6 Re-orientating Hesitantly

Approaching the Entangled Temporalities of Cinema, Dementia, and Hong Kong From a Decolonial Viewpoint

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I open with a scene from Ann Hui's *Summer Snow* (1995, Hong Kong) that captures, in broad strokes, the overarching argument that this chapter puts forward. It is late at night. The Sun family is asleep, and the sound of a clock ticking permeates the whole household. Suddenly, from outside the house, the elderly Lin Sun begins to shout specific clock positions of enemies to his squadron in Mandarin so that they can pilot and shoot the planes down. His daughter-in-law, May, wakes up and finds him on the communal roof with a broken umbrella as a side stick. She rushes towards him and attempts, in Cantonese, to coax him back into the house. As May reaches him, their angry neighbours start throwing trash at them, and Lin Sun, seeing the flying rubbish, announces in Cantonese that the enemy is attacking them. He gets up, drags May, and runs off in the opposite direction to seek shelter. As they run, May points out to Lin Sun that the house is the other way before changing her claim, saying that they need to go to the bomb shelter to hide. Upon hearing her suggestion, Lin Sun agrees, and they both head inside the house.

Here, as Lee Carruthers might argue, the cinematic timeliness of the scene is heightened. For Carruthers, cinema's timeliness "encompasses our encounters with filmic ambiguity, as we read and respond to shifting temporal cues, and it retains the immersive appeal of cinematic time as we acknowledge our ongoing investment in it, as viewers" (16). This moment, like the rest of the film, is shot with Hui's typical social realist style. It is captured through a series of mid- and wide-angle shots by the observing camera, and it unfolds linearly through its editing pattern. Yet, despite the "real time" of the "now" that the scene seems to be rooted in, the succession of events appears to be far from temporally fixed or linear. First, the audience is encouraged to question the assumed function of clock time, as the ticking of the clock in the diegesis is punctured by Lin Sun shouting clock positions, imbuing the clock with a locational function. Second, though he is seated on the communal rooftop piloting an umbrella side stick, Lin Sun appears to be in a plane during the Second World War gunning down the enemy. Third, despite speaking in

Mandarin while flying his plane, he switches to Cantonese when speaking to his daughter-in-law, even though he continues to insist that he is being attacked by the Japanese.¹ And, fourth, in trying to get her father-in-law back into the house, May switches between asking him to go back into the house and asking him to run into the bomb shelter to shield themselves from the incoming rubbish attack.

In paying attention to the minutiae of the film's narrative and form – as I do throughout this chapter – the seemingly straightforward temporal position in the scene becomes significantly more complex and hesitant. This scene, characteristic of *Summer Snow* and cinema about dementia in general, foregrounds the temporal mediation between the film and the audience, as the audience is invited to constantly (re-)assess and (re-)accept the temporalities that are embedded in the unfolding structure of the film. Through the timeliness of *Summer Snow*, the audience, like the characters in the film, is invited to continuously and hesitantly locate themselves temporally and positionally on multiple planes. In highlighting the constant temporal negotiations and refusing to pin any character or the audience members into a fixed temporal regime, films about dementia, I argue, offer and encourage a decolonial worldview that allows us to live with dementia without evaluating one's life course only in relation to the homogeneity of clock time, which, as I explain below, is a form of time that is associated with the project of colonial modernity.²

Such an argument is underpinned and furthered by the socio-politics of pre-handover Hong Kong, in which *Summer Snow* is contextually situated. Released in 1995, Hui's film was produced in a period of deep crisis and change, as Hong Kong cinema (and culture in general) re-examined its relationship with the colonial in all its manifestations. Hong Kong became a British Crown colony in 1842, at the end of the First Opium War, when the Qing Empire ceded Hong Kong Island, and the colony expanded to include the Kowloon Peninsula in 1860 at the end of the Second Opium War. In 1898, Britain signed the Convention for the Extension of Hong Kong, which allowed it to lease the New Territories of Hong Kong from China for 99 years, to expire in 1997. In 1984, mainland China and the UK signed the Sino-British Joint Declaration, and this set in motion the handover of the entirety of Hong Kong to China in 1997. The discussion of the handover occurred mainly at the top levels of governance, and this left the people living in Hong Kong with little agency and voice, consequently engendering a lot of anxiety and (re)consideration of what "Hong Kong-ness" might be or mean.

