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Center for Government and International Studies, Harvard University
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PAPER TITLES AND ABSTRACTS

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FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2007

PANEL ONE (9:45 – 11:45 AM)

Theorizing the Sinophone

[Shu-mei Shih](#), University of California, Los Angeles

This paper attempts to theorize the Sinophone from comparative perspectives by considering seriously the models offered by other language-based minor transnational studies such as the Francophone, the Anglophone, and the Hispanophone. The paper will consist of proposals for Sinophone studies as the study of Sinitic-language cultures outside China as well as those of ethnic minorities in China, and proposals for Sinophone studies as a method that allows for multi-directional critiques across different national contexts.

(Re)mapping Sinophone Literature

[Kim Tong Tee](#), National Sun Yat-sen University, Taiwan

This paper is an attempt to (re)locate the position of the Sinophone literature produced in various literary communities of Chinese diaspora. Scholars in the past decades have been trying to map from different perspectives the systemic relationship between diasporic Sinophone literature and Chinese literature as a national literature. Different terms are proposed to include all modern literatures in Chinese language produced outside China by people from the Sinophone communities. Furthermore, the complex relationship between Chinese language and Chinese culture in diasporic Chinese communities and China is also a major concern in the discourse on Sinophone literature. This paper will trace and discuss the diverse theoretical construction and conceptualization of Sinophone literature by scholars such as Chow Tse-tsung, Yu Kwang-chung, Dominic Cheung, David Der-wei Wang, Shih Shu-mei, and Ng Kim Chew. Examples will be drawn from *Mahua* literature in Malaysian and *Mahua* literature in Taiwan.

Some Versions of Sinophone

[Ping-hui Liao](#), National Tsinghua University, Taiwan

This paper considers different accounts of Chinese diasporic expressive cultures in light of their power and limitations. They range from centripetal versions such as advocated by Wang Gungwu to those centrifugal ones as offered by Huang Jingshu that highlight divergent experiences. In the first part, I review the conceptual frameworks that help generate the accounts of Chinese diaspora. Then, I move on to examine a selection of texts — including popular songs from Taiwan and America. While scholars have resorted to the diasporic framework in their discussion of the relatively unique histories of minority groups moving across national boundaries, they have tended to emphasize transnational connections and links to unsettle notions of modernity and identity. Though a condition of “terminal loss” (Said 173), diaspora or exile is said to be able to make linkages that transect borderlands and

open up new spaces or subject positions. This “partial linkage” discourse is often formed to the neglect of difficult transitions, especially for “children of immigration” (Suarez-Orozco), and of a tightening of patriarchal control over women in response to the social insecurities or moral ambivalences in the new “home” (Bhabha; Ifekwungwe). Diaspora is thus celebrated in theories of culture traveling, of a displacement-dwelling dialectics (Clifford), or of realizing creative potentials and even triumphant achievements otherwise impossible (Said). It is understandable that critics from different camps have constantly cautioned against the uses and abuses of diaspora. However, the term is frequently evoked as a theoretical concept to frame questions of place, culture, memory, and identity in view of the unprecedented global flow of people, machinery, money, images, ideas, medical aids, entertainments and sports, and, not the least on the list, of travelers and indentured labor (Appadurai; Behdad; Cohen).

