

Ambivalent Loyalties: Tales of Trans/national Belonging

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Abstract

The contemporary movements of transnational migrants, who draw on connections and identifications with more than one nation in everyday life, present a fascinating problem for the study of national loyalty. This paper draws on interviews with recent migrants from Hong Kong - a group without a strong history of 'national' identification. In diverse accounts of 'belonging between' Hong Kong and Australia, various objects emerge as quasi-national referents in a play of preferences, loyalties and attachments. Three ethnographic case studies map the conflicting and ambivalent loyalties that mark simultaneous engagements in national and transnational social fields.

Transnational loyalties: depths and surfaces

The movements of transnational migrants, who draw on connections with more than one nation in everyday life, present a fascinating challenge for the study of citizenship, national loyalty and the sense of belonging. How does loyalty, the "non-contractual ties that bind individuals to a community" (Delanty, 2003, p. 125), operate within the de-territorialised conditions which are characteristic of diasporic formations or transnational migrant communities bridging at least two national spaces?

Political theory generally conceives of the object of loyalty as singular - the concept of loyalty tended to be "centred on the nation state as the impersonation of the unique characteristics and aspirations that distinguished each people from all others" (Vogel, 2003, p. 19). One example is Benedict Anderson's (1983) well-known account of the imagining of a sovereign national community as a "deep horizontal comradeship" (p. 7) that could command loyalty to the extent of giving up one's life in war. Deeply felt attachments and obligations could be grounded in the cultural narrative of the nation. The 'constructed' nature of these narratives does not negate their subjective effects: 'primordial' national attachments may be culturally engineered or invented, but they are still *felt* to be primordial. However, since Anderson, the cultural elements of such imaginings have increasingly come to be understood as multiple, modular, portable and mobile (Appadurai, 1990).

Today it has become common to maintain that nation states have a lesser hold on the loyalty of their citizens. As the rhetoric of globalisation enters every sphere, we increasingly encounter more 'flexible' notions of attachment to nations. Migration studies only recently moved beyond an understanding of migrant experience framed by "dominant models of bipolar landscapes and localised identities" (Rouse, 1995). Accordingly, the connotation of loyalty as allegiance to a single sovereign body has given way to a plurality of modalities of attachment or

belonging. For instance, Nadia Lovell (1998) describes belonging as a “multifaceted, multilayered process which mobilises loyalty to different communities simultaneously” (p. 5)

Other writers have pushed further in the direction of pluralising networks of attachment, while decentering any primary community or nationality as an object of loyalty. Elspeth Probyn (1996), in *Outside Belongings*, conceives of belonging in terms of an impulse for “some sort of attachment, be it to other people, places, or modes of being, and the ways in which individuals and groups are caught within wanting to belong, and wanting to become, a process that is fuelled by yearning rather than the positing of identity as a stable state” (p. 19). In pursuing a Deleuzian emphasis on the immanence of surface connections and rhizomatic networks propelled by desire, she opposes ‘outside belongings’ to the ‘inner’ attachments of cultural or national roots. Theoretical thinking about belonging or identity frequently relies on polarised spatial metaphors in attempting to construct a specific “space of the subject” (Kirby, 1996, p. 148). For instance, playing with the same arboreal metaphor of roots as Probyn, James Clifford privileges ‘routes’ over roots in arguing for the emergence of fluid, portable socialities associated with ‘dwelling-in-travel’ rather than in a fixed relation to a locality and single sovereignty (Clifford, 1997, p. 2). A disavowal of roots is a common feature of other influential ‘cosmopolitan’ writers such as Said (1984), Bhabha (1994), Hannerz (1989) and Beck (2000). While these writers have, in differing ways, contributed greatly to shifting attention to the subjectivities of increasingly mobile subjects, I am wary of a certain normative privileging of particular modes of mobile belonging and disavowal of ‘homely’ attachments. The deracinated, cosmopolitan subjectivity celebrated in much of this writing sometimes appears to be a performative mirroring of the authors themselves, perhaps limiting their usefulness to inform the investigation of empirical regularities and patterns of loyalties and attachments among specific migrant groups.

In spite of the recent rethinking of the nature and scale of migrant practices and their multiple domains, problematic oppositions remain, thereby clouding thought about the allegiances and alignments of migrants ‘betwixt and between’ national sovereignties. It does not seem analytically useful to see mobility and settlement, or transnationalism and national loyalty. Are ‘deep’ and ‘surface’ attachments incommensurable? Is loyalty necessarily opposed to cosmopolitan dispositions?

These kinds of questions were very relevant to the research I carried out with migrant subjects from Hong Kong.¹ The emphasis on a plurality of attachments that are disembedded from either points of origin, or from norms of local ties and allegiances, resonated with my research with these highly mobile migrants. Interviews about migration processes were certainly full of fleeting narratives of preference towards either Hong Kong or Australia, which often cohered around tastes or distastes, the comparison of consumption styles, food, fashion, media technologies, weather and so on. But despite the often fleeting, ‘surface’ nature of such ‘weak’ expressions of allegiance, it was not apparent to me that durable ties to national and cultural entities were necessarily more attenuated. Rather, I was aware of a co-existence of deep and surface attachments, sometimes existing in considerable tension.

