



Analyzing Hong Kong Literature and Hong Kong People's Identity with the Example of the Novel "The Opposite"

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Abstract. From the earliest reflections on the urbanization of Hong Kong to the proliferation of new generation writers in Hong Kong in the 1970s and 1980s, the sense of localization gradually deepened, and then the sense of impact brought by the return of Hong Kong further stimulated the local identity and the defense of local culture, the development of Hong Kong literature has also flashed its own glory and set up a flag that distinguishes it from other literatures. Therefore, this paper intends to take the novel "Counterparts" as an example in the description of Hong Kong literature to explore the impact of the development of prosperous Hong Kong literature in the process of socialization and the identity of Hong Kong people as revealed in the literary novels, so as to gain a deeper understanding and empathy towards Hong Kong and Hong Kong literature.

Keywords: Hong Kong City Literature, Inversion, Liu Yixiong

1 Present

The special characteristics of the city of Hong Kong also predestine Hong Kong literature to be different from that of the mainland. From the third day when the British army entered China's overseas colonies, Hong Kong, with a total area of only 1,106 square kilometers, stood on the first line of resistance in ancient Chinese history. Over the past two centuries, the Eight-Power Allied Forces' war of aggression against China, Japan's war of aggression against China, ten years of intense turmoil, and 1997, Hong Kong has become one of the twelve important transportation hubs in the long evolution of China's history, as well as a "free trade zone" that has been preserved by default. In 1997, Hong Kong became one of the twelve major transportation hubs in the evolution of China's history, as well as a "free trade zone" that was retained by default.^[1] Hong Kong has become the residence of tens of thousands of southerners, including countless outstanding writers who fled the war. As one of the few safe havens in the midst of the chaos, Hong Kong's existence also provided these writers with a literary arena in which they could roam freely, and at the same time develop their own distinctive literature. These writers participated in Hong Kong's political history, economic development, art

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and the construction of the chemical industry, coinciding with the change of the United States policy towards China, the United States Congress began to set up a series of resolutions and bills related to Hong Kong and China, and Hong Kong as the United States of America for the cultural export of China is an important stronghold of the impact of foreign cultures, which also allows the local culture, mainland culture and foreign cultures blended together, so that Hong Kong's literature is compatible and integrated, but also very unique. Hong Kong's literature was a mixture of both local and foreign cultures, which made Hong Kong's literature unique. ^[2] At the same time, being in a foreign country and in the relatively advanced development of capitalism at that time made Hong Kong people, especially those who traveled to Hong Kong from the mainland, have a deeper understanding of Hong Kong's "sense of dislocation", while Hong Kong's local residents deepened their own identities in the continuous changes in Hong Kong.

2 Hong Kong and Literary Style

2.1 Hong Kong's locational impact

Hong Kong, as one of the fastest urbanizing cities in Asia, has seen the development of a market economy, and no matter what form of culture it takes, it cannot be divorced from the influence of the economy and the social market. Hong Kong as an ancient "international free trade zone", the requirements of the literary world is also to hold high the banner of freedom. ^[3] Although the free regulation has made Hong Kong's literary scene blossom and produce numerous works, various writers have occupied a place in the literary scene, whether they are criticizing, reflecting or praising. In *The Book and the City*, Yassi wrote that "the culture of the city is not only Eastern and Western, but also village, town and city, and there is also a multiculturalism that is a mixture of traditions and modernity and other contradictions", which also clearly points out the characteristics of Hong Kong literature. ^[5] In the exchange struggle between Hong Kong literature and popular literature, the market also plays a considerable influence. Publishing houses as the main battlefield for Hong Kong writers to publicize their works, coupled with the publication and distribution of newspapers and other types of publications by the great influence of the market economy, so that Hong Kong writers in the face of the spirit of the bread and butter of the choice to have to make a choice. On the one hand, there was no unified management or establishment for writers in Hong Kong, and many writers did not have stable material support and guarantee, which also made few writers able to choose spirituality in front of various temptations. On the other hand, Hong Kong's literary market was not in the doldrums at that time, and it was unrealistic to rely purely on writing to fill one's stomach or even to subsidize one's family. ^[4] Therefore, in order to stand out from the strong competition, many writers chose to commercialize their works, lower the reading threshold of their works, give up the original characteristics of their own writing, and turn to write popular works called sit-downs, which would be accepted by the majority of the society.