W.B. Dubois, Frantz Fanon, and many other thinkers of the Negritude movement helped promote the dissemination of a black diasporic consciousness, a theme reiterated in Paul Gilroy’s seminal work *The Black Atlantic*. Within this transatlantic African diaspora framework, slavery and colonialism in many parts of North America, South America, the Caribbean and elsewhere have been under scrutiny (Okpewho, Davies, and Mazrui). According to these thinkers, black African diaspora constituted a transnational network of counter-modernity, for the slaves resuscitated their spiritual traditions in their new homes and thereby challenged the dominant trends of enchantment or enlightenment in the West. From the 1980s onwards, scholars have applied it to other religious or ethnic groups —Muslims or Sikhs (see Bates), for example—in their discussion of migration or deterritorialization. The critical term has increasingly been associated with blacks across the Atlantic, with Asian immigrants, South American refugees, world-wide indentured labor, transnational mobility, postmodernism, globalization, minoritization, new ethnicity, cultural hybridity, nomadism, etc. The term no longer seems historically specific or even meaningful, as it is used indiscriminately with exile, migration, travel, and fluid identity formation. Cultural historians have understandably advised us to drop the term altogether. In China studies, for example, Wang Gungwu has cautioned the politically centrifugal implications of the term in attenuating the sense of Chineseness, in undercutting the desire to return or to be reclaimed by China. “I have long resisted the use of *diaspora* to describe the Chinese overseas,” he writes, “and am still concerned that it could acquire political overtones similar to those of *huaqiao*, which governments both inside and outside China have highlighted in the past” (84, note 4). Wang has argued against a “single Chinese diaspora” and suggests that we pay attention to the economic, political, and historical contextual specificities of variegated groups moving to different places across times. In opposition to Wang’s stress on the ties to the motherland, several Asian American scholars have directed our attention to ways in which sinology has tended to freeze its object through the mechanism of writing the other (Chow), to racialized political economy of immigration acts and with them the tendency toward provincializing cultural internationalism have been reinforced (Lowe; Palumbo-Liu), or Asian diasporas have developed and maintained crucial networks of material and symbolic exchange with their homelands as well as with various minority groups in receiving countries (Ong). They advocate a more worldly and contextual approach to the study of diaspora.

In many respects, Chinese diaspora study has benefited from the study of such particular cases as black Atlantic (Gilroy); Aguilillans in Redwood City, California (Rouse); Koreans in Los Angeles (Abelmann and Lie); Caribbeans in New York (Scher), among others. Against these “Afrocentrist,” cultural, or even “elitist” approaches, Ali Behdad has highlighted the layered, conflictive, and disjunctive nature of global movements by citing examples of Southeast Asian guest workers in the

Gulf states that join international circuits of migration to finance their home economies and to realize their hopes for better lives away from home, from famine or from new terrorist regimes. Underneath this trajectory of empowerment, there is a peculiar form of what Benedict Anderson has called “long-distance nationalism,” of upholding an alternative political culture back home. Filipino maids in Hong Kong certainly contribute to overseas national projects, to the political economy of diasporic aspirations (San Juan). These diaspora case studies attend to the particular configurations of power in socio-cultural relations, and to the complexities of diaspora experience triggered by the transnational flows of material and symbolic goods.

Of course, not all cultural critics agree that as a critical notion diaspora is politically useful. Bruce Robbins finds the term problematic as it highlights mobility to the neglect of intellectual and political engagement centering on questions of citizenship and racial inequality within the nation. To him, diaspora risks losing a historical specificity and critical edge. And if we review back issues of such journals as *Diaspora*, *New Formations*, *Positions*, *Public Culture*, and *Transitions*, the diaspora references range from transnationality, the gay movement, ethnic communities abroad, consumerism, global contemporaneity, stateless and flexible citizenship, colonialisms and alternative modernities, to return migration, foreignness, plurality, identity crisis, minority, exile, difference, exhibiting (Mexican) museum culture, etc. Apparently, diaspora has too many facets and does not adequately address concrete cultural issues. However, the term has been profitably expanded to cover the fractured trajectories not only of Africans and Jews exported or forced to move across the globe, but also of other ethnic groups in massive migration and their cultural representations from Algeria to Trinidad to New York and elsewhere (Mirzoeff; Clifford). The general consensus finds the term useful as a concept so long as we take into consideration the complexities of diaspora experience and attend to the historical conditions that produce diasporic subjectivities. As Jana Braziel and Anita Mannur have pointed out in a recent anthology, diaspora does not “transcend differences of race, class, gender, and sexuality,” “nor can diaspora stand alone as an epistemological or historical category of analysis, separate and distinct from these interrelated categories” (5). Theorizing diaspora from the perspective of the discordant movements of modernity, they think of it as “a nomadic turn in which every parameter of specific historical moments are embodied,” “scattered and regrouped into new points of becoming” (3). To them, diaspora represents the lived experiences of peoples whose lives have unfolded in a myriad of diasporic communities across the globe, forcing us “to rethink the rubric of nation and nationalism, while refiguring the relations of citizens and nation-states” (7). It offers multiple dislocated sites of contestation to the hegemonic, homogenizing forces of globalization, challenging the rule relations of transnational empire, international economic exploitation and political disenfranchisement, and corporate capitalism or managerialism all over the world (10-11). While their critical enterprise very much echoes what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have suggested in their conclusion to *Empire*, their discursive strategies of inter-ethnic articulation and coordination are never clearly defined.