In this paper I will explore the emotions at play at varying ‘depths’ of national belonging, drawing on some ethnographic accounts of ambivalent loyalty which emerged in my research with Hong Kong emigrants, who came to Australia in the 1990s. This recent migration flow is generally transnational in character, since there is typically a high rate of return, and frequent flying movements connecting kin, businesses and careers. It will be necessary to first provide a brief background to Hong Kong migration to Australia, and the political and cultural contexts in which it is linked.

Hong Kong migration in a time of colonial transition

The circumstances of Hong Kong migration practices I was researching were intimately connected to the political events in the period prior to the handover of sovereignty - from British Hong Kong to the Special Administrative Region - which occurred on 1 July 1997. The long countdown of the 'twilight' period before the handover - from 1984 to 1997 - was a highly charged time for Hong Kong subjects. The inaugurating moment of this transitional period was the Sino-British 'Joint Declaration' of 1984, which set out the terms for return of all of Hong Kong to China and the setting up of the Special Administrative Region for fifty years from 1997. But it was the dire events at Tiananmen Square on 4 June 1989 that galvanised and magnified anxieties about the PRC government and triggered a dramatic increase in emigration. The mood during the handover period could oscillate rapidly between dread and fear of possible political calamity, which was at a peak in 1989 and the early 1990s, and the strangely hopeful, even deliriously positive, mood leading up to the handover in 1997. The relentless marketing of the handover by the colonial government in the twilight decade of the 1990s presented Hong Kong as a spectacle of economic success and Asian modernity - few informants were untouched by this image of Hong Kong as the pearl or the golden place of *entrepôt* capitalism. At the same time, a sense of exhaustion and boredom could result from the repetition and over-exposure of these signifiers (Lilley, 2000).

During this transitional period, Hong Kong emerged as a major supplier of immigrants to Australia, briefly surpassing the United Kingdom as the number one source of migrants (Kee and Skeldon, 1994, pp. 183-214). There were less than 9,000 Hong Kong-born people in Australia in 1976, and 68,000 by 1996 (DIMA, 2000, p. 4). While there is a long history of Southern Chinese migration to Australia from the nineteenth century, Hong Kong having been a major point of embarkation for movement to many parts of the Pacific, including Australia (Sinn, 1995, pp. 12, 21), recent migrations were largely unconnected to existing communities in Australia.² The Hong Kong-born population in Australia could be described in a government report as "one of the youngest immigrant communities in Australia" (DIMA, 2000, p. 2).

Hong Kong people migrating in the 'twilight' period were not refugees or exiles in the strict sense, although they were generally responding to a potential political emergency - the end of British colonial governance, and the uncertainties this engendered. Hong Kong's situation was never straightforwardly 'post-colonial'. There is no nation called 'Hong Kong' or no real prospect of national self-determination; only the peculiar fifty-year interregnum of the Special Administrative Region negotiated between China and Britain. Hong Kong was returned to China in 1997, but it is still effectively partitioned off from the rest of China. Its value for China, and to the rest of the capitalist world, seems to lie in its continuing separation and differentiation from the PRC, at least for the moment. These specific factors made the viability of national identifications highly fragile and precarious.

Hence it is difficult to speak of 'national' loyalty in the case of Hong Kong. British administrations made little attempt at fostering loyalty among its Chinese subjects, as was the case with India or Australia, at least not until the final years of rule. Any semblance of identification with Hong Kong was largely grounded in the consumption practices of the newly affluent *entrepôt*, with its distinctive culture industry products, such as cinema, Cantopop and fashion (Chun, 1996, p. 58). Other commentators maintain that Hong Kong subjects bear little identity with Hong Kong itself, being oriented more to a kind of perpetual mobility in pursuit of economic opportunity. Aihwa Ong (1992) presents Hong Kong emigrants as fully globalised subjects oriented primarily by economic opportunity: "[T]he Hong Kong subject seeks not to return to the cultural motherland, but to join the transnational world of capitalism that developed under European hegemony" (p. 131).