2.2 Comparison of the Styles of the Remaining Hong Kong Writers with the Apparition of Lau Yee-shing

Nevertheless, many writers still adhere to their original creative concepts between spiritual literature and popular literature. Writers such as Xixi, Liu Yixing and others have also continued to record the journey of Hong Kong people in the changing times through different artistic expressions, and have continued to probe deeper into the local consciousness and identity of Hong Kong people. ^[6] Liu Yisheng has constantly conducted innovative experiments in his novel writing, and this innovation has also made many of his novels unique. It is this rare quality that Liu Yisheng demonstrates in his treatment of the same characters, plots and clues in *The Counterparts*, which he presents to readers in two distinctly different forms: the short story and the long story. Normally, it is risky to compress and revise a long story into a short one, and it is even riskier to juxtapose two versions of a novel in one book. If not handled well, the work will appear to be a patchwork of tigers, with many details incompatible, leaving the reader confused after completing the entire text. ^[7] But it turns out that this juxtaposition, not only did not make the work fragmented, but also not reduce but increase the creation of a new value.

3 Character Analysis of Chunyubai and Yaxing

3.1 Jun Yu Bai

In the story, Chun Yu Bai is a middle-aged man in his forties or fifties who came to Hong Kong from Shanghai. The text does not specify when he came to Hong Kong, but through his memories of the Battle of Xuzhou, we can infer that he came to Hong Kong around the time of the founding of the new China, a few decades before the hand-over of Hong Kong, so Hong Kong at this time did not suffer too much from the impact of the local culture of the new China. Liu Yisheng once said, "When people are lonely, they always like to think about the past and appreciate the past as if it were a picture. ^[8] This point is well reflected in Chun Yu Bai. As an old-fashioned Shanghainese, he spends most of his time reminiscing about the old Shanghai, and after coming to Hong Kong, he does not integrate well into the new environment, which can be seen as a kind of disapproval of Hong Kong's identity by those who live in Hong Kong. He can think of the poodle he once owned when he sees a black dog on the street, and the conversations of Shanghai women are also in his mind when he visits for dinner. ^[9] It can be said that everything in his mind is related to the Shanghai he once had, leaving very little for Hong Kong. Even though he lives and resides in Hong Kong, he comes across as more of a Shanghainese who has come to Hong Kong for a visit and intends to return home in a few days. Although he wants to make a connection with Hong Kong at the end and dreams of the Yaxing who has only seen the same movie as himself, it is undeniable that Chunyu Bai who stays in Hong Kong is lonely and isolated, not only in his age but also in his thoughts. Unlike the youthful enthusiasm of a young girl, what touches Jun Yu Bai is not strong feelings, but rather the emotions associated with the bland memories of the past, which will eventually subside no matter how complex they

are. When he witnesses a tragic car accident, he doesn't empathize, but remembers the same thing that happened to him when he was young. When he watches a movie side by side with a young girl, he remembers his former classmates through the young girl, and thinks of the difference between Hong Kong women and Shanghai women. When others are immersed in the touching emotions of a romantic movie, Chunyu Bai thinks only of his own unfortunate marriage.^[10] All these behaviors can actually be seen as a kind of nostalgia for the memories of old Shanghai, and it is this passionate nostalgia buried under the cold exterior that makes Chun Yu Bai's identification with Hong Kong and Hong Kong's identity not deep.^[19]

