Master Thesis Religion and Cultural Heritage

Heritage in Humour

Investigating Concepts of Heritage in the Hong Kong Comedic Scene

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Abstract

Joking is a form of discourse that is often used in a group context and helps in confirming group identity and foster the sense of belonging. Each group has its own culture, history, and traditions and hence the joking culture of each community is unique and is based its own heritage, or in other words, on a set of assumed shared knowledge. In this thesis, the Hong Kong heritage is examined through the lens of humour, in particular through the stand-up performances of the Hong Kong comedian Dayo Wong. My aim is to explore what the underlying shared knowledge beneath Dayo's jokes are and how he played with the shared knowledge to generate humour. To analyse Dayo's stand-up content, I have chosen six segments from six of his recorded performances and discussed the underlying assumed shared knowledge that his jokes were based on. Because all his performances were performed in Cantonese, I have provided my own translations for all of the segment scripts, and I have also translated the title of the performances into English based on my understanding of Dayo's intent. In conclusion, I have found that Dayo played with two levels of shared knowledge, the first level being factual knowledge and the second level being a collective emotional knowledge. Dayo played with them in various ways, including using linguistically based jokes, character impersonation, as well as non-verbal gestures and cues.

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Abbreviations

Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD)

People's Republic of China (PRC)

Moral and National Education (MNE)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Introduction

A group of friends are laughing at a witty remark made by one of them about an embarrassing event that they had experienced together. Such a scenario is not uncommon in our everyday lives, and it can take place anywhere – in the office with colleagues, at school with classmates, at home with family. As the friends spends more time with each other, a group identity begins to form and the pool of shared experiences and memories on which in-group jokes are based expands. The joking culture bonds the group by smoothening interactions and maintaining group stability, creating a cycle of group identity reinforcement that further separates outsiders who do not understand the references made.[1]

Now imagine this scenario on a larger scale and replace the group of friends with a community of people. Through constant interaction and connections made over time, this population will develop its own traditions, customs, language, and culture, or, in other words, its own heritage. The ensuing joking culture will be based on the group's shared heritage, and any culturally specific humour used in this population will not be understood by foreigners since they do not share the same knowledge background.

Heritage can be seen as a form of discourse or performance which creates meaning. These meanings are constantly being constructed by people that are involved in the discursive or performative processes in the day-to-day activities. Humour is a social phenomenon that can create laughter and has an implicit component that is culturally specific and is based on a set of assumed shared knowledge within the group. Different communities have their own unique

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[1] Gary Alan Fine and Michaela de Soucey, 'Joking Cultures: Humor Themes as Social Regulation in Group Life', *Humor* 18, no. 1 (2005): 8–11.

shared memories, experiences, practices, and customs, which means that each group will create their own unique meaning, and so heritage, and develop a different set of assumed shared knowledge on which their humour is based.

This leads to the focus of this thesis – to explore the heritage of a group by examining the assumed shared knowledge underlying the group's joking discourse. I have chosen the Hong Kong community as the target population because it will be interesting to see how Hong Kong's colonial history and the return to Chinese sovereignty affect the "Hong Kong heritage", and being born and raised in Hong Kong myself, I have a personal connection with the city. I have examined Hong Kong people's joking discourse through the stand-up performances of Dayo Wong (from this point onward will be referred to as Dayo), a renowned comedian in Hong Kong.

Currently, there is only one other research paper by Wai King Tsang and Matilda Wong which has examined Dayo's stand-up material and it focused on the relationship between the use of language and identity construction.[2] With my thesis, I would like to expand upon Tsang and Wong's research to include not only linguistic techniques but also non-verbal gestures that can create humour. Moreover, Tsang and Wong's paper aimed to explore how Dayo actively constructed a shared "Hong Kong identity" during his performance, while my thesis concentrates on the assumed shared knowledge underlying Dayo's joking discourse. This means that I will focus on the past events and moments that the Hong Kongers have shared with each other, rather than investigating what Dayo was creating during the show. With this different approach, I hope to show that heritage can not only be found in play and humour, but

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[2] Wai King Tsang and Matilda Wong, 'Constructing a Shared "Hong Kong Identity" in Comic Discourses', *Discourse & Society* 15, no. 6 (2004): 767–85.

it is actively being referred to in the joking discourse of a population. My research question is thus: **How is the Hong Kong heritage reflected through Dayo Wong's stand-up performances?** I will answer the research question with the support of two sub-questions:

1. What is some of the assumed shared knowledge that is underlying Dayo's humour in his stand-up performances?

2. How did Dayo play with the assumed shared knowledge to create humour, especially with the use of language?

In Chapter 1 of this thesis, I outline the theoretical framework for my investigation and provide an overview of the fields of heritage and humour studies, and how the two disciplines can be connected and examined together. Chapter 2 treats the methodological framework, and includes a summary of Hong Kong history and identity as well as some basic information on the Cantonese language, the main Chinese dialect used in Hong Kong. I have also included an introduction to Dayo Wong as an artist and I have described the methodology of my analysis of Dayo's performances. Following the methodological framework is the analysis itself (Chapter 3), which includes the scripts of the performances and my analysis of segments based on the two sub-questions. To end the analysis section, I have provided a summary of my findings and some thoughts on Dayo's style of humour and material that he has chosen to perform. Lastly, the thesis ends with a conclusion that is comprised of my reflection on the translation and analysis process, the limitations encountered in this investigation and the significance of this research in both heritage and humour studies.

Chapter 1 - Theoretical Framework

1.1 Heritage Studies

As the field of heritage evolves over time, the focus of research shifted from objects and their preservation, documentation, and analysis to the ways in which they are used and expressed as a form of culture and identity. In 1972, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, officially recognised the need to protect and preserve cultural and natural heritage on an international scale and that it is vital for the international community to safeguard these unique properties for their "outstanding universal value".[3] However, the World Heritage Convention saw increased criticisms especially from non-Western nations and academics, who criticised the enforcement of a European outlook on heritage with a heavy emphasis on historical monuments and the values within such properties as a universal guidance for all heritage.[4] Moreover, the concept of heritage is different in each community: some cultures, such as indigenous cultures, value the intangible processes and customs to preserve identities rather than with material objects or sites.[5] In response to these comments, UNESCO adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003 to include non-Western understandings of heritage.

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[3] UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 'Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage', UNESCO World Heritage Centre, accessed 19 June 2022, https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/.

[4] Janet Blake, *Developing a New Standard-Setting Instrument for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage: Elements for Consideration* (Paris: UNESCO, 2001); Henry Cleere, 'Designating World Heritage Industrial Sites', in *International Engineering History and Heritage Improving Bridges to ASCE's 150th Anniversary* (Reston, VA; American Society of Civil Engineers; 2001, 2001), 49.

[5] Janet Blake, 'On Defining the Cultural Heritage', *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 49, no. 1 (2000): 72–73; Thomas M. Schmitt, 'The UNESCO Concept of Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage: Its Background and Marrakchi Roots', *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 14, no. 2 (1 March 2008): 95–111.

1.1.1 Heritage as Discourse

Over the years, the heritage field continues to broaden, with the definition of heritage and the methodology with which to examine heritage-related subjects being scrutinised in an increasingly critical light.[6] More and more scholars view heritage as a form of discourse and discursive practices. For Michel Foucault, whose *Archaeology of Knowledge* published in 1972 popularised the notion of discourse, the term "discourse" can be defined "by a group of sequences of signs, in so far as they are statements, that is, in so far as they can be assigned particular modalities of existence."[7] He argues that discourses are not merely groups of signs that represents objects and content, but rather are "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak."[8] In this sense, discourse is a form of social practice that is used to understand the world, and without discourse, the material world does not have any meaning. The knowledge that we generate through the use of discourse formulates our reality. From this viewpoint, heritage is not an existing entity that is waiting to be discovered, but rather it is constantly being constructed and formulated by those who are involved in the discursive processes.[9]

As discourse formulates what we perceive as the world around us, there is a power relation underlying knowledge and discourse as those who are knowledgeable can construct reality and determine what should be considered as "heritage". This idea is further expanded

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[6] Emma Waterton and Steve Watson, 'Heritage as a Focus of Research: Past, Present and New Directions', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 1.