For Ong, the identity of Hong Kong migrants is not tied to place or culture, but to the internalisation of Hong Kong's historical role as a trading *entrepôt*. The Hong Kong sociologist Wong Siu-lun (1994) asserted that Hong Kong migrants were opportunist and had no loyalty to

Hong Kong: they would simply go to the place of greatest economic advantage. Hong Kong emigrants to Australia were ‘roaming yuppies’, characterised by a ‘refugee mentality’, instrumental motivations, ‘short term orientation and brash behaviour’, and ‘self confidence bordering on conceit’ (pp. 373, 386). Wong depicts them as driven purely by economic gain, as free-floating entrepreneurs wandering the globe at will, unbounded by social or political limitations or any sense of loyalty. In a sense, these accounts merely echoed truisms - such as ‘Hong Kong people only care about money’ - often expressed by Hong Kong people about themselves. Nevertheless, migrants from Hong Kong were also characterised as ‘reluctant exiles’ (Skeldon, 1994) owing to the high rates of return migration. The term ‘insurance migration’ was common usage amongst emigrants to describe a strategy of securing foreign citizenship in order to return to Hong Kong. Insurance migrants were those who emigrated primarily to gain citizenship of a second country in the event of some form of political downturn. Insurance migration is not a mode of exile, but a means of remaining by ensuring the possibility of exile. Rather than constituting a flight from Hong Kong, it enabled a continued existence in Hong Kong, buttressed by a degree of political security. Is this loyalty or disloyalty?

Given the above perspectives on migrants from Hong Kong, they would seem to be likely candidates for ‘outside belonging’, lacking the historical basis for a well developed ‘national’ identity, having developed an entrepôt orientation to a wider world of capitalist opportunity, speaking an ‘in-between’ language (Cantonese), and having inherited an ambivalent relation to both China and ‘the West’ as cultural and political points of reference. Perhaps this seems like unpromising ground for national loyalties, as some of the authors cited above appear to argue. Nonetheless, I insist on pursuing the idea of national loyalty in relation to transmigrants from Hong Kong, albeit a wider notion of loyalty that is able to accommodate “plural, non-exclusive affective ties of both a cultural *and* political character” (Devetak, 2003, p. 40).³ The instances of national loyalty I will be examining are thus potentially multi-directional, although not so pluralised or malleable as to make the idea of loyalty meaningless. Loyalties of necessity carry an emotional charge because they imply demands and obligations on the person: it was the strongly affective nature of the following enactments of loyalty that alerted me to their importance for these migrants. These displays of loyalty could perhaps be dubbed small ‘I’ loyalty, as they were not grounded in identifications with movements or transnational political institutions, as is the case with many diasporic groups. In this sense, they demonstrate ‘pre-political’ feelings, emerging in the flux of new experiences of migrant accommodation to transnational space. The salience of an analysis of feelings of loyalty in a still-forming migration milieu is that they point to tensions and ambivalences in relation to specific migration trajectories where final destinations are in doubt.

Topographies of national belonging in transnational spaces

In the remainder of this paper I explore some ethnographic instances of emotions arising from conflicting loyalties. My informants were Hong Kong emigrants who left Hong Kong and came to Australia in the years before the 1997 handover. My research from 1995 to 2000 was not originally concerned with national loyalties, but with the experience of moving between very different kinds of urban space. However, I was struck by the frequency of expressions of national attachment that emerged in highly affective moments in discussions about processes of adjustment in migration. I became interested in the directionalities of national loyalty (to Hong Kong, Australia or China, for instance) of recent migrants, given that these were neither straightforward nor generalisable. Expressions of such loyalties showed differing levels and intensities of attachment to national objects - from ‘deep’ attachments grounded in what was felt to be relatively stable collective identifications, to apparently fleeting desires and affects acquired

en route. I want to examine some of this material in order to encompass both transitional, 'surface' modalities of ('outside') belonging and 'inside' belonging attachments of an apparently interiorised subjectivity.

If clearly defined, 'monogamous' loyalties cannot be assumed amongst transnational subjects. How are 'national' objects of attachment to be located amongst people who are moving frequently or may be short-term residents in the host country? Everyday conversations about migrant inhabitancy threw up multiple 'representations of space', to appropriate Lefebvre (1991), which serve to bifurcate the discursive space of transnational movement into a 'here' and a 'there'. Particularly at times of greatest insecurity or uncertainty, a division of the transnational world into good and bad is deployed as a discursive device, which assists settling and making strategic decisions about on-going movements (Mar, 1998). Almost any object or quality can enter into narratives of transnational comparison, in which a logic of evolutionary developmentalism can often be found. Hence 'Kevin', an electrical engineer, describes the technological primitivity he found in Australia:

My first impressions? Australia is not a very advanced country. Most of the families they own old fashioned electrical appliances. And also telecommunication technology is not so advanced as Hong Kong. And also you can see the overhead lines for electricity are everywhere in the suburbs, as far as Central Station [in Sydney], not as good as in Hong Kong. But the people - very friendly compared with Hong Kong people. You can talk with them anywhere, for example, if you are travel in a coach, you can talk with them, you can talk about anything. In Hong Kong you can never do that - if you do that, they think you are crazy [laughing].

Australia was typically depicted as pure *gemeinschaft* - quaintly backward, but friendly. This kind of account was common amongst returnees such as Kevin, who had gone back to Hong Kong to work. For Kevin, Australia is a place to retire or to come for holidays, a kind of ludic space of deferral. This example illustrates the way in which transnational space is 'folded' along the lines of social potentiality and economic potentiality. Hong Kong is identified with economic power, work and material necessity, in short, the 'reality principle' writ large, in contradistinction to Australia, which was associated with nature, leisure, slowness and sociality - an imagined freedom from necessity. 'National' spaces are idealised as potentialities which cannot be brought together in the present.

