



## *Angel Island* Xiaoyu Weng

1 "Trading vessels carried the news of the discovery of gold in California across the Pacific in the spring and summer of 1848. From the docks of the British colony, Hong Kong, word spread quickly throughout China. By 1851, 25,000 Chinese had left their homes for California, the land of *gum saan*, or 'gold mountain.' Most of these emigrants were part of a larger exodus of people who left China's southeast Guangdong, or Canton, Province in search of better economic opportunities and political freedom." <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/connections/chinese-cal/file.html>. Accessed March 29, 2014.

2 Compared to the multiple and various immigration exclusion acts implemented in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the significance of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act is that it was the first Federal law that proscribed entry based on a specific ethnic working group. It served as the foundation of the racist sentiments in the United States, of which the lasting effect still haunts today.

### On Multi-handed

The 1885 November 14 issue of the San Francisco-based weekly satire magazine *The Wasp* featured an astonishing cover image, in which a devil in the center of the image sits on top of a pillar with leg crossed, sticking out two tongues from his insidious smiley mouth. Ten hands mutate out from his spreading half-fin, half-wing on the back, reaching out to offer various kind of vices to the Caucasian figures depicted. Clearly indicated by its title *The Chinese: Many Handed But Soulless*, the illustration highlighted the never-subsiding anti-Chinese sentiment that had pervaded in California. Early Chinese immigrants arrived in California because of the discovery of gold.<sup>1</sup> By 1880, more newcomers were brought in to meet the labor needs for completing the railroads. Despite being paid with pitiful wages, the Chinese became the object of continuous violence due to the desperate economic competition. The fear and antagonism toward Chinese immigrants had only exacerbated since the twenty-first United States President Chester A. Arthur signed and implemented the Chinese Exclusion Act as a federal law on May 6, 1882.<sup>2</sup>

The following texts in the magazine's "Our Picture" section monsterized the mischievous Chinese figure:

The all-absorbing character of Chinese competition is well illustrated in its many-handed god. On all sides it is reaching out for trades that it can master, and a crushing out of opposition is the inevitable result. Its Briarean arms stretch far and wide and crunch and crush out of existence every interest hostile to its monopoly. Our workingmen and women dependent upon their own hands and arms for support look with

sad hearts upon this iconoclastic breaking down of all their employments, and in bitterness of soul cry aloud, “How long, O Lord, how long.”<sup>3</sup>



“The Chinese: Many Handed But Soulless,” cover of *The Wasp*, vol. 15 (November 1885). The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

A “multi-handed” monster isn’t just any monster but one with the idiosyncratic ability to reach, grip and paralyze everything in every direction with its infinitely extendable arms. No one can escape and there is nowhere to escape. If there is a prevailing image of such a “multi-handed” monster in the cultural imaginations of the nineteenth century, the cephalopod definitely highlights the representation. When the protagonist Gilliat of Victor Hugo’s 1866 novel *The Toilers of the Sea* was caught in the grip of a giant octopus, a devil-fish, the moment of inestimable horror occurred. The monster’s “gigantic hands” with “fingers of which were each nearly a yard long” grasped like “the spider holds the fly.”<sup>4</sup> Its prey trembles in horror through the creature’s immense, all-absorbing power generated by its almost incorporeal and disfigured body: as it is boneless, bloodless and fleshless; it is almost invisible.

If the monstrosity of capitalism in cultural imagination has a genealogy, then the Octopus is certainly for the

<sup>3</sup> *The Wasp*, November 1885, vol. 15, 6.

<sup>4</sup> Victor Hugo, *The Toilers of the Sea*, Neeland Media LLC (December 1, 2009), 196. Kindle version.

nineteenth century as the Zombie is for the twenty-first century. It is not a coincidence that such representation corresponds with the monstrosity of the history of the establishment of California. When the Great Western Expansion made the transcontinental railroad a necessity, the monster was born. By the time the two sections of the railroad (the Central Pacific which started on the West Coast going east and the Union Pacific started in Nebraska going west) met in Utah in 1869, this “multi-handed” monster had perished the lives of thousands of railroad workers, plundered millions of acres of land from the indigenous tribes, accumulated billions of capitals and established a total monopoly. When an enormous red octopus was visualized by G. Frederick Keller to represent the irresistible power