Set in a period contemporary to 1995, where this rapid (de-/re-)colonial change is taking place, *Summer Snow* follows Lin Sun, the patriarch of an "everyday" Hong Kong family who lives with dementia, as he forges a new relationship with his family. Throughout the film, the characterisation of Lin Sun is typical of cinema about dementia: he regularly insists that he is still piloting airplanes in World War Two, shooting

Japanese invaders down; he constantly wanders the streets of Hong Kong by himself; and he continues to rely heavily on the care of his daughter-in-law, May, whom he rarely fails to acknowledge. Yet, despite the constant temporal and spatial disorientation that Lin Sun faces, the people around him never really renounce him for his out-of-place-ness and out-of-time-ness but, rather, re-orientate themselves in relation to his worldview and changing sense of identification.

Focussing on the caring and interpersonal interactions between the person living with dementia and the person not living with dementia as encompassed by the social realist aesthetics and politics in Hui's film, I propose that *Summer Snow*, as a film about dementia, emblematically offers and invites a decolonial and hesitant encounter that in turn encourages a sense of re-orientation in the viewer.³ Drawing from Alia Al-Saji's understanding of hesitation as that which "suspends, for a brief interval, habits that constitute the normativity of the everyday" ("SPEP" 347), the chapter argues that to hesitate is to unfurl time and to allow for the simultaneous occupation of multiple temporal positions; to hesitate is to take into account an understanding of the interactions between people living with dementia and people not living with dementia as temporally relational; and to live relationally with dementia is to choose the option of living a decolonial way of life.

Hesitation and Entangled Temporalities

This atmosphere of uncertainty that permeates the film can be understood as an acknowledgement of a kind of temporal excess that explodes many of the strict boundaries set up by homogeneous, clock time. In such a way, in being hesitantly made mindful of the different temporalities in negotiation, the potential for a more relational kind of orientation is offered. To develop and add nuance to my suggestion, I turn to Alia Al-Saji's philosophy of hesitation. She writes:

to hesitate is to delay and to make affect wait. The incompleteness, both of affect and of that to which affect responds, is here felt. To wait is to testify that time makes a difference for experience, that all is not given in the present. To open to a futurity that escapes prediction, but also to a past that can be dynamically transformed through the passage of events, and that grounds the creative potential of events.

("A Phenomenology" 148)

Al-Saji's argument is complex and is predicated on a nuancing of the Bergsonian philosophy of time, which I will elaborate upon here. According to Al-Saji, to hesitate is to pause, and this in turn "suspends, for a brief interval, habits that constitute the normativity of the everyday" ("SPEP" 347).

Habits, as understood by Bergson, are intimately tied to the sensory motor, as the body repeats the same effort over and over again. For Bergson, in a habitual act where, for instance, a body is orientated to expect that the clock will go “tock” after the “tick,” the only shreds of the past that remain are “the intelligently coordinated movements which represent the accumulated efforts of the past” (*Matter and Memory* 93). This is to say, the past is contracted – flattened, in various iterations – in the present. The past is subsumed to the bodily and tied to movement, and it largely follows the body as it moves forward, linearly. The habitual, in other words, is tied up with the homogeneity of modern, clock time.

In momentarily pausing the bodily movement of time, Al-Saji posits, hesitation disorients the body and opens up a space where “[u]seless memories, superfluous and aleatory remnants, steal in” (“SPEP” 347). Here, Al-Saji is referring to the ways in which the colonial project of modernity has closed off so many versions of living a life, consigned them to the past, and rendered them effectively useless (and not modern). As she writes, “useless memories are often *witness* to structuring conditions of nonlinear time” (“SPEP” 347; emphasis in original). When these useless shreds of the past re-enter the present through hesitation, the present is reconfigured and, simultaneously, the present’s relationship with the past is also thickened. To hesitate, for Al-Saji, is thus to break “with the closure of the past and the predetermination of the future” (“A Phenomenology” 148). Put differently, to hesitate is to unfurl time and to open up the possibility of occupying multiple and different temporal (and spatial) planes.

We can see instances of such temporal hesitancy throughout *Summer Snow*. For example, just as May finally manages to get her father-in-law into bed after his earlier moment at the shared rooftop, Lin Sun sits up and attempts to leave the bed. May quickly announces that the enemy has retreated, and this proclamation stops him in his tracks. He nods at her – she nods back – and he lies back down. Suddenly, Lin Sun sits up one more time and points at what he believes to be two Japanese figures towards the off-screen. The film then cuts to a wide-angle shot of the bedroom: May and Lin Sun are in the foreground of the shot whilst Lin Sun’s son and grandson are in the background looking concernedly at the situation. Lin Sun wants to kill the two Japanese soldiers while May insists that they are prisoners of war. She orders their execution, and the two men leave the room. This act satisfies Lin Sun, and he lies back down. As that happens, the film cuts to a two-shot, and this conversation ensues:

MAY: Tomorrow I must

LIN SUN: Fight again.

MAY: If not for you, I would have fought to the death with Isabelle [a colleague she does not get along with].