The role of idealisation amongst subjects in between places can be linked to Kleinian object relations theory, which articulates processes in which the splitting of the world of the subject entails the projective allocation of good and bad objects to different national entities or places. In transnational contexts, this bifurcation of transnational space operates to help distribute aspects of the good and bad in migrant experience and in articulations of hoped-for states of becoming. This degree of dichotomisation will tend to diminish as migrant subjects become more secure in their incorporation into new environments. As with a child, "as the threat of persecution abates, the necessity for the vigilance of splitting is reduced; the infant experiences herself as more durable, less in danger of being crushed or contaminated by external or internal forces" (Mitchell and Black, 1995, p. 94). Without wanting to place my research subjects on the couch (no entendres intended), I maintain that the analysis of projective idealisation in accounts of migration experiences is a useful means of tracing patterns of the distribution of values in a transnational milieu. The kind of narrative idealisation I have been describing is probably general in the practices of migration and travel, but it is of specific interest in the way it can illuminate a particular matrix of national representations in circulation amongst migrants from Hong Kong. Whether such idealisations constitute idioms for expressing more enduring loyalties is open to question. That would depend on the continuity and duration of feelings linked to these

representations. However, I often encountered more elaborated narratives of national loyalty entwined with the specific situations of individual persons. I have chosen three cases to illustrate differing directions taken in the negotiation of loyalties.

1. Josie: sporting dilemmas

A limited feeling of national belonging to Australia was hardly surprising because my informants had all lived in Australia for a relatively short time, and many had returned to Hong Kong. Nevertheless, expressions of some kind of affinity to the host country were not uncommon. A woman I will call Josie discussed her sense of becoming Australian, moving from the experience of her citizenship ceremony, and hearing of Sydney's success in the bid to host the 2000 Olympic Games.

P: Getting your Australian citizenship, did it mean much to you?

J: Actually, I didn't get much sense of being Australian then, but when Australia got the Olympics, I'm just watching that when John... Fahey [struggling to pronounce the name], is that right?, and he's jumping with another person,⁴ and I'm jumping too [she makes a high pitched whooping sound]... Sometimes watching cricket, with the West Indies, I listen to that and I watch the television, and if they win I will jump [she makes an excited sound again, like hmhohohohurray].

I was reminded of the jumping bodies in the 'Oh what a feeling' Toyota ads, which convey the upward bodily motion of 'elation' very well (which is what elation literally means - a lifting). In this case, her response was doubly mimetic, imitating the embodied expression of joy of an Australian politician, and assuming the patriotic triumph of Australians in general. Josie's elation at Sydney's Olympic selection seems to have validated her settlement choice, the feeling of having picked a winner. (Most Hong Kong people I spoke to felt it was an honour to have won the Olympic selection, in marked contrast to Australians in my milieu who were far more cynical.) Josie's exuberant bodily response to sporting spectacles signalled for her a transfer of both national loyalty and a change in disposition - she had never cultivated any interest in sport in Hong Kong. But changing loyalty may be a slippery moral proposition intimating further dilemmas. Josie's reflections later in the interview further pursued the logic of her new national feeling to arrive at an ambivalent juncture:

That kind of behaviour, following the sports, usually a person do it like they feel they belong. I belong to Australia, so I will support them, I will feel really proud of them. But what if China came, like at war, like *clashing* - the question would be too hard to answer. Who would you turn to? The same as like, if my husband and my mother is drowning, which one would you want to get?

This sudden conscious shift in focus from sport to war, from the relatively trivial to matters of life and death, suggests the potential gravity of making new alignments. Josie sensed in her shifting of loyalties that other loyalties could be compromised or betrayed. It was China, and not Hong Kong, that Josie counter-posed to Australia as the alternative object of loyalty (the interview took place before 1997). Variable identifications with China and Hong Kong are part of the complex histories of Hong Kong people. Narratives of belonging intertwine collective and individual strands, and include complicated and generationally inflected dynamics of identification.

In this case, a ‘surface’ attachment based in new connections and tastes (e.g. an acquired interest in sport) accompanies an eruption of anxiety about conflicting loyalties to Hong Kong, China and Australia, between the subject’s natal family and her newly acquired Australian family. Loyalty here emerges affectively as a clash of incommensurable claims on the person. As Judith Shklar (1993, p. 184) noted, the emotional nature of loyalty sets it apart from more formal and rule-governed obligations. Loyalties are fundamentally not rationally chosen or voluntary in nature. Incommensurable demands can arise when loyalties to different objects coincide and are placed in conflict. Ambivalence about conflicting loyalties is deeply felt because it is not primarily within the realms of cognitive or interpretive action. Rather, such ambivalence suggests a potentially painful dilemma of ‘valence’, an almost chemical bond to persons or collectivities.⁵ Moments of ambivalent loyalty mark out affective points of collision between modalities of attachment in which kinship, gender and sexuality are important elements.