G. Frederick Keller, “The Curse of California,” *The Wasp*, vol. 9, no. 316 (August 1882): 520–21. The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

of capitalism expansion—with its ten arms instead of eight, everything profitable is under its irresistible control—he must have had the precise fear of being engulfed into the body of this monster wholly and entirely. One’s life is so swiftly and silently terminated: not even with the sublime and the sensation of the bodies being torn apart in flesh and

blood. Keller's illustration perhaps served as an essential inspiration for Frank Norris's novel *The Octopus: A Story of California* (1901), the first part of an uncompleted trilogy. Based on the historical event of the Mussel Slough Tragedy, the story "deals with the war between the wheat grower and the Railroad Trust"<sup>5</sup> of the dispute over land. Norris described the railroad as "the Colossus," "the Octopus," and "a vast power" "with tentacles of steel clutching into the soil, the soulless Force." It is an "iron-hearted monster."<sup>6</sup> California was cursed under the spell of capitalist production in its dawn era.

What is indeed astonishing, though, is how the monstrosity applied to the capitalism monopoly later identically excised on the Chinese immigrants. The fear toward the capitalism monopoly was preposterously yet effectively replaced by the loathing toward the Chinese immigrants. The racist discrimination did not simply come from the different culture and custom of the Chinese immigrants encountered by the Euro-Americans; it had formed through the structural violence and oppression conspired by the capitalist scheme.

By the 1870s, California and other Western States had gone past their golden era of economic boom blessed by the Gold Rush. The optimism and momentum of making a fortune in the Wild West had dissipated. In order to adopt policies that would sustain the stability of the system, the government of the United States pretended neutrality while serving the interests of the rich.<sup>7</sup> Based on the creation of "separate levels of oppression—a skillful terracing to stabilize the pyramid of wealth," the immigrants were strategically treated as the "more controllable" and "strike-free" labor force to achieve the organization of "the greatest march of economic growth in human history."<sup>8</sup>

The Chinese were accused for stealing jobs away from white workers, as they were willing to take cheap-waged jobs in abominable environments such as in cigar and shoe factories and restaurant and laundry facilities.<sup>9</sup> *The Wasp's* description of the cover image expressed mercy towards the vulnerability of the working class, corresponding to the much valued merit – the

5 Frank Norris, *The Complete Works of Frank Norris* (New York: Doubleday Page & Co., 1903), introduction page.

6 Ibid., 51.

7 Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005), 258.

8 Ibid., 253, 266.

9 Erika Lee and Judy Yung, *Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 75.

"Heroic Artisan" – a mode of manliness characterized by independence and assiduity,<sup>10</sup> which had served as the foundation of the American Dream. In contrast, the stereotype characteristic of the Chinese's "all-willingness" ("all-absorbing") was considered morally degenerate therefore created unfair competition. In Henry Grimm's four-act drama *The Chinese Must Go* (1879), the white character William Blaine attacks the Chinese as slavish in nature:

"[N]ow, most men are nothing else than slaves of their stomach, and many a man sells body and soul – turns actually a slave—only to satisfy the craving of his stomach. This very cause brings those hordes of Chinese to our shore; and if we allow the surplus millions of their country to invade ours, they will degrade us to the same level."<sup>11</sup>

The desire for controlled labor had resulted a labor surplus to keep wages down. The division of labor among race, gender, national origin and social class in order to maximize the capital accumulation had ignited the machine of modern enslavement. The venting from Grimm's character projects a relation between the capitalism monster and death: not that much of the fear of being invaded and overturned by the Chinese slave, but the fear of becoming one—the fear of losing control of oneself, of becoming a slave.

### On Orifice and Porosity

On the map, an island is a convex dot. It is also a negative point in relation to the surrounding sea and the universe environs the earth. If cartography reflects the eternal desire of human species to grasp the comprehensive knowledge of the world, islands are holes that penetrate the maps and interrupt the consistency of the writing of history. Angel Island is such a hole that both absorbs and exposes the fictions and hypocrisy of America's acclaimed immigration

10 See Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*, (New York: Free Press, 1996), 13–42; Jeff House, "Sweeney among the Archetypes: The Literary Hero in American Culture," *Journal of American Culture* 16, no. 4 (1993): 65–71 (70).

11 See Henry Grimm, *The Chinese Must Go*, <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/flipomatic/cic/brk5043>, Accessed December 1, 2013

history. It calls reflection on not only the traumatized past but also the present-day schematic crises of American's migratory struggles amid the global neo-liberalist agenda.