LIN SUN: Sounds like a powerful foe. They shot a lot of our planes down. Forget about me, get back out there. But be careful.

After he concludes the conversation, Lin Sun falls asleep. May, on the other hand, sits down and leans against the bedside drawer with a pensive look on her face (see Figure 6.1).

As observed by scholars like Hannah Zeilig and Janelle S. Taylor, the most common cultural fear that seems to be connoted by and associated with dementia is that a person living with dementia can no longer recognise you, and that their – and in turn your – futurity is thrust into an incomprehensible sphere of doom. Put differently, the cultural imagination of dementia is predicated on the fear of meaninglessness, as the sense of the self (embodied or not) is threatened. Yet, despite such a suggestion, something very different seems to happen in this moment from *Summer Snow*. Although Lin Sun's (mis)recognition of his son and grandson as Japanese soldiers/prisoners of war might feed into this sense of unknowable doom, no one in the room appears to articulate this fear or sadness. Instead, there is a wry touch of humour associated with the whole situation, as May orders the execution of her husband and her son in front of Lin Sun. Upon hearing the instructions, May's son calls out to his father and they both leave the room, and in this scene, through listening to May's interaction with her father-in-law, both husband and son are simultaneously prisoners of war *and* not prisoners of war. The audience, like the characters around Lin Sun, is invited to consider the multiple temporalities in negotiation.

Here, this interaction might be seen as echoing the ideas put forward by Lawrence Cohen who, writing about dementia as registers of voice, proposes that we listen ironically. For Cohen, the “senile deformation of

Figure 6.1 May and Lin Sun after their conversation.

meaningful utterance is not necessarily a turn to meaninglessness" (125). Rather, dementia "does not so much turn the actual order of things inside out as trouble our desire for and identification with such an order" (125). According to Cohen, listening to people living with dementia is ironic because, within dementia, "words neither correspond to the expected referents of a shared history (that is, are coherent) nor are they necessarily radically beyond coherence" (127). In this sense, Cohen avers, dementia "heard ironically offers no redemptive or hidden speech, but neither does it of necessity reduce the voice" to that of nonsensical babble (127). Altogether, for Cohen, dementia heard ironically engenders a sense of "neither this nor that" and, consequently, challenges the hegemonic understanding of a certain idea without necessarily changing it.

In this respect, Cohen's argument finds affinity with my argument on hesitancy and films about dementia as characters regularly have to reassess their understanding of a particular idea or situation in order to accommodate the person living with dementia. However, I would suggest, this moment in *Summer Snow* goes one step further than Cohen's argument. Through this event, both son and grandson gain a deeper understanding of how to interact with Lin Sun, as they continue to be and not be for the remainder of the film. Similarly, the conversation between May and her father-in-law bears more elaboration. In this moment, Lin Sun appears to be talking about the Second World War and May about the workplace adversities that she is encountering. Despite the apparent cross-wiring between them, the conversation proves to be therapeutic for both because Lin Sun is finally able to fall asleep and May is able to process her feelings about her tense relationship with her colleague, Isabelle. Such an analysis is furthered by the cinematography and the use of music. As May lowers herself against the bedside drawer, the camera, following May, tilts down; this camera movement in turn reduces the empty space that was in the *mise-en-scène* before the start of the conversation, and both father- and daughter-in-law are framed more intimately. Likewise, as the camera moves, slow string music, in a minor key, enters the film score, adding to the scene's contemplative atmosphere.

Understood together, as encompassed by the film form, the multiple temporalities embedded in the scene become a way for the characters in the film to re-orientate hesitantly. For Sara Ahmed, the concept of orientation shapes "not only how we inhabit space, but how we apprehend this world of shared inhabitation, as well as 'who' or 'what' we direct our energy and attention toward" (3). Elaborating, Ahmed writes:

The work of inhabitation involves orientation devices; ways of extending bodies into spaces that create new folds, or new contours of what we could call livable or inhabitable space. If orientation is about making the strange familiar through the extension of bodies into space, then disorientation occurs when that extension fails. Or

we could say that some spaces extend certain bodies and simply do not leave room for others.

(11)

Ahmed's thesis on orientation is an examination of the ways in which the body is phenomenologically disciplined by space, as the "body orientates itself by lining itself up with the direction of the space it inhabits" (13). To be in the Western world, for example, is not to be in the Global South, and to be straight is to experience a linear route of (reproductive) futurity and not to be queer. In other words, the notion of orientation is deeply enmeshed in the politics of space and the body.