2. *Janey: floating allegiances*

To further illustrate these cross-cutting loyalties encompassing three national objects of identification amongst Hong Kong migrants, I will use the words of Janey, a nurse then in her mid-thirties, who had emigrated some five years before I met her and married an ‘Aussie’. This tale has a cross-generational political dimension involving Janey’s parents who were quite elderly and had both come from rural Guangdong in the aftermath of the Second World War and Communist revolution. They had remained in Hong Kong where Janey’s other siblings were also living. They had no intention of emigrating but made regular trips to visit their daughter and young grandchildren in Sydney.

When I first interviewed her, Janey had not been living in Sydney for long and was feeling homesick. Janey had complained by telephone to her mother in Hong Kong of missing Hong Kong. Her mother surprised her by berating her: “Why do you feel homesick? Hong Kong is not your home.” For Janey’s parents, Hong Kong had never represented a stable entity, a place identifiable as a home. For Janey it was a palpable place of origin where she had an ‘at home feeling’. Studies of ‘Hong Kong identity’ have pointed to the relatively recent emergence of a national (or quasi-national) sense of being a *Heunggong yan*, a Hong Kong person (see Lau and Kuan, 1988, p. 2). Janey would often speak of a singular Hong Kong way of thinking or of doing things that suggests the operation of a well-formed ‘national’ category that her parents do not recognise.

However, Janey’s knowledge of China was filtered largely through her parents’ memories. Her ‘China’ was a misty construction grounded in the emotionally charged world of her mother’s stories and songs. Janey described an instance when her mother visited Janey in Sydney. They were driving while her mother sang songs from her village, including ones about the Japanese invasion of China:

In the car we sing old Chinese songs. She grew up in a peasant family, they have like a bamboo shelter, with a lot of plants growing on top, and the people sit there after a whole day of work, waiting for their husband or the son. So she’s singing in the car and sometimes she’s crying. Like they sing, oh the Japanese are coming, everything is peaceful until the Japanese come, lost everything, and then she will start crying. And definitely, when I hear the traditional songs that have a lot to do with the Chinese village, not Hong Kong, and when they sing they will just relate to the water, the fish, the farm, and things like that. But I never experienced that, but I feel like, that’s China. So when I sing I just feel like, I belong there.

This imagining of a peaceful rural China before the Japanese may be more characteristic of older refugees, yet Janey has inherited it, although she had never been on a farm or under a bamboo shelter herself.⁶ Her broader sense of ‘traditional’ China, conveyed performatively through her mother, is monolithic and frozen in time.

They (the Chinese) never go and they never need to. They never need to settle anywhere. They never need to settle because they’re always in one place with the same people all the time.

Janey, from her ‘Hong Kong-born’ perspective, envisions China and the Chinese as a homogenous and eternal presence (notwithstanding the upheaval of its modern history and the resultant migrations of her parents). ‘China’ is the inverse of the Hong Kong Chinese - the Chinese are static, while the Hong Kong Chinese are in motion.

J: This group of Chinese of Hong Kong, they need to settle all the time, to find comfort all the time. Adjust to the environment all the time. They’re mobile. I remember like my mum usually said “you are in a... *fáu tauh*,” meaning like in Cantonese my mum said that “you are in a *fáu tauh déi fóng*,” meaning like parking... a ship will stay somewhere, a ship will come around in a... a... [she is searching for the right word] harbour, or a...

H: port... [her husband suggests]

J: A port, yeah. You are living in a port, Hong Kong is a port, you got to learn a skill, otherwise you can’t have a firm place to stand on.

P: A skill?

J: Yeah, yeah, something to settle, to stand firm, to stand on your feet or to just keep the status, or... So my mum means like, this is not a stable environment, so you got to try your very best to catch up whatever that place wants you. So, I said that because that means from my very young age I need, I know that you’ve got to have a skill all the time to catch up.

Hong Kong is viewed as a transitional place against the stable verity of China and the Chinese. An imaginary of centrality and peripherality, as well as relative size, is operating here. China is the originary land and Hong Kong a ship or ‘port’, a place existing only as temporary mooring.

It is important to remember that this is Janey’s mother’s perspective ‘translated’ in Janey’s tale, although it can be difficult to discern the boundaries between their perspectives. Interestingly, it is Janey’s mother, with her ‘deep’ roots in rural Chinese culture, who has the stronger disposition to mobility and the need to find the ‘place of opportunity’. From Janey’s perspective, China is literally a mother-land, since it is affectively transferred through her mother.

This case suggests something more complicated than the old myth of the Chinese as perpetual ‘sojourners’. Janey’s parents are stolidly anti-Communist and have stubbornly never gone back across the border even for a short trip, even though their home-village is less than one-hundred kilometres from Hong Kong. This presents an interesting inversion of one of the stock narratives of migrant settlement - the figure of the ‘traditional’ migrant parents stuck in the old ways of homeland identification. In this case, Janey’s mother is the more disengaged from identification with Hong Kong. Even though she exhibits a spoiled nostalgia for the rural China of her upbringing, she is more attuned to a condition of ‘light modernity’ (Bauman, 2000) than her daughter, who is impelled to perform a cultural allegiance to China, perhaps to balance the sense of cultural lack she feels in Australia.