With its inhuman condition and mistreatment of immigrants, the detention center on Angel Island, which operated from 1910 to 1940, had given the island notoriety as the Devil's Island.<sup>12</sup> 10,000 years ago, when a period of global warming thawed the glaciers, the rising ocean creating a mile-wide gap separated the island from the Marin County mainland. The island's detachment from the Tiburon Peninsula transformed itself into a topographically confined and isolated object within which a kind of monstrosity was ready to be nourished.



Joseph Whittle, *San Francisco Bay with Alcatraz the Steamship Princess*, California, ca. 1860. Oil on canvas, 35.7×51 cm. The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Angel Island is in the background.

Sitting in the middle of the San Francisco Bay, Angel Island is just north of the smaller yet far more well known island Alcatraz as it is tirelessly illustrated in pop culture. However, the seemingly romantic and tranquil appearance of Angel Island cannot obscure its equal if not more notorious history. Long before the establishment of the detention center, Angel Island had been the site for waves of atrocities. The arrival of the European settlers was disastrous for the indigenous Hookooeko tribe of the Coast Miwok, who had lived on the island for at least 1,000

12 Steven Gould Axelrod and Camille Roman eds., *The New Anthology of American Poetry: Modernisms: 1900–1950* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 536.

years. The introduction of foreign and contagious disease terminated the natives.

Rising from the sea, the cephalopod, the monster, is often characterized with a unique feature: an orifice equivocally and disquietingly serving as both mouth and anus. As noted by cinema studies scholar Allen S. Weiss, “monstrosity gains a new dimension, the reduction of anatomy to an absolute orifice.”<sup>13</sup> Consider the sarlacc, a fictional creature in George Lucas’s *Star Wars*, which inhabits remote, inhospitable location in the galaxy. The appearance of the sarlacc is an immense, barbed hole on the sandy ground with multi-tentacles reaching from inside. It is an octopus folded outside in, into its orifice. Victims are being painfully and slowly digested and then excreted after they fall into its mouth-maw-anus. Angel Island, a dot on the map, a hole in the history writing, was also once such a monster-as-orifice. It was not only an entry point for immigrants to arrive in American mainland with the aspiration of a better life but also a last stop on a forced deporting journey out of the country with the despair of a dream in vain.<sup>14</sup> When the immigrants stumbled in, a slow and agonizing investigation and detention procedure was awaiting them; even after being admitted, their fates were still uncertain. They were the helpless victims being digested to satisfy the monstrous system’s insatiable appetite.

The idea of orifice also associates with the concept of porosity. American philosopher Susan Buck-Morss passionately argues that the concept of porosity emphasizes the events and experiences that fall out of the historical, “collective experience” based on the categories of “nation,” “race,” and “civilization.” By recognizing and encouraging the porous space, cultural binaries are deconstructed and boundaries of meaning systems are breached, exposing ungovernable connections.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps Angel Island once had the potential of becoming such a porous space.<sup>16</sup> The detention center was a place characterized by “multiracial” and “multiethnic” albeit the grouping was not entirely voluntary. When being detained in 1927, Japanese labor organizer Karl Yoneda

13 Allen S. Weiss, *The Epic of the Cephalopod*, *Cabinet*, Issue 4 Fall 2001, <http://cabinetmagazine.org/issues/4/weiss.php>. Accessed on December 7, 2013.

14 Lee & Yung, 9.

15 Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 10–118.

16 Buck-Morss points out in a footnote that “porosity, unlike hybridity, does not name a cultural form. It insists, rather, that the lived experience of the New World for the colonial dominators and the slaves (as well as indigenous populations), in every case challenged pre-existing conceptual distinctions. Granted, their experience were radically unequal in pain and suffering, reflecting the brutally racist inhumanity of the capitalist, colonial project; nonetheless, in every case, they necessitated those who lived through it to reimagine their world.” *Ibid.*, 112.



wrote in his poem to describe the “different sounds of voices from the next room; Chinese, Russian, Mexican, Greek, and Italian.”<sup>17</sup> The appeals for the Chinese immigrants were facilitated by attorneys like Oliver P. Stidger who, for instance, famously defended Chinese revolutionary leader Sun Yat-sen from the U.S. government’s attempted deportation. Interracial marriage occurred between Tye Leung, an interpreter and assistant matron, and an immigrant inspector Charles Fredreick Schulze during a time when interracial marriage was prohibited in California. These events delineated the otherwise invisible negative space shaped by the constructed national, racial and social boundaries. While these characters were initially coded with national belonging and social standing (the Lawyer, the Interpreter, the Inspector and the Immigrant), they soon were connected and intertwined by the bond of Angel Island and the longing for a New World.