Historians and geographers have systematically used the term to mean dislocation or the existential predicaments resulting from such displacement. From the perspective of human geography and of migrant atlas, Gerard Chaliand and Jean-Pierre Rageau list the statistics of different ethnic groups scattered all over the world. Benedict Anderson opposes this sort of historical atlas; to him, real and imagined censuses fail to account for “phantom communities” which are created by imagination and no longer confined to the interiors of already-existing nation-states. “Is it necessary,” he asks, “to underline that these countings were made by imperial state machineries for their own reasons and by

their own peculiar logics, that it is quite uncertain how many of the 42,000 “Indians” in fact imagined themselves as such, and that there was every sort of ambiguity and arbitrariness involved in deciding who was a Jew in thirteenth-century Portugal?” (1997: 44-5). In other words, diaspora study has to consider qualitative transformations in relation to bound and unbound relationships with home. In an essay included in this anthology, James Clifford proposes that we view diaspora as a condition in which the displaced manage to form partial connection with homes—that is, with one far away and another in proximity. Disaporic consciousness operates in syncopated responses to differential communalities and temporalities, in modes of entanglement and cross-cutting time and space.

And History Took a Calligraphic Turn: On Tai Jingnong’s Writing

[David Der-wei Wang](#), Harvard University

Among the Chinese literati of the May Fourth generation, few have led a career as tortuous as that of Tai Jingnong (1902-1990). When he first appeared on the scene of 1920’s Beijing, Tai was a writer of New Literature and a leftist activist; for his revolutionary cause, he was jailed three times. Tai took up classical style poetry during the Second Sino-Japanese War period while befriending such veteran radicals as Chen Duxiu. After his accidental relocation to Taiwan in 1946, however, Tai Jingnong gave up his literary career; instead he ended up becoming one of the greatest calligraphers in the second half of 20th century China.

This essay discusses the metamorphosis of Tai Jingnong at the crucial moment of his career, the 1940’s and 50’s. Faced with incessant national calamities that culminated in the 1949 Divide and the subsequent exodus, Tai Jingnong made his testimony by turning to the “surface” rather than the depth of writing. Although acclaimed for his fiction and poetry, Tai did not set free his creative energy till he discovered the power of the brush—a quintessential form of Chinese writing which is nevertheless embedded in the trauma of “Southern Migrations” from the 4th to the 20th century.

Tai’s transformation may have resulted from his discretionary response to the politics of diaspora. A more compelling reason perhaps is that he had come to a different understanding of artistic agency and historical representation. By deferring literature to calligraphy, he may not have sought for a conventional, and therefore safer, craftsmanship, any more than toying with a polemical vocation. Where writing betrays its finitude, it is the performance of writing that generates new configurations of history, nationhood, and “Chinese” identity.

The essay will focus on the following aspects of Tai Jingnong’s work: the dissemination of modern Chinese writing in visual terms; calligraphy and its geographical implications; and the poetics of “muted” Sinophone articulations.

