ll stick to what I understand best at the moment—the Lingnan Cultural Studies program, our reasons for organising this workshop in conjunction with the CCR, and my expectations of what we might hope to achieve.

This workshop is the first activity to be held under a recently signed Academic Cooperation Agreement between our two Universities, and it could fairly be described as initiating (on a modest scale) a new kind of transnational research enterprise—not least because it brings together parties who have little in common in certain important respects. Take the two Universities committed to the Agreement. Both are so-called new universities, facing all those problems of financing, organisation and (as we say in Hong Kong) brand definition that the term “new” suggests, and both universities happen to be the youngest in their respective cities. However, while the University of Western Sydney is a huge, sprawling, comprehensive university created in part by the amalgamation of diverse older elements,

Lingnan is a small, compact, residential liberal arts university that can claim a tradition running back to 1888 in Guangzhou (where Lingnan University was a progressive Protestant establishment), but has a much more recent profile in Hong Kong as a Business-dominated College created in 1967. Under our current President, Professor Edward Chen, Lingnan College began to develop new programs in the Humanities and Social Sciences from 1995, achieving University title in 1999.

In practice, this Workshop involves just one area of each university and here, too, there is an asymmetry: the UWS participants are based in a research centre while those from Lingnan work in a teaching department. The CCR develops research contracts, trains postgraduates and orchestrates the work of post-doctoral and research fellows. At Lingnan, life is organised around close, intensive contact with undergraduates. Our Department of ten full-time staff delivers a full Bachelor of Arts in Cultural Studies, enrolling around 33 new First Year students annually. There is a small, select, postgraduate group (three of whom are here for the Workshop) but our MPhil and PhD students work by thesis alone, in the old British way, and most are involved in undergraduate tutoring. Most staff must produce research as a condition of contract renewal, but we do so on our own time. Funding is secured through competitive external or internal grants and, in a significant difference from Australian practice, those grants generally exclude the possibility of “buying time off teaching”.

Now, in Hong Kong as well as in Australia there is an insistently circulating argument for formally dividing the academic field into “research” and “teaching only” universities. This division is not yet an official reality, having been resisted in both places by reformers with at least some understanding of the importance of research to pedagogy and, more rarely, of the importance of pedagogy to research. In both places “research universities” still run undergraduate programs while receiving the biggest chunks of research funding and the largest postgraduate enrolments, while the rest must struggle to support their often first-class research activities as best they can. In other words, in both places the publicly-funded universities remain mixed, if unevenly so, and the universities that matter are public.

Nevertheless, we all know that across the field of higher education the research/teaching distinction has acquired internationally an active discriminatory force, and that within as well as between universities a real separation is informally well underway. So in combining staff *and* postgraduates from a research centre on the one hand and a teaching department on the other, our Workshop moves against the prevailing tendency towards divergence to create a

new working relationship across what is increasingly a tense or fraught demarcation line in the academy today.

In the permanent condition of instability installed in the Australian academy and now overtaking Hong Kong, we tend to overwork the word “new”; I’ve already invoked a new transnational research enterprise and new research practices, as well a new relationship. What will this really mean? I don’t have ready answers, but a few things are more or less clear. Like many opportunities worth seizing in institutional life, the beginnings of this relationship were arbitrary to an extent—personal friendships, a little homesickness on my part, Professor Ien Ang’s role as External Examiner for the Department of Cultural Studies—but the challenge here and now is to extend those friendships to people from two different societies who have never met before, and to develop a rationale and a practical basis for the relationship’s future development. Our “enterprise” is small, informal and experimental at this stage; the transnational does not have to be grandiloquent, and with this Workshop we aspire only to get to know each other well enough to form an idea of what we might do in future. So in these respects what I mean by “new” is simply something recent and as yet ill-defined, but open to development by participants who are uncertain of what they may hope to achieve. I have a more concrete sense of what is “new” from a Humanities perspective about the research practices of the CCR with its emphasis on seeking commissioned projects as well as competitive grants, and on a mode of involvement with government agencies, community groups and organisations in Western Sydney that includes but is not limited by the cultural studies preoccupation with minorities and marginalisation. Such practices are not, of course, exclusive to the CCR; for example, at Lingnan, an excellent Asia-Pacific Institute of Ageing Studies has a similar orientation. However, APIAS is a social research unit and I think it is fair to say that doing *cultural* research on this model—in particular, commissioned and contracted research—would have been hard to imagine for most Humanities-based scholars in the West some thirty or even twenty years ago. True, many of us in those days worked hard for social movements, published busily beyond the confines of academic journals, and tried to link scholarship with activism; there are important continuities in the West between the “radical” ethos of the 1970s and the externally-oriented “professionalism” of the CCR today, which may be concealed by an unreflective hostility to professionalism as such. But among the significant differences, the idea that the themes and priorities, indeed, the very substance and the *genres* of one’s academic research might be initiated and shaped by

requirements determined “outside” one’s personal field of interest would count for me as a major departure from the tradition in which I was trained. There is a real difference between, on the one hand, spending a life-time deepening one’s knowledge of, say, Milton, to generate scholarly books and articles (current options might be “sexual politics in Milton”, “queering Milton”, “Milton and governmentality”), and, on the other hand, spending one year writing a report for the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) and the next running workshops for a Health Centre—all with, who knows, a little queering Milton on the side.

Mind you, my own old-fashioned training came from an “outside” that exerted its own determining force (not least on “my personal interests”) no less than does a research brief today when it arrives from an art gallery, a town council or a media organisation. We just didn’t think about it in quite those terms. However, the training of a Humanist thirty years ago did predicate a consistency and durability of vocation that is becoming unimaginable now. On the literary side, we were shaped by and for a community (“of scholars”) sharing an ethos (“criticism”) and a discipline (“English”, “French”...) within an institution (“the University”) that was assumed not only to exert somewhat ineffably a life-long influence on us but to command life-long allegiance from those who continued on to postgraduate work—a very small number of students by today’s standards, I might add. The professionalism of a Stanley Fish, eloquently expounded in his book *Professional Correctness*, still conforms to this model, which, far from being in global decline (as academics struggling with Australian conditions sometimes wishfully suppose), is deeply entrenched in elite US universities—now undergoing a strong disciplinary backlash against “studies” areas in general, and cultural studies in particular.¹

Elsewhere, such a specialised *mode* of professionalism is too costly, too exclusive to sustain on the public purse. With casualisation and the rapid spread of fixed or renewable short-term contracts (the norm rather than the exception in Hong Kong), our time-frames of commitment have shrunk; there is no guarantee of ongoing academic work, and this alters in manifold subtle ways both the quality and the nature of a plausible subjective investment in scholarly or, in Fish’s terms, “interpretative” community, in disciplines, and in the University. What will become of the critical ethos in these conditions is an interesting question, and one that does not have to give rise only to sad or depressing answers. For while the *time* we may have for academic work is reduced, the “spaces” in which our interests and trainings can be put to work are beginning to multiply; extra-mural activities that once

signified special dedication in individuals are becoming ordinary—a mundane condition of employment. The CCR has a brilliant record of generating such activity; read from Lingnan, your list of projects involving road safety issues, women’s health, Asian-Australian art and the National Parks and Wildlife Service has (including for me) an exotic utopian force. I do not mean to romanticise this multiplication of spaces. “Mobility” and “flexibility” also mean insecurity and alienation, while “diversification” can just be a way of spreading yourself too thinly. We all understand this, I think: these clichés of the new academy regulate our everyday working lives, and they designate problems we urgently need to deal with rather than offering (as blow-in pundits commonly suppose) magic solutions to need. Nevertheless, these are also the conditions in which that traditional critical ethos has to be reworked, and in which some aspects of older models of radical practice as “social engagement” can be made to acquire new relevance. I tend to think that the most interesting contrast to draw within cultural studies in the West right now is not between a radical/critical past and a professional/co-opted present, but rather between two starkly divergent modes of professionalism, one of which is tenure-based and institutionally insular in its self-presentation (“Stanley Fish”), while the other is contract-based, other-oriented and socially cosmopolitan (“CCR”).

In this context, our shared enterprise as I see it has an intellectual foundation in Ien Ang’s working paper, “Who Needs Cultural Research?”ⁱⁱ. First delivered at an annual conference of the US-based Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes held at the Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, in July 1999 (*The Humanities, Arts & Public Culture in Two Hemispheres*), this paper detached from the usual polemics and legitimation exercises buzzing about the Humanities by posing a genuine research question: who *needs* what we can do? With investigation it is possible not only to come up with answers to a question like that, but with a variety of context-specific responses that can give rise, on the one hand, to a series of local, practical initiatives, and, on the other to a cosmopolitan or boundary-crossing reflection: our answers from Lingnan in Hong Kong will differ from those that arise for the CCR in Sydney, and together we can examine and then work with this difference, “transnationally”. Legitimation exercises are necessary; I’ve written some myselfⁱⁱⁱ. They keep the Humanities involved in the renegotiation of academic life, and sometimes they make space for concrete projects to form. Arguably, one of the most influential books of the 1990s in Australia was one that few people read closely and many disliked when they did: *Accounting for the*

Humanities: The Language of Culture and the Logic of Government (1991)^{iv}. Hotly disputed at every level from that of fact to morality, this text none the less succeeded in disseminating widely the idea that it was futile for the Humanities to maintain the “incalculable worth of reason and culture”^v in the face of the determinedly economic restructuring of higher education that began in Australia with the “Dawkins” reports of 1987-88 and has now reached Hong Kong with the “Sutherland” report (*Higher Education in Hong Kong*) of 2002^{vi}. In this respect a work of meta-legitimation, discrediting some defences while endorsing others, *Accounting for the Humanities* pointed a way towards further exploration of those “regular and reciprocal exchanges between the academy and social administration”^{vii} presupposed by an experiment such as the CCR, and it put forward some fascinating history to support a case for the “always-already instrumental” value of Humanities research and teaching. However, its mode and above all its *tone* (if I may do a little lit-crit here) were “critical” in the generic sense of that term. Heavy sarcasm about what soon began to figure as the doctrinal errors of others—“whole”, “well-rounded” persons and “grand, oppositional gestures” were major targets for scorn—signalled, at least to this reader, an investment of the text in the postural extremism that it rightly wanted to distance, but more importantly its rhetoric also encouraged inattention to some practical issues. Is a “whole person” ideal always illusory in a *pragmatically* significant way? Are grand gestures never necessary? Is “opposition” in academics never quotidian, forever gestural, and, by implication, always hollow and absurd? These are interesting questions to pose in a Hong Kong university framed by the wider context of the People’s Republic of China. Under what is often called the “minimal state” of the HKSAR and yet within (let me say as an outsider) a culture of maximal governmentality—where my local gym boasts a “Headphone Sponge Use Policy” and on the beach a rock barely bigger than I am is smothered in signs warning “DANGER DO NOT CLIMB!”— what would it mean to develop “reciprocal exchanges between the academy and social administration”? I really have no idea, but I am conscious that in this context I work for a university that wants to *niche-market* “whole person education”. This liberal arts ideal was never explicitly affirmed by my own education in Australia (the assumptions of which were meritocratic), and it is certainly a novel, exotic and precarious proposition in the Hong Kong university system. Now, niche-marketing personality is a vocation that *Accounting for the Humanities* broadly attributes to cultural critics, but the interesting term here is “whole”; what can wholeness come to mean as, first, the goal of a university-wide curriculum and a set of

pedagogical practices, and, second, as the *product* of a degree in Cultural Studies “with Hong Kong characteristics”?

Even to sketch an answer here would take me beyond my introductory brief, but let me say that the university curriculum includes compulsory General Education components, distributed evenly across degree programs in Business, Social Sciences and Arts, and a language policy that privileges English but fosters “three speech” (English, Cantonese, Mandarin), bilingual training (in English and Chinese) for a student body that on entry reads little in any language and speaks only Cantonese well. Among the pedagogical practices are: easy access to close contact with teachers, contrasting with a norm elsewhere of classroom overload and impersonality; hostel life away from home, rare for young adults in a space-cramped, familial society; an international student exchange program, providing those who stay as well as those who go with an experience of diversity and a chance to compare achievements with those of students from other places, neither of which is easily available in an intensely homogenous (97% Chinese) and somewhat inward-looking environment; and a stress on creativity, problem-solving and, yes, critical thinking that contrasts with most students’ experience of a high school system where rote-learning and drilling still rule. This may sound like a recipe for “multi-skilling” an elite in “flexibility” and “difference management”, and in a sense I wish it could be: many of our students are the first generation in their families to have secondary, let alone tertiary, education; quite a few are the children of new immigrants (from the Chinese mainland in most instances); and most come to us with, in varying degrees, an entrenched sense of failure and low self-esteem (Lingnan is the least prestigious of Hong Kong’s seven universities and few students “choose” to come). My point, however, is that *wholeness* in this context minimally names a supplement offered in response to an actually existing deficit in educational opportunity that is damaging for a real social cohort of students.