Yet, the writing and interpretation of the experiences on Angel Island still heavily relies on the classification of ethnicity. Although the authors of the book *Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America* acknowledge the “great diversity” of immigrants who had stayed on Angel Island, the foundation that shapes the organization of the historical materials of the book—as one of the most important references on the island—is based on the distinct separation of each ethnical group. Since the detention station opened to the public as an interpretive center in 1983, it has gradually transformed into a museum and a tourist destination. Memories are reconstructed through the display of objects and the pedagogical tours. Remembering becomes a performance involving visitors, objects and docents.

Among the display items, there were once a few wax mannequins used to enliven the interrogation room. A double-bind relationship is introduced: while the display interpretive strategies emphasize on bringing “authentic” experience with the help of hyper-realistic display apparatus, they reveal that the concept of race and ethnicity is an imitation (the wax replica) of which there is no original. Apparently an economical arrangement, these mannequins were donated by a wax museum in

17 Lee & Yung, 17, 112.

18 Gareth Hoskins, “Materializing memory at Angel Island Immigration Station, San Francisco,” Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences, University of Wales, Aberystwyth (2007). <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/media/departmental/iges/pdf/staffpublications/materializing-memory.pdf>. Accessed December 26, 2013.

San Francisco as outdated or worn models. The wax body of the “inspector” was no longer actor Marlon Brando in the Hollywood Hall of Fame nor the “guard” was Mike Piazza, a catcher for the New York Mets baseball team any more.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, for the figure of the “immigrant,” journalist Jenny Scheid humorously commented in her visitor’s evaluation that “our guide was unsure of the identity of the immigrant, guessing it to be either Bruce Lee or Jackie Chan.”<sup>19</sup>

In fact, their former celebrity identities were never the reason of their relocation to the Angel Island as every wax museum figure was once a superstar of some sort. For display purpose, as long as the wax figure was fabricated as a white body, he/she can be an officer or an inspector, and an immigrant, of course, needs to be represented by a yellow-skinned wax mannequin. Here, individual identity is dissolved, eliminated, and categorized into a sweeping representation, an over-simplified and impoverish representation based on skin colors. However, what is more preposterous is that these mannequins’ once glorious identities and gossips had to be reintroduced by the docent as the “spices” for a more intriguing tour; as if without them, the history would be lesser interesting and thus less memorable and convincing. Sensationalized storytelling takes over the site of memory and reflection.



19 Jenny Scheid, “Angel Island Immigration Station,” *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (September 9, 2001): 5.

Thomas Chang, *Interview, Angel Island Immigration Station* from Circa 2005, 2005. Gelatin silver print, 16×20”, courtesy of the artist and Lisa Dent Gallery.

The museum of the detention center becomes an ideological representation. Details of historical facts are lost and traces of past events are erased. Instead, they are categorized and are grouped together to form totalities and historicized stereotypes. It does not allow room for a porous space. Political judgments and debates are based on the assumption that “cultures always flow into patterns congruent with the borders of essentially homogeneous nation states,” ethnical differences and racial divisions.<sup>20</sup> On the one hand, for example, the immigrant policies in the United States continue to reinforce regulations that are hostile to certain nationalities, in particular, Chinese immigrants. On the other hand, facilities such as the Angel Island State Park, by offering sensationalized narratives of the immigration history, they actually further expand the artificial distance between the immigrants’ experiences and those of the visitors. The violence generated by the systematically enforced difference is disguised under the rhetoric slogan of “political correctness.”

20 Buck-Morss, 111.

21 Liang Qichao (1873–1929), scholar, journalist, philosopher and one of early modern China’s foremost reformists. He was dedicated to reforming China’s political structure during the waning years of the Qing Dynasty and sought among ideologies and institutions various Western philosophical and political models such as Social Darwinism, democratic liberalism, and, eventually, the idea of a constitutional monarchy. “Selected Memoir of Travels in the New World (xindalu youji jielu)”, *The Complete Anthology of Liang Qichao (liang qichao quanji)* vol. 4 (Beijing: Beijing Publishing, 1999). All references to Liang’s book in this essay were translated by the author, including the title.