[7] Michel Foucault and Alan Sheridan-Smith, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2010), 107.

[8] Foucault and Sheridan-Smith, 49.

[9] Zongjie Wu and Song Hou, 'Heritage and Discourse', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 38–39.

in what Laurajane Smith calls the "authorised heritage discourse" (AHD), where the discourse "populates both popular and expert constructions of 'heritage' and undermines alternative and subaltern ideas about 'heritage'."[10] In particular, AHD values monumentality and emphasises national narratives, grand artefacts, and historical sites that contains ties to the nation's history. This then creates boundaries where heritage is tied to the past and is disconnected from the present, and that only expertise personnel are qualified to manage and comment on heritage.[11] The use of heritage as a way to represent national values is also commented on by Stuart Hall in his keynote speech at the national conference "Whose Heritage? The Impact of Cultural Diversity on Britain's Living Heritage" in 1999. Hall described how the British idea of heritage has become the "material embodiment of the spirit of the nation", which presents the British society as culturally homogeneous and unified and prevents those who do not fit the British "heritage" imagery from truly belonging to the country.[12] He urged his audience to challenge the assumptions of heritage that is formulated by people in power and to embrace the multiculturalism that exists in current-day British society, especially given the British colonial history.

1.1.2 Heritage as Performance

Other than seeing heritage as the product of discourse, one can also approach heritage as a performance, where social practices are being performed and experienced to create meaning, connecting heritage to a wider process of meaning making through the act of reminiscing and remembering.[13] Paul Connerton in his book *How Societies Remember* stated

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[10] Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2006), 11.

[11] Smith, 12.

[12] Stuart Hall, 'Whose Heritage? Un-Settling "The Heritage", Re-Imagining Post-Nation', in *The Politics of Heritage: The Legacies of 'Race'*, by Jo Littler and Roshi Naidoo (London: Routledge, 2005), 21, 24.

[13] Michael Haldrup and Jørgen Ole Bærenholdt, 'Heritage as Performance', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 52–53.

that commemorative ceremonies re-present scenarios from the past, thereby reminding the community of its identity through a master narrative.[14] An image of the past becomes a kind of collective autobiography that is sustained through ritual performances, where participants in the rite gave the past event an embodied form in the present. The performance of the act at a sacred site suspends the perception of time, eliminates temporal difference and thus creates the illusion that the participants have become contemporaries with the past event.[15] As a result, the recreation of events through commemorative ceremonies is a performance of heritage that combines the act of remembering and also memory making.[16]

Traditional accounts of heritage transmission depict a unidirectional communication where visitors of heritage sites passively receive messages and traditions formulated by experts in the subject area. Gaynor Bagnall argues that rather than being passive consumers of knowledge, visitors are actively performing a form of reminiscence through emotional and imaginative engagement.[17] The physicality of the experience can induce personal and family memories which can lead to the visitors emotionally engaging with the site and responding with either a confirmatory or rejective reading of the content presented.[18] Bagnall, by using concepts of performativity, demonstrates that heritage is not a message or tradition that can be passed on from one person to another, but rather constructed and performed together by all parties in a society.

By seeing heritage as performances where material culture is being incorporated, the study of heritage can move into the realm of day-to-day activities and incorporate the meanings

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[14] Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 70.
[15] Connerton, 43.
[16] Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 66.
[17] Gaynor Bagnall, 'Performance and Performativity at Heritage Sites', *Museum and Society* 1, no. 2 (2003): 87.
[18] Bagnall, 89–91.

created through the interaction between material and bodies. Abercrombie and Longhurst offer new insight into the changing relationship between performances and audience and thus a fresh perspective towards heritage as a performance. Contemporary society is inherently performative and with the increase of narcissistic tendencies in modern civilisation, people feel compelled to present themselves, or, in other words, perform to others. The distance between performers and audiences decreases as people can play both the spectacle and the spectator.[19] Moreover, Abercrombie and Longhurst further explain that the experiences and qualities obtained as an audience member can "leak out" of performance events and affect the construction of identities.[20] This means that all activities, regardless of their nature, carried out by general population in their everyday lives can be considered performances and that people can be both "cultural consumers and producers".[21]

1.2 Humour studies

Only recently, the study of humour was still frowned upon in the academic world and only in 1994, less than thirty years ago, was the first conference dedicated to the cultural history of humour held in Amsterdam. Despite the rapid developments and growing interest from scholars, humour remains a vague concept and its inherent ambiguity does not help in establishing a more systematic methodology for its study.[22] Although humour is commonly associated with laughter, laughter can be a result of various emotions and states of mind such as genuine happiness, feigned interest, surprise, embarrassment, or sarcasm. This leads to a

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[19] Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst, *Audiences: A Sociological Theory of Performance and Imagination* (London: Sage, 1998), 95–96.
[20] Abercrombie and Longhurst, 36.
[21] Bagnall, 'Performance and Performativity at Heritage Sites', 87.
[22] Jessica Milner Davis, 'Foreword', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Humour, History, and Methodology*, by Daniel Derrin and Hannah Burrows (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), v.

further debate on whether humour can be considered an emotion. Various brain analyses through MRI scans have shown that both the "involuntary" and "emotionally driven" system as well as the "voluntary" and more cognitively based pathways are activated in response to humour, suggesting that humour generation requires a level of cognitive comprehension and emotive response.[23] Over time, many theories of humour have been developed, but in contemporary academic literature, three main theories of humour emerged in the field – the Incongruity Theory, the Superiority Theory and the Relief Theory.

1.2.1 Humour Theories

The Superiority Theory is the oldest theory of humour out of the three and sees laughter in a negative light. In Greek philosophical sources, laughter was heavily criticised because it often involved the breaking of social rules and was associated with the loss of self-control.[24] For example, Plato in the *Republic* advised that the Guardians of the state should avoid laughter, "for a fit of laughter which has been indulged to excess almost always produces a violent reaction."[25] The Bible also connects laughter and humour with negative traits and situations. In Proverbs 26:18 –19, a person who deceives his neighbour and then says, "I was only joking!" is "like a maniac shooting flaming arrows of death"; in Genesis 18:11-15, when God confronted Sarah on her response to the prediction of her pregnancy by the three visitors, Sarah would rather lie to God than to admit her laughter.[26] In the seventeenth century, Thomas Hobbes further expanded on Plato's critique of laughter and stated that laughter "is caused either by some sudden act of their own, that pleaseth them; or by the apprehension of some

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[23] Barbara Wild et al., 'Neural Correlates of Laughter and Humour', *Brain* 126, no. 10 (October 2003): 2121–38, https://doi.org/10.1093/brain/awg226.

[24] John Morreall, *Comic Relief* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2009), 4, http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9781444307795.ch1.

[25] Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Waiheke Island: Floating Press, 2009), 176.

[26] Pr. 26:18-19 (New International Version); Gen. 18:11-15 (New International Version).

deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves."[27] According to Hobbes, humans are prone to laugh at other's shortcomings and misfortunes because of their tendency to be individualistic and competitive.[28] Moreover, mankind's primary passion is the search for the power over other people and laughter involves making someone as the butt of the joke, and thus placing them at an inferior position.[29]

In contrast to the Superiority Theory where the source of laughter originates from a point of malice, the Incongruity Theory sees laughter as a straightforward expression of mirth and pleasure without ulterior motives.[30] The Incongruity Theory rose to prominence in the eighteenth century and was most widely proposed by Blaise Pascal, Francis Hutcheson and Immanuel Kant. It postulates that we laugh because something subverts our expectations, and the element of surprise provokes laughter. Kant stated that an uproarious laughter can only be a result of something nonsensical and "laughter is an affect resulting from the sudden transformation of a heightened expectation into nothing". Therefore, although there is nothing enjoyable with respect to understanding since source of laughter is nonsensical, the play of representations is nevertheless indirectly enjoyable and can create a lively scene.[31] F.H. Buckley also describes the element of surprise as one of key aspects of humour and a "successful comic must surprise us with his wit." The need for surprise explains the importance of comedic timing because the use of pauses allows the audience to form an expectation which will be subverted by the punchline.[32]

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[27] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Newburyport: Open Road Media, 2020), 37.

[28] John Morreall, *Comic Relief*, 6.