What kind of “whole personhood” may be produced by a Cultural Studies degree? This is where the *form* of Ien’s question—*who needs* cultural research?—has a practical force for us that a deconstruction of the “person” and the “whole” of Western liberalism does not, or does not unsupplemented by context-specific research. If we ask, for example, “*who needs* whole persons in Hong Kong?”, the University has an answer supported by findings in the USA: business does. Corporate managers seek that famous “well-rounded personality” in potential employees, and by this they mean a mix of cognitive, presentational and social

skills^{viii}. “Cognitive” here covers critical *and* creative powers as well as a lasting aptitude for learning. “Presentation” involves not only an ability to “communicate” in speech and writing, along with a grasp of logic and composition (“coherence”), but also other semiotic knowledges—of dress codes, say, or manners—that sustain *persuasiveness* (rhetoric). Finally, social skills entail a pragmatic acceptance of difference (“to work with others ... regardless of race, gender and age”) and an internalised cosmopolitanism (“international experience and foreign language facilities are essential”)^{ix}.

This is clearly a condensed revision of an old Arts curriculum that adapts and generalises for the purposes of corporate globalisation some of the once specialised self-shaping procedures learned by “reading literature”^x. Of course, it does not follow that business in Hong Kong uniformly accepts that these *are* its “needs”, or that scholars are thereby constrained to disseminate or internalise corporate values any more than we already do. However, any public university today is obliged, if not duty-bound, to promote a viable, indeed persuasive account of its mission; UWS does no less when it posits and works to create its own special importance to the economy and society of the Western Sydney region. In the militantly entrepreneurial, low-“welfare” environment of Hong Kong, it makes sense to emphasise a business-culture nexus. The hard question for a Cultural Studies program is not, “who needs critically trained, creative and difference-literate Cultural Studies graduates?”; we can plausibly say, “cultural industries, institutions and organisations do”, and foster awareness of these in our program. The hard question is how to integrate with or sustain alongside this mission those more contestatory, unsettling commitments to a politics of “culture and society” that are distinctive to our discipline and constitute its heritage in Hong Kong as elsewhere^{xi}.

It would be presumptuous of any newcomer, let alone one without Cantonese, to express strong views about this; I have access neither to the everyday life of 95% of the population nor to the large network of Chinese “Societies” and “Associations” which formed under British colonialism a majority-based yet “alternative” mode of social governance, and still operates today^{xii}. Nor does an English-only speaker really have access to the vibrant life of those non-governmental associations [NGOs] and social movements that seem *formally* more familiar to a recently-arrived Australian. However, it is also a fact of Hong Kong life that well-remunerated members of elite cultural minorities like myself are lodged, as it were, in the social body, with a job to do that has consequences for that body. So rather than

dodging the question of politics with irresponsibly PC display of my humble marginality I will address it, but from a very narrow point of view—that is, through my own responsibilities as a “textual” critic in the institutional and social context I’ve just outlined. As you might expect I dislike saying “textual” in this reifying way and I’m doing it to be friendly. Widely used on the sociological side of our field, this term is inaccurate and misleading as an invocation of either a method or an object; it is, in fact, obstinately *literary* in its assumption that ethnography, historical research and cultural policy work are insignificantly textual activities. It also slyly predicates a realm of pure Practice which is greater (or lesser) in its immediacy than a fallen (or ideal) world of Text. But to rehearse even the preliminaries of a tired critique of this old and enduring fantasy buys into what we have unfortunately come to call the “text-ethnography debate”, a debate that strikes me as increasingly bogus for two reasons of relevance here. One is that as we replay through this debate the modern division of Humanities and Social Sciences (as if this particular “great divide” were reparable by *fiat* in a utopia called Cultural Studies), we do so in interesting times that merit more of our attention; as cutbacks and restructuring in universities force the amalgamation of once distinct intellectual traditions, we find the textual and the ethnographic flung together in administratively unified but far from utopian Schools, Faculties and even Departments of “Humanities and Social Sciences”. We may not be able to resist the overall contraction in resources that this “interdisciplinarity” achieves, but we do have choices about how we handle the outcome. Ritualised hostility, particularly of the kind that rhetorically aims to exterminate a neighbour’s mode of expertise, is not necessarily clarifying of the potentials of this time or phase of choice.

My other reason for calling the text-ethnography debate *increasingly* bogus (for of course there have been and continue to be productive issues of contention at stake) is that far more polemics calling *for* ethnography or audience research are now appearing as “Cultural Studies” than substantial achieved examples *of* such work. There is at least one simple reason for this: principled defences of ethnography and attacks on textualism—or vice versa—are much faster and cheaper to produce in our new conditions of labour than research of any kind. Research on the traditional model of “field work” is becoming rare, even in those fields where the work is mainly in the library with texts; we have no time or resources to do it in a sustained and intensive way, and we are approaching a threshold where most of us may manage it once or twice in a lifetime after completing a PhD. Tetchy or speculative essays fit

more easily into the rhythm of our working lives and as “international refereed journal” items they meet the productivity requirements set by our employers and help us keep our jobs.

I don’t mean this cynically, although I do think that most such essays are defensive operations in wishful thinking rather than the bold campaigns for renewal they represent themselves to be^{xiii}. To the extent that I am calling *for* something (and meeting productivity requirements) myself right now, it is for the focused and collaborative exploration of actual working contexts for cultural research that I expect this workshop to foster. So this seems the right moment to sketch the disciplinary mix and political involvements constituting at least one realised Cultural Studies program by introducing those of my colleagues who have come to participate in this workshop and who will no doubt tell their own stories in other terms over the next few days.

Teaching doesn’t leave us time for internal text-ethnography debates, and I’m not sure we would have them if it did. Several staff do have literary backgrounds, in both English and Chinese, but it would be a mistake for those of us educated only in English to assume that we can annex as *similarly* “textual” the practices, traditions and ethos of Chinese literary scholarship. In fact this is the first among many borders or differing lines of development constituting our Department. It is more complex than the social science/humanities division which we also incorporate (we have left a political economist, a historian, a critical theorist and a translation specialist behind on this occasion), since only the “Chinese” side of this one is fully obliged to grapple with the difference—one that Western cultural studies arguments in English fail to admit or even to imagine. Yet it is crucial to recognise these little civilisational *differends* if we are ever to talk sensibly about transnational Cultural Studies. I have a whole new level of insight about what it means to be an agent of imperialism now that it is part of my job to help colleagues trained in Chinese literature to submit their work to the conventions of refereed journals in English, or write funding applications on ARC-style forms to the Research Grants Council, Hong Kong’s ARC equivalent. Believe me, “English” as a *language* is the least of anyone’s problems.

But there are always third terms (and American connections) to mediate an English/Chinese disciplinary split and, typically for a Cultural Studies program, few of us narrowly practise the discipline in which we were trained. Our Head of Department, Dr. Stephen Chan Ching-kiu, worked in Comparative Literature at the University of Hong Kong and UC-San Diego, but

his major research is in Hong Kong cinema and popular culture--especially as these respond to the pressing, worldly questions of identity posed so acutely to Hong Kong people in recent decades. The other major practice of this textualist is as an institution-builder: as Director of the Programme for Hong Kong Cultural Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong from 1994 to 1998, he established a substantial *Hong Kong Cultural Studies* series with Oxford UP (China), before playing a primary role in creating both our program and our Department at Lingnan; recently, he has been working on Hong Kong-wide, Hong-Kong-mainland, and East Asian-based regional networks for cultural research.

Dr Chan Shun-hing is Beijing-trained and has a background both in Chinese literary history (most recently, literary migrations between the mainland and Hong Kong after 1945) and in feminism; she is Chairperson of the Association for the Advancement of Feminism (AAF), an important NGO, and her work on feminism and cultural studies draws on long involvement in social movements ranging across such issues as housing, sexuality, self-employment projects for women in local informal economies, and the lives of older women in Hong Kong. Dr Lisa Leung Yuk-ming did postgraduate work at the University of Sussex (UK) and has experience as a journalist as well as in media studies; she studies the circulation and local uptakes of East Asian popular culture (Japanese TV “dramas”, for example), and as Chair of the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission she is involved in research on human rights sensitivity among journalists and on poverty in Hong Kong, as well as in networking with overseas human rights and labour groups.

Our postgraduates bring further involvements to the program. As a full-time PhD student, Margaret Sit Tsui uses her background in Comparative Literature and Translation to study the burden of representation negotiated by women caught up in the vast rural-to-urban migration unfolding across China; however, her interest in how rural women migrating to the factories and cities of the East and South respond to their textual use in the state’s latest Modernisation campaign is formed by her work as a researcher with the China Social Services and Development Research Centre (CSD), especially with a women’s Credit Union that aims to reconstruct particular village economies in rural China. Of the two part-time students who have come to UWS, Luk Kit Ling is a professional social researcher; she works full-time for APIAS at Lingnan while writing a PhD on representation of older women in government policy, media and social movement discourse. Cultural studies with a textual inflection is new for Kit Ling, and she has chosen it to supplement her knowledge as a long-

term activist for the housing and residents' movements that arise at the core of Hong Kong "culture and society". Kimburley Choi is moving in the opposite direction. A composer and musician, with experience in women's theatre and as a member of AAF, Kim is an Instructor for the School of Creative Media at City University of Hong Kong; she trained in Comparative Literature at HKU, but her "as-it-happens" study of the cultural insertion process being attempted for the Disneyland now under construction on Hong Kong's Lantau Island is resolutely ethnographic.

As for me, my training was in English and French as drastically demarcated disciplines with a shared classical base; Cultural Studies pays little heed now to the latter, but studying Latin, Hebrew and Biblical Studies in the late colonial atmosphere of Australia in the 1960s after a childhood spent watching Hollywood Biblical epics in the "old bush town" of Tenterfield no doubt shaped my research in action cinema, popular historiography and the work of Ernestine Hill. I have some experience in journalism and I, too, act as Chair of a small NGO, the Human Rights Council of Australia (HRCA). However, like my colleague Stephen (I imagine), I have been institution-building for so long now that the rest is recreation. Much of this work has been with journals (*UTS Review: Cultural Studies and New Writing*, now *Cultural Studies Review*) and regional research networks such as those now focused by *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* and *Traces: a Multilingual Journal of Cultural Theory and Translation*. In different ways, all three projects aim materially to sustain locally involved, regionally-oriented intellectual practices within and beyond the UK/US-based economy of publishing. As I see things (others will disagree), these journals are primarily professional in their politics, but no less political for that; they foster "socially cosmopolitan" activities across our shared yet painfully differing situations as scholars and researchers in culture. This experience (far more than "my research", I suspect) has allowed me to work in Hong Kong and thence to come to this workshop.

So what can a "textual" orientation contribute to all this? I can remember when people who worked with texts did not claim to do research; we read, and read "closely"; we thought, talked, argued and wrote criticism. (Most of the people who taught me best did not do even the latter; they just gave wonderful lectures). One direct consequence of the drastic changes in university funding in recent decades is the partial reshaping of Humanities research by a science-based model of knowledge production which forces us to claim to do *more* than read, think and write. One way of dealing with this is to fake it: the funding application becomes a

genre one learns, like CV-writing, from which nothing follows for critical practice. That can work, although a problem is arising for new literary graduates who genuinely do not understand why their brilliant exercise in queering Derrida is not deemed “research” by higher committees. A more interesting outcome, I think, is the recovery of older traditions of positive literary scholarship—historical and philological, for example—that were widely displaced from the mid-twentieth century by those practices and philosophies of close reading that did so much to professionalise the modern discipline of English. As Cultural Studies is reshaped by the powerfully geopolitical force of “culture wars” today, the expansive, research-based scholarship modelled by Erich Auerbach’s *Mimesis*, Curtius’ *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* or Peter Brooks’ *The Melodramatic Imagination* acquires new relevance and power, and all the more so for the creative effort it takes to think *past* its Eurocentrism; so, too, does the model for a formally precise, culturally “thick” investigation of transnationally popular genres to be found in Peter Dronke’s *The Medieval Lyric*.

So I would say (wouldn’t I?) that text-based study provides not only an enriched but also a sobering historical perspective on the politics of “culture” today^{xiv}. More immediately, though, such study is a field of practice in which people learn to *do* things; text work hones skills that “transfer” usefully to all sorts of endeavours, and the critique of the grandiose claims used to legitimise aesthetic education in the past has relatively little to say in this ongoing practical dimension. Of course, the value of any such transfer depends on its purposes in the context in which it occurs: if mastering the genre of the “funding application” may sustain but need not alter a given critical practice in Australia, the significance of securing such sustenance has a social and collective edge, indeed, a political resonance for, say, Chinese feminist literary scholars negotiating the hostility of colleagues as well as the demands of the globalising academy. Understood as an apprenticeship for doing something else, close reading has and always has had powerful uses—not least in fostering the literacy on which equal opportunity depends. Teaching Cultural Studies in what is for most of my students a poor second or even third language leaves me in no doubt at all about that.