By extension, Ahmed's ideas also have a temporal aspect. This is to say, bodies are oriented to a hegemonic understanding of space that is compliant with notions of expansion and linearity, and, here, we can begin to trace these space/time politics back to the burgeoning project of modernity. From the early voyages of Christopher Columbus, Ferdinand Magellan, and Amerigo Vespucci in the late fifteenth century, when a sense of cartographic colonisation and centring of Europe began to take place, to the rise of homogeneous, clock time across the world via the genealogy of the railroad and telegraph, when globalised space was standardised across the world in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, issues of the body and space are inexplicably coupled with questions of time.⁴ This time that is associated with modernity – described by Henri Bergson as "a juxtaposition in space" – is uniform and linear and has been the dominant way to orientate bodies into a particular mode of living which is completely entwined with the mechanics of capitalism (*Time and Free Will* 85).

Drawing from scholars like Bergson and Dipesh Chakrabarty, Bliss Cua Lim observes that "the world-historical project of modernity that hinged on colonialism" rests "on a temporal strategy in which radical cultural differences brought to light by colonial contact were framed as primitive or anachronistic" (13). According to Lim, heterogeneous temporalities – other modes of bodily orientations – are rendered untranslatable by the dominance of homogeneous, clock time, and that these varied attitudes towards time and temporality are subsumed by the overwhelming power of spatialised time. Writing about the aswang – malevolent shapeshifting spirits in the Philippines – in relation to the Philippines' socio-historical context, Lim observes that aswang narratives have flitted between history and story in the Philippines since at least the sixteenth century but, when the Spanish invaded and colonised the nation, the aswang and its narratives were relegated to the non-modern and pre-modern in favour of a Europeanised culture that was run on clock time and development. Such temporalities that do not fit with modern time are in turn disenchanted, understood as "a precursor to modernity," where "heterogeneity is translated into homogeneity in order to govern

unsettling, radical difference” (Lim 18–19). Consequently, the Spanish invaders took over the Philippines, inhabited it, violently extended their bodies over the bodies of the indigenous people living in the land, and orientated the local people’s heterogeneous understandings of time into the fold of homogeneous, spatialised time.

This understanding of a clock time that disciplines is thus associated with that of colonial modernity and Eurocentrism. As Enrique Dussel suggests, modernity’s Eurocentrism, in defining those in the periphery who do not follow its myth of linear progress and development, “can be read as the justification of an irrational praxis of violence” (472). Briefly summarised, the myth of Eurocentric modernity casts Europe as the superior culture and takes it upon itself to educate those in the periphery, violently or not; in turn, as the victims of colonial modernity stack up – like the growth of the Atlantic slave trade, like the institutionalisation and genocide of indigenous peoples, and like the plundering of resources from the lands of the colonised – Europe casts itself as the blameless, whereas the colonised are blamed and punished for not signing up to this form of modernity (Dussel 472–73). One way out of the modernity project that is overwhelmingly violent, Dussel argues, is to affirm “the alterity of the other (which was previously denied)” so that “modernity and its denied alterity, its victims, would mutually fulfil each other in a creative process” (473–74).⁵ In this sense, to decolonise from a Dusselian viewpoint is to put European ideas in conversation with non-European ideas on an equal ontological and epistemological ground.

Seen from this angle, and in light of the work by scholars like Nikolas Rose and James R. Fletcher, who argue that the biomedical treatment of dementia can be understood as a strand of twentieth-century neuropsychiatric imperialism in which Eurocentric psychiatric classificatory systems are privileged over all other forms of knowledge, people living with dementia, who are regularly proclaimed to be living out of time and thus medicalised, can be understood as having their bodies temporally colonised. Tests used by medical practitioners to diagnose forms of dementia, like the Montreal Cognitive Assessment and the Self-Administered Gerocognitive Examination, often seek to place the subject as somewhere in time or to see whether they are able to do something in a linear order (most analogously, perhaps, is the constant appearance of the Clock Drawing Test in these assessments, where the subject has to draw a clock set to a specified time so as to be located in a particularly homogenised temporal plane).⁶ Failing to do so, the subject is then diagnosed to be living with dementia and medical interventions are administered to help the body cope, and to slow down the (assumed) process of physical and mental disorientation.⁷ As Anne Davis Basting observes about the situation, the “ability to place ourselves in linear time is considered a mark of personhood and distinguishes us from primates who live only in the present” and, because of that, people living with dementia are often associated

with the irrational (135). Simply put, homogeneous time disciplines and others the person living with dementia, and from this viewpoint, synthesising Ahmed, Lim, and Dussel, to temporally understand dementia and the person living with dementia in such a way is to continue the colonial/modernity project.