3.2 Sub-almonds

On the other hand, unlike Jun Yu Bai's rich inner world, the adolescent girl Yaxing reveals the innocence of a young girl and her sensitivity to the things around her from the very first scene. She has all the qualities of an adolescent girl, the most important of which is her ignorance and desire for sex. When she sees a mannequin in a wedding dress in a wedding dress store, she develops an infinite number of erotic fantasies, not only marveling at the beauty of the wedding dress, but also thinking about how she would look in it, and then becoming jealous of the mannequin who is now wearing a wedding dress. In addition to the wedding dress, she also has her own rich fantasies about the other half of the person she is going to meet in the wedding dress. The text states that "the man who looks a little like Johnnie Ko, a little like Deng Guangrong, a little like Bruce Lee, a little like Dillon, a little like Alain Delon" is also fantasized to be in the shower room when she showers.^[11] In addition to her desire for sex, she is also narcissistic. She compares herself to actresses, claiming there is no difference, and kisses herself in front of the mirror, "her face flushed like red-hot iron, a pinprick of sensation in the inner layers of her skin, her heart beating faster, a fire burning inside her. She made a completely unexplained gesture: she pressed her lips to the mirror and kissed herself in the mirror. And it is this kissing action that not only shows Apricot's narcissism, but also her own affirmation of her adolescent desires, and also her own affirmation of herself."^[12] In addition to her face, she also admires her body in the mirror, believing that she is no worse than Chen Baozhu and Yao Surong, but the reality is that she is just an ordinary girl. But it is also these jumpy and unrealistic thoughts that shape the image of such a lively young girl.

4 Identity in the text

4.1 Impact of identity

Identity, as an important basis used to classify people's origin and status in social life, changes correspondingly in time and space according to the different social roles they play. In Hong Kong, a land with a special history, the thinking about identity has never stopped, and it has become the core of many works.^[13] It is not difficult to find out that in Hong Kong, where a loose colonial culture has taken root, there is no so-called mainstream culture because the number of foreign cultures is too large and their contents

too complex. And in the Chinese-dominated Hong Kong society, as the Chinese intermarried with people from other countries and produced the next generation, more and more mixed-race children also made Hong Kong's sense of locality weaker and weaker. Most Hong Kong people actually migrated from other places, and those who migrated at a later time will also suffer from the pain of this cultural difference, just like the narrator in another piece of work by Liu Yisheng, *The Drinking Man*, this pressure from both economic and mental aspects will even make a person who originally has little affection for Hong Kong even more disgusted with the Hong Kong identity.^[14] However, as Hong Kong's urbanization progressed even further in the 1970s and its economy developed rapidly, more and more localized voices emerged, and writers began to observe and think about the city from different perspectives, and Hong Kong's local identity became stronger and stronger.^[15]

4.2 Identity and Local Consciousness

Taking a closer look at the different identities of Chun Yu Bai and Yaxing, we find that the contradiction between the new identity and the old one becomes more and more obvious when the environment is changed but not the identity positioning and identification. For Chun Yu Bai, the most important thing is his own memories of Shanghai, the development of Hong Kong at that time is far less than that of Shanghai, experienced the prosperity of Shanghai, he must be very difficult to integrate into the Hong Kong society, the difference in the environment, coupled with the refugee mentality of Chun Yu Bai, who came to Hong Kong to seek refuge in Hong Kong, it is more and more to make him and the Hong Kong society to increase the gap. With this "other city" mentality, Chun Yu Bai can only connect with Hong Kong, where he has lived for a long time, in his dreams. Unlike the so-called outsider Chun

Yu Bai, the native Yaxing does not compare other places with Hong Kong, and even as a young girl, she does not have a clear image of other cities. As a Hong Konger who lived through the British rule, she has little sense of belonging or identification with the mainland, so she will not compare Hong Kong with it; she cares more about herself, and produces a personal egoism that is different from the collectivism of the mainland, and carries a very clear Hong Kong character.^[16] It is also this idea of "my city", which is different from "other cities", that makes this Hong Kong girl develop more local consciousness and identity for the city of Hong Kong, which is hard to see in Chunyu Bai.