Beyond these life-supporting practices, textualism can make two modest but vital contributions to both the cultural research projects and the wider social ambitions of a locally-implicated program such as ours. I have already mentioned one of these, an active

understanding of genre; to be able to *work with* given differences between a memo, a media report, a commissioned research report, a position paper, a personal essay, an essay for refereeing and an Internet chat-room message (the base-line genre in English that most of our students begin with) is a pre-condition not only for participating in the world of cultural work but for having any chance of making a difference within it, let alone beyond it. The other contribution we offer is a similarly active awareness of rhetoric; I mean arts of persuasion, yes, but primarily the capacity to “speak *to*”, rather than “at” or “past”, those whom we hope to persuade. I have been harping about this for more than twenty years^{xv}. So let me just add that with rhetoric, too, the crucial thing is to help people deal with differences—to know how to *address* varying social bodies and contexts, which means being able to recognise new ones as they arise.

If we can establish an understanding that people *practise* rather than merely “identify” genres or “analyse” rhetoric, and if we can ground this understanding in a skills-based confidence to go out and *engage* in the many complex processes of “ordering and limitation” that cultural practice entails in a “three-speech, two languages” society undergoing a “one country, two systems” transition towards a future as yet unknown^{xvi}, then we will have gone a good way towards training students to work effectively across the varying institutions, industries and community groups, including NGOS, who need cultural research in Hong Kong. We may also be in a better position ourselves to imagine (in the midst of that same complexity) new ways of orienting our work towards shaping that unknown future—and finding practical ways to realise whatever plans we make.

Let me conclude by mentioning some concrete features of the near future that is taking shape around us at Lingnan now. Reading the Sutherland Report on *Higher Education in Hong Kong* gave me a strange sensation of having migrated to the past; Australian academics know all too well what happens when a government decides to cut the higher education budget while expanding participation, to channel more resources to fewer institutions by promoting “excellence” schemes, and to encourage “collaboration” and “partnerships” to make up the inevitable deficit—all in the name of that perverse dream of crumbling public sectors worldwide, the cut-price “World Class University”. There is a logic to these changes that is powerfully supra-cultural and unvarying in its unfolding. Nevertheless, we cannot know in advance how those changes will be taken up and dealt with in societies very different from our own.

Here's one significant difference between Australia and Hong Kong. In the Humanities and Social Sciences, Australian academics feted for being able to raise substantial "external funds" for their research programs and projects are very often (if not always) accessing money made available by other branches and offshoots of government; it's still public money, taxpayers' money, that is shunted around, but now we must compete for that money by spending less time on research and much more time pursuing it over an ever more complex obstacle course. This is not an option in a low-tax, minimal state environment; nor, for that matter, are Hong Kong universities likely to raise funds by charging large fees to "international students from Asia". I don't know what will happen in the long run to the Hong Kong university system. Perhaps it will be absorbed sooner rather than later by the mainland or sold off to a multi-national educational conglomerate forming out there right now; for the moment, a bout of amalgamation fever seems to be in the offing.

Intrinsic to the state of minimalism, however, is another difference with positive implications for a Cultural Studies program. Post-colonialism with Hong Kong characteristics includes that strong community sector, all those Societies, Associations, social movements and proliferating NGOs, with deep experience of how to thrive or at least survive in an entrepreneurial, self-help spirit rather than the "state-funded" mode that became entrenched in Australia at the time of the Whitlam government (and which allowed John Howard to dismantle so much of "the social" so quickly). Many Hong Kong NGOs have an established regional or transnational base. One example is the Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives (ARENA), with which some members of our Department are involved; ARENA's activities stretch from the Philippines and Japan to India, and its research publications program has attracted support from Hong Kong University Press. Of course such entrepreneurialism is small-scale, grant- and good-will dependent, fragile in bad times; such organisations are hardly "sources of external funds" that can save a University. But this is not the point, because it not *their* purpose to bring (in Ien's words) "a kind of dowry" to the relationships they form with academic programs^{xvii}. Rather, their social purposes can inflect and invigorate ours, and not the least of the benefits of this is the enhanced capacity it brings to conceive an intellectual life beyond the University (as we know it) in a temporal as well as a spatial sense.

Similarly, an Australian-style quest for matched funding is not the purpose of the Internship program that we have established for our BA Cultural Studies Major students, who spend a

period of 6 to 8 weeks over summer doing on-the-job training with a range of local institutions. Some of the NGOs I have mentioned are among the more than twenty media, artistic and community organizations that have taken part in this program; others are Oxfam Hong Kong, Greenpeace, Hong Kong Repertory Theatre, Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, Heep Hong Society for the Handicapped, Step Forward Multimedia Company, Ming Pao Daily News, Cattle Depot College (Ngau Pang Sue Yuen)—a community college which organises classes for the public and publishes a cultural criticism magazine called *E + E*—and the renowned performance group Zuni Icosahedron^{xviii}. Do not mistake me; nobody sneers at funding. However, in the absence (at present) of a state-driven match-making scheme, collaboration is not forced by financial incentives. Instead it emerges in the business-like form of mutual consultation over what can be done, whether as training or as research, for the benefit of all parties; finding money, if it's needed, follows as part of the process.

This is a different but not necessarily better way of working than the Australian approach allows, and it pursues an interstitial rather than a “heavy construction” logic of building support for the Humanities and Social Sciences. Certain restrictions follow from that logic—burn-out, ephemerality, over-dependence on key individuals and a sometimes disabling amateurism. But I love its inventiveness, and relative freedom from the dispiriting, credibility-sapping game of catch-up that Australians are obliged to play with the changing buzzwords of government, whereby head-kicking polemics for social engineering under one Prime Minister give way to private sector euphoria and Third Way-burble under the next. However, once again we have choices about how we deal with whatever conditions we face and, as I suggested at the beginning, the CCR at UWS strikes me as a model of inventiveness (or should I say “innovation”?) in the Australian context now, as well as a model of the enabling force of a socially critical professionalism. The task of redefining in practice what it means to do cultural research, how, and for whom, is one that all participants in this workshop share. We have a lot to learn from you, and I look forward not only to this week but to our future collaboration.

Learning to Experience Culture: An Exercise in Research, by Stephen Chan

Learning about Selves and Others

The UWS-Lingnan Cultural Research Workshop was subtitled “An exercise in research and collaboration.” The object of much cultural studies research today includes quite inevitably an aspect or instance of “our” contemporary culture, granted that it could be seriously based on historical considerations and problematics. In practice, the concern *I* might have with an aspect of *my* culture (certainly in turn a dimension of *our* culture) could well have started with the need on one’s part to learn about the others, whose experiences constitute so crucially what is regarded in the end as our “common culture”. It is not surprising, therefore, to realize that taking up the exercise one would indeed have to begin with oneself, in accordance with the principle of reflexivity informing all works in Cultural Studies. Specifically our exercise at the Workshop seemed to have started with such a *methodological* question: “How do I learn about and understand the others as a category of the “unknown” – perhaps even the “unknowable” – supposedly posited as the object and purpose of my investigation, even though I would very much want to pin down that which I am to study as a clear target of research.”

Ready to move back to Sydney from Bologna, Italy, Brett Neilson recalled how he had learned, or “over-learned”, something about Sydney from the facial expressions Kim Choi and I had on us while listening to Melissa and him explaining how we were during one of the workshop mornings looking at the “most populated” square mile of the Australian continent. Coincidentally, I was unpacking my boxes when I received Brett’s response via the internet, eager to settle down in the local Shanghai community I had just moved into in order to prepare some talks on Hong Kong identity I would be giving to the Cultural Studies seminars at the Shanghai University, with which I am affiliated during the period of my study leave away from Lingnan. It is in this trajectory that I would like to take up Brett’s question, which could be read retroactively as a key question for the Workshop as a whole, on the

implications of cross-cultural communication for research and collaboration: What can I say now of what I had learnt then of HK, via Sydney, in light of the current state of things of which I am still trying to make sense during my visit in Shanghai?

Cultural Learning and Research

Let us first consider whether there are genuine ways for someone who is used to living with and within one culture to gain understanding from that which he or she can only have limited experience of, and hence should not be expected to fully comprehend. We might here be able to say that that which is to be learned and researched on is often an aspect or instance of the social realities that someone other than *us* (and most probably not like *me*) are most familiar with inside another cultural context. To focus on the dialogic relationship involved here, one cannot take for granted the coherence and security of the other and other-ly social space within which (cross-)cultural understanding must take place.

What would constitute “Sydney” for me then, and by the same token “Hong Kong” for another? What, to pick a small example from my own pedagogic experience, is the meaning and use of cultural memory among university students today in Hong Kong, when you take into account the changed demographic pattern and social condition of the last two decades. What seems to be “familiar” could assume a very different role once re-captured in an “unfamiliar” interpretative context, where learning becomes harder, and potentially deeper. It is perhaps the quality and complexity of such (cultural) learning that Brett’s question invokes for researchers in Cultural Studies. A pre-requisite for taking seriously the implication of the question would, I suppose, be a certain intense form of attention to that which is not immediately familiar, as well as that which is familiar but does not appear so from another’s point of view. This dialogic relationship is possible and effective only from within one’s space of imagination, largely conditioned by the specific experience acquired via membership in one’s lived “home” culture.

Contemporary social space consists of innumerable sites of contest and negotiation; they are living space, with living contradictions. When new knowledge seems to have been produced, the researcher needs to ask how that happens? And as new subjects of knowledge emerge in

a particular social and discursive context, one investigates the process, materiality, and history of that formation. How do they all relate to learning though? Seen from a cross-cultural perspective, the critical imperative is to focus on the pedagogic dimension of the formation, and re-think the production of cultural “knowledge” and “discourse” alongside the problematics of cultural experience as realities taking shape in the dialogic space of social mediation.

In what follows, I want to recollect briefly what went through my mind as I took part in the concluding session of the Workshop, before I return to Brett’s question for a quick thought about what implication this might have for future projects.

Visibility as Intervention, or Learning from Fairfield City

The “Tune in to Fairfield City” tour has provided us with an extraordinary approach to experiencing the multicultural diversity of the local community through an invitation to see and (for the Lingnan group from Hong Kong) to visit a range of the ethnic and religious sites in the area, as well as to hear and understand individual cultural and historical narratives about the people and their pasts, that which must have constituted the community of *experiences* at issue. Its visible aim is for the “tourists” concerned to appreciate, indeed *celebrate diversity* (the motto of Fairfield City) through a guided tour to a certain representation of the multicultural community, “stories of resistance and survival, of celebration and adaptation, and above all stories of everyday life” -- “reflecting Australian history, cultures and the dynamic faces of Sydney” (reading from the leaflet I have). Significantly, the Fairfield tour attempted to focus our attention on specific experiences and perhaps alternative readings of “cultural diversity.” Indeed by driving us around the community in accordance with the route outlined in the package, our colleagues at the UWS have succeeded in making visible to us what its designers and operators presumably consider to be worthy of our attention. It seemed crucial that identities and signs of identity must be made visible--not just on the map provided as part of the project, but through the windows of the moving van in which we toured. What is seen provides a crucial entry point to what may come after into one’s view of an alien cultural experience, something not to be acquired so much as it is to be learned about. If through such a process visibility does mediate the cultural identity and diversity of

the community, reflecting the basic “reality” of Fairfield, we must be alerted to how that has happened, and indeed our respective roles in it, while celebrating the success and remembering the excitement of the tour.

So how does the tour relate to the problematics of understanding cultural experience at issue? Two points may be raised, if we may for the moment focus on the process of mediation: spectacle and consumption, both operating through a function of visibility in line with what I have been trying to suggest. Contextualized in the project of a cross-cultural research of the kind we want to explore, spectacle is the outcome, or the inevitable form of display, if you want, of a particular cluster of cultural experience -- display, the turning into ostensibly visible form, of that which would need to be presented, re-presented, or indeed showcased, in an attempt to explaining and justifying with such an explanation what our project is worth. Alongside public policies today with their emphasis on creativity and its link to post-industrial productivity, consumption constitutes the condition of possibility for generating critical interaction and cross-sector working partnership among practitioners concerned with heritage, community and cultural tourism, respectively. Whence the intervention provided by contemporary cultural research with projects and the resultant package of *representations* and practicable *cultural events* such as the Fairfield Tour.

Obviously, I have raised these issues only as ideas for further consideration in our collective experiments in critical research collaboration, rather than as any definitive statements on the particular cultural phenomenon or social reality concerned. In this connection, I would like to further invoke the following points to put on the table.

Identity, Mediation and “Packaging”

Upon arrival at the Sydney international airport, I jumped on a taxi to rush straight away to the Workshop at the University of Western Sydney Parramatta campus, which had started that morning. “Kept away” in the western part of the city, UWS and the road to Parramatta, along with the subsequent tour to Fairfield (which I didn’t know I was about to visit as part of the Workshop programme at the moment), have together helped frame my understanding and even experience of Sydney, Australia. It was the first time I visited Sydney.