[29] F.H. Buckley, *The Morality of Laughter* (University of Michigan Press, 2010), 7–8.

[30] Lucy Rayfield, 'Rewriting Laughter in Early Modern Europe', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Humour, History, and Methodology*, by Daniel Derrin and Hannah Burrows, n.d., 80, accessed 21 June 2022.

[31] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 209.

[32] Buckley, *The Morality of Laughter*, 20–21.

The Relief Theory, also known as the Psychoanalytic Theory, rose to prominence in the eighteenth century along with the Incongruity Theory. The Relief Theory takes a similar stance to the Incongruity Theory and connects laughter with mirth and pleasure, rather than with demonstration of dominance and intent as the Superiority Theory has suggested. In addition, the Relief Theory focused on the physiological aspects of laughter and humour, especially on their connection with the human nervous system. In the earlier versions of the Relief Theory, it was believed the nervous system is a network of tubes that build up tension over time and one of the ways for the tension to be released is through laughter. Herbert Spencer, in his essay "On the Physiology of Laughter", remarked how "nervous excitation always tends to beget muscular motion" and these reflex actions become increasingly harder to contain if the tension build-up is high. For example, the shivering of the body in a cold temperature can at first be controlled, but in extreme coldness the shivering becomes completely involuntary.[33] Laughter is thus a muscular tension-release response, and the jaw, tongue and lips are first to respond because they are the organs of speech, and so are the closest to the tension created by the "very moderate flow of mental energy which accompanies ordinary conversation."[34] Increasingly, medical professionals examined the physiological benefits of laughter, with some even prescribing their patients laughter as a particular remedy.[35] Although Spencer's account of laughter and humour is detailed and easy to understand, the Relief Theory is more commonly associated with the more famous Sigmund Freud, who expanded on Spencer's ideas and linked the idea of nervous energy to the less-innocent subconscious mind. Freud described the creation of jokes is an unconscious process where we

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[33] Herbert Spencer, *Essays on Education and Kindred Subjects.* (Auckland: Floating Press, 1911), 582–83.
[34] Spencer, 591.
[35] Lucy Rayfield, 'Rewriting Laughter in Early Modern Europe', 81.

express thoughts and emotions that are normally repressed, and release of energy through laughter is the energy that is used to repress hostile and sexual feelings and emotions.[36]

It is important to keep in mind that although certain scholars and their theories are grouped under the terms "Superiority Theory", "Incongruity Theories" or "Relief Theories", this merely signifies that their accounts of laughter share one common feature and are different in other aspects. These academics were not actively contributing towards one humour theory and even when a notion of humour is grouped under "Superiority Theory", this does not mean it cannot contain elements from "Incongruity Theories" or "Relief Theories" as well.[37] In fact, on many occasions, a single theory is not enough to explain why something is funny, nor is the creation of the situations described in the theories necessarily lead to humour. For example, the Superiority Theory cannot explain jokes that involve word plays and puns, or why tickling will lead to laughter.

Moreover, there are many other humour theories which do not quite fit under any of the major humour theories umbrella and some of them are equally widespread and frequently researched. One of such theories is the Semantic Script-based Theory of Humour which was first outlined by Victor Raskin and would subsequently evolve into the General Theory of Verbal Humour. Both theories focus on scripts, defined by Attardo as "an organized chunk of information about something", and are based on the core concept of "script opposition", where the humorous texts can be discerned by their relationship of opposition with the non-humorous texts.[38] There are three types of script oppositions: actual versus non-actual, normal versus

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[36] John Morreall, *Comic Relief*, 20–21.
[37] John Morreall, 6–7.
[38] Salvatore Attardo, *Linguistic Theories of Humor*, Humor Research (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994), 198, 204.

abnormal, and possible versus impossible, all of which are instances of opposition between real and unreal. Raskin further explained the three oppositions with more concrete examples such as good versus bad, rich versus poor and high status versus low status. Although it is unlikely that the three basic types of opposition will change with culture, it is very reasonable to believe that people from different cultures will use different concrete examples to express the major oppositions, thus explaining why some jokes will work in one culture but not another.[39]

1.2.2 Metacommunication and the Cultural Specificity of Humour

Although there is not one theory of humour that can explain all things that are humorous, it is undeniable that humour is a social phenomenon that requires communication between individuals, be it through speech or through texts and different media forms. However, if we look more deeply, we can see that humorous communications depend not only on the verbal cues but also on metalinguistic properties that are not explicitly spoken. In other words, humour can be understood as a "production/reception process with a necessary metacommunicative component" and it is up to the listener to decipher the implicit part of the joke.[40]

Jurgen Ruesch and Gregory Bateson first coined the term "metacommunication" and defined it as "communication about communication."[41] Bateson expanded on the idea in his *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* where he stated that the "human verbal communication can operate and always does operate at many contrasting levels of abstraction", which can be either be classified as metalinguistic or metacommunicative. Metalinguistic levels of abstraction refers to the explicitly or implicitly-communicated messages through the use of language. For

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[39] Attardo, 204.

[40] Alexander Brock, 'Humour as a Metacommunicative Process', *Journal of Literary Theory* 3, no. 2 (January 2009): 178.

[41] Jurgen Ruesch and Gregory Bateson, *Communication: The Social Matrix of Psychiatry* (New York: Norton, 1951), 23.

example, the verbal sound of "cat" signifies a particular class of animal which has certain appearances and behaviours. Metacommunicative levels of abstraction refers to any other messages that is outside of the language realm. For instance, asking "Can you pass me the salt?" at the dinner table implies that the asker would like some extra salt in his food, and that he is requesting the receiver of the question to physically pass him the salt, rather than questioning the receiver's ability to do the action.[42]

Although the mechanism of humour is universal, jokes can fail because the listener is not able to grasp the implicit component and thereby fails to understand the humour behind the joke. Nancy Bell and Salvatore Attardo's paper, which investigated failed humour in non-native English speakers, demonstrated that one of the reasons participants failed to understand the jokes made by native speakers was because of their lack of certain group-specific, implicit cultural knowledge. The underlying knowledge includes particular word connotations and what Bell and Attardo call the "pragmatic forces of utterances", meaning the ability to recognise the implicit level of utterance rather than taking the utterance literally. Pragmatic forces of utterances include speech acts, irony and indirect requests.[43] Moreover, non-native speakers also found themselves with a different style of humour due to cultural differences, and occasionally felt that the natives were inappropriately joking at situations where the natives found acceptable to do so.[44]

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[42] Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology* (Northvale, N.J.: Aronson, 1987), 138.
[43] Nancy Bell and Salvatore Attardo, 'Failed Humor: Issues in Non-Native Speakers' Appreciation and Understanding of Humor', *Intercultural Pragmatics* 7, no. 3 (January 2010): 430–32.
[44] Bell and Attardo, 434–35.

Giselinde Kuipers supported the cultural specificity of humour by using a sociological point of view to examine humour and focusing on "group-specific or culturally specific knowledge about social and cultural conventions regarding humour."[45] She has shown that in order for a joke to be appreciated, the joke deliverer and receiver both have to observe shared, though usually implicit, cultural rules that dictate how, when, by whom and with whom humour should be used. Different communities have different rules pertaining the appropriate ways of delivering and receiving a joke, and the failure to observe the rules, which can happen especially when two people of different cultures communicate, will result in the failure of the joke. In fact, even people with the same cultural background but of a different class already share a different set of implicit rules regarding humorous discourse. Kuipers made use of her experience in the Netherlands as an example, where the Dutch upper-middle class people distinguish themselves with a more "civilised", restrained and ironic style of humour, a joking style which is responded with boredom and annoyance by the working class Dutch people. The difference in joking styles not only bring obstacles to day-to-day conversations, but also has a wider social impact and "sustains class divisions in Dutch society." [46]

1.2.3 The Role of Humour in Social Context

As established in previous sections, humour is a social phenomenon that has a unique power which allows humans to lift their spirits but also at the same time to damage and offend. Consequently, it is important to give an overview of the role of humour in the social context and how it is being used from smaller group settings such as a workplace with colleagues, to bigger social situations like the political arena of a city.