In this chapter, I propose that films about dementia, by highlighting the multiple temporalities under negotiation, can offer and invite a mode of hesitant encounter and that this form of engagement disorients a colonial approach concerning dementia and re-orientates the characters and the audience towards environments that allow for more types of bodies to (co-)exist. In *Summer Snow*, such a diagnostic test can also be seen as Lin Sun, at the hospital, is asked questions about his age, the transportation he took to get to the hospital, his dinner the night before, and the year he got married to his wife. More often than not, Lin Sun gives an answer that is “wrong” or “out of time,” and May, who sits behind him, has to nod or shake her head to indicate to the doctor whether Lin Sun is correct, or not. As the test begins, May confidently marks the veracity of Lin Sun’s answer but, as the examination continues, she becomes increasingly uncertain of his answers and ends up, after pausing momentarily, just simultaneously shaking and nodding her head, quickly undercutting the seriousness of the diagnostic test.

Paradoxically, here, it is through the attempt to discipline and subsume the different temporalities that the plethora of temporalities are foregrounded and heightened. Borrowing from Lim, such a moment, in which Lin Sun and May sign up to/acknowledge the many different temporalities that might coexist with the assumed linearity of the seemingly singular life course, can be understood as hinting at – or pointing directly towards – “untranslatable times, that trace of containment and excess” (32). Through the timeliness of the scene, we are made aware of what Lim calls “immiscible times,” or “multiple times that never quite dissolve into the code of modern time consciousness, discrete temporalities incapable of attaining homogeneity with or full incorporation into a uniform chronological present” (12). May’s hesitant response, brought about by a confrontation with the person living with dementia’s multi-faceted relationship with time, draws the audience’s attention to the intersecting and heterogeneous temporalities that he (and she) lives with, as her concurrent shaking and nodding of head produces a comedy that unnaturalises the universalising effect of clock time, of the one “correct” way of living, poking at the structures of knowledge production of dementia in this moment.

Time, Care, and a Decolonial Worldview

Throughout *Summer Snow*, the hesitation engendered by the immiscible temporalities of the person living with dementia and enacted by the

people around Lin Sun takes on a particular inflection that sees them refusing to pin him down to a particular temporal mode of existence. Instead, the characters choose the option to re-orientate relationally to him, and this in turn encourages a decolonial worldview that allows the character to live with Lin Sun's dementia without evaluating his life course only in relation to the homogeneity of clock time. In the earlier analysis, I have already highlighted how his son and grandson are simultaneously prisoners-of-war and not prisoners-of-war, and how May likewise is his fellow soldier and daughter-in-law. In another example, as Lin Sun's son, Bing, goes to the rooftop to look for his father, he finds Lin Sun cooing and throwing bird feed. Lin Sun explains that he is feeding the pigeons, and Bing pauses and hesitates. This exchange is captured via a wide-angle shot, and throughout the moment, there are no visible pigeons in the *mise-en-scène*. Like the audience, Bing also notices that there are no birds around. Nonetheless, after hesitating, he points his father towards an area out of the frame, says that there are a few more pigeons there, and both father and son begin to feed the pigeons together. It is important to note that Bing's decision is not a patronising act where he is just "pretending" to placate his father or to get him to do things. Instead, I would suggest that his interaction can be understood as demonstrating a more developed and complex form of "relational citizenship," a concept preliminarily proposed by Pia Kontos, Karen-Lee Miller, and Alexis P. Kontos that, following the tradition of Tom Kitwood's person-centred dementia care, is "premised on the importance of interdependence, reciprocity, and the support of persons living with dementia as active partners in their own care" (182–183). That is, in this scene, we can think of Bing as carefully taking his father's agency into consideration and that he and his father are both agentically performing and performed by each other's actions and narratives.⁸

I will elaborate on my understanding of this caring relationship through that of performance studies. Janet Gibson, drawing from performance studies scholar Richard Schechner, proposes to look at dementia "as an action, event, or behaviour, with attention to the circumstances in which it has been created and is exhibited" (252), and this means that we reframe the behaviours of people living with dementia "as creative adaptations rather than just as deficit exemplars of insidious diseases" (256). This, Gibson argues, would demand an understanding of the performances of people living with dementia as inclusive of the embodied and an acknowledgement of their performances through the lens of "double negativity:"

their stories, as well as their identities, could be allowed to be both not true, but not not true. For example, through this lens people who are exhibiting symptoms of forgetfulness or changes in their personalities can be understood to be both who they are now and who they

are not now (i.e. who they were): still becoming selves, if also disappearing selves. They are not exactly “themselves”, but this should not prohibit possibilities for being other selves.

(258)

In this sense, the person living with dementia, like the person not living with dementia, performs, presents, and manages a sense of embodied self “in front of others to whom the term ‘audience’ can be applied” (Gibson 250).⁹ In moving to think of the person living with dementia’s performances as “still becoming selves, if also disappearing selves,” Gibson puts forward an articulation of an audience who allows themselves to be dialogically performed by the actions and narratives of the person living with dementia, rather than just prescribing a set of interventions or medications to the people living with dementia so that they are living the “right way” – or, as I argued earlier, the colonial way.

