

“See you in the same old place”: the postcolonial uncanny in *Killing the Angel*:

Short Stories by S. Quanan

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Abstract

As Mike Ingham observed in “Writing on the Margin: Hong Kong English Poetry, Fiction and Creative Non-Fiction”, in Hong Kong, Anglophone writing long carries the stigma of being “irrelevant” and “colonial”. It is deemed to be largely expatriate, unable to capture the “local” and as a result often excluded from the study and discussion of Hong Kong literature. Against such prejudice, the present paper argues that English writing can be just as apt as Chinese in closely engaging with socio-political issues of Hong Kong through discussing the case of *Killing the Angel*, the English debut by Hong Kong Chinese writer Quanan Shum. In the short story collection, tropes of the Freudian uncanny, Oedipus complex, and the death drive are extensively utilized and reinvented to illustrate Hong Kong’s postcolonial identity crisis. The male protagonists in Quanan’s stories are all deeply upset by the city’s profound unhomeliness. As the search of political freedom becomes ever more hopeless, they attempt to find escape through sexual relationships with women, only to be further haunted by the mother(land) that threatens to dissolve their identities. However, Quanan also hints at the possibility to break through his own narrative. To conclude the paper, this paper investigates Quanan’s bilingualism and self-translation and asserts the significance of English writing to the postcoloniality of Hong Kong.

Reflection

Hongkongers have been faced by identity crisis. Four and a half years as an

English major with a fairly strong background in Chinese literature has made me realize how personal this crisis can be. “Why not both” is easier said than done; I often find myself in a neither/nor situation like a double misfit, feeling schizophrenic. The capstone project was very therapeutic in that it helped me reconsider the issue of identity. It did not offer any answer, but possibilities are opened. Perhaps there is no need to see the self and the other as antagonistic. Perhaps Chinese and English are both just as foreign as local to Hong Kong. Perhaps, as Ackbar Abbas said, there is nothing to apologize for being hybrid and being the on the edges. Perhaps one day I will be able to achieve something unique with my writing not despite but because of its idiosyncrasies.