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[45] Giselinde Kuipers, 'Knowledge About Humour', in *Script-Based Semantics: Foundations and Applications. Essays in Honor of Victor Raskin*, by Salvatore Attardo and Victor Raskin (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2020), 94.
[46] Kuipers, 99–100.

When used between individuals, humour can help secure personal relationships and establish a shared common ground that the relationship can be built on. Buckley gave an account of how laughter and humour can foster trust and establish a bond between the speaker and the receiver of the joke, and states that genuine laughter can reveal private sentiments which can demonstrate one's loyalty and sympathy towards others. Because the joke will only be successful if the listener understands and accepts the implicit knowledge component, joking can show that the jester and the listener share a common set of values, and thus providing a site of bond formation.[47] However, the use of humour can also weaken relationships if the humour involves a "butt" of the joke, and as a result isolate the individual from another person or from a group. The listener's failure to laugh at a joke can also signify his/her disapproval of the joke and weaken the tie between the individuals.[48]

For humour's role in a group context, Gary Alan Fine and Michaela De Soucey has provided a detailed overview on the joking culture in a small group and the role of humour in sustaining and maintaining the relationship between the group members. When group members interact they create an idioculture, or a "small group culture", that among other things contains a set of joking references that are repeated and eventually become an identifier for the group. Joking as a form of discourse is embedded (occurs within an ongoing relationship), interactive (requires participation from both deliverer and receiver of the joke) and referential (parties share a history and identity to understand references).[49] For an item to become part of the joking discourse of the group, it needs to be known to at least a few of the group members,

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[47] Buckley, *The Morality of Laughter*, 182–84.
[48] Buckley, 185–86.
[49] Fine and Soucey, 'Joking Cultures', 2–4.

must be considered a usable material for jokes and does not cross any boundaries, is functional in terms of contributing towards maintaining the group, is appropriate for the status system within the group, and lastly, it must be a triggering event.[50] Following these five implicit joking discourse rules, joking can not only smoothen interaction between group members but also help maintain group stability. Moreover, because of the implicit nature of these rules in addition with the referential component of jokes, the joking discourse separates outsiders from group members because they do not possess the shared experiences and the knowledge of what is considered funny. Furthermore, a joking culture can act as a form of social control, as undesirable behaviours exhibited by a group member will be mocked and thus curtailed by the group member in order to prevent future mocking.[51]

In a larger societal scale, humour allows the minority groups to speak out against their oppression and can facilitate the communication between groups and mediate conflict. Ethnic humour is frequently used by the dominant group to stay in power, but through the "inversion on the part of the oppressed, [it can] become a weapon of liberation."[52] Minority populations can use humour as a tactic of non-violent resistance and can be seen as "the useful deployment of playfulness as a political tool."[53] Gandhi's playful reply to the question "Mr. Gandhi, what do you think of British civilization?" with "I think it would be a very good idea" is a demonstration of a witty remark which bears a heavy criticism on the dominant colonial British and subverts the assumption that the governing party is in the superior position.[54] Although racial and ethnic humour can reinforce stereotypes and may act as cover for underlying racism,

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[50] Fine and Soucey, 4–5.
[51] Fine and Soucey, 7–11.
[52] John Lowe, 'Theories of Ethnic Humor: How to Enter, Laughing', *American Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (1986): 442.
[53] Christi A. Merrill, *Riddles of Belonging: India in Translation and Other Tales of Possession*, 1st ed (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 3.
[54] Merrill, 1–2.

it can also act as a sign of deepening friendship between people of different cultural backgrounds and that one feels comfortable enough to make racial jokes because he/she knows it will be well received and that no aggressive intent is meant. For example, the use of ironic racism explains "how an outwardly offensive exchange can be experienced as quite its reverse – and in fact where the relational bonds have been established and joking symmetry present – the more outrageously racist the jousting the more it communicates the reverse."[55] Moreover, Elise DeCamp has shown, in her examination of ethno-racial jokes in a stand-up comedy performance, that comedians reinforce the racial stereotype to provide a familiar reference to the audience before challenging it and offering an alternative narrative at the punchline.[56]

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[55] Amanda Wise, 'Convivial Labour and the "Joking Relationship": Humour and Everyday Multiculturalism at Work', *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 37, no. 5 (2016): 489–90.
[56] DeCamp E., 'Negotiating Race in Stand-up Comedy: Interpretations of "Single Story" Narratives', *Social Identities* 23, no. 3 (2017): 327, https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2016.1235968.

Chapter 2 - Methodological framework

2.1 Hong Kong History

Hong Kong's colonial past and its subsequent return to Chinese rule has rendered it a city with a complex and nuanced history. Hong Kong is comprised of three main parts of territory: Hong Kong Island, ceded to Great Britain in 1842 under the Treaty of Nanjing after the First Opium War; Kowloon Peninsula, ceded to the British in 1860 under the Convention of Beijing at the end of the Second Opium War; and the New Territories, leased to Britain for ninety-nine years in 1898 in the second Convention of Beijing after China's defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War. In 1984, the Sino-British Joint Declaration was signed between People's Republic of China (PRC) and the United Kingdom, in which both countries agreed that the entire Hong Kong colony would be returned to Chinese sovereignty at the end of the New Territories lease on July 1, 1997. Moreover, the Chinese government also declared its basic policies on governing Hong Kong after the handover, which included establishing Hong Kong as a special administrative region that would be self-governing and, under the principle of "one country, two systems", has its own economic, governing, and legal system.[57] This new system was recorded in the Basic Law and allowed Hong Kong to continue to operate under a capitalist system, while PRC practiced a socialist system, for fifty years after the handover, until 2047.

Hong Kong's colonial past, ironically, was what made Hong Kong the metropolitan city it is today. Although Hong Kong does not have any natural resources, the deep harbour

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[57] Edwin L. C. Lai, 'The Economic Implications of the Reunification of Hong Kong with China Symposium--Economic and Legal Implications', *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law* 30, no. 4 (1997): 736.

and the shelter provided by its hilly landscape made the city an excellent port and from the 1960s to 1980s, Hong Kong exported goods to destinations around the world. However, Hong Kong played an even more important role for its imports, as the city acted as a window to the outside world for China: goods that could not be produced in China were imported through Hong Kong; Hong Kong became a remittance centre that received money sent by overseas Chinese; during the Korean war, resources such as gas and penicillin were smuggled in through Hong Kong under United Nations and American embargo.[58] In the 150 years of British rule, Hong Kong progressed from an agrarian society into an industrial economy, and ultimately to one of the biggest financial and trading centre in Asia and in the world.[59]

As the date of the handover approached, Hong Kong citizens began to fear for their future under the Chinese Communist rule, especially after the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989. Many held pessimistic outlook and believed that the Chinese government would meddle in Hong Kong affairs and trample on its freedoms, such as freedom of speech and freedom of press. However, to many people's surprise, the transition of sovereignty in 1997 did not result in any dramatic changes and everyday activities continued as usual.[60] Despite the initial relative tranquillity after the handover, Hong Kong saw increasing conflict between the Hong Kong government and its people, with many criticising the Chinese government for slowing down Hong Kong's progression to democracy and interfering with Hong Kong's political system. For example, the Hong Kong government's insistence on passing Article 23, a bill that requires Hong Kong to enact laws to prohibit "theft of state secrets, sedition, and subversion against the Chinese national government", has led to more than 500,000 people marching in the streets.

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[58] John M. Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong*, Critical Issues in History (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 3.
[59] Tsang and Wong, 'Constructing a Shared "Hong Kong Identity" in Comic Discourses', 770.
[60] Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong*, 217–19.

The bill was extremely unpopular because many feared that this law would restraint their rights and freedom, and the Chief Executive, the head of the Hong Kong government, at the time was forced to shelf the bill.[61] Many more protests followed in the subsequent years, with the Umbrella Movement in 2014 and the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Protest in 2019 as some of the largest protests in Hong Kong history and gained international attention.