Janey has a doubled perspective, a romantic view of China filtered through her mother’s representations and emotionally charged performances, combined with a more experientially

grounded sense of herself as a *Heunggong yan* and a naturalised sense of mainland Chinese as radically other. She draws on all of these at various times, as well as this image of the 'floating motherland', that mobile pursuit of opportunity. Like other Hong Kong migrant subjects, at times she feels 'deep' attachments to either Hong Kong or China. She expresses these layered impulses to belong as being oriented to three 'national' homes:

Hong Kong is my home, where I grow up, where I learned everything. Yeah, Hong Kong is my home, and from a very young age I see China is my country. And now my husband and kids are here, I will naturally feel that this is my home. Like this is my home, but my heart is still there I suppose. Sort of hard, I can't figure it out, but this is true.

Here we find multiple referents to home: Hong Kong as birthplace and place of formation, China as cultural reference point and mother-land (almost literally), and Australia as the place of the husband, the home that must be made. Janey's subsequent strategy in Sydney seems to have been to deepen practices of cultural maintenance of Chineseness, to bring the Chinese home into the Australian home and her family life. For instance, Janey chose a 'traditional' post-partum diet of pig's feet, herbs and ginger following the birth of her daughter in Sydney, remarking that she would not have bothered before emigrating, and that she was becoming 'more Chinese than she had been in Hong Kong'. I encountered such 're-traditionalising' modes of attachment to practices associated with 'traditional' Chineseness, particularly amongst women living in Australia, who perhaps tended to experience greater isolation and to sense a lack of recognition. On the other hand, subjects could disavow 'Chinese' tastes and cultural practices in favour of new enjoyments and forms of lifestyle and sociality, conceived as being more Australian (e.g. barbecues, pubs and Australian sports) or more multicultural. In the process loyalties to Australia begin to take shape.

3. *Stanley and the old Australian*

The final story concerns inter-cultural relationships with Aussies and the impulse to forge attachments with those perceived to be the most culturally legitimate people. Stanley is a computer technician in his forties who settled with his family in a suburb of Sydney. He describes his friendship with an older Aussie man in his neighbourhood:

My neighbour actually treats me as his son... He's an Australian, from the third or the fourth generation. They own that land. They own half of the suburb in the past, according to what they told me. Just a big piece of farm. I prefer to live in an area with the old traditional Australian than the new migrant. The new migrant, they still have to find a way to settle. Everything, every sliding movement will make them to think whether it's against them or for them. But the old one, it doesn't matter. The old Australian, they have seen things change. For example, now they try to accept the Asian, I mean the Asian migrant, whereas some fifteen years ago they accept the Greek and Italian. The same thing.

Here Stanley enacts a desire for a father figure, in this case literally identified with the Australian fatherland. At the same time, this allows him to assume an overview of the social contents of the nation from the viewpoint of this 'old traditional Australian'. Migrants who 'still have to find a way to settle' are not fully Australian in this view, which is (in a way) very perceptive of the relations of national belonging, in which belonging is not an either/or relation, but a matter of differential accumulations of 'national capital'.⁷ He had the assurance to arbitrate about the

position of others. He can do this by aligning with his neighbour's 'pioneer' narrative of suburban squattocracy.

Stanley was only too aware of the precariousness of migrant settlement: 'every sliding movement' is magnified, for instance, when "the children come back every day crying, and your wife says the neighbour's bad." Hence the projective idealisation of the neighbour who represents security and legitimacy:

P: You're saying you'd rather not live with the people who are still settling?

S: I prefer to live with the old Australians. I mean old ones who have been here more than two or three generations. The new ones they have to fend for their family, they have to fend for their kids, get a secure job.

P: You feel more at ease with them [the old Australians]?

S: And they are not that mean. Some of the new migrants, they are very mean.

P: Which migrants?

S: I mean the [other] neighbours. At a certain stage my fence was damaged, and I don't know how to fix it. And I have no time to do it. My neighbour, who is going to be eighty, he went to buy the wood, and then he nailed it, and he fixed the fence. That is a common experience. But I am much younger than him, he is eighty and I am only forty at that time. He fixed it for me, and he said, "you don't have to pay." He paid everything. And later on, when I find some of the fence is damaged, then I say, "this is my part." And he gave me the whole bucket of nails, and said "This is useless to me. Can you take it? If you need it, you just take it." So it makes a big difference. Little things that make you feel it's totally different.