Gibson’s working theory of dementia as performance, then, is primarily concerned with the live, shifting and interdependent relationship between the performer and the audience, and her argument finds synergy with recent scholarship on care aesthetics.¹⁰ According to Amanda Stuart Fisher, the act of care too can be understood as performance, for “care can only be experienced as a live, embodied encounter” and “because it is comprised of repeated or ‘restored’ practices and behaviours” (12). From such a viewpoint, Stuart Fisher proposes, care should be understood “as becoming itself through the demands of the relationship that emerges between the caregiver and care receiver” (12). Concomitantly, James Thompson develops what he describes as “an aesthetics of care,” which is “about a set of values realised in a relational process that emphasise engagements between individuals or groups over time” (437). Synthesising the ideas of Gibson, Stuart Fisher, and Thompson, to think of the caring relationship between the person living with dementia and the person not living with dementia through the framework of performance studies is to not just think of the semiotics (the acts and gestures) but to also consider the affects (the sensations and the feelings) that shape the interdependent and reciprocal relationships.

Throughout this chapter, I am interested in the ways time and temporality shape such caring relationships.¹¹ As *Summer Snow* demonstrates, films about dementia invite a mode of hesitant encounter between the person living with dementia and the person not living with dementia, and everyone is performing and performed by everyone’s actions and narratives. In one moment, for instance, as Lin Sun refuses to take off his clothes while his son and daughter-in-law bathe him, they end up washing the clothes at the same time to save time on doing laundry. In another, Lin Sun puts his son in an arm lock as he is accused of being a burglar, and to resolve the situation, both May and her husband insist that he is actually a good man who is returning the stolen money. Such

a relational approach towards dementia, as evinced by the interactions between Lin Sun and the people around him, draws parallels with what Raewyn Connell describes as a “mosaic epistemology,” in which multiple “knowledge systems sit beside each other like tiles in a mosaic, each based on a specific culture or historical experience, and each having its own claims to validity,” and a “solidarity-based epistemology,” where there is a “mutual learning on a world scale, in which different formations of knowledge are respected but enter into educational relations with each other” (30–31). Writing about the Westernised epistemology(ies) that colonise(s), Connell argues for a need to not only acknowledge the multi-varied types of knowledge formation but also, crucially, the ways in which these approaches are entangled and complementary so that no one framework can be centred and made universal. To decolonise, then, is to attend to the messiness of the structures that govern and to acknowledge a pluriverse, or a world that is plural.

A pluriverse, as defined by Walter D. Mignolo, “is not a world of independent units (as is the case with cultural relativism) but a world entangled through and by the colonial matrix of power” (xi). Developing this concept further, Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh write:

the pluriversal opens rather than closes the geographies and spheres of decolonial thinking and doing. It opens up coexisting temporalities kept hostage by the Western idea of time and the belief that there is one single temporality: Western-imagined fictional temporality. Moreover, it connects and brings together in relation – as both pluri- and interspersals – local histories, subjectivities, knowledges, narratives, and struggles against the modern/colonial order and for an *otherwise*.

(3; emphasis in original)

In other words, in a decolonial worldview, by situating ourselves in a pluriverse, heterogeneous temporalities that were subsumed by homogeneous time – made untranslatable, as suggested by Lim – are freed up. Accordingly, these different heterogeneous temporalities are positioned relationally to linear clock time; all these different attitudes towards time are entangled, and all temporal positions can be adopted and can unlock a more complex way of life. For one, specific to the chapter’s central argument, it will allow us to live with dementia without othering the person living with dementia or evaluating their lives as relative to homogeneous, linear time. Films about dementia, in highlighting a kind of temporal excess, provide us with a decolonial worldview as an option that we might be able to hesitantly re-orientate towards, and this chapter serves as a provocation – as my opening exploration and invitation – to think through the complexities of such a mode of living with dementia in more detail.

***Summer Snow* and the Decolonisation of Hong Kong**

This mode of living hesitantly as envisioned by *Summer Snow*, I suggest, extends beyond the individual to the national and the global. In my impressionistic and potted discussion of the socio-politics of Hong Kong earlier, I suggested that *Summer Snow* can be understood as a pre-handover film that was produced in a period of deep crisis. Before the British, Ackbar Abbas writes, Hong Kong did not have a pre-colonial history, and the handover to China was not simply a return to the “motherland” or a “Chinese-ness” that is associated with a version of Greater China:

Ironically, it is Hong Kong’s colonial history, the only history it has known and a history that cannot be forgotten overnight, that has distanced Hong Kong culturally and politically from China and that will make their relationship not simply one of reunification.