2.2 The "Hong Kong Identity" and Relations with China

Under British rule, Hong Kong has developed rapidly into a metropolitan city while China has fallen behind. Many Hong Kongers saw China as backward and inferior, and most were aware that the people in mainland China did not enjoy the same level of freedom that existed in Hong Kong, and the rights to expression, association and religious belief are stifled with poorly defined national security offences.[62] As a result, the Hong Kong identity was heavily based on the superiority over mainlanders and Hong Kongers saw themselves as a special type of Chinese that did not belong with people from mainland China.[63]

Even during colonial rule, most Hong Kongers held a "multi-levelled conception of identity", where "individuals can determine their identities with reference to local, national and international communities, with there being no necessary conflict between them."[64] With this

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[61] Hualing Fu, Carole Petersen, and Simon N. M. Young, *National Security and Fundamental Freedoms: Hong Kong's Article 23 under Scrutiny* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), 13–14; Jeffie Lam, 'National Security: What Is Article 23 and Why Is It Back in the Spotlight?', South China Morning Post, 28 June 2021, https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3138956/national-security-what-article-23-hong-kong-and-why-issue.

[62] Fu, Petersen, and Young, *National Security and Fundamental Freedoms*, 20.

[63] Paul Morris and Edward Vickers, 'Schooling, Politics and the Construction of Identity in Hong Kong: The 2012 "Moral and National Education" Crisis in Historical Context', *Comparative Education* 51, no. 3 (2015): 307; Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong*, 6.

[64] Christopher Hughes and Robert Stone, 'Nation-Building and Curriculum Reform in Hong Kong and Taiwan', *The China Quarterly*, no. 160 (1999): 977.

multi-layered identity, Hong Kongers have no problem with identifying themselves as a part of the local Hong Kong community and also as a part of the larger and more regional group of Chinese ethnicity. In fact, this model of identity is encouraged by the Hong Kong government to harmonise any potential identity crisis that might arise with the Hong Kong's special status within the PRC's governing system. Hong Kong's 1996 guidelines on civic education stated that identity should be developed in relation to the regional community (Hong Kong), to the national community (PRC) and to the world.[65]

Despite government efforts, the people in Hong Kong who identified themselves as Chinese fluctuates after the handover. For the first few years after the handover up until 2003, the proportion of people who identified as Hong Kongers exceeded the proportion who identified as Chinese. The percentage of people who identified as Chinese reached a peak in 2008, which was the year Beijing hosted the Olympics. However, from 2009 onwards, the pattern between Hong Kong and Chinese identities began to diverge, where a decline in Chinese identity corresponded with a rise in Hong Kong identity.[66] With Beijing's increased interference with Hong Kong's affairs in addition to the built up of resentment due to the influx of mainlanders, Hong Kongers felt that their distinctiveness was being eroded under Chinese rule. News of safety issues over food production and building construction due to an inadequate and corrupt government, as well as the persecution of activists in China such as Liu Xiaobo, further reinforced Hong Konger's mistrust in the Beijing government.[67]

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[65] Hughes and Stone, 981.
[66] University of Hong Kong, 'Categorical Ethnic Identity', Public Opinion Program, accessed 29 June 2022, https://www.hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/ethnic/eidentity/poll/eid_poll_chart.html.
[67] Chiew Ping Yew and Kin-ming Kwong, 'Hong Kong Identity on the Rise', *Asian Survey* 54, no. 6 (2014): 1102–9.

2.3 Cantonese and Code Switching

Before sovereignty handover in 1997, English and Cantonese were the two languages that were used in Hong Kong. English, as the coloniser's language, was used in more prestigious domains such as the government, law courts, education, and business, while Cantonese was used in everyday life among the ethnic Chinese. Although there was little interaction between the English-speaking expatriates and the Cantonese-speaking local Hong Kongers, the influence of English is evident in the code-mixing, where Cantonese conversations were often injected with English words. After the transition of power, the first Chief Executive of the Hong Kong government announced the "Biliterate and Trilingual Policy", where students must be proficient at written Chinese and English and speak fluent Cantonese, Putonghua (also known as Mandarin, the national language of PRC) and English.[68]

There has been a multitude of research, performed pre- and post-handover, that investigated Hong Kongers' attitudes towards the three languages and the connection between the languages and the Hong Kong identity. A paper in 1980 showed that some respondents feared the loss of cultural identity if they spoke English, despite the general desire to learn to speak English fluently.[69] However, a replication study in 1994 has shown that there is a still a strong motivation to learn English, but the students did not feel that the use of English would threaten their ethnolinguistic identity, which may represent a change in attitudes towards the languages

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[68] Mee-ling Lai, 'Hong Kong Students' Attitudes Towards Cantonese, Putonghua, and English After the Change of Sovereignty', *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 22, no. 2 (2001): 112.
[69] Herbert D. Pierson, Gail S. Fu, and Sik-yum Lee, 'An Analysis Of The Relationship Between Language Attitudes And English Attainment Of Secondary Students In Hong Kong', *Language Learning* 30, no. 2 (1980): 292.

in anticipation of the takeover.[70] After the return to Chinese sovereignty, attitudes towards English remained positive and the language continued to be an important part of the Hong Kong identity.[71] Bilingualism in Cantonese and English is seen as essential component in the Hong Kong identity because it separates Hong Kongers from mainlanders, some of which, especially those from southern China, can also speak Cantonese.[72] Research has shown that the use of Cantonese and English code-mixing also contributes towards the identity formation of a Hong Konger. However, this is also connected to the social class of the user, with a higher percentage of middle-class group agreeing that the use of mix-code best represents the Hong Kong identity when compared to the working-class group.[73]

Cantonese has always been viewed favourably as it is most Hong Kongers' mother tongue. However, despite its popularity, Cantonese is considered by many as not the most important language that will help them succeed in their careers, and that Cantonese should not be used to teach in secondary schools even though everyone spoke it in their everyday lives.[74] The general attitude towards Mandarin is also positive and Mandarin as a compulsory subject in school was welcomed because it would help students communicate with people from mainland China and Taiwan.[75] In fact, the overall attitude towards Mandarin became more positive over time because learning the language would open doors to mainland businessmen and tourists, who have gained significant economic power over the years as the Chinese

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[70] Martha C. Pennington and Francis Yue, 'English and Chinese in Hong Kong: Pre-1997 Language Attitudes', *World Englishes* 13, no. 1 (1994): 10–11.
[71] Kingsley Bolton, 'The Sociolinguistics of Hong Kong and the Space for Hong Kong English', *World Englishes* 19, no. 3 (November 2000): 275–76.
[72] J.G. Hansen Edwards, 'Hong Kong English: Attitudes, Identity, and Use', *Asian Englishes* 17, no. 3 (2 September 2015): 184.
[73] Lai, 'Hong Kong Students' Attitudes Towards Cantonese, Putonghua, and English After the Change of Sovereignty', 126.
[74] Lai, 121.
[75] Lai, 121.

economy took flight. However, the integrative orientation towards Mandarin is still not strong because no matter how wealthy some mainlanders may be, negative news about the bad quality of Chinese products and the lack of civility exhibited by certain mainland tourists have become linked with Mandarin, preventing the Hong Kong population from truly integrating Mandarin in their daily lives.[76]

2.4 Hong Kong humour

It is interesting to note that the Chinese word for humour, 幽默 (youmo), is a loan-word that originated from the interaction with the English language, indicating that it is a novel concept in Chinese culture. This is not to say that there is no expression of amusement and jocularity in Chinese – 滑稽 (huaji) is an older term for "comical" and 笑 (xiao) is the word for "to laugh" but can also be used as part of an adjective to describe something funny. However, 幽默 denotes a gentler and kinder laughter and is associated to "the idea of modernity and adaptation to new ways and values."[77] Concepts related to humour are not a new phenomenon in Chinese literature. Just like in Western culture, the notion of an appropriate sense of humour is present in Chinese traditional teachings, and the ideas related to Confucian virtue and rites were used to identify a proper kind of humour.[78]

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[76] Mee Ling Lai, 'Tracking Language Attitudes in Postcolonial Hong Kong: An Interplay of Localization, Mainlandization, and Internationalization', *Multilingua* 31, no. 1 (1 January 2012): 104–6.

[77] Jocelyn Chey and Marjorie K. M. Chan, '"Love You to the Bone" and Other Songs - Humour and Rusheng Rhymes in Early Cantopop', in *Humour in Chinese Life and Culture: Resistance and Control in Modern Times*, ed. Jessica Milner Davis and Jocelyn Valerie Chey (Hong Kong China: Hong Kong University Press, 2013), 2–3.