The largesse and noblesse of the 'old Australian' is contrasted with the meanness of migrant neighbours. 'Little things' rendered are taken as a sign of a more expansive nature. These little things confer Stanley a place on the side of the 'established' Australians, idealised as the 'old Australian' neighbour. Fixing the fence is perhaps too obvious a metaphor for the grounding of national belonging in a hierarchy of difference. Receiving the gift of the nails, Stanley is able to projectively categorise 'the migrants', the Greeks, the Italians, as well as Asians, as other to himself, as 'strata' of settlers legitimated by the longevity of occupation (indigenous Australians are entirely absent from this scheme). This alignment with Australian society relies on an objectification of migrant others and a distancing from an identity with being a migrant. Stanley shows a capacity to transcend migrant status through complicity with the 'old traditional Australian', and the naturalness of this myth of settler domination. In attempting to short-circuit the subalternity of migrant status, Stanley happily accepts a dependent relation to the 'old Australian' neighbour in order to secure a sense of legitimate belonging by association. Did this complicity arise from an affinity with colonial rhetorics of settlement? Identification with the English may not have been as strongly pursued by Hong Kong people as in some British colonial sites, but for Stanley settler rhetorics were recognisable, and preferable to the insecurity of migrant existence within the multicultural hierarchies in Australia.

Typically recent Hong Kong migrants did not perceive Australia as a social sphere in which they could legitimately interact and participate as citizens. And often there was no real desire to do so. In the minds of many migrants, Australia was 'their' country - they being "the people whose homeland is Australia, those people with white skin colour," as one young woman expressed it. In other words, race or whiteness was often explicitly identified with legitimate Australian belonging and citizenship. The naturalness of this legitimacy was rarely questioned. However, this exclusion from core citizenship in a 'white nation' did not necessarily result in a negative emotional sense of displacement or social inferiority. This depended also on the

intensity of psychic investment in Australia, that is, on the sense of necessity of Australian belonging or assimilation, or whether other avenues were possible, such as return to Hong Kong or the development of more cosmopolitan identifications which are less reliant on a fixed territorial referent. These identifications could be with a larger diasporic sense of Chineseness or with the hyper-mobility of global citizenship associated with the figure of the 'astronaut'.⁸

Some conclusions

In this paper I have not attempted to examine loyalty in terms of regularities of practice in public spheres or engagement with transnational political institutions. Rather, I have focused on a 'pre-political' landscape of migrancy by examining accounts of emotional orientations to 'national' objects in the accounts of the newly forming everyday world of migrants. The stories of interviewees articulated a bifurcation of transnational belonging, through a distribution of national objects between Hong Kong and Australia. This on-going process functioned to bring these places into a relation, and to draw together practical experience, representations of place and affective nuances. At the same time, it expressed shifting inclinations, desires and attachments to one place or other, which frequently became attached to national and cultural categories. While no single directionality of nascent identifications could be established, everyday 'national' identifications and attachments emerged as contingent objects in a 'space of play' that could encompass elements from either Hong Kong or Australia. These tended to pursue a logic of distributing potentialities, through a splitting of the temporal and spatial horizons of transnational migrancy. As such, these national identifications emerge from everyday practical strategies of migration - and also reflect differing capacities to mobilise economic and cultural capital. Nevertheless, they could not be reduced to individual dynamics of migrant adjustment and the conversion of resources between social fields, as this would not fully explain the affective charge of many accounts of migrant belonging. A sensitivity to conflicting valences of loyalty is a means of locating points of change and tension.

Nascent identifications with Australia could come into collision with a tangle of existing identifications with Hong Kong or China. National feeling for the host nation could be diminished or undermined on encountering the lesser status and recognition often accorded to migrants. Some subjects experienced exclusion from a sense of Australian belonging, sensing that whiteness and Anglo culture defined the category of 'Australian'. Others could recognise and valorise Aussie myths and values. The man who constructed an almost mythic identification with his neighbour as 'old traditional Australian' was making an alignment with colonial legitimacy, a fantasy which also involved the construction of a hierarchical positioning of migrant others that is structured by degrees of legitimate 'settlement' in a suburban neighbourhood. The three case studies demonstrate the strongly gendered nature of these national loyalties, mediated as they are by intimate relations of a familial or quasi-familial nature: compare the 'motherly' dilemmas of care with the bonding with the Australian father figure who represents the continuities of a settler order. Re-traditionalising strategies cohering around Chineseness could be intensified with settlement in Australia, perhaps as a compensation for a perceived lack of recognition of a cultural way of being previously taken for granted. Patriotic songs or comforting tastes and smells could help to fill a perceived loss of continuity with the ease of belonging associated with a 'Chinese' past.

Despite the individual nature of cases, the plurality of affective attachments I have described is neither arbitrary nor socially unstructured. Firstly, there is a relation with the subject's dispositional capacities to translate dispositions and social and cultural capital into new contexts. The depths and surfaces of attachment can be linked to a dialectical relation within migrant practice between dispositional expansion, where subjects tend to open themselves up to

new experiences, and the pursuit of new pleasures and tastes. This takes place alongside the assimilatory pressures of 'host' cultures, which could be experienced as a sense of contracting social connection, and a contracting identity space of people struggling to fit into estranged space.