The question I had then during the course of the Workshop was: How “Sydney” is this? Or, indeed, how “Aussi” is this (referring to the Fairfield experience we had)? It is undoubtedly a question about the (dominant) representation of (another’s) identity. (To compare, imagine what a visitor might think if, upon arrival in Hong Kong, he or she is made to approach the city from the experience and perspective tied to an immersion in Tuen Mun and the adjacent Yuen Long area in the northwestern corner of the New Territories. Someone is bound to ask the critical question “How Hong Kong is this?” somewhere along the line.) All these, I stress, are not rhetorical questions, but serious methodological issues to be addressed and adapted from an outsider’s point of view, whatever cultural experience the person may happen to identify with. The identity stance, however defined, allows this “researcher” to focus on (another) cultural experience as object of analysis, and given the complex process of mediation in the social articulation of any such experience, the question of how the “unknown” is to be *made known* returns in a crucial way.

Thus, such a methodological problem hinges significantly on the basic issue of cultural representation and production. We would realize, in this connection, that integrative fieldwork (e.g., the Fairfield Multicultural Driving Tour) plays an extremely productive function in allowing the researcher to intervene in the “natural” process of identity-in-the-making, thus bringing to the foreground the work of mediation in the larger context of knowledge production. Indeed, we would need to consider again the crucial form of mediation in the project we engage ourselves in—the complex operation of “field” texts and contexts researchers work to re-construct, re-enact, and put on display in order to thematize and critique (our way of “packaging”) what I have been calling “cultural experience.”

Hence, if we ask questions such as how cultural tourism works, we could be concerned with how social representations mediate our learning and understanding of experience through the institutional production and reproduction of narratives. Such concern may lead on for us to the next set of issues, in which form, representation, and above all genre – in other words “packaging” – must be taken seriously by commercial agents, by government, by alternative groups, or by Cultural Studies research projects (including partnerships), since what these involve would definitely have a key role to play in the identity-making process. It is in the

light of the *kind* of discursive form and pattern of utterance adopted that we need to bring ourselves together in cross-cultural collaboration, in order to pose additional research questions for ourselves alongside the particular engagement we all have in our respective projects. We have asked what we were trying to achieve by taking part in the “Tune in to Fairfield” tour; we asked, specifically, how we could take a productive and reflexive stance on Tania’s wonderful guide and representation of the events of the day, her intervention framing along with the audio-tape (and the map) our sense of what constitutes the experience of multicultural Fairfield.

Mapping Experience

Finally, I want to bring up the question of *mapping* in the context of cultural learning and research. My concern relates certainly to the possibility for various local histories to be represented under the name of “diversity”, as in the case of Fairfield. But the real issue is for communities, with their own enactment of time-space instituted in the formations of lived reality, to become aware also of the representation on any “map” thus constructed, providing ways of reading/experiencing/making sense of the collective experience they expect others to learn and understand. The Fairfield Tour is represented to us through the audio recording that provides the tour-guide explication while a group, or indeed an individual, may be driving through the Fairfield community on the road. It is also re-enacted in the representational form of the map provided, packaged, in the generic convention of the tourist map. Differences, of course, are emphasized and represented accordingly. Moreover, “diversity” is put into perspective, made visible for us on the same platform, thus bringing up perhaps for the first time to the reader of the map a “master” narrative that has not appeared prior to its intervention, re-presentation and re-enactment. Cultural diversity is put on display, through the map. In the mapping process, one may consider the purpose but also the *work* of that representation: the skills and tactics involved; the movements, trajectories; the activities marked, perspectives fore-grounded or hidden etc. In short, cultural understanding could be seen to work through everyday itineraries we are capable of creating in our daily attempt to make sense of, and make do with, the experience we have. I suggest that this concern with the work of mapping may, in the end, serve both useful research and pedagogic functions for our projects.

To return here to Brett's question on learning, we may now say that the knowledge and understanding of culture relate rather centrally to the negotiation we always have with the time and space of experience, and those of representation (whether in a research context or otherwise). How *HK* would Tuen Mun be? Or, how much Tuen Mun is a part of the HK discourse as we know it? How would our knowledge, indeed experience, begin to make a different sense once a differential order of things is put in place, even just temporarily. How does one *know* what one's experience is, or means, when one is all the time inside of it, being always-already packaged as part of the unknown maybe? Perhaps, then, attempts to get hold somehow of the unknowable do provide a useful perspective here – for our learning about the others (without necessarily resulting in knowledge), for our learning within and about the viewing relationships of that mediated event. We may then ask, yet again: Where are we going? Where could we go? Where can anyone go? And of course, “Where are you from?” (that all-time question Sydney taxi-drivers have had to ask Ien Ang, we were told). How, in short, does one map the trajectories whereby the posing of such questions has become not just possible, but possibly “natural”?

So what have I learned? Given that I may never be able to know Sydney, or answer to the question on Fairfield as a part of it (How Aussi, how “representative”, is it?), I can never have access to what the “real” answer to those questions might imply for a “local”. Is it possible then for one to learn without fully understanding the complexity of the other (Sydney) experience? It is here that I would prefer to place the work of Cultural Studies research, in the context of our rethinking of the experience of cultural learning.

Shanghai/HK/Sydney: how may difference in the time and space of so many lived representations re-frame for one some of the basic terms of our research concern, and how may that kind of re-orientation affect the understanding of others and selves. Can we approach the “other” without leaving the “self” unmediated or transparent, or vice versa? Would I ever be able to probe deep into the question (experience) of “self” without ever being able to fully experience, appreciate, or acknowledge the “other” as a position I may identify with and relate to?

It does not matter if cultural understanding is ultimately possible, I suppose, but it could matter a lot how in that process we map all the differences in the hope that *that* will lead us naturally to the resolution of a problem fixed neatly inside/outside? I suddenly realize I did learn something about HK at the moment when I wondered.

Reflections

Where East meets ‘Westie,’ by Sharon Chalmers

We stood waiting for our visitors at Sydney Airport grasping a sign that read ‘Lingnan University’ hoping that we would have something in common with a group of scholars from Hong Kong. This venture was a new experience for us all. The idea was to bring cultural researchers together from disparate geographic and cultural locations and attempt to make academic linkages and forge new ways of thinking about scholarly collaborations. Within the first few minutes of piling suitcases into the cars there was non-stop chatting and laughing, discovering research interests, predicting the weather and explanations of what lay ahead for the following week. For one week we were going to be tied at the hip, spending every day and often evenings together both showing but as it turned out also discovering our own cityscapes in new and often surprising ways.

It was a long drive back to where our guests were staying in Parramatta. From east to west, from the city to the ‘burbs. The University of Western Sydney as the name suggests is out west. In other ways, however, it denotes what is ‘not western’ but rather exudes and typifies the global character of Sydney in terms of cultural diversity. It is often portrayed as a vast area of the unknown, where the many ‘others’ dare to be different. Indeed, the often commonly heard put-down of the inner-city dwellers is that a picnic lunch and a change of clothes wouldn’t go astray if you’re venturing beyond Strathfield (the unnamed demarcation between the safe and ‘seedier’ spaces of Sydney).

This is a common but complicated story and one that in starts and spurts we began to relay to our guests. They in return asked questions and contributed insights, similarities and differences from the Hong Kong and mainland Chinese experiences. For example, while we explained that western Sydney was the fastest growing economic and population centre of Australia, they pointed out that in China there was a large population shift from the country

to the large cities. In both cases it was those less economically secure and often members of disenfranchised groups that were doing the moving.

Images of western Sydney are reinforced, in fact sometimes created by the hype of mainstream media representations that invariably do not dare to be different. This was confirmed by our distribution of a press release to promote the scholarly partnership. The following claim was our attempt to capture the media's attention.

What do you do when people from Hong Kong come to town? You show them western Sydney!

What is more seductive to the media than a challenge to venture out west to show a group of foreigners other foreigners. While our challenge attracted some attention our ability to fit into the images that the media wanted to portray resulted in a somewhat ambivalent response. This breakdown in communication was a two-way process. From our perspective we were unable to articulate in everyday language, nor were we *au fait* with formulating pithy media grabs, to explain the intricacies and multiple layers that cultural diversity in western Sydney produces. We wanted to communicate the complexity of a combination of issues around differing experiences of exclusion, migration, education, employment, gender, sexuality and age. From the media's perspective they insisted on a particular kind of representation, one we resisted to hand them. The print media wanted a picture of the Hong Kong and CCR group in front of something 'ethnic' while the radio didn't like the answers to the questions they asked our guests and declined to air the interview. While not overly surprising these experiences do raise important issues around communication, or more precisely the lack of communication, between academia and mainstream media.

Nevertheless, for me there were a number of highlights to the week. Generally, the most exciting was the total enthusiasm and interest shown by all those involved. From the first to the last day the pace of the cultural tours and the non-stop discussions was unrelenting and challenging. Specifically I'd like to discuss two events that stood out. The first was the afternoon I organised at the Leichhardt Women's Health Centre and the second was our visit to Cabravale Diggers Club in Cabramatta led by Fiona Nicoll.

On the first occasion I arranged for a number of community workers who worked in the area of women's, lesbian, gay and HIV health care to give us an overview of their work and to explain the positive and negative implications of working in partnership with academia. Initially there was a focus on each of the workers that included: working with prisoners who are HIV+; access to health care for women from Chinese cultural backgrounds; lesbian health care; Asian gay men's health; and Indigenous women and HIV. This was then followed by an open discussion concentrating on the ethics and methodologies of working with diverse groups and how to accommodate divergent political, academic, economic and moral agendas. Experiences were exchanged and particular logistical problems raised when attempting to work in partnership, with the media, and in situations where expertise and knowledge comes from a range of backgrounds. Feedback from both the Hong Kong group and from the community workers exemplified the usefulness of having the time to engage in conversation from which others' experiences can feed into new ways of operating and negotiating despite the obvious cultural and political differences. What was also interesting was the conspicuous absence of participants from the CCR, a great opportunity lost for our researchers. Perhaps the oft-heard claim by community workers who talk of the arrogance of Australian academics was sadly reflected in this lack of participation by those from the CCR.

The visit to Cabravale Diggers Club was the last stop on our cultural tour of Western Sydney or what has become known as the 'Tune into Fairfield City: a multicultural driving tour'. For me preconceptions abounded as we stepped into the large plush foyer of the club. After explaining to an employee that we were doing a cultural tour of western Sydney with a group of guests from Hong Kong we were given the royal treatment with a full tour of the club. As we were shown around, we passed by proud images of colonialism represented in huge paintings adorning the walls. This of course confirmed many of my views. These clubs were a white male working-class bastion of conservatism. However, while there remain strong reminders of a past-gone-by another story also emerged. We were informed for example that 25 percent of club members were 'Asian' and that when Vietnamese singers performed there was standing room only in the entertainment area.

By coincidence the president of the club was in the bar and was interested to find out what we were doing at the club. As he gained insight into our reasons for bringing the group to the club, I gained insight into the changes that have occurred in the ways local communities adapt to each other – the ways all cultures for both pragmatic and philosophical reasons adopt and surprisingly even defend their community's diversity. On asking about the media's take on Cabramatta as the drug and criminal capital of Sydney the president duly dismissed this claim as a beat-up and then told the bar that drinks were on the house for our group. Will wonders never cease!

By the end of the week strong friendships had been formed and research links tentatively explored. While many of these connections still feel rather vague and 'out there' the interest, new knowledges and good humour that permeated the week of 'cultural tours' is only one small part of an on-going collaboration, one that attempts to move beyond simplistic understandings of knowing who 'we' are and how 'they' live.

Reflections, by Chan, Shun-hing

In December 2001 when I decided to participate in this cultural exchange activity, what I aimed at was to know more about cultural research and its practices in Australia, and if possible, to share my cultural research experiences that were more China and Hong Kong oriented. After these 5 days workshop, I found that I learnt much more than expected and was impressed by the methodologies used by the fellow researchers in CCR. I was exposed to more Australian-specific issues like multiculturalism and nation-building, the struggle of aboriginal people, and other general issues which were not much researched in Hong Kong, like driving culture, “homeworld”, stigmatized regional culture, women’s health and sexuality, cultural tourism, shopping centers and youth culture, and so on. The involvement of CCR in these projects also demonstrated the effectiveness of a kind of collaborative academic-community cultural research format that some colleagues and I are trying to develop in Hong Kong. Here because of limited space, I can only highlight two projects for sharing and reflection.