[78] Chey and Marjorie K. M. Chan, 4.

In modern-day China, humour is very much dependent on the regional politico-economic development and the local subculture. Regarding humour specific to Hong Kong, there are various research papers that focus on Hong Kong humour in different aspects of life, for example humour in early canto pop, online during protests, in television advertisements, and in workplaces.[79] In particular, most literature on Hong Kong comedy is written on the actor-filmmaker Stephen Chow and his unique *moleitau* (non-sensical) style of comedy, which made him arguably the most popular film comedian in Hong Kong since the 1990s.[80]

Apart from Stephen Chow, another notable Hong Kong comedian is Dayo Wong, who is credited for introducing the genre of stand-up comedy into Hong Kong. Stand-up comedy is a form of entertainment first developed in the United States of America and is an "inherently rhetorical discourse" which can be used as a cultural form of resistance and challenge the hegemonic view of order. [81] In stand-up comedy, "there often exists an element of ridiculing moral, social, and political conventions," and through the use of humorous discourse, stand-up comedians can challenge accepted values in the society.[82]

For Dayo, his version of stand-up comedy is slightly different from the Western style because his performances tended last around two hours, and they were all one-off programmes

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[79] Chey and Marjorie K. M. Chan, '"Love You to the Bone" and Other Songs - Humour and Rusheng Rhymes in Early Cantopop'; Marta Dynel and Fabio Indìo Massimo Poppi, 'Caveat Emptor: Boycott through Digital Humour on the Wave of the 2019 Hong Kong Protests', *Information, Communication & Society* 24, no. 15 (2021): 2323–41; Fong Yee Chan, 'Selling through Entertaining: The Effect of Humour in Television Advertising in Hong Kong', *Journal of Marketing Communications* 17, no. 5 (2011): 319–36; Stephanie Schnurr and Angela Chan, 'When Laughter Is Not Enough. Responding to Teasing and Self-Denigrating Humour at Work', *Journal of Pragmatics* 43, no. 1 (January 2011): 20–35.

[80] Chi-Keung Yam, 'A Secular Gospel for the Marginal: Two Films of Stephen Chow as Hong Kong Cinematic Parables', in *Exploring Religion and the Sacred in a Media Age*, ed. Elisabeth Arweck and Christopher Deacy, Theology and Religion in Interdisciplinary Perspectives Series (Farnham etc.: Ashgate, 2009), 203.

[81] Andrea Greenbaum, 'Stand-up Comedy as Rhetorical Argument: An Investigation of Comic Culture', *Humor - International Journal of Humor Research* 12, no. 1 (1999): 33; Lawrence E. Mintz, 'Standup Comedy as Social and Cultural Mediation', *American Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (1985): 72.

[82] Tsang and Wong, 'Constructing a Shared "Hong Kong Identity" in Comic Discourses', 771.

performed in larger stadiums similar to music concerts. The fact that Dayo was always performing in stadiums showed that he had gained a level of popularity among the Hong Kong population that allowed him to do so. Dayo's stand-up career started in 1990 and ended with his last performance in 2018, the one which Dayo have explicitly announced would be his last one. During the span of almost thirty years, Dayo has performed fifteen stand-up performances, one of which was performed as part of a comedy duo with Tat-ming Cheung. Dayo's stand-up performances were widely praised for their depth and original perspectives on current events, and many quotes from his performances were often repeated among the Hong Kong netizens as Dayo has the ability to precisely summarise an emotion or collective attitude with one sentence or phrase.[83] After Dayo's introduction of the art form to Hong Kong, stand-up comedy was also performed by other celebrities as well as smaller stand-up comedians who perform solely in local comedy nightclubs for a smaller audience.[84]

2.5 Methodology

To analyse the assumed shared knowledge underlying Dayo's stand-up material, selected parts of Dayo's recorded stand-up performances were translated and analysed. Dayo has uploaded recordings of his performances on his official YouTube channel, which is where I have gained access to my primary sources. Since all of Dayo's stand-ups were recorded in Hong Kong, I can only interpret his performances based on the reaction from his Hong Kong audiences.

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[83] '黃子華', 香港網絡大典, accessed 1 July 2022,
https://evchk.fandom.com/zh/wiki/%E9%BB%83%E5%AD%90%E8%8F%AF.
[84] Charles Lam, 'Identities Are No Joke (or Are They?): Humor and Identity in Vivek Mahbubani's Stand-Up', *HUMOR* 34, no. 4 (2021): 679–98.

After reviewing all of his stand-up shows, I have chosen six segments: each lasts for around 1-2 minutes and refers to a different aspect of the local Hong Konger experience. For each segment, I have provided a description of the venue and the stage, with details on stage decorations, Dayo's costume and props, to give a general impression on how his performances looked. This is then followed by the script itself and if there are culturally specific jokes, I have included an explanation in the footnotes, and if these jokes refer to a larger phenomenon, I have discussed them in more detail in the paragraphs after the script.

The topics of the chosen segments were based on either the common experiences in the Hong Kong daily lives, or a collective feeling that prevailed in the Hong Kong society before and after the occurrences of momentous events, with topics including relationships, struggles with identity and working culture. It is through the accumulation of big and small events can the people of Hong Kong create meaning and use these events as reference points for an ingroup joking discourse. Although some of the subject matters are not unique to Hong Kong, especially the day-to-day affairs, it is how Hong Kongers react to these events based on their history and cultural background that made them distinct from other groups and form their own heritage.

Other than the subjects of the material, the segments were also chosen based on the different time periods they were performed in Dayo's career and I have organised these segments in chronological order, so the parts that occur in his earlier shows will appear first, and vice versa with the later ones. With this arrangement, I hope to demonstrate the shifts in Dayo's material over the years, and I have made references between the segments to make these underlying changes or continuities more explicit.

Regarding the scripts, I have provided my own translation to all the selected segments because they were all performed in Cantonese. The performance titles are also my own translation (except for *What's Next?* which was already translated in the paper by Tsang and Wong), and I have selected the appropriate words that I feel best represent Dayo's intent behind the names. Humour is notorious for its difficulty to be translated because of the combination of its "linguistic and cultural-specific features."[85] For example, in one of the segments, the word 勁 (ging) has proven to be difficult to translate because its meaning of being powerful or expert at one's field fluctuates depending on the context. Nevertheless, I have translated Dayo's performances into English as well as I can and I have chosen to translate certain words that has a functional equivalence in the English language, rather than translating *ad verbum*.

In addition, I have embedded descriptions of Dayo's performative actions (gestures, tone, speed, etc.), change in language, and audience reactions within the script. These non-verbal elements will be bracketed and are written with coloured fonts. Blue represents Dayo's actions, green represents a change in language, and orange represents audience reaction. A word written **bold** indicates that Dayo has put emphasis on it in his delivery.

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[85] Delia Chiaro, *Translation, Humour and the Media.*, vol. 2 (London ; Continuum, 2010), 1.

Chapter 3 - Analysis

3.1 *(Im)proper Family*[86] (1991)

    (Im)proper Family is Dayo's second stand-up performance and its content focused on love, relationships, and sex. Dayo talked about his personal relationship stories, his observations regarding his parents' failed marriage, and his views on various aspects of sex, including masturbation and prostitution. The performance took place in the Queen Elizabeth Stadium, a popular venue that can hold up to 3500 audience members and hosted various sport competitions and concerts performed by artists and pop stars since the 1980s. On the stage of *(Im)proper Family*, a giant chair stood at stage left, and a large red piece of cloth that was tied to the back of the chair draped towards stage right, where a giant yellow cube stood. There was a DVD player on top of the cube. Dayo performed in front of these objects at the front of the stage, and only interacted with the DVD player once at the end of the performance to play a song. Dayo wore a pink button-up shirt, black jeans, and black shoes.

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[86] The word that is used to describe "family" is 色情 (sik cing), which means pornographic. However, I think Dayo has chosen this word for an extra layer of meaning in this context. The character 色 denotes a physical relationship involving lust and lewdness. In contrast, 情 represents a relationship that is built on the connection between individuals, be it friendship, romance, or familial love. The combination of the two characters is a synopsis of Dayo's material in this performance and leads to a translation difficulty because there is no adjective in English that contains both meaning. "(Im)proper" is chosen because a proper familial relationship will entail an emotional bond between family members, but if inappropriate physical relationships are involved, the familial relationship is no longer proper.