PANEL TWO (1:10 – 2:40 PM)

Transnational and Immigrant-Oriented: Characteristics of Chinese Journalism in America

[Xiao-huang Yin](#), Occidental College

The birth of Chinese journalism in America can be traced to the mid-nineteenth century. On April 22, 1854, San Francisco saw the publication of *Kim Shan Jit San Luk* (金山日新录) [Golden Hill News] -- the first Chinese newspaper to appear in America. As the Chinese American population has grown to four million, Chinese journalism in America has also developed dramatically. At present, there are four major transnational Chinese dailies circulating throughout North America. With a daily circulation of more than 250,000 copies, *Shijie Ribao* (世界日报) [Chinese Daily News] stands out as the largest Chinese newspaper in America, followed by *Xingdao Ribao* (星岛日报) [Sing Tao Daily], *Qiao Bao* (侨报) [China Press], and *Guoji Ribao* (国际日报) [International Daily News]. Although each of the newspapers has its own particular subscriber group, they tend to cater to the taste of readers across group lines to seek a larger share in the highly competitive Chinese publishing market in America.

What are the characteristics of Chinese journalism in America? What role does it play in Chinese American life? In what ways has it been transformed by changes in the Chinese American experience? And how does it differ from newspapers published in other parts of the Chinese world? My essay is an attempt to find answers to the questions. By examining nature of Chinese journalism in America, my study explores a major source of Chinese American transnationalism and sheds light on critical aspects of the development of trans-Pacific Chinese community networks throughout history.

Transplantation and Modernity: The Chinese/American Poems of Angel Island

[Stephen Yao](#), Hamilton College

In the paper, "Transplantation and Modernity: The Chinese/American Poems of Angel Island," Yao not only situates an (in)famous example of non-English Chinese diasporic literary expression within the global context of its production, but also suggests some ways that literary studies of this sort can help to complicate both recent theories about globalization and cosmopolitanism and established conceptions of the dimensions of the category "American." Toward these ends, Yao urges an engagement between Asian American Studies as it has thus far developed with the emerging field of Asian Diaspora Studies. In addition, he seeks to bring attention to the Angel Island poems for their aesthetic and cultural meaning, not just as historical and sociological documents. And he explores the interactions and resonances of these literary texts with the larger, more familiar movements of American and Chinese Modernism.

Chinese Lessons

[Jing Tsu](#), Yale University

Given the multiple sites of Chinese-language literary production outside of monolingual, national centers, the concept of Sinophone literature, this paper argues, requires us to reexamine the question of language not only figuratively but also literally. How do we come to access and recognize an official language in the writing of national literature? What happens, for instance, when dialects sound stranger than foreign tongues, Chinese characters seem better represented by alphabet letters, and Indo-European grammar organizes writing subjects in the modern sense? I will explore these questions in a longer historical frame of the twentieth century.

PANEL THREE (3:00 – 4:30 PM)

Genocentrism in Global Clothing: Nomenclature and Vision in Sinophone Chinese American Literature

[Sau-ling C. Wong](#), University of California, Berkeley

This presentation begins with a quick survey of the nomenclature and reception of a body of work -- literature written in Chinese by Chinese-ancestry writers resident in the United States -- that has been variously labeled but, given recent trends, can be least prescriptively designated as *Sinophone Chinese American literature*. Each act of classification represents an implicitly or explicitly nation-based claim of cultural membership made by the categorizer, and as such expresses a certain vision of the U.S.-located Chinese subject's relationship to "origin." Identifying three possible orientations toward "origin" -- *genocentrism*, *translocalism*, and *racinationism* -- I argue that in spite of recent enthusiasm in the Sinophone world toward *shijie huaren wenxue* or *shijie huawen wenxue* -- terms that appear translocal, decentering, and catholic -- genocentrism remains the predominant orientation.