5 Reflections of the authors themselves

Lau Yee-spirit has made the protagonists of the story, Chun Yu Bai and Ah Xing, symbiotic in Hong Kong, sharing a common space and time, a common vision, but living in two worlds, even though they are close to each other, they never really cross paths, and in the end, they can only embrace each other briefly in their dreams. Despite the twists and turns of the story, the main characters, Jun Yu Bai and Yaxing, are indeed the "opposite" of each other in every way corresponding to the title of the work. Chun

Yu Bai is an old man, while Yaxing is a young girl; in life, Chun Yu Bai does not have to run around to earn a living, while Yaxing was born in a very poor family; in thought, Chun Yu Bai lives by remembering the past, while Yaxing lives by fantasizing about the future; Chun Yu Bai's memories are grey and melancholic with all kinds of feelings and encounters, while Yaxing's fantasies are simple and transparent; both of them like to look in the mirror, but what Chun Yu Bai sees is his own grey hair and confused face, and what he sees is his own gray hair and confused face. They both like to look in the mirror, but while Chunyu Bai sees his gray hair and confused future, Yaxing sees his beautiful appearance and a future full of expectations; they both go in the same direction - Chunyu Bai has infinite memories but practically nothing, especially no future; Yaxing has infinite fantasies, but likewise nothing, no future.^[17] But from start to finish, the author uses a lot of ink to keep you thinking that they will always cross paths, but the story turns out to be impossible. He whets your appetite with a game-like narrative, only to throw you into the void with those two characters in the end. If readers were asked to retell the story of this novel, many would find it difficult to know where to begin. In the end, these two emotions collide in a tragic dream world, and what makes it a tragedy is that the emotions that these two people are experiencing are generated in the urban illusion of Hong Kong. In fact, until the end of the novel, all that is left is the possibility of generating a "story". From here, we can also see that the fate of the two protagonists is not the heart of Hong Kong's journey, movie watching, horse betting, property speculation, roadside suicide and robbery It is not difficult to find out that this characterization is based on the author's long-term observation and exploration of Hong Kong's society. Naturally, it also includes the thinking of Liu Yixing as an author. Liu Yixing himself is not a native of Hong Kong, he migrated here as did Chun Yu Bai, so we can also see Liu Yixing's shadow from Chun Yu Bai when reading *Counterparts*, his disapproval of and even resistance to the identity of Hong Kong in the beginning, and his strong homesickness, all these emotions have made him think about the city of Hong Kong continuously, giving birth to a lot of lively The characterization of Liu Yixing was born out of these emotions.^[18]

6 Concluding remarks

Throughout the literature of Hong Kong, because of the diversity of ideologies, it has flourished and blossomed. Although the transformation of the nature of the city and the market economy have had a greater impact on the literature, the local consciousness and identity have always been an invisible thread running through the course of its development.^[18] In Lau Yee-spirit's *The Counterparts*, through depicting the alienation and nostalgia of Chun Yu Bai, the "little man" under the "big history", and the boldness and longing of Ah Heng, the author observes and reflects deeply on Hong Kong people of different historical periods and different status classes in the combination of self-experience and social history, and he also reflects on the different periods and different status classes of Hong Kong people. In the combination of her own experience and social history, the author has made her own elaboration and reflection on the identities of Hong Kong people in different periods and situations, stimulating the reader's

discussion and deep thoughts on the opposing or similar identities held by the novel's characters. Nowadays, Hong Kong has changed from the so-called "city of unknown identity" to "city of clear identity", and when we look back on the phenomena of Hong Kong in the 70's through *The Counterparts*, we do not feel unfamiliar in our hearts, because Hong Kong's urban style has gradually swept across the whole of China, especially the southeast coast of China.^[19] Because the Hong Kong city has gradually swept across China, especially along the southeast coast, the city nurtured by capitalist civilization has deeply influenced the modern people in space, and the cities have converged, but the people living in the dense buildings have been separated from each other. Nowadays, the story of Chun Yu Bai and Ah Xing may continue to repeat itself in different people, and how we should trace the Hong Kong full of stories in "*Counterparts*" has become a question left by the author to the readers.^[20] In addition to the city, nowadays Hong Kong literature also has more and more exchanges with mainland literature, and the influence of mainland culture has become stronger and stronger. The words written by Hong Kong writers will continue to record the development of this legendary city of Hong Kong. And these works will also provoke readers' discussions and thoughts.

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