1:32:06 - 1:33:29[87]

Nowadays, there is something called "one-night stand." Have you ever heard of it? It's a fling[88]. You don't need to spend a lot of money. You go to a bar, dress a bit nicer (small pause, pretends to fix his shirt), and treat the girl to a drink. I heard that you don't even need to be handsome for this to work (slight laughter), so someone like me will also pass. (Slight laughter) (Small pause) Everything will be fine as long as you know how to say cool things. (Smiling cheekily) I don't know much, but when it comes to saying cool things, I'm an expert. OK, let me show you. (Long pause, straightens his back, positions himself at a slight angle to the front of the stage, expression of confidence) (In English) Shit. (Slight smile) (Big laughter and applause) Ah. I mean. (Points finger at audience) You know? (Laughter) (In Cantonese) The most important thing is, are we going to your place or mine? (Laughter) I know that too in English: (in English) your place or mine? (Slight laughter) (Spoken like a teacher) Let's say that together once, shall we? (Laughter) French: (in French) chez vous ou chez moi? (Slight laughter) (In Cantonese) A Vietnamese person taught me this. (Slight laughter) We were talking about the problem of where we should go after 97. (Long pause) (No laughter at first, then laughter grows and some applause) Those who find this funny are very smart.[89] (Laughter)

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[87] 黃子華, 色情家庭, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JjQR1iCl9Sg.
[88] The four-character word has no direct translation in English. It literally translates to "mist water affair", an idiom that describes ambiguous relationships that last for a short period of time. One-night stands are one of such relationships. The word "fling" is chosen because it has the closest definition to the original word.
[89] This joke is one of Dayo's more complex jokes and is related to the fear of Communist rule that many Vietmese people have also experienced. The joke will be explained in detail in the following paragraphs.

3.1.1 Language Switch

In this segment, there are two points that deserve a deeper exploration. The first being the switch in language from Cantonese to English resulting in the punchline – "Shit." On the surface, this joke is an excellent demonstration of tension building and releasing as the source of humour. The long pause and Dayo's active repositioning of himself heightened the audience's curiosity in his claim of expertise in "saying cool things." Moreover, "shit" is a common English swear word that most of the Hong Kong audience would have known, thus creating another point of tension that requires a release through laughter.

However, the switch to English represents something bigger that is related to western influences on Hong Kong people's identities and attitudes. Studies from 1980s and 1990s have shown that in Hong Kong, modernisation is often associated with Westernisation and that Westerners were ranked higher in qualities such as appearances, friendliness, wealth, and status.[90] There was attitude of admiration towards Western culture and the desire to learn English to achieve an advantageous position with "either upwards and/or outward mobility" in the future was not uncommon.[91] This explains why Dayo has chosen to speak English (and French) as a way to impress ladies in a bar in his stand-up routine. The unexpectedness of the language switch, in combination with the image of Dayo as a local Hong Kong man attempting to speak a foreign language, made "shit" a very effective punchline.

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[90] John P. Gibbons, 'Attitudes Towards Languages and Code-Mixing in Hong Kong', *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 4, no. 2–3 (1983): 143; Pierson, Fu, and Lee, 'An Analysis of the Relationship', 298.

[91] Daniel W.C. So, 'Language-Based Bifurcation of Secondary Education in Hong Kong: Past, Present and Future.', *Into the Twenty-First Century: Issues of Language in Education in Hong Kong*, 1992, 78.

Dayo has continued to insert English words and phrases in his subsequent stand-up performances. It is interesting to note that the underlying tone of admiration towards the West has diminished in his later performances when using the English language. Here is a short example from his performance in 2012, in which he talked about his embarrassing experience in a singing competition:

Disc 1 – 14:19-15:18[92]

One time John[93] asked me to join an English folk song competition with him and help him sing a line. Do you know what John sang? It was so embarrassing. (Pause) Do you want to hear? (Cheers, applause, yelling "Yes!") I don't need music. Are you ready? I am giving you some mental preparation, OK? (Slight laughter) (In English) (Singing to the tune of Cantonese pop song "Fan Fei Yin") Flying, many miles. Fly a-a-a-away. I am trying not to cry-y-y-y-y. I am so sad I want to die. (Big laughter and applause)

From the example above, the language switch once again leads to a laughing point, but the humour is generated based on a cultural clash between the Chinese and English language. "Fan Fei Yin" is a Cantonese pop song that first became popular in the 1970s in the southern parts of China. This song was one of the first popularised songs sung in Cantonese and has retained elements of Cantonese Opera, such as the use of Classical Chinese in the lyrics and a

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[92] 黃子華, *娛樂圈血肉史2 Disc1*, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r--Ckap5ryo.
[93] The name Dayo uses here is 強 (koeng) and is one the most common Chinese male names. Dayo often refers to Koeng in his performances and the name represents a fictional character or is a substitute name for someone Dayo knows in real life. I have changed "Koeng" into "John", so that the ordinary nature of the name can be understood in English.

Cantonese opera style melody. [94] Cantonese Opera is one of the most traditional art forms in southern China and is a representative of the Chinese culture. By changing the lyrics to English, Dayo has essentially stripped the song of its historical and cultural significance and reduced it to its most superficial meanings. Even though the younger audiences in Dayo's 2012 performance were unlikely to know "Fan Fei Yin", its tune or its history, the Cantonese opera style melody was instantly recognisable for audience members of all ages to understand Dayo's joke. Again, the unforeseen language switch in addition to the cultural clash generates humour. In contrast to the English segment in *(Im)proper Family*, however, the undertone of admiration towards the West is gone.

3.1.2 Fear of Communist Rule

The second point that I would like to discuss is the joke related to the Vietnamese person talking to Dayo about where they should go after 1997. This was one of Dayo's more convoluted joke in the show, hence Dayo deliberately paused, allowing the audience to take some time to understand it. Vietnam has a similar history to Hong Kong because they were both colonies of a Western power, with Hong Kong under British and Vietnam under French rule, thus explaining why Dayo would learn a French phrase from a Vietnamese person. Moreover, Vietnam shares a similar political situation with Hong Kong with the Communist party in power. In 1975 when the Communist north seized control of south Vietnam, large amounts of Vietnamese people fled from their homeland in fear of the Communist party and

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[94] "Fan Fei Yin" is a representation of a turning point in Cantonese pop music history that requires another place outside of this thesis to examine. The song marked the early popularisation of Cantonese-sung pop songs in southern China, during which the music industry mainly sang Mandarin and English songs. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, music that was sung in Cantonese was seen as old fashioned and distasteful. With the popularisation of "Fan Fei Yin" and several other Cantonese songs, musicians began to write and perform songs in Cantonese, and in the process modernised the Cantonese music style and removed the Cantonese Opera attributes, leading to the current distinct Cantonese music genre we hear today. 黄志華, 情迷粵語歌 (Hong Kong: Fei fan chu ban, 2018), 139–48.

arrived at neighbouring countries. Hong Kong was one of the cities which received waves of Vietnamese refugees, a problem that would trouble the Hong Kong government for years.[95] Dayo's joke was based on the common fear of the Communist regime which has already been experienced by the Vietnamese, and, with the return of sovereignty in 1997, will be experienced by Hong Kongers. Chez vous ou chez moi? Should the people go back to Vietnam or continue to stay in Hong Kong? Whatever the choice is, neither outcome would be an ideal one. Although this joke is embedded in a humorous performance, it is clear to see that the laughter concealed a sentiment of fear and anxiety towards the future that was prevalent in the Hong Kong society at the time.

3.2 *What's Next?*[96] (1992)

What's Next? was Dayo's third stand-up performance and took place in the Queen Elizabeth Stadium. Dayo began the stand-up with his personal experiences with relationships and work and gradually expanded the breadth of his topics as the show progressed to societal problems, the return of sovereignty to China, Chinese history, and the Chinese identity. The name *What's Next?* summarised the central theme of this performance – the apprehension towards the soon-to-arrive handover of Hong Kong and the search for any signs that would reveal what the future might bring. The stage decorations were similar to *(Im)proper Family* in that it featured enormous ordinary objects. On centre stage were two giant boots, one standing up right and the other lying sideways, placed in front of a red backdrop. Dayo never interacted with the giant boots and delivered his material in front of them. Dayo wore a short

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[95] Roda Mushkat, 'Refugees in Hong Kong: Legal Provisions and Policies', *Hong Kong Law Journal* 10 (1980): 169.