Given this "genocentrism in global clothing," one question to ponder is whether, and if so how, genocentrism militates against racination (in which, as an Asian Americanist, I take a special interest). I broadly trace the gendered trope of green card marriages in Sinophone Chinese American literature from the 1940s to now, to show how the theme of "selling out" reflects a persistent anxiety about engagement with one's chosen land of residence, experienced as a betrayal of "origin." Contrasting two anthologies that may serve as snapshots of Sinophone Chinese American literature two decades apart -- *Haiwai huaren zuojia xiaoshuo xuan* (1983) and *Yidai Feihong* (2005) -- I identify varied ways (again heavily gendered) in which some post-1979 Mainland-origin writers refigure genocentrism in a period when the rise of China on the global stage requires non-engagement with the local to appear in new forms.

Journeys to Nowhere: Escape and Displacement in Gao Xingjian's Plays

[Sy Ren Quah](#), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Themes and metaphors of escape are commonly found in Gao Xingjian's plays. In 1985, Gao wrote *Wild Man*, in which he portrayed an autobiographical journey of escape and search. In *The Other Shore* (1987), he created a setting without spatial and temporal specificities but continued to explore the meanings of journey and destination with a denser philosophical tone. In 1989, he wrote *Fleeing*, a play about three people fled from their idealism and activism, revealing their inner weaknesses under the façade of heroism. Some of Gao's post-exile plays, such as *Nocturnal Wanderer* and *Snow in August*, presented different images of escape: e.g., as a modernist traveler who has no definite destination in the former, and as a figure of Zen patriarch in continuous journey of fleeing in the latter.

As a self-exiled writer who professed to flee his indigenous land for freedom of expression, Gao has continually been confronted with issues such as location and displacement, self and identity. How have these issues been mediated and represented in his plays? Images of exile and escape appear to be more a continuum and at times filled with contradictions. What are the reasons to escape, and what are there to escape from? The simple answer may seem to be the Chinese authorities' suppression of views and creativities; but Gao's artistic representations reveal much more. Exile is not only a physical passage but also a spiritual voyage. Is his exile a means to unrestrained self-expression and self-actualization? Or is the journey of exile itself an end and a destination?

Traveling Nativeness and Its Discontent: A Case Study of Li Yongping's *Jiling Chronicle*

[Chongke Zhu](#), Sun Yat-sen University, China

As a phenomenal writer of Malaysian Chinese diaspora, Li Yongping 李永平 plays an important role in literary histories of Taiwan and Malaysia. Li Yongping's representative work, *Jiling Chronicle* 《吉陵春秋》, presents a unique dystopian image of Jiling, in which humanity is repressed, distorted, and reified by insanity, concealment and violent catharsis of desires.

This paper is aimed to explore three main questions: How does Li lay bare his "traveling nativeness" in his Nanyang narratives? In what ways does the dystopian image in *Jiling Chronicle* stand out as a unique voice? And what is the relationship between his dystopian narrative and his traveling nativeness?

The author tries to argue that whereas Li's local/native narrative bears a certain kind of focus shift from Nanyang, to blurry China, then to Taiwan, in the process of which his "Chineseness" keeps being strengthened, it seems that his nostalgic feeling directed to an imagined "cultural China" will never be satisfied. This dissatisfaction, to all intents and purposes, leads to his laborious creation of a labyrinth of Chinese characters in his writing.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2007

PANEL FOUR (9:00 – 10:30 AM)

Sino/Anglophone Literature, Maxine Hong Kingston and Peace Writing

Shirley Geok-lin Lim, University of California, Santa Barbara

Chinese identity as a fixed civilizational and raced category continues to serve as a hyper-visible global marker for national insecurities, whether the diasporic subject is citizen in an Asian or Western territory. Narratives by Sino/Anglophone writers, such as Timothy Mo, plot various forms of liminality as dramatic conflict with violence and trauma as core external and psycho-dynamic actions. Maxine Hong Kingston's most recent books, however, beginning with trauma, write a counter narrative of peace. Similarly, her writing of peace sets out also to counter an original authorial identity of Chineseness and to unfix its naturalized natalism through a pacifist practice.