Secondly, migrant identifications draw on common narrative elements, drawn from emergent collective imaginings of intersecting national spaces within the orbit of migrant movement. Migrant performances of loyalty draw on an entangling of disjunctive narratives that were even further magnified in the liminal period of the 1997 handover. Hong Kong's figuring as a 'big little' place - dynamic, intense, and politically and culturally in-between - helped to generate an outlook that could be at once cosmopolitan and parochial.⁹ Idealised understandings arising from Hong Kong's peculiar post-colonial situation were played out in migrant subjectivities and projections onto national objects. Hong Kong modernity, entrepôt aspirations to global capitalism and background projections of cultural China are juxtaposed in manifold subject positionings. Such self-imaginings intersect in migrant experience with interpretations of imaginings of the host nation, to produce, for instance, an understanding of Australian egalitarianism juxtaposed with a sense of the hierarchal dimensions of Australian multiculturalism.

Subjects draw on these intersecting imaginings in ways that, while being socially contingent, are linked to the negotiation of specific pathways and dispositional possibilities. The inhabitation of new spaces and cross-national contexts necessitates an expansion of ways of being to incorporate new knowledge and intuitive capacities to act. Specific migration trajectories could be experienced as 'dislocation', a rupture of places and modes of being attuned to those places. Or they could be experienced as dispositional 'expansion', the enhancement of potentials and orientations to new spaces and contexts. The highly mobile styles of migrancy I have been describing require making on-going accommodations between discursively mediated places and sharply different ways of being. It is evident that there is a play of 'inside' and 'outside' modalities of identification, of affective depths and surfaces in new juxtapositions of migrant loyalty. For migrants, the sense of belonging as 'inside' or 'outside' is not a question of philosophical preference, but arises from psychological dispositions and capacities to negotiate the dilemmas of change and continuity (routes and roots, if you like) encountered in migration. Whether the sense of belonging is felt to be deep and 'primordial', or as a flexible connection acquired in a cosmopolitan trajectory, bears a strong relation to the uneven capacities of individuals and collectivities to engage in belonging in relation to host nations, and to access forms of cosmopolitan belonging in wider transnational social fields.

This brings us back to the question of the relevance of loyalty to the plurality and contingency of transnational orientations. A viable conception of loyalty would require more than a simple multiplication of loyalties to match the plurality of possible objects within transnational lives. It would entail the recognition of the difficulties and conflicting logics of multiple emotional bonds which necessarily exceed the demands of any singular and exclusive loyalty. Such an agonistic conception of loyalty will be useful in identifying the valences, intensities and tensions inherent in migrant engagements with specific national and transnational fields.

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² In a 1991 survey, a much higher proportion of Hong Kong people claimed to have relatives in Canada (11.5 per cent) and the United States (10.8 per cent) than in Australia (3.2 per cent) (Wong, 1994, p. 384).

³ Devetak was actually speaking here of the Australian Aboriginal athlete Cathy Freeman's controversial lap of honour at the 1994 Commonwealth Games, where she carried two flags, the Australian national flag and the Aboriginal flag. The fact that this performance of dual loyalty was widely attacked is, of course, symptomatic of the symbolic violence inherent in national loyalties which insist on exclusivity.

⁴ She is referring to an iconic Australian media moment in 1993 when the New South Wales politician John Fahey was captured leaping into the air after the IOC chief Samaranch announced "the winner is... Sydney."

⁵ Ambivalence thus differs in its affective charge to 'ambiguity', which is a doubt or uncertainty around meaning or interpretation. Ambiguity can be present without the emotional and ethical uncertainty that characterises ambivalence.

⁶ Attitudes to the Japanese in Hong Kong are highly complicated and largely generational. They range from hate and mistrust, stemming from the Japanese invasion of China and the occupation of Hong Kong, to an admiration and even fetishisation of Japan and Japanese culture as an alternative (Asian) source of modernity. Hong Kong interest in Japanese fashion,

pop culture (manga, music and ‘cute’ icons such as Hello Kitty) and technology (the latest electronic and communications products) is an important element of Hong Kong’s cultural modernism.

⁷ Ghassan Hage (1998), drawing on Bourdieu’s notion of cultural capital, refers to practical nationality as an accumulation of recognised and valued cultural styles, as well as embodied characteristics - “looks, accent, demeanour, taste, nationally valued social and cultural preferences and behaviour, etc.” (p. 53.).

⁸ The vernacular notion of the astronaut (in Cantonese: *taai hung yahn*) exemplifies a Hong Kong (and more generally East Asian) idealisation of the global body in perpetual motion. The word for astronaut was adapted to describe emigrants who sent family members off to ‘host’ countries, while maintaining businesses or professional careers in Hong Kong or China (Pe Pua, 1996, p. 1).

⁹ High cosmopolitan cultural forms are in themselves ‘parochial’ concentrations, as Meaghan Morris (2004) recently suggested. This is nowhere more evident than in ‘expat’ enclaves of numerous world cities.