### On the Superimposition of Place and Non-place

When the preeminent Chinese political thinker Liang Qichao undertook his first pan-North American tour at age thirty in 1903, he crossed the continent by rail and visited three Canadian and twenty-eight American cities and towns. During the seven-month journey, he kept a detailed journal recording his encounters with the people, landscape, history, culture and society of America. These notes later became his renowned literary reportage *Selected Memoir of Travels in the New World*, published in 1904.<sup>21</sup> Among the detailed recounts of his interaction with the Chinese settlements, Liang gave significant report on the demographics, labor division, Chinese American associations in San Francisco’s Chinatown. He opened the chapter:

August 5th, from Portland to San Francisco.

Chinese people call it “Old Gold Mountain.” Part

of California, San Francisco is the ninth biggest metropolis and has the largest Chinese population in America... In my opinion, it is the best place for evaluating the position of Chinese people in the world. Why? There is no foreigner for us to compare to on the mainland thus no difference can be told. Investigating the oversea situation is a better option. There are two categories of the oversea Chinese: first kind can be seen in Nanyang. But the Chinese there are treated with special laws since they outnumber white people; the second, such as in America and Australia, where there are more white people than Chinese so we are regulated by the same law... Among the areas of the second category, San Francisco is the most representative.<sup>22</sup>

Liang expressed the desire in seeking reassurance of Chinese culture and political awareness among his oversea compatriots. However, his observation on San Francisco’s Chinatown did not quench his thirst for the nationalistic longings but rather disappointed him to a greater degree. For Liang, Chinatown was an epitome of the collective Chinese identity and the Chinese “can be clansmen but not citizens”, who “has the village mentality but does not understand the concept of nation state,” who “shall be ruled by autarchy and cannot to enjoy freedom, and who “has no noble purpose.”<sup>23</sup> Despite from a completely different position, Liang’s impressions of Chinatown was shared and further demeaned by the Euro-American communities. As an intellectual and a reformer, Liang was motivated to design political reform programs to modernize China and the “non-modern” manners and mentalities of the Chinese had helped him to analyze the “basic flaws” in the Chinese social characters. The Euro-American communities, however, considered the “inferior Chinese” as a threat that affected the perpetuity of American’s institutions and the standard of its civilization as the American citizen had to choose whether they would “have for the Pacific Coast the civilization of Christ or the civilization of Confucius.”<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, both perspectives constantly put the Chinese

22 Liang, 1179.

23 Liang, 1187–88.

24 K. Scott Wong, “Chinatown: Conflicting Images, Contested Terrain,” *Melus* 20, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 3–15.

and the Euro-Americans in a binary relation, in which human collectives are divided into advanced, civilized people and those who are backward and barbaric forged by a strong social-Darwinist belief.

When the epidemic of the bubonic plague broke out in San Francisco's Chinatown in 1900, the disease was immediately associated with the "immoral nature" of the Chinese community. The already disreputable Chinatown became the metonym of plague, of evil, and of death. The image of the monster retuned. It crawled and crept, spreading its deadly and poisonous fluid.

Radical sanitizing procedures in Chinatown soon followed and the roles of prey and predictor reversed. These procedures were violent physical and psychological invasions, attempting to coerce the population into the surrender not only of western standard hygiene but also of the civil dominance—as if areas that do not obey the demands of known forms of civilization should be punished, and should also become a field of acts of punishment. A parallel may be drawn here, of what Buck-Morss describes as the global political agenda that "the idea of progress justifies the imposition of democracy on others as a military project."<sup>25</sup>



Ming Wong, Still from *After Chinatown*, 2013. Single-channel video, courtesy of the artist and Vitamin Creative Space, Guangzhou.

The Chinatown epidemic lends itself to help diagnosing the pathology of a place. Although the presence of bacteria was detected, retrospective investigations

hinted that Chinatown's plague could have been a fabricated hoax<sup>26</sup>—just as fictional as the notion of "Chinatown" itself. Chinatown is very much a *place* as it has been "defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity."<sup>27</sup> Yet, Chinatown is a *non-place*, as it has been "assigned to a circumscribed and specific position."<sup>28</sup> While the history writing recounts it as a site of disease and sin, the contemporarily culture continues to portray it as an eccentric and foreign space. Chinatown is both an indelible memory and a fantasy in the making. Perhaps Marc Augé would agree that Chinatown is one of those totalized "anthropological places" that he criticizes, where singular particularities could be characterized and each Chinese people living in Chinatown could be "an exact replica of his neighbors."<sup>29</sup> Or perhaps, in the Hollywood movies, the spectator can project one's imagination of Chinatown as a channel to enter the *other*, where the fleeting images of gangster chasing, detective hunting, opium smoking, mahjong playing, red lantern flickering and pedestrian clamoring form his own spectacle.