(5)

Here, Abbas’ claim can be understood in relation to the ideas I discussed earlier. Hong Kong, a city-body, has been orientated to know only one kind of history, a history that is predicated on a kind of colonial modernity. All of a sudden, as 1997 neared, the prospect of experiencing and reckoning with a future that was not necessarily reconcilable with Hong Kong became increasingly overwhelming. Confronted with this creeping expiration date, Abbas observes, “a culture of disappearance, whose appearance is posited on the imminence of its disappearance,” paradoxically appears (7). As Victor Fan laments, pre-handover Hong Kong experienced an anxiety that compelled the people living in Hong Kong “to enjoy a present that had no future,” and to focus on “the time it took for time to end” (114). Hong Kong cinema of this period, in turn, started to make films about the city that foregrounded an anxiety about time: in *Chungking Express* (Wong Kar-wai, 1994, Hong Kong), for example, individual frames are removed from the film or reprinted and inserted, and music plays on an eternal loop; in *Rouge* (Stanley Kwan, 1988, Hong Kong), the city is filtered through the viewpoint of a ghost and her ghostly temporalities; and in *Song of the Exile* (Ann Hui, 1990, Hong Kong), memories are layered upon memories to bring forward a kind of past and present that is organised in an expansively spatial manner.¹² In these films, through the examination of time, the city of Hong Kong is disorientated.

Despite being a social realist dramedy, the exploration of time in *Summer Snow* is not too dissimilar to these films. In the film, Lin Sun wanders off on his own twice. In the first incident, he is chased by his daughter-in-law on foot as he walks around his estate, and in the second occurrence,

Figure 6.2 Lin Sun as part of the texture of Hong Kong's cityscape.

he walks beyond his immediate neighbourhood to traverse a wider portion of Tai Po, the area where the family resides. In the first example, he is wearing a white shirt that looks no different from the many white clothes that the people around him are wearing (see Figure 6.2), and in the second, he is wearing a blue shirt that blends in with the blue tint of the city's night lights.

In both instances, the wandering sequence is largely shot using a long lens, which flattens the *mise-en-scène* of the city, rendering it slightly claustrophobic and further embedding Lin Sun in the texture of the cityscape. The music that plays in the score when we see the city is martial, textured with drums and various brass instruments, and at once carnivalesque and whimsical, referencing Lin Sun's life as a veteran and flipping inside out the linear time in which he is supposed to live. Moreover, the area that Lin Sun wanders – Tai Po – is significant as the location where Britain raised the British flag and set up their first headquarters when they leased the New Territories, which is the territory that catalysed the handover of Hong Kong. All in all, as Lin Sun's dementia is inexplicably tied to the cityscape through the film's form, Hong Kong is imbued with a kind of temporal excess, and the audience is invited to hesitantly engage with the city.

There has been much debate about the status of Hong Kong and Hong Kong cinema, which, because of its history, is often talked about through the framework of the (trans-)national. As Vivian PY Lee observes, for

many scholars, the politics of the local in pre-handover Hong Kong cinema

stood out as simultaneously an attempt to construct and consolidate a *place/space-based identity* on the one hand, and a tactic to destabilise and deconstruct narratives of identity associated with either the “empire” or the “nation,” which are no less place/space-based regimes, on the other.

(66; emphasis in original)

Scholarship on Hong Kong and Hong Kong cinema, not least in relation to national and transnational film studies, is in other words firmly rooted in discourses of the space. Elsewhere, I have examined how such a focus on space in (trans-)national film studies relies on “the fixity of the nation as a geopolitical concept that is built on the notion of temporal continuity” (50). Such an approach, which is predicated on the linearity of time, continues the colonial project of modernity and does not fully account for the ways in which the “diverse pasts are often re-remembered (and re-forgotten) differently for the various purposes of the nation’s present tense” (44). And, since the handover, such an understanding of Hong Kong cinema as attempting to comprehend its sense of self by turning to an imagined and linear historical development is becoming increasingly untenable.

In 1997, Hong Kong witnessed the Asian Financial Crisis and the H5N1 bird flu epidemic and, in 2003, the SARS epidemic. These events resulted in significant economic blows to the city and played a large part in the significant decline of the Hong Kong film industry. Through the signing of the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) in 2004, which allowed Hong Kong to co-produce films with mainland China, there has been an increasing “mainlandisation” of Hong Kong commercial cinema, as most of the films produced in the city today are predominantly CEPA films, as the past of Hong Kong cinema is folded into the wider history of Chinese cinema and culture. Concomitantly, politically there have been significant attempts by the mainland Chinese government to violently orientate Hong Kong into the outlook of the People’s Republic of China, and this has been forcefully resisted by the local people in Hong Kong. In 2014, the Umbrella Movement, which is largely led by the younger people of Hong Kong, staged a series of protests that lasted 79 days, demanding full democracy. Since then, there have been continued large-scale protests in Hong Kong, most recently, at the time of writing, the 2019–2020 protests against the creeping of mainland China’s legal system into Hong Kong. Throughout these protests, spectres of the colonial continue to haunt Hong Kong as people variously call for a return to British governance and for America to step in and “Make Hong Kong Great Again” (Ruwitch and Pang).¹³