Fairfield Tour

This tour was one of the most memorable activities in this workshop. As introduced in the pamphlet “Tune in to Fairfield City—a multicultural driving tour”, “this is the living face of Australian multiculturalism, where diverse cultures meet and mix, and traditions are maintained and evolve.” When we were driven to different spots in the City, like the Fairfield City Museum and Gallery, the Holland House, the Phuoc Hue Buddhist Monastery, the Cambodian Temple Vat khemarangsaram, the Mingyue Lay Buddhist Temple, the Cabramatta Town Centre etc and had a chance to talk to people there or had a cup of coffee, I could feel the “living face of Australian multiculturalism” if not knowing the interactive face of these cultural institutions. This form of cultural tour designed and produced by a collaborative effort of local governmental bodies and academic institutions is quite different from that produced by the semi-governmental body, the Hong Kong Tourist

Association in Hong Kong, which also stresses cultural diversity but in the context of boasting about Hong Kong as a so-called Asian cosmopolitan city. In this driving tour guided by a tape, the substantial input by the CCR (Tanja Dreher and Antonio Castillo) in terms of research, script writing and production marks the genuine advocacy of the motto “celebrate diversity” in the Fairfield City and in Australia at large. While criticizing that Hong Kong being a multicultural society is only a kind of propaganda or a myth produced by the Government, can academic institutions like our Department or the Centre for Cultural Research and Development in Lingnan play a role in the future to open up discussions on cultural diversity by participating in such a project on cultural tourism? Cultural diversity in Hong Kong may not be manifested only as ethnic diversity (like the South Asian community in Yuen Long, the scattered Philippine domestic workers, the invisible Vietnamese and so on), but also diversities within the Chinese community because of their differences in origins in Mainland China, histories of migration to Hong Kong, and positions occupied at the present moment. Developing similar projects like the Fairfield City tour is also a way to offer alternative narratives to the history of some interesting areas in Hong Kong (like Li Yu Mun, Tai O, Yuen Long and Tuen Mun) that have been homogenized by the Governmental or the commercial touristy propaganda. Generally speaking, inspired by the different projects of the CCR, I think cultural tour as a genre has a potential for further cultural research and development in Hong Kong.

Gender, Sexuality and Health

The afternoon tea with Sharon Chalmers and other speakers at the Leichhardt Women’s Community Health Centre was also a wonderful experience for me.

I could see another form of collaboration between community and academics in cultural research and development. In this session, there were two women from the Centre introducing us the situation of women’s health in the changing health system in Australia and the health issues related to Chinese women migrants; and there were four speakers from ACON (a community, health and action group which serves the people whose lives and health are affected by discrimination, prejudice and the impact of HIV) introducing us their work for gay, lesbian, aboriginal women and HIV positive people. We were supplied with printed and audiovisual materials in addition to their well-prepared presentations.

These kinds of health projects related to gender and sexuality are fascinating for me not only because of their wide scope and high quality, but also the vision behind which reflects a concern for other kinds of cultural (social and sexual) minorities in the society. Although I did not have much time to discuss with Sharon how exactly she has worked with these projects (except a bit on the lesbian health), based on my own experiences in Hong Kong as an academic and an activist in the women's movement, I am fully aware that it would be much easier for an academic researcher to work with the community in research projects if she or he is involved in the community in one way or the other, or has established a kind of trustful and cooperative relationship with the members of the community. By bringing these frontline workers together to speak to us on such an occasion, Sharon had already demonstrated her close connections with the groups. During the round-up discussion, I learnt from Sharon that there was also a cultural shift of social movement in Australia that might have drawn it closer to cultural research. But I think there is still much to be done on the side of academics. I think Hong Kong is also undergoing such a shift, therefore I may say that there is much potential for cultural research to develop in such direction.

Concluding remark: we need cultural research

In responding to the theme of this Workshop: what is cultural research and who needs it, I think cultural research is a kind of engagement with the society in which both academic researchers and community-based researchers are involved. As cultural studies academics, we need it because it is a way to produce new knowledge about the world and to keep a dialogic relationship with the community. Hopefully we can develop our new projects and to continue the dialogue with our own community. By the time we sit down again in the second joint research workshop to be held in Hong Kong later, we have more rich experiences to share. I look forward to that. Last of all, I would like to thank all the colleagues in CCR for the wonderful exchange workshop.

“Eat Drink Play Fun” in Sydney, Australia, by Kimburley Choi

Facing stagnant local economy and successive reduction of university positions, my colleagues and I often discuss we should set up a tourist agency and develop “alternative” tourist packages for “gwe-lo” (Westerners) and Mainland Chinese tourists: gay, senior citizen, bi-sexual, with different subject matters highlighted: old village visit, tea culture, eat drink Hong Kong, gay bar and more. Today we can choose among hundreds of packages according to our own preferences. We locate there is an enormous market unexplored. Our confidence boosts up since Hong Kong is expected to be the 5th top tourist city in 2020 in the world.

Once I took my paid-holiday from my work place, I could not lie to myself that I always treat myself as a tourist traveling rather than a post-graduate studying Australia. The 5-day Australian “conference” to me is of course “serious” academically, but it is also a means for me to escape from my boring working life, an “alternative” leisure activity, or should I say, an attractive alternative cultural packaged tour, in which I sense and taste “Australia” with the guidance of “Australian” scholars.

It is a cultural packaged tour since everything is superbly prepared and organized: once we stepped the Australia airport, tourist guide Sharon and Fiona gave each of us a big hug. As tourists, what we did first of course is shopping. My first spot of “Australian” product in the supermarket is not Tim Tam, the authentic Australian taste of biscuits, but Blackmores vitamin C and evening primrose oil plus fish oil tablets! It is half the price of Hong Kong! How can I not be tempted to buy a dozen of them?! The Blackmores bought in Australia is not only cheaper but also gives me more confidence than those in Hong Kong since the ones sold in Parramatta supermarket are made in Australia, while products in Hong Kong are made in Malaysia...

If Tim Tam represents the original “Australian” taste which you can find it not just in Parramatta supermarket but also in the airport with delicate package, Blackmores

characterizes the globalized natural health discourse with good reputation of strict Australian medical quality control.

Although Ritzer's McDonaldization thesis is so compelling, I really "taste" the problem of standardization and homogenization in global economy. Say the Starbucks. In Sydney, thanks to all Australia friends, I visited several small coffee shops. The taste was so good that I could not forget. Once we would like to have coffee after dinner, what we could find was only Starbucks. My Australian buddies immediately show their uneasiness with their pale face. I wondered why. People in Hong Kong like drinking coffee a lot, but we have our own style. In "tea restaurant", we can have coffee in Hong Kong style, which is totally different from the Western one. With very few local coffee shops in Hong Kong, Starbucks means "good coffee and comfortable environment" for me. As far as I know, no friends of mine lament the existence of Starbucks in Hong Kong, although we know clearly Starbucks is a global branded chain shop operated by a big local food corporation. However, my Australian buddies felt totally different from me. After the first taste, I totally understand why they hate such a global giant corporation, compared with the local stylish coffee shops. Starbucks in Sydney means the horrible degrading monstrous global chain stores. With its sheer capital power, it perhaps even seizes territories and limits the operation space and business of local coffee shops.

Same name, different taste. Is it because of local adaptation? Seems not. The problem of Starbucks here is not homogenization and standardization, but its lack of it. Situating in different contexts, people sometimes confront against and sometime comply with the offerings of global corporations.

As a tourist, I consumed numerous Sydney spots, some "mainstream" such as The Rocks and some "alternative" such as the Fairfield tour. As a first-time tourist of Sydney, both places allow me the chance of "gazing at the exotic." Seeing Disneyland's Main Street as simulacra inside a playground, that I can easily re-locate my own sense of such an "old town" in a 3-dimensional "theater", The Rocks certainly destabilizes my senses and orientation totally, especially when I am asked to believe that it is the "authentic" old town of Sydney. The previous is called "dreamland" while the later heritage tourism. But is there

any difference between Main Street and The Rocks, when both emphasize “image-and appearance-orientated mode of existence”?^{xix}

Fairfield is different. Before coming to the trip, my Australian colleague cautioned me that Western Sydney is quite a rough place that I have to be aware of my own safety. Fairfield, in my colleague’s eyes (I should say imagination), perhaps is the China Town in L.A. in *Blade Runner*. Gazing it under bright sunlight, Fairfield is no more a city of sin but a peaceful town in which different ethnic groups with various religions live there. However, as a distant observer, it is too easy for me to view those towers, temples, and monuments as spectacles. With or without the cassette tapes playing and instructing us what we are watching, sitting inside a car makes me becoming a protagonist of a road movie, gazing at things outside the window. Can I dig deep inside and understand the cultural significance of the town and the cultural tour, when I am, as a tourist, so accustomed to consume images as sheer appearance? How can we make cultural tourism possible to work against the postmodern trend highlighting sheer images? Or the nature of “tourism” is in a way spectacular that we should not bother much?

After the 5 days exhausting study trip, there are lots of questions yet to answer. Compared with the cases in Australia, cultural tourism in Hong Kong is still in its infant stage. When our Australian friends visit us next time, we can have a more thorough discussion after switching our roles.

Experimenting with collaborative cultural research, by Elaine Lally

Expectations

Excitement was high at the beginning of the workshop week. What a luxury -- a legitimate excuse to avoid the administrivia and the everyday demands of work, and spend several days in stimulating company, in a range of interesting venues, with time for ideas to emerge and develop!

After the first day's talks and discussions, and getting to know each other through an evening of pizza and beer, came the second day's field trip. 'Tune into Fairfield City' is an audio tour of significant sites in the Fairfield LGA, researched and developed by Tanja Dreher and Antonio Castillo on behalf of the Centre for Cultural Research. Although the tour is ostensibly stand-alone self-drive, Tanja was our tour-guide for the day, having developed skills and a fine line of patter through her experience in taking CCR and other groups on the tour.



On the bus



At the Dutch house



Phuoc Hue Buddhist monastery

Making the familiar strange again

On the third day of the workshop, I hosted an excursion to the changing landscape of the western Sydney suburbs. My daily commute from home to the CCR's offices at Parramatta takes me past Newbury, a new release area in the north-western suburbs of Sydney. Here is a contemporary experiment in urban architecture, based on a higher density of living than the 'traditional' Australian suburban model, with the standard 'quarter-acre' block. Town-house style developments, in terraces with only tiny gardens or courtyards, mix with larger detached dwellings. While there was no sign of where the local shopping centre might be within the development, communal amenities include a neighbourhood centre and water-feature (a pond with fountain). The slogans on the billboards promise 'Soon life will be close to perfect'. We wondered what kinds of community would evolve once its 'aspirational' inhabitants moved into the deserted suburb. Would it retain its genteel atmosphere of civility over the coming decades, or would its fortunes be less favoured? Finding the front door open to an unoccupied, newly-built house, we ventured inside to ask permission to look around, to find that the tradesman was a Chinese migrant who had been in Sydney for some 10 years.



Houses at Newbury



The next stage: streets have been laid out, including the street lights, but the houses are still to be built

Not far from Newbury is HomeWorld, where our exploration of the domestic imaginary of the western Sydney suburbs continued. HomeWorld is said to be the largest display home village in the southern hemisphere. Here we imagined ourselves living a resplendent lifestyle, in the house named the 'Emperor', or perhaps the 'Regal'.



Making ourselves at home at HomeWorld

I drive past these areas most days of the week, but it was only with the prospect of showing these areas to the visitors from Hong Kong that I found the time to think further about what these suburbs mean for urban life and mobility in Sydney. These pristine clean suburbs, empty at the time the buyers commit to living there, surely give insight into the imaginaries of what have been called the ‘aspirational’ class in Sydney. They seem to promise escape from the older suburbs where the houses and shops are run-down and dirty, where the crime rate is to be concerned about, and where children are exposed to bad influences and drugs.

Themes, Teams & Time -- or how much can you really achieve in five days?

We certainly all had a great time on the field trips of the second and third days of the workshop, but if that had been all that happened, then it would only have been cultural tourism and not a genuine experiment in cultural research.

Monday afternoon’s session included those of us who were full participants in the workshop organising ourselves into teams for what was envisaged as some kind of mini-research project or activity, to be carried out during the week and then presented in some form on Thursday afternoon. Research activities would be focussed for each team around a theme (or around a major theme and alternative theme for each group). A number of potential themes had been suggested, including gender, diaspora, home, ageing, leisure, media and

representation, urban space and technology. Teams of three or four people were formed of a mix of Lingnan and CCR participants, also with a mix of staff and postgraduate researchers. Themes were assigned to the teams somewhat arbitrarily rather than on the basis of the research interests or expertise of the members. The idea was to ‘stretch’ people: working on an unfamiliar theme would encourage working collaboratively within the team, and prevent people from falling back into the familiar and comfortable track of an individualised style of thinking about a problem.

Unfortunately the compressed program didn’t allow time for the teams to get to know each other, and to come to function effectively (the team I was in had four members, myself, a Sydney-based postgraduate student, and two members from the Hong Kong contingent). This is undoubtedly inevitable within such a short period of time, but perhaps the idea of the teams was abandoned without really giving the team members themselves time to try to make it work.

I certainly found that the company and the content of the field trips were good for sparking ideas for a multitude of interesting research projects. I could see many interesting research questions to be explored, however these were all framed for me by my habits of thinking as individualised research projects, shaped by my own research interests. Some general conversation about possibilities for collaborative research took place, but nothing sufficiently concrete to follow up on emerged. Perhaps this was a lack of mutual familiarity with our environments between Hong Kong and Sydney, and it would be hoped that over a longer period of familiarisation such possibilities might emerge.