Double-Colonialism, *Mahua* Writing Consciousness and the Germination of Localized Modernity

Fah Hing Chong, Universiti Putra Malaysia

Existing discourses on literary history often regard Malaysian literature in Chinese (better known as *Mahua* literature) as a continuation of the May 4th Movement's New Literature abroad. Perceptions of the relationship between *Mahua* literature and mainland Chinese literature, often from the viewpoint of historical origins and unilateral cultural connection, lack an in-depth retrospection on the influence of western enlightenment during the May 4th Movement. Thus, it is not surprising that the narrative in the current *Mahua* literary history quickly turned to the period of new emergence literature (*xinxing wenxue*) in the 1920s. Such an attempt, reflecting the influence of China's leftist-revolutionary literature, has gained the favor and respect of the writers of literary history. What we can be sure of is that, in the pursuits of the internal spirit and practical writing of literary history, what one can never deny is the obsession with the nation. However, that historical perspective cannot be effectively explained in the emergence of the writing consciousness in *Mahua* literature and also in the spirit that gradually developed under Western colonialism.

History is not just a monster, but also a demon, and it is always hidden, waiting for an opportunity to appear. *Mahua* writing consciousness reflects the fluctuation of its historical development. The Chinese community in Malaya before World War II was frequently influenced by China's domestic political situation, and this undoubtedly had left some significant traces in the literary works. Initially, it is anarchism which was imported to Malaya in 1920s, followed by the spread of communism, the ideological conflict between the Chinese communist and Kuomintang (KMT), as well as the patriotism and high nationalist sentiments resulting from the anti-Japanese's movement. Such incidents easily allowed people to accept China as a sole factor which had promoted the *Mahua* writing consciousness without question. Thus, *Mahua* literature, on this view, would be inevitably biased. In fact, the presence of colonialism not only contributed to the sentiments of anti-feudalism, anti-imperialism, and

anti-colonialism of new emergence literature in the connotation of Chinese nationalism, more importantly, the social and political changes in mainland China had caused reaction from the Chinese community in Malaya, thus bringing the corresponding measures by the colonialist and various responses from the cultural/literary circles. In other words, the implementation of various administrative and legal measures was to denounce China as a precursor to the social and political movements by the overseas Chinese. Apparently, we have noticed that the consciousness of *Mahua* writing was deeply constrained by the China factor. However, what has often been overlooked is that the connotation of transcended-localized modernity was precisely germinated within the structure of colonialism, in particular, the double-colonialism in the early post-war period, i.e., the western capital mode of economic and the colonialism of Chinese communism. This paper tries to discern the specific role of the colonialism factor in the *Mahua* literature in pre-war and early post-war period, and furthermore, to survey its contribution in generating the consciousness of *Mahua* writing and the possible forms of *Mahua* modernity.

What's in a Name? Some Reflections on Sinophone Literature

[Te-hsing Shan](#), Academia Sinica, Taiwan

Much academic attention has been paid to “Sinophone literature” in recent years. This paper provides some reflections on this cultural phenomenon from various perspectives and explores some of the possibilities and pitfalls of this seemingly emergent field. My reflections will make reference to the following areas of research: Chinese literary history, American literary history, Chinese American literature, multilingualism, diaspora studies, and translation studies.

PANEL FIVE (10:50 AM – 12:20 PM)

Multi-lingual-Sinophone? The Transnational and Rhizomatic Politics of Creativity in Wong Bik-wan's Fiction

[Mirana May Szeto](#), University of Hong Kong

Hong Kong writer Wong Bik-wan (黃碧雲) is an experienced veteran of colonialism who has seen it all. Whether she is read as a national allegory, the usual women's writing, or in comparison to Lu Xun, Zhang Ailing or Wang Anyi, like cannon to canons, she throws creative myths both East and West on their heads. The creolized colonial subject cannibalizes her multi-cultural heritage matter-of-factly, in retribution to literary tributes.