Throughout, then, the question persists: how might you access Hong Kong's temporalities, which are always at risk of disappearing or being subsumed to another colonial linearity? As I suggest earlier, films about dementia draw the audience's attention to the heterogeneous temporalities that intersect, engender a sense of hesitation that disorients, and offer a decolonial way of life as an option that one might choose. In doing so, a worldview that is open to, and premised on, relational change and becoming is espoused. In *Summer Snow*, the family's experiences of living with dementia are inexplicably tied up with a sense of everyday "Hong Kong-ness" through Lin Sun's relationship with the city-body. As Lin Sun wanders around his surroundings, and as he is followed around by his family members, the film introduces the audience to shots of newer high-rise buildings, of mould and decay creeping into older buildings, of children playing with their latest toys, of adults playing mah-jong, of people taking naps outside of shops, of people carrying slabs of meat to sell, of people eating beef noodles, and of overflowing rubbish bins that have not been collected for days. Against this backdrop, as Giulana Bruno might argue, in showing glimpses of the often contradictory and disparate elements of everyday Hong Kong through the film's social-realist aesthetics and through Lin Sun's dementia, *Summer Snow* draws a cultural map of Hong Kong "as a metonymy of fragmentations" (4). In turn, the film about dementia offers a decolonial framework of temporal entanglement to shift the debate about the nation(al) from space to time so as to allow for an understanding of space as one where the past and the present are multiple and coeval (a pluriverse).

In this sense, to examine the temporalities of films about dementia is not just to think of the individual caring relationships that are formed between humans but to also think of the wider geopolitics that are structured by (the legacy of) colonial modernity, and *Summer Snow* offers the potential for a more nuanced examination of Hong Kong and Hong Kong cinema that is temporally entangled through and by the colonial matrix of power. Throughout the film, emphatically, the audience never sees Lin Sun actually feeding pigeons – nonetheless, as discussed above, this does not stop his family from feeding pigeons with him. At the end of the film, after Lin Sun has passed away, May goes to the rooftop to do some chores, where she discovers a rooftop full of pigeons. As she looks around ecstatically, proclaiming the existence of the pigeons, the film cuts to a freeze-frame of her face, and a woman's voice enters the score, singing about the importance of not crying or grieving, as life, like a morning dew, is ephemeral. With that, the film ends. In living relationally with dementia, in acknowledging and reckoning with the fleetingness of temporal change and becoming, the pigeons, which seemingly have not been present throughout the film, do appear.

Notes

1. In mainland China, the dominant Chinese-language vernacular spoken is Mandarin, whereas in Hong Kong, it is Cantonese.
2. See Birth and Fabian on clock time and colonial modernity.
3. This chapter builds on the work on care, time, and cultural narratives about dementia by scholars like Sally Chivers, Martina Zimmermann, Raquel Medina, Sarah Falcus and Katsura Sako, and Rebecca Bitenc.
4. See Thompson, Nanni, and Sharma on time, modernity, and globalisation.
5. Dussel is critical of postmodernism and critical modernism as, according to him, these approaches continue to perpetuate the Eurocentrism that modernity is built on.
6. The Clock Drawing Test is also a test that examines one's spatial cognition, and this in turn furthers the link between homogeneous, clock time and spatial cartography.
7. On people living with dementia's time awareness, see Edwards; Eriksen et al.
8. See Boyle on the agency of people living with dementia.
9. Here, Gibson's understanding of the audience is drawn from Gareth White's definition of an audience, which is that of "a socially constructed practice," in which the audience comes into being as they perform and are performed by a set of social structures and beliefs (5). See, also, Kershaw, Santone, and Sedgman on the social construction of audience behaviour.
10. Scholarship on care aesthetics expands on the work done by care ethicists and philosophers like Joan C. Tronto, Eva Feder Kittay, Virginia Held, and Michael Slote, who insist on a politics of interdependency between the carer and the cared for.
11. See Deleuze and Massumi on time and affect.
12. See Eren, Lim, and Ma on the disparate temporalities in these films.
13. For John Nguyet Erni, post-handover Hong Kong exists in a state of "liminal postcoloniality." For Howard Y.F. Choy, Hong Kong has gone from the colonial to the recolonial.

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