Rather than larger teams, perhaps a ‘buddy’ system, with pairs working together with a focus on an issue that the members have a background academic knowledge in, might allow enough development for a presentation of some sort later in the week. The Thursday workshop, with its engaging and intensive discussion, was certainly stimulating and evocative of ideas. Still, it would have been interesting -- if risky -- to have pursued the format as originally envisaged, just to see what would have happened. If nothing else, this might have given some insight into the processes and skills relevant to collaborative research, as well as the stimulating exploration of western Sydney as a ‘field’ of research. The week was rich in

content, but without thinking through or analysing what skills or competences are involved in collaborative research this aspect of the week inevitably went largely undeveloped. In the end, the most valuable part of the experience for me was that of undermining the ‘taken-for-grantedness’ of my everyday life in Sydney, and western Sydney particularly. Seeing it through the eyes and the questions of intelligent well-educated scholars from elsewhere taught me to see a different Sydney, where every detail is potentially one with significance.

Cultural Research and ‘Travelling’ – Thoughts from UWS workshop, by Lisa Leung

At the moment of writing it is already 7 months after our UWS workshop, but fragments of memories of the study trip still prevail. And indeed the week-long workshop did stretch the length and breadth of ‘travelling’: travelling from summer to winter, from Parramatta to central Sydney, from Fairfield to the Rocks, from ex-service machismo to lesbianism, from gender and cultural identities to memories (forgetting) of war and peace. But during that travelling, we came to immerse ourselves in ‘pockets’ / ‘nodes’, listening to our Australian colleagues as they enlighten us on their research....

I did not know what to expect when I arrived in Australia. But when the first day came and we indulged ourselves in a supermarket shopping experience (close to the Hong Kong one but on a bigger scale) trying to equip us with supplies for the week, and later feasted ourselves on Ossieland’s own ‘Tim Tam’s, we already had a strong feeling of ‘relearning (or rather Australianizing) the everyday’. The excitement was also one of ‘ordinarizing the exotic’, as we moved into an apartment rather than a hotel, a very nice arrangement to top up our ‘everyday experience’ in Australia. Came the first official meeting and we got to meet our Australian counterparts, we marveled at Sarah’s research on youth and driving behaviour, which was to set the tone and theme for the workshop: intersection and intervention. I was sitting there and the image of an octopus popped up, stretching out its tentacles, as far and as deep. I was to contemplate the breadth and depth of cultural research, which is entrenched in the spirit of Cultural Studies. The idea had a special relevance to what has been currently in my mind, of trying to foster research in the organisations that I am member of, and of thinking of ways to make my academic research ‘intervene in the everyday’. I did, on the other hand, have specific questions that I hoped to be able to find answers to during the trip. How do big issues arise from the everyday? How do we engage in the everyday? How can research interface with the ordinary? What do we with Hong Kong background read of these projects? How much of these research experience can be applied to Hong Kong?

With these questions in mind, I set off our week long (re)cognizance of Parramatta and Central Sydney. The first to strike us was definitely the Fairfield tour (many of us, including our Australian colleagues, expressed awe at the trip). The project, in the hands of Tanya, was to initiate a driving tour in the vicinity. And we went travelling through a plethora of culturally marked spaces. A lot has been said around ‘multiculturalism in Australia’, but it was the first time to witness a fraction of it just within the confines of Fairfield. The tour was surely an intersection in all senses of the word: listening to the tape describing the stories around the spots we passed, and matching them with the passing images in front of us, did enlarge the space for imagining the culture(s) that are made visible. One endearing scene was when the coach stopped opposite an unpatronized park, and we listened to the tape describing the history of the park while gazing out of the coach window, imagining the life that has been in the park. We were also able to get on the ground and visit the temples, churches, mosques that tend to graphicize not only the religions, but also the ethnicities that (perhaps stereotypically) have been associated with them. As we learnt, the different architectures not only serve to ‘monumentalize’ the mobilities/ diasporas of diverse cultures; they are actively used as community centres by descendants of the different cultures, especially during weekends. Histories and cultural identities meshed with the communal everyday. The tour left us so much to think about: of how multicultural Australia is, of how cultural identity is made sense in the everyday, of ways to make cultures (in)visible without essentializing them. Moments after the tour, Stephen, Shun Hing and I were already conjuring up a ‘mediated driving cultural tour’ of Tuen Mun and Yuen Long, but how and with whose money?

If Fairfield, the Rocks and King’s Cross district revealed ways of interpreting and representing cultures (Australianness), then the RSL, Leichhardt Women’s Centre, and the various social concern groups represented the diversity of social, sexual, and gender orientations. Despite their difference in nature, they both showed research as the nexus that intersects (different groups/ cultures) and intervenes (academia and social/ community work). Community centres that make visible these different groups also serve to create spaces for interfacing between them: Chinese women’s groups, Aborigines women’s/ lesbian groups, homosexual groups, AIDS concern committees.

Within just the week-long tour, we had a feast of ‘travels’: geographical, climatological, cultural, social, intellectual. Amidst these travels, we were enlightened by the breadth of knowledge informed by the audacious research conducted by our Australian counterparts. If this travel was to represent a snapshot of ‘Australianness’, it presented an interface of cultures, orientations, inspired by research ideas and funding from the government and commercial corporations. Research, like urban traffic, appears as the roads/ railways/ aviation routes that traverses through academic and cultural scapes, with government and commercial fundings as traffic lights that regulates the flow of research and hence extent of intersection and intervention. How Australian is this? On the other hand, how Hong Kong could this be? Given the climate of sluggish economy, predicted cut in educational and research budget, funding is hard to come by. However, this is interestingly a time for the need for creative research that would open up new spaces for innovative thinking ahead. Tuen Mun as the Parramatta of Sydney?

Sydney Impression – UWS Workshop, by Luk Kit Ling

Over the past few years, as I started to get involved in ageing studies as a junior “academic” researcher, I have been to various ‘big’ (normally ranging from over 100 to 300 participants), ‘international’ (involving scholars from the U.S., Europe and other parts of the world) conferences launched in big hotels or exhibition centers. However, at this workshop, with a small but very passionate host group from Australia, I experienced the warmest hospitality and a very interesting ‘bilateral’ exchange amongst researchers in Australia and Hong Kong. Of course, the extended discussion in the apartment after the workshop amongst my female colleagues from Hong Kong also enriched my experiences with insights and lots of fun.

The presentations of the recent research done by various researchers from UWS did give me a sense of what cultural research is like in the context of Australia. The exploration of the driving cultures of youngsters, how a shopping mall in Sydney becomes a place for youth activities from different cultural backgrounds and how our lives are shaped by these activities—all interesting research work but not that popular in Hong Kong. I have done nothing to explore why these very interesting and valuable research topics were overlooked, but I could think of some more unexplored areas with regard to ageing studies in Hong Kong.

One example would be “how older persons’ shopping habits or leisure activities changed as the older estates where they lived were under demolition. We could no longer find older persons staying around in those parks or open areas which were replaced by shopping malls or a high-rise market place. I found it interesting to see older persons sitting in the McDonalds not enjoying a burger but enjoying the air conditioning there. A mix and match of older and younger generations in the shopping mall/popular areas would echo with the research done in one specific popular area in Taiwan applying the notion of “the third space” and the dichotomous dualism of young and old. At this moment, I am not sure what valuable findings could come out of those topics. However, this would add colour to research and make it fun. From my point of view, it would be very interesting for Hong

Kong research which at the moment puts overwhelming emphasis on very practical issue of policy, materialistic issues etc.

The part of the workshop on field observation and interaction with the actual place was another experience. The Fairfield tour was rich in the variety of various cultures in Sydney. However, the visit to the temples and established institutions only left me with a puzzle of how these institutions can connect the people together since they seem so detached from the people; standing so far away that they may not be accessible. I think it is always a problem with museums and exhibitions that require the readers to understand something through symbols and signs and using lots of imagination. This is similar to my experience joining the “Outer Limits” group to visit the Home World tour of suburban developments with empty houses for sale and I have to imagine that I am a potential buyer. However, the experience was enriched by Elaine and Fiona’s explanations. Nevertheless, the advertisement for a perfect home caught our attention most.

In contrast, the exhibition and tour at the Parliament House on Auntie Nance was so real and unforgettable. The story of the “Stolen Generations” did enrich my understanding of the ‘history’ of Australia and I was impressed by her positive attitude toward her own experiences. At the same time, the rich materials and the exchange of practical experiences with workers in the women’s Community Health Center left us with lots of information which is still to be digested. It would be interesting if we could further explore the structural factors constructing the difficulties new immigrants faced. As I run through those materials it seems that the question was left untouched. In addition, the sharing with Sharon on how to activate our co-partners in research projects were also very fruitful for me.

Lastly, the whole day discussion was very relaxing and comfortable. It was a “luxury” workshop in terms of time for discussion and reflections. In addition, the center did provide comfortable environment in terms of space and support, for researchers to work on their research work. It was very exciting to read Fiona and Elaine’s publications. Most important, I was so impressed not only by the research work done by the individual researcher in CCR but their passion and energy in their life.

There is a lot more that I recall from this visit to Sydney and CCR. The extremely beautiful sea in Bundeena, a glance to my supervisor's home and her workplace, the mix of Cantonese, Mandarin and English Karaoke, the visit to the Blue Mountains with Sarah and her friend in which we could see the mix of dead wood and new buds, the visit to the center for older persons in blue mountain arranged by Sarah, staying with Rhoda (Shun Hing's sister) and her family enjoying the big Salmon and fresh seafood are so unforgettable.

From Sydney to Hong Kong (via Bologna), by Brett Neilson

My participation in the UWS-Lingnan workshop was somewhat attenuated, due to the fact that the encounter took place just days before I was due to leave to Bologna, Italy for a study leave. Shunting between the various workshop events and a half-packed apartment, the carefully planned encounters and my own chaotic rush to store my life in a box, the experience was somewhat fleeting and unreal. The paper-maché stage, I call it, those few days before a departure where the over-familiar shades into the strange and illusory ... appetizing moments when memories are consciously stored up and the everyday suddenly flashes up as if it were something quite novel and ephemeral.

Six months later, I find myself recalling the workshop through the haze of another departure. Again my life is in boxes, as I ready myself to return to Sydney. Once more there is a sense of the unreal and fortuitous, but this time tempered by the prospect of encounter with the over-familiar ... Sussex, Clarence, Kent, York, George, Pitt, Castlereagh, Elisabeth, I can recall those colonial-sounding Sydney street names without effort or excitement. And there is the decision about what to carry in the suitcase and what to send by surface mail ... miraculously to appear three months later.

Certainly there are pleasures in this kind of intellectual tourism (mine in Bologna, that of the Hong Kong contingent in Sydney), but also dilemmas and questions. I can't see anything particularly ground-shaking or epistemologically-challenging in this kind of mobility, no matter how much I draw on the available theoretical tropes: cosmopolitanism, flight, translation, flow. These pleasures are thoroughly banal, and certainly must be located in relation to other forms of motion and stasis in the contemporary capitalist world, as marked as these are by patterns of hierarchy, inequality, and unevenness.

One moment continually returns from the Lingnan days in Sydney ... Moving through an alleyway from Macleay Street to Elizabeth Bay, Melissa and I announce to our Hong Kong friends that we have now arrived in the most populated square mile of the Australian

continent. The conversation up to that point (gentrification, finance capital, counterculture, global city) has passed without revelation or surprise. But I don't know quite how to describe the something's wrong look that I furtively glance passing across Stephen and Kimberley's faces at that moment: displacement, yes; bewilderment, certainly; disbelief, probably not ... the expressions have a quality that fails to escape me.

The next morning at a group discussion, I recall this moment. Meaghan pipes up: "Yes, I heard about this" (somebody else has remembered). And Stephen comments: "I learned something about Hong Kong at that moment." Retrospectively, I might remark that I also learned something about Sydney from those facial expressions, or more precisely, over-learned something about Sydney, in the sense that children are made to over-learn their times tables, over and over again, monotonously, so that the memory won't disappear.

Ask me what is 7×12 and I'll tell you 84 immediately, but ask what is 7×13 and I'll stop dead in my tracks, having been led outside the familiarity of the over-learned. So what I gleaned from those facial expressions is something I already knew (like those colonial street names): that Sydney, despite its appearance on those lists of global cities, still seems strangely empty and sparse, especially to the cosmopolitan visitor, surprisingly unpopulated and suburban (even in its most metropolitan sites). At least that is how I imputed those quizzical looks. Interrupting my paper-maché reveries, my self-conscious construction of novelty and memory, those expressions struck me with something I might describe as the shock of the familiar, the arresting and utterly shocking production of knowledge that is anything but new.

But what did Stephen learn in that moment? What did he learn about Hong Kong, standing there under the blank winter sunshine, surveying the scene in a few moments of respite from our pleasant but somewhat uneasy colloquy? This I cannot impute. But surely what he learned was not simply that Hong Kong is more densely populated than Sydney. There is no need to travel to Elizabeth Bay to learn this. Such knowledge seems *prima facie* and shared, totally unsurprising even as it takes an embodied or phenomenological form. I need to confess that I don't know exactly what Stephen learned at that moment (that is for him to tell). But it does seem that his experience was something other than over-learning, which is

to say he learned something about Hong Kong that he could not ascertain from his over-familiar experience of that city, no matter how embodied, grounded in the local, or ethnographically informed it might be.

