



# Hiding in Plain Sight: Translating Contemporary Hong Kong Writing

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- Language
- Sense of Place
- Themes

Language

- Written vs Spoken
  - Invisible language
  - Names
- Traces of Cantonese
  - Idiom
  - ?

- Invisible Language
  - Written Chinese
    - Hon's straightforward prose style
      - Grammar, pronouns, verbs of Standard Chinese
  - Hon Lai Chu reading aloud
    - Pronouns, verbs, common nouns

# Reading Aloud

- 是 : 係
- 不是 : 唔係
- 他 : 佢
- 吃 : 食
- 喝 : 飲
- 看 : 睇
- 的 : 嘅
- 我們 : 我哋

- What strategies, if any, are available to the translator?

韓麗珠 《風箏家族》

Names of characters in Hon Lai Chu's "Kite Family"

白

浮塵

白白

魏

莊

迷妳

林木

林發

林白

陳年

陳末

江湖



- What is the work doing?
- What motivates choices of names?

韓麗珠 《風箏家族》

Names of characters in Hon Lai Chu's "Kite Family"

白	Blanc
浮塵	Dusty
白白	Zero
魏	Ngai
莊	Zong
迷妳	Minnie
林木	Forrest Woods
林發	Rich Woods
林白	Pearl
陳年	Amber
陳末	Dot
江湖	Clay

- Disappearing idioms—translation hides localisms
  - Spoiled Brains

# Sense of Place

- Surrealism
- Global City, Global Capital
- Physical Surroundings
- Social and Cultural Context

- Surrealism elides place
- Anywhere and nowhere, and yet...

- Global City

- Physical Surroundings
  - Demolition and construction
    - The Kite Family
    - Heartbreak Hotel
  - Vast indoor shopping centers--disorientation
    - Spoiled Brains
    - The Kite Family
  - Tenement like conditions
    - Spoiled Brains



- Social and Cultural Context

- Spoiled Brains
  - Migration
  - Overcrowding, lack of privacy
- Heartbreak Hotel
  - Women from another town
- Forrest Woods Chair
  - Family pressures and dysfunction
- The Kite Family
  - Demolition and construction

- Deceptively accessible
  - Relatability: a double edged sword

# Themes

- Late capitalism
- Environmental degradation
- Economic pressures
- Family dysfunction
- Urban environment
- Human trafficking
- Lack of privacy

- Anti-individualism
  - Notes on an Epidemic
  - Puma
- Government intrusion on private life
  - Notes on an Epidemic
  - The Kite Family

# Particularity, Hong Kong-ness 香港性

- There if you know to look for it
- Don't need a degree in 20<sup>th</sup> century Chinese history to enjoy or connect with (unlike Mainland works which can be much too opaque), but how do we take it further?

# Contemporary Hong Kong writing

- Language
- Sense of place
- Themes



- Accessibility
  - Potential asset, can bring in new readers
  - Risk of normalization
- Highlight the particulars:
  - Translator's introduction
  - Where possible, introduce heteroglossia
  - Publication of more Hong Kong literature