Refusing to massage the muscles of Westerncentrism and Sinocentrism through vertically imagined identity politics, Wong's cultural and affective affinities are rhizomatic. She traverses the oral histories and oracular voices of the “wretched of the earth,” the Romano Gypsy, Hakka, Cuban, Cantonese, guerrilla, and working class women. The peasant, the cripple and the sick come together at the mahjong table. As an alluring and transgressive traveler (*Meixingzhe* 媚行者), her Sinophone graphic and phonic subversions force the Chinese language to embrace Portuguese and Cantonese syntax and diction, working class slang, tempos of other cultures, the poetic in the prose, and the inarticulacy of pain.

Traditional pious women (烈女) enter history only when they practice extreme obedience to patriarchal and national imperatives. In Wong, this extremity (暴烈) becomes the tactics of subversion. Wong's peasant, working class and nomadic women survive sexual, familial, and national trauma as unprotected bare life (*cangsheng* 苍生), scavenging the violence of the nation and the home. Their decomposer's feminism de-aestheticize sacrifice and cruelty, and give civil war an intimately violent re-interpretation.

Imagining Beijing in Sinophone Writing

[Weijie Song](#), Purdue University

This paper aims to explore the Beijing narratives by six Sinophone writers based in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the United States, by considering issues such as nostalgia, amnesia, and physical dismantle of the “old Beijing” against the backdrop of the Cold War division.

My research consists of three sections: (1) “Where Have All the Natives Gone: The Aesthetics of Disappearance and Reappearance” focuses on Liang Shiqiu and Tang Lusun who reconstruct the esthetics of daily objects and the poetic practices of Beijing everyday life, and therefore make their remote geographical and spiritual hometown Beijing reappear in their “republic of letters.” (2) “Beijing Sojourners: Between Eulogy and Allergy” examines Lin Hai-yin and Zhong Lihe who project their sojourning or traveling experiences in modern Beijing onto their diasporic “state of mind”. After her 25-year living experiences in Beijing, Lin Hai-yin eulogizes her memory, lived and imagined, of the south side of Beijing from an innocent girl's eyes. In contrast, Zhong Lihe sharply criticizes the dark and filthy life of Beijing's underground society, and exhibits a bleak city image in his disillusioning discovery of the old capital. (3) “Invoking Martial Arts Narratives” concentrates on Jin Yong and Zhang Beihai who intertwine literary geography and chivalric fantasy, inscribe post-loyalist attachments and detachments into the city, and suggest a hybrid and fluid identity as evidenced in the chivalric gestures of both intervening into the core urban settings and fleeing away to the Xinjiang Muslim district, an overseas kingdom, an unknown space in Yangzhou, or certain mythical locations in Beijing.

Beijing becomes a shared platform, a common space of anxiety and desire, and an intriguing opening for these Sinophone writers to articulate their frustrated and fluid subjectivities, as well as their identity crisis and formation in their diasporic imaginations of the city.

Li Tianbao and Pop Culture China

[Alison Groppe](#), University of Oregon

Singaporean sociologist Chua Beng-huat has recently offered the concept of “Pop Culture China” as a corrective to Tu Wei-ming's Cultural China paradigm. For Chua, the circulation of popular culture among dispersed ethnic Chinese populations makes possible the creation of a “pan-Chinese community,” albeit one that is multilingual and functions as a network. What this means for cultural identification remains open to question; Chua asserts that pop culture consumption is ephemeral and demands “no deep identity investment on the part of the consumers” (88).^{*} The writing of

contemporary Malaysian Chinese author Li Tianbao casts doubt on this conclusion, however. Li's texts abundantly refer to the popular songs, films, and stars that mesmerized him as he was growing up in Kuala Lumpur, most of them associated with *shidai qu*, sometimes known as "Mandarin pop"—a hybrid musical form that first flourished in 1930s and 40s Shanghai and then further developed in Hong Kong in the 1950s and 60s. These references to the Chinese pop culture of Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Taiwan — as consumed in Malaysia — consistently characterize Li's rhetoric of nostalgia. Thus Li's writing not only reminds us of the historical dimension of Chua's contemporary Pop Culture China, it also provides an example of how one Chinese overseas writer has harnessed this longstanding circulation to invent a literary persona that is at once Chinese, Malaysian, cosmopolitan, and modern.