Here is the gist, the reason why to learn about Hong Kong, Stephen must travel to Sydney, and why to learn about Sydney I must travel to Bologna (to phrase the matter in an utterly allegorical way). The quality and the complexity of such learning is elusive. To begin to describe it effectively, one would need to think not only about how subjects relate to other subjects and how subjects relate to contexts, but also how contexts relate to other contexts. This was the big question that I took with me from the UWS-Lingnan encounter: how does one translate between contexts?

It seems to me that such translation is precisely what was being performed in that moment of bewildered apprehension in Australia's most populated suburb. But how to describe it, formalize it, submit it to a grammar, if such a thing is possible (or even desirable) in an interconnected world, where the link between one context and another implies another series of links, a multiplying effect by which each context links into a global network of contexts. Meaghan had begun on the first day of the workshop by talking about translation (donning the hat of what she called "my old textualist self"). But while textual translation and intertextuality might tell us something about intercontextual links, they surely cannot exhaust or fully explain the complexities involved.

To begin to describe the complex shift between contexts (and the kind of learning that can take place by means of it), it would be necessary to work simultaneously on several geographical levels (from the local to the global, with all the in-betweens). This would also mean exploring the mutual implications and disconnections of contexts in a multi-layered and interdisciplinary way (pushing in particular the culture-economy divide, examining the juridical formations that code political subjectivities, the new centrality of language and intersubjective cooperation in the global information economy). There is as yet no grammar for this, no task for this translator ... yet somehow, in those few days in Sydney, I felt we were stumbling in this direction.

But again my impressions are furtive, partial, and I have boxes to pack ...

On Being a Cultural Tour Guide (and Loving it!), by Fiona Nicoll

UWS and Lingnan Cultural Research Workshop

22-26 July 2002

I'll start with two comments made by Meaghan and Stephen during the final wrap-up session. Stephen asked what it was possible to know about a place through the cultural tour format. This way of mapping the terrain of cultural research prompted him to ask the question: 'How Australian is it?' Meaghan commented that the workshop had been a unique experience for her, due to the absence of a core of academic or theoretical texts to orient participants coming from very different national and institutional contexts. As co-organizer, my first reaction to this comment was "Shit Sharon! We forgot to include the academic content!!" But it was an important observation and deserves some response before the Lingnan/CCR workshop recedes further into memory with the onset of the silly-season.

Rather than presenting a program of guest-speakers, Sharon and I decided to focus the workshop on projects that CCR researchers were doing on and around different cultural sites and practices in Western Sydney. We also wanted the week to be fun and made a pact that the process of organizing and participating in this event would be enjoyable for us. We hoped that this spirit would flow through to all the participants. The first thing we did after picking up Shun-hing, Kimburley, Lisa, Kit ling and Margaret from the airport was to take go shopping at *Westfields*, Parramatta. For some reason I was keen to show them to iconic Aussie brands of biscuits. Maybe like a good Australian multiculturalist, I felt cultural exchange should be bite-sized, palatable and easily digested? We bought *Tim Tams* and *Iced VoVos* to sample. The *Tim Tams* went down well but the *Iced VoVos* were another story with their gaudy pink coating and sickly artificial flavour. If I was to answer Stephen's question 'how Australian is it?' with reference to Iced VoVos, I'd have to speculate: 'They're so Australian that – in spite of the fact that nobody eats them – some patriotic force keeps *Arnotts* rolling them off the production-line.'

We knew we were all in for a good time by the end of the first day when Sharon's lounge-room was transformed into a dance-floor. The boogying was all videotaped of course; prompting exaggerated camp performances on everyone's part. The serious part of the program entailed considerable slabs of time for mixed groups of Lingnan and UWS post grads and academics to reflect on different elements of the tours. But the inability of Sydney people to commit for the whole five days (a hard ask – and we should have anticipated this problem) meant that the group continuity was impossible to sustain. As a consequence, intellectual exchange occurred in a haphazard – rather than systematic - way. I relished snatched conversations with Lingnan colleagues on topics such as the ethical issues arising from accepting funding from smoking and gambling business interests, different constructions of national 'heritage', the respective queer politics of bisexuality in Hong Kong and Australia and connections between war, whiteness and Aboriginality.

Memorable moments

*The man at the Mosque on the Fairfield Tour who took the opportunity to redress any stereotypical impressions of Islam that we might have brought through the gates and sent us away with pamphlets that – among other things – explained the high regard for women in Islamic teachings.

*Grahame Spindler's tour of the NSW Parliament House to introduce the *Aunty Nance* exhibition. We watched school children in the Legislative Assembly debate the merits of compulsory school uniforms and were taken up to the highest point on the building's roof, which had fantastic views of the city and harbour. But the highlight for me was being taken over to examine a small panel in the wall of the Senate room, which was peeled back to reveal corrugated iron under the opulent wallpapered surface. With what can only be described as glee, our guide explained – "if you scratch just below the surface, you find a tin shed!" So much for the grandeur of white sovereignty! The laws to take Koori children like Nancy Edwards out of tin huts and into middle-class "homes" were made by old white men in a glorified tin-shed.

* Elaine Lally's tour of *Homeworld*. Streets of display homes that are models of those being erected in new release areas of Western Sydney. We sat on colonial-style furniture and imagined how we would inhabit domestic spaces with names like 'The Emperor', and 'The

Regent'. As someone born into Melbourne's latte sipping, Chardonnay quaffing cosmopolitan centre, the suburban sovereigns of Western Sydney defied my imagination. Elaine and I discovered that in Hong Kong, such residences are reserved for the outrageously wealthy and that the middle-classes and their small dogs have to settle for high-rise flats.

* The array of health professionals gathered together by Sharon at the Leichardt Women's Community Health Centre representing a range of constituencies marginalized from mainstream health provision services. (Indigenous, CALD, gay, lesbian, transgender, prisoners and HIV) This presentation sparked interesting comparative discussions during the wrap-up, which I look forward to pursuing next time.

*Ien Ang asking questions about the 'complicated entanglement of togetherness-in-difference', in the Cabra Vale Diggers Club. In response, the staff member guiding us around the premises frankly admitted that he had no idea why there is no overlap whatsoever in attendance between events that cater for the Vietnamese community (such as weekly discos) and those which are staged for other clientele (such as Tom Jones impersonators).

* Taking a ferry to visit Meaghan's long-term residence in Bundeena - a coastal village-within-a-global city. The ambivalence and/or hostility of residents about 'development' and outside interference was palpable and Meaghan's stories of the area's past and present characters were gripping – especially the one about the ex-criminal resident who - after a few drinks – would sometimes lurch out onto the beach and harass passing locals.

Future Directions

For me, the workshop was a personal highlight of 2002. As a starting point for future research collaboration, I thought it was very promising and I am now interested in visiting Hong Kong and seeing the cultural sites and practices that are the focal points for Lingnan cultural studies academics and postgraduate students. I'd like to get a clearer sense of the cultural and political contexts from which your research on TV dramas, feminism, social movements and older women, theme parks and rural diasporas has emerged.

In response to Meaghan's comment about the lack of structured academic content in the workshop, I'd suggest that one relevant reading be attached to each aspect of any future program organized by Lingnan. Retrospectively, it's clear that we should have done this rather than pursue the less successful small-group strategy. I don't think I'll be in a position to answer Stephen's question 'How Australian *was* it?' until I have participated in a workshop run by the Lingnan cultural studies contingent. His question has certainly made me curious about what alternatives to a cultural tourism approach might be.

Reflections on a week in Australia with Hong Kong insights, by Sarah Redshaw

I first met our visitors from Lingnan the morning I was to give a talk about the Driving Cultures project following a public address by Meaghan Morris. I was quite nervous but when I got into talking felt quite comfortable and keen to explain what the project was about and how it worked. I was also nervous about my lack of real positioning in cultural studies amongst heavyweights like Ien and Meaghan and my colleagues and these visitors who I assumed to be well versed in cultural theory. The most outstanding feature of the week, however, was the fascination with what we had in common – from technologies to food and the kinds of experiences we were interested in having, our awareness of media and internet and our relation to it culturally. We wondered together whether how much we shared was a feature of being academics or of our particular interest in “cultures”. Whatever it is, it produced common ways of looking at the world and inquiring into what we saw that we were able to share enthusiastically. It was like our differences were irrelevant though at the same time highly relevant but certainly not a barrier.

When I was able to shed the persona of having to present my project and relax with everyone I felt very comfortable. The Fairfield day was the real ice-breaker. Sitting on the bus together, giving Francis a hard time (gentle but amused) for being so late and getting on and off the bus with different people and conversations going on around me was most enjoyable and enlightening. I got to see and hear and share with the reactions of colleagues and visitors alike to the places we visited. Lunch in Cabramatta was especially fun with all of us at one big table trying out foods that some were familiar with (from our own group as well as our visitors) and seeing Ien in a place she was at home in with food she obviously enjoyed.

What I also looked for as we toured Fairfield was my own heritage. Knowing my father had grown up in a very traditional Anglo working class Fairfield but never having really spent much time there, I was fascinated by the multi-culturalism of it which now appeared readily accepted. In the 30s and 40s there would have been little tolerance of Chinese let alone a

myriad of other groups and their spiritual expressions. It was white country where workers lived in fibro cottages that are still largely evident amongst the new brick double story houses and townhouses and blocks of units. It was an area where factory workers lived. It was hot, dry south west of Sydney where the workers could own their own slice of suburbia. It was relatively poor which is why it was predominantly covered in fibro houses – the poor man’s building material. Houses were small boxes that were very hot in summer. I remember from visiting my father’s father’s house in Guildford near Parramatta (on the poor side towards Fairfield) as a child how hot and small and closed in it felt compared to the homes of the north shore family of my mother.

The fibro cottage appeared to me as iconically Australian, the workers’ cottage, the kingdom of the Australian film ‘The Castle’. I tried to imagine the Fairfield that was, that got very little, if any, attention as I was growing up, and was one of those “pasts” my father wished to forget. It was a part of Sydney that the educated and well-off ignored. Now it was receiving attention and in very different ways. I was surprised at the presence of a museum there as well as the number and variety of religious places of worship in the area. These are cultural centres for different cultural groups and present a very different Fairfield from the one I grew up with. I think being there with the Lingnan group really gave a special impression of how much had changed in Fairfield. I wanted to give them an idea of what I saw from the past as we toured there. Having come from a tradition intellectually where the suburbs didn’t really matter and were not the hub of culture I learned to see how culture is there and how it had been in the past. This was not a new insight to me intellectually but new in terms of the actual experience of being there with this group of people who compared it with areas of Hong Kong and saw things that I would not have seen, as did some of my colleagues.

As we travelled out to Meaghan’s place on the train and the ferry, many more discussions emerged about the experience of “Australia”. At times I really felt my Anglo heritage and was aware of how many others were part of cultures unfamiliar to me. This presented a point of interest but also made my own “angloness” stand out for investigation. Australia’s Anglo heritage has become a point of criticism for its exclusions and self-privileging and its blindness to the value of other cultures. On this occasion it also became a point of value not just shame. How we are seeing “cultures” and why we are wanting to – was it with a view to understanding for example, was a frequent point of discussion. Sharing in that experience of all of us working on the idea was a real workshop in cultural studies for me.

“Aunty Nance” and Others, by Margaret Sit Tsui

Department of Cultural Studies

Lingnan University

December 2002

The workshop of “Cultural Research: What is it and Who needs it?”, organized by Institute for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney in Sydney, provides us, a group of postgraduates and teachers from Lingnan University, Hong Kong, with an opportunity to share a comparable methodological and theoretical interests in the new emerging discipline of Cultural Studies. We visited various cultural institutions and organizations and had dialogues with local researchers and participants. The themes of discussions were mainly cultural diversity, migration and marginality, politics of identity and sexuality, representation and visibility, etc.

The “Aunty Nance” exhibition at Parliament House gives me a deep impression. Through photographs, videos and interviews, we learn that it is about a story of “gendered subaltern”. It is an effort of making the marginal visible by drawing public attention and inviting judgment. It is also an attempt to rewrite and disrupt the white official history. Nance de Vries is one member of the “Stolen Generations” of aboriginal children. The New South Wales government has carried out assimilation policies through child removal. Today, Nance is a health professional and prominent Koori community educator. On behalf of Stolen Generations, she made a powerful speech to Legislative Assembly of NSW in 1997. Shown on the video, she made a testimony: “I was taken away from my mother at the age of 14 months and my journey as a lonely, homeless, unloved child began...” Then Bob Carr, NSW premier, responded with a public apology: “We are not dealing with some abstraction from the remote past. We are confronted with continuing, contemporary pain, grief and loss, as has been demonstrated in this house this morning...” However, the Federal government, led by John Howard, refused to offer a formal apology to the survivals of assimilation policies.