Singapore-born artist Ming Wong's seven-channel video installation *Making Chinatown* (2012) reconstructs a Hollywood classic to complicate the relationship between identity, language and performance. The video installation is a remake of Roman Polanski's 1974 neo-noir film *Chinatown*, with the artist cast in roles originally played by Jack Nicholson, Faye Dunaway, John Huston and Belinda Palmer. Wong's reference is only one of such imaginations among many in popular culture. The representation of Chinatown is often realized through the depiction of its inhabitants as the "Yellow Peril," portrayed as crooks, thieves, corrupt, untrustworthy, and filthy. Against the backdrop of Chinatown, the impression of evil and mystery rises as "the ominous shadow of an Oriental figure thrown against a wall, secret panels which slide back to reveal an inscrutable Oriental face, the huge shadow of a hand with tapering fingers and long pointed fingernails posed menacingly, the raised dagger appearing suddenly and un-expectedly."<sup>30</sup> For example, Sax Rohmer's infamous creation of Dr. Fu Manchu, a heartless master criminal, who

26 Guenter B. Risse, *Plague, Fear and Politics in San Francisco* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 12.

27 Marc Augé, *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. John Howe (New York: Verso, 1995), 78.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., 50.

30 Dorothy B. Jones, *The Portrayal of China and India on the American Screen, 1896-1955: The Evolution of Chinese and Indian Themes, Locales, and Characters as Portrayed on the American Screen* (Cambridge, Mass.: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1955), 13.

was featured extensively in cinema, television, radio, comic books for over ninety years. The visual representation of Dr. Fu Manchu not only popularized the Fu Manchu moustache<sup>31</sup> (to make him look sly) but also the long fingernails, a symbol for foulness that point to Chinatown, a den of iniquity.

Not surprisingly, the image of the Octopus, the multi-handed soulless devil comes to mind again. What is more interesting is that the figure of an octopus also refers the idea of alienation, of otherness, considering the visual representation of the extraterrestrial intelligence. In addition to being a physiologically and culturally unhygienic place, Chinatown (mixed visual elements from other Asian cultures, such as those from Japan) is also repetitively being portrayed as such an alien place, a site for a racialized and dystopic future. The Yellow Peril is manifested as a projection of futuristic anxieties.

However, in Wong's films, he denies these assigned characteristics of Chinatown. Instead, he introduces Chinatown as a superimposed *place* and *non-place*—depicting proximity that nonetheless institutes a barrier of distance. *Making Chinatown's* seven channels play simultaneously with different scenarios, lines of conversations, and music background merging into each other and the sense of space and time collapses. In *After Chinatown* (2013), a sequel of *Making Chinatown*, Wong, again, plays both Detective and Mrs. Mulwray, switching back and forth between the protagonists. He is simultaneously predator and prey. Suspended between states of perceptive and disorientation, the figures hastily chase each other in the alleyways yet remain beyond forces of identification. The shifting identity signals the continual refiguration of Chinatown: neither strange nor familiar, neither absent nor present, creating non-place in the places, in neither dream nor reality.

31 The Fu Manchu moustache is a full, straight moustache that grows downward past the lips and on either side of the chin.

*City of the Queen:*  
*A Novel of Colonial Hong Kong*  
**Shih Shu-ching**

3

This alien land was a bleak and a barbaric hostile island, not just for Deyun but for the early colonizers as well; it was a frightening place with barren mountains and unruly waters. Britons considered it an insidious form of exile to be sent to the queen's most backward city in the Pacific. Even ambitious young civil servants did not accept their posts without qualms, let alone view them as stepping-stones for future promotion. British sailors who planned to make career in the Royal Navy had a rude awakening when they were sent to the Western Garrison. The well water decimated their ranks, and taipans, who engaged in smuggling by sea, found the terrible weather on land unbearable. Every winter, snow covered Mount Taiping, which was not even two thousand feet high, and as soon as May arrived, the humid, stuffy summer took hold before anyone had a chance to change out of their woolen undergarments. They ate flyspecked meat, then spent half the summer seeking medical treatment for stomach ailments.

Then came an unknown fever, and members of the Western Garrison began dropping like flies. Malaria spread from the marshes eastward, and a quarter of the