* Chua, Beng Huat. "Gossip about Stars: Newspapers and Pop Culture China." *Media and the Chinese Diaspora: Community, Communications and Commerce*. Ed. Wanning Sun. New York: Routledge, 2006. 75-90.

PANEL SIX (1:30 – 3:00 PM)

Looking for the Unicode in the Chinese Box

[Yunte Huang](#), University of California, Santa Barbara

By revisiting the entangled history of Chinese characters and Western modernism, this essay is a futuristic meditation on the technopoetic potentials of Chinese writing in the age of digital media and globalization.

Alai and the Politics of Internal Diaspora

[Carlos Rojas](#), University of Florida

As an ethnically Tibetan author who received one of China's most prestigious literary prizes for his first full-length novel, Alai occupies a contradictory position at the borders of modern China and historic Tibet. Out of a combination of necessity and choice, Alai writes exclusively in Mandarin — a language that, in the context of modern Tibet, inevitably carries imperial connotations. Alai's fiction, however, functions as a kind of "minor literature" — one which pushes back against these same imperial presumptions by underscoring the linguistic and cultural tensions necessarily present within the narrative itself. Many of Alai's characters, for instance, know little or no Mandarin, and therefore they speak in a Tibetan that Alai either transliterates or silently translates into Chinese. Even as these fictional texts undercut their own hegemonic use of Mandarin, furthermore, they simultaneously challenge the counterhegemonic status of Tibetan as well. Like Chinese, Tibetan actually comprises a cluster of disparate dialects, and while Alai typically uses "Tibetan" to designate the native-language environment of his fictional works, there are moments in which a more complicated picture is hinted at, one in which characters are occasionally described as being uncomfortable in both Mandarin and Tibetan. These simultaneous challenges to the presumptive unity of both Chinese and Tibetan, therefore, help position Alai as a diasporic author whose position and concerns mirror, but invert, those of other Chinese-language writers within the global Chinese diaspora.

The Difference of Resemblance: Zhang Guixing's Sinographic Translations

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Zhang Guixing's 張貴興 novels *Elephant Tropes* (1998, 《群象》) and *Monkey Cup* (2000, 《猴杯》) renegotiate the author's diasporic position as a Malaysian-Chinese writer in a special way. Even as Zhang's writing takes place in Taiwan, *Elephant Tropes* and *Monkey Cup* thematize returns to another "homeland" as the protagonists of both texts search for their "origins" not in China, but in Borneo, more precisely in Sarawak's rainforest and with the indigenous Dayak and Iban tribes. And yet, even though the texts tap into the exoticizing movement of "going native," they are more complex than a diasporic "diversion," the replacement of one homeland (China) with another one ("primitive" Borneo). Going "primitive"—a form of cultural nostalgia often attributed to the West, but also multiply resonant with trends in contemporary Chinese literature and cinema in Taiwan and on the mainland—enables Zhang to reflect on the origin of Chinese writing: the Chinese writing system, what I will call the sinograph. If the South Seas have been designated as the space where language (i.e. the Chinese language) is lost in a multitude of cultural codes and scripts in constant (at times violent) friction with each other, Zhang harnesses this hybridity to the goal of redefining Chinese writing. In this paper, I will analyze how Zhang critiques both sino- and signocentrism by invoking the permeability of Chinese writing vis-à-vis other scripts and by staging the friction of different theories on the sinograph. Zhang's sinographic translations thus refocus the stakes of discussing Modern Chinese literature as a globalized expression: the frictions between Chinese and other languages and cultural discourses, the frictions between different sinophone expressions, but also the question of Chinese writing and its basis, the sinograph.