On 27 May, 2002, up to a quarter of a million Australians walked across the Sydney harbor bridge gave full support for a Commonwealth apology. But “John Coward” still lacks of “the capacity to embrace the past honestly...”

“John Coward’s refusal” has led me think of two seemingly irrelevant things, which may refer us to complexities in reality. On a photograph, Aunty Nance is sitting on a wheel-chair, and her grandchildren are standing beside her. The children are wearing pairs of Nike shoes. I am wondering that in the age of globalization, any children, no matter white or aboriginal, accept the standardized culture, or American culture. Who makes the shoes? Female immigrants in Australia? Women workers in areas of export manufacturing zone? Another thing is a role-play. By accident, on the day we visited the Parliament House, there were a group of primary students too. They were guided to do a role-play of debating on abolition of school uniform. Different color of children: black, white, brown, yellow, are all involved. They learned how to speak, to do, to behave. Some did a good job had given a rewarding remarks, while others did a bad job a punishment of “being corrected and embarrassed in public”. Here, cultural identity is constructed not through blood or color, but by explanation, institutionalized recognition and punishment. What they have learned is western style parliamentary democracy. They were instructed in the ways of white society.

Nike products like jacket and T-shirt once again appear on the aboriginal teenagers in Ivan Sen’s film *Beneath Clouds* (2002). Lena, a daughter of an aboriginal mother, lives in a small country town. One day, Lena runs away to search for her “absent Irish father”. On the road, she meets Vaughn, an aboriginal teenager who has also run away from a security prison in the hope of reaching his ill mother. The film captures the beauty and wonders of landscape, but it fails to attract the children to stay. Lena’s aboriginal mother is represented as a poor abandoned woman by white man and a victim of domestic violence because her second husband is alcoholic. Vaughn’s aboriginal mother is a dying woman. Here “aboriginal” represents “despair and gloom”. What Lena longs for is Sydney/Father/White/Origin. She loses any sense of dignity of being an aboriginal or a rural young person. Her trajectories are in contrast to the runaway “Aunty Nance”, who always runs away to look for her family, and three aboriginal girls in the true story of *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* (1996) written by Doris Pilkington/Nugi Garimara. The story is based on Doris Pilkington’s mother, Molly and her

two little sisters, the victims of Stolen Generation. The three girls, aged 8, 11 and 14, “managed to escape from the white settlement’s repressive conditions and brutal treatment” and were “desperate to return to the world they knew.”

The runaway Lena has made me think of the village girls I know in Jiangxi province, South China. Most of them rush to the city to work as factory workers. In 1978, China decided to adopt an open door policy and rapid economic policy. The goal is set to be the developed countries of “Europe” and “USA”. Then a wave of rural-urban migration has repeatedly appeared. Millions of rural people abandon their homes and go for the city even as sub-proletariat. According to Doris Pilkington, the white colonialization is based on the forcibly occupation of aboriginal land resources and exploitative labor for agriculture industrialization, urbanization and domestic services. Today, marginalization of the aboriginal is meant the exploitation of the “rural natural resources” and “the rural labor power”. In China, the dominant discourse of developmentalism is using the same logic: the “backward” rural should be eliminated or “the rural full of rich resources” should be fully utilized for modernization.

I have been a volunteer of China Social Services and Development Research Centre, an NGO based in Hong Kong, since 1994. From years of participation in projects like women’s credit union, alternative trade, health care, etc. What we attempt to do is the reconstruction of rural community, in which senses of love, trust, pride, dignity, security and collectivity are regenerated. I have observed that rural China is very much excluded from “people’s developmental agenda” and to a large extent, is forced to sacrifice in the name of modernization, although it appears as an indispensable target of innovation in the national developmental agenda. The latter discourse addresses the polarities of rural-urban with a solution of rural-urban migration. It was expected that the migration would narrow the great discrepancy of rural and urban, but seen in a different light, the duality has been further reinforced for the past twenty years. The rural continues to be exploited for industrial development. The massive migration discloses contradictions and crises that China has confronted in the process of modernization, and also compels us to interrogate our positionings in this complex relationship.

By taking a gendered subaltern perspective, my research tries to examine discourses on rural-urban migration in contemporary China, particularly the representation of the migration of women peasants—whose significance lies in questioning the patriarchal model of destructive development/modernization, and in problematizing the unjust rural-urban relation. Reading the migration of women peasants provides us with an opportunity to look into how “a rural/urban woman”, whose identity is in danger of shattering in an uncertain and unstable everyday life, both subjugates/confronts the forces of patriarchy and capitalism, tradition and modernization in contemporary China.

The “Aunty Nance” exhibition at Parliament House resists the stereotyped representations of aboriginals in official documents. The word “Aunty” reminds us of living in a global family, shared with “herstories”. But from the representations of Lena and Vaughn, it seems that the derogatory marks once imposed on Nance and Molly, like “uncontrollable”, “delinquent”, “serial recidivist”, “half-caste”, “quarter caste”, and “member of a despised race”, still exist in today’s global capitalist economy, together with “superior” white culture/American standardized taste, in the naming of the “aboriginal/rural”.

Fragments from Lingnan, by Dinesh Wadiwel

I have to say that my memory has never been very good, and it has been a difficult task for me to remember. I only attended two days of the exchange, as well as coming to Parramatta to see Meaghan and Ien Ang open the week. I have tried to jot down a few ramblings below, which include my memories of the week and a few thoughts that I remember having at the time...

Fairfield Cultural Excursion

When I was a child my family used to go every Friday — almost without fail — to Cabramatta for dinner. We used to go to the same Vietnamese restaurant (I believe it is still there) and order a great banquet for what was, even then, a relatively little amount of money. Sometimes we would go to some of the grocery stores, and buy vegetables and fruit that we could not otherwise get where we lived. My parents are Malaysian Indian, and at that time, it was more difficult to find easily some of the produce that is now commonly available on Sydney supermarket shelves (such as *choi sum* or *gai lan*). Sometimes after dinner, my mum would like to take us around the corner and order a bowl of cool *ais kacang*, and which try to encourage myself and my younger brother to partake, and we would always, pursing our lips tightly together and scrunching our faces, refuse.

So it was a strange experience to me when some twelve or so years ago, Cabramatta became known not merely as one of the most culturally diverse communities in Australia, but also as a drug capital: and somewhere with an apparent ‘crime’ problem. There was a period where the newspapers relentlessly paraded the depravity of Cabramatta: heroin; crime gangs; murder. Was this really the face of Cabramatta today? And who ever heard of the Dutch House?

This was, in a way, the prelude to my first day of my participation in the Lingnan tour. I got on to the bus at Fairfield station, and was whisked back in time to the place I seemed to know so well when I was a child, but now, many years and many newspaper headlines later, the details seemed a bit faded.

The weird thing about showing people around is that you have to explain why it is that what you are showing is actually significant. Some things I guess, like the Sydney Opera House or koala bears, come attached with meaning, so there is not very much need for explanation. But other things — like the Cabra Vale Diggers Club — demand explication, and require the host to step aside from themselves and put into words what is that makes this particular object or event worthy of explication. I think what I liked about this day was that not only did I find out a whole lot about an area that I believed I knew, but also in my interactions with the representatives from Lingnan university, I was continually forced to reappraise my own attitude to this part of Sydney. What is it about the Fairfield area that is so interesting? In what ways does the area represent what is “Australian”? In what ways is it “un-Australian”?

In fact the Cabra Vale Diggers club was a real highlight for me. And it was when the president of the Club came and greeted us that I really felt most special: right there before us the questions of what it meant to be in Australia (or at least in Sydney) were being subject to a subtle contestation. It was a great way to end the day!

Trip down to South to Bundeena

Sydney is a somewhat divided city. People who live in the north, do not really commute with those in the south; folks in the east would never stray into the west. I am sure that Sydney is not alone in maintaining these territorial segments (which also correspond to class / cultural divisions), but for people like myself who have grown up here in Sydney, it affects the way in which the city is experienced. For me the South was the last frontier: a vast unexplored expanse of national parks, suburban landscapes and cultural difference. It has only been in the last few years that I have allowed myself to stray in that direction, and after the trip down

to Bundeena, I have renewed my desire to find out more about this strange — at least for me — part of Sydney.

As I remember the day was very relaxed. Having not had a great deal of time with the Lingnan Cultural Exchange, this felt like my first opportunity to meet people and talk about aspects of life at Lingnan, and life at Western Sydney. We strolled along beaches and gazed across the water. We listened to strange tales about dears in the national park and fishing.

Meaghan's house was a real spin out. Her bookshelf — and I was not the only one who was spellbound — was amazing. Lunch on the grass outside, and drinks later at the pub were the perfect way to close the day Bundeena.

I of course need to say something about the Karaoke. I like going to Karaoke with people I do not know very well because it almost always promises to bring to light what would otherwise have never been anticipated. Seeing Stephen sing with such ardency and beauty will always remain in my memory!

ⁱ Stanley Fish, *Professional Correctness: Literary Studies and Political Change* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995). Fish does not participate in this backlash against “studies”, but he brilliantly describes the conditions in which it arises.

ⁱⁱ Ien Ang, “Who Needs Cultural Research?”, CHCI Working Paper, Walter Chapin Center for the Humanities, University of Washington, Seattle WA 98195.

ⁱⁱⁱ For example, Meaghan Morris, "Truth and Beauty in Our Times", in *Our Cultural Heritage* ed. John Bigelow (Canberra: Australian Academy of the Humanities, 1998), 75-87; and (with Iain McCalman), "Public Culture" in *Knowing Ourselves and Others: The Humanities in Australia -- Into the 21st Century* Vol. 3 (Canberra: National Board of Employment, Education and Training, Australian Research Council, 1998), 1-20.

^{iv} Ian Hunter, Denise Meredyth, Bruce Smith and Geoff Stokes, *Accounting for the Humanities: The Language of Culture and the Logic of Government* (Brisbane: Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, Griffith University, 1991).

^v Ian Hunter and Geoff Stokes, "Introduction", p.2.

^{vi} See J.S. Dawkins, *The Challenge for Higher Education in Australia* (Canberra: AGPS, 1987), *Higher Education: a policy discussion paper* (Canberra: AGPS, 1987), and *Higher Education: A Policy Statement* (Canberra: AGPS, 1987); and Stewart R. Sutherland, *Higher Education in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: University Grants Committee, March 2002).

^{vii} Denise Meredyth, "Personality and Personnel", *Accounting for the Humanities*, p.188.

^{viii} See *Liberal Arts Education: Institutional Visit Document for Submission to UGC*, Lingnan University, Hong Kong, September 2002, pp. 18-22. U.S. evidence is cited from Steven Koblik and Stephen R. Graubard (eds), *Distinctively American: The Residential Liberal Arts College* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2000).

^{ix} *Liberal Arts Education: Institutional Visit Document for Submission to UGC*, p. 18.

^x See Ian Hunter, *Culture and Government: The Emergence of Literary Education* (London: MacMillan, 1988).

^{xi} These concerns can be traced in local and/or regionally-based journals and publications such *Alternative Discourses* (Hong Kong), *Hong Kong Cultural Studies Bulletin*, *A*

Radical Quarterly in Social Studies (Taiwan), *Dushu* (Beijing, China), and *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*.

^{xii} On the complex politics of colonialism and anti-colonialism waged through Chinese associations in British Hong Kong and the legacies of this today, see Fred Chiu, “Combating the Double Processes of Decolonisation/Recolonisation in Hong Kong, or, ‘Postcoloniality’ as a Double-pronged Politics”, *Cultural Studies Review* 1:2 (2002, forthcoming).

^{xiii} An example is the lugubrious, finger-wagging Introduction to Marjorie Ferguson and Peter Golding (eds), *Cultural Studies in Question* (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997), pp. x-xxvii.

^{xiv} I discuss this in more detail in “Globalisation and Its Discontents”, *Meridian* 17. 2 (2000), pp. 17-29; a slightly expanded version appears in *Sekai* 686, (2001) [Japan]. A loopy but interesting argument for the importance of grasping the geo-political dimension of “culture wars” is Terry Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

^{xv} A recent example is “‘Please explain?': Ignorance, Poverty and the Past”, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 1.2 (2000), 219-232.

^{xvi} I borrow this emphasis on “ordering” from the interesting and deeply un-literary work of Gavin Kendall and Gary Wickham in their *Understanding Culture: cultural studies, order, ordering* (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001).

^{xvii} Ien Ang, “Who Needs Cultural Research?”, p.7.

^{xviii} On Zuni, see Rozanna Lilley, *Staging Hong Kong: Gender and Performance in Transition* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1998).

^{xix} Korte, Barbara. 2002. “Julina Barnes, *England, England*: Tourism as a critique of postmodernism” in *The Making of Modern Tourism: The Cultural History of the British*

Experience, 1600 – 2000, edited by H. Berghoff, B. Korte, R. Schneider, and C. Harvie.
Hampshire, NY: PALGRAVE.