[96] Several of the jokes in this performance were analysed in the paper written by Tsang and Wong. I have reused their translation of the performance name as I believe it is quite an accurate translation.

sleeve light green shirt, which was partly buttoned up, revealing a white T-shirt underneath. He wore black jeans and brown shoes.

46:22 - 48:15[97]

What I worry about is that thing called Daya Bay[98]. It will go into operation this year. I think if anything bad happens to that thing, all the police are going to be like "Why did we destroy the motorboats[99]?" (Slight laughter) But it will be useless, by that time even if you have a motorboat, it will be useless. Because by then all the fish in the sea (pause, hand gesturing in circular motion to symbolise the sea) will be affected by the radiation, undergo mutation, and know how to talk. They will surround your boat and say (said with smile) "Hey! You want to leave? (Pause) (Slight laughter) (Smile disappears) Have you paid your protection fee?[100] (Laughter) What! (Surprised and angry expression) You don't know who I am? I am **the** kingpin bream[101]!" (Laughter and applause) To be honest, in the many topics under environmental protection, I

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[97] 黃子華, 跟住去邊度, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eXX48v9K9Q0.

[98] Daya Bay here refers to the Daya Bay Nuclear Power Plant, which is located in the east of Shenzhen, the Chinese city bordering Hong Kong, and to the northeast of Hong Kong. It was built with the intention of providing electricity to both Hong Kong and Southern China. Following the incident in Chernobyl, over one million Hong Kong people, which was one fifth of Hong Kong's population at the time, signed a petition opposing its construction. Chinese officials pushed through the anti-nuclear campaign, and signed contracts for its construction with British and French companies.

[99] The word used to represent "motorboats", 大飛 (daai fei), is a colloquial term that refers to the motorboats that were used in the smuggling of goods, usually back to China. These highspeed boats are sometimes intercepted by the Hong Kong police and had them destroyed.

[100] The word is a translation of 陀地費(to dei fai), a racket perpetuated by local crime group towards shops in their controlled area, promising protection from outside the sanctions of the law, or their refrainment from carrying out attacks on the target businesses. Dayo has change the phrase into 陀海費. 地 means land and 海 means the sea, meaning that the fish in the sea is demanding for a protection fee from the people in the boats, which is a ridiculous scenario.

[101] The original word used is a pun on a top position in Hong Kong organised crime groups. More details in the analysis following the transcription.

support one of them the most. And that is I think we, as Hong Kong people, really need to reduce our noise pollution. So, if anyone is willing to relocate the guy called Zhang Junsheng[102], I am personally willing to donate 1000 dollars for this cause. (Laughter, cheers, and applause begin before Dayo finishes his sentence) (Pretend to talk to crew members and point towards the audience) Have you videoed the people who clapped? (Big laughter) (Expression of relief) Phew I was so scared. (Laughter) I was scared I was the only one. (Laughter) Phew I am much calmer now. (Pretend to talk to crew members) There's no point in videoing now. Now everyone will be like. (Assume a stiff standing position with the hands on the side, expression of a person trying to hold in laughter) (Laughter) (Pause) Is everyone scared? (Pretend to talk to crew members) Stop videoing, don't be mean. I will take sole responsibility. (Slight laughter) Really, we are truly scared right? I know, what's so funny about that sentence? You laugh because you are afraid, (Pause) the more afraid you are, the louder you laugh. (Pause) But not too loud though because Xinhua News Agency is really close to here.[103] (Slight laughter)

3.2.1 Hong Kong Crime Groups

This passage from Dayo's performance evokes a generational memory of a time when crime was an integral part of the Hong Kong everyday life. From collecting protection fee from local businesses by street gangs, to organised criminal groups that influence politics and law enforcements, evidence has shown that criminal activity had permeated to all levels of the

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[102] Zhang was the deputy director of the Xinhua News Agency, which, before 1997, was the *de facto* Chinese embassy in Hong Kong. His views and vocal criticisms towards the British colonial government were seen as conveying the Chinese position towards different matters, including the transition of Hong Kong after the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration.

[103] The Xinhua News Agency Hong Kong branch is located across the road from the Queen Elizabeth Stadium.

Hong Kong society and was an constitutive part of the societal structure.[104] One of the biggest crime groups in Hong King is the Triad group, which originated from the Triad Society created in China with the initial intention of overthrowing the Qing dynasty in 1644. With the overthrow of the Qing dynasty in 1911, the secret political group mutated to become an underground crime group.[105] Triad gang members form their own subculture by publicly distinguishing themselves through dress, language, and behaviour. The public displays of identity and the confrontations with the rival gang members give the impression of the complete domination of an area.[106] Organised crime groups used to have a more rigid hierarchical structure, with specific positions that were filled by more exceptional members to perform specific functions for the group, including accounting, message delivering and fighting.[107]

Dayo's segment about the fish mutating to become gang members is a direct reference to the triad organisations that are present in Hong Kong. The pun related to "kingpin bream" is difficult to translate because it is a reference to one of the highest positions in a crime organisation - 雙花紅棍 (soeng faa hung gwan), which literally translates as "double flower red stave". The double flowers represent the ability to be adept at both the pen and the sword, and the red stave is a position name for the fighters involved in gang combats. Thus, those who are awarded the honourable title 雙花紅棍 are socially adept men who built their reputations within the crime community through their intelligence and fighting abilities.[108] In Dayo's pun,

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[104] James J. McKenna, 'Organized Crime in the Royal Colony of Hong Kong', *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 12, no. 4 (November 1996): 316–28.

[105] Wai-kin Che, 'The Triad Societies in Hong Kong in the 1990's', *Police Studies: The International Review of Police Development* 13, no. 4 (1990): 151.

[106] McKenna, 'Organized Crime in the Royal Colony of Hong Kong', 321.

[107] Philip Baridon, 'Report on Asian Organised Crime' (The Criminal Division U.S. Department of Justice, 1988), 24.

[108] W. P. Morgan, Kingsley Bolton, and Christopher Hutton, *Triad Societies in Hong Kong*, Triad Societies, v. 6 (London: Routledge, 2000), 100–101.

he has changed the position name into 雙花紅三 (soeng faa hung saam). 紅三 is the name of a common bream that is often eaten by Hong Kong households. Hilarity ensues when Dayo wittily combined the two names together to denote a fish gang member.

3.2.2 Anxiety and Uncertainty Towards the Chinese Rule

Dayo had skilfully incorporated an interlude of fishy crimes within his bigger description of Hong Kong attitudes towards China. As the title of the show already suggested, Hong Kongers were uncertain of the future under Chinese sovereignty, which was markedly illustrated by the lack of support in the construction of Daya Bay Nuclear Power Plant. The main concern for the Hong Kong people was not the lack of nuclear energy experts in China, but its inefficient bureaucratic system. The incidents that happened in Chernobyl and Three Mile Island were due to human error and not because of an insufficient technological knowledge. Communist China's inclination to cover up disasters and accidents would cost Hong Kong people valuable evacuation time in the case of any accidents that may occur at the Daya Bay nuclear site.[109] Dayo's worries concerning the nuclear plant is a feeling that his audience could empathise with because of the general anxiety over China's opacity in sensitive matters. The government's disregard of the complaints further weakened the Hong Kong population's confidence in the Communist rule because it showed that their voices were not being heard. Although the topic of Daya Bay may conjure negative feelings, Dayo carefully maintained the tension created until its release through laughter at the fish gang member's appearance.

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[109] Herbert S. Yee and Wong Yiu-Chung, 'Hong Kong: The Politics of the Daya Bay Nuclear Plant Debate', *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 63, no. 4 (1987): 619.

In addition, Dayo poked fun at Zhang Junsheng being the source of noise pollution and received enthusiastic applause from the audience when he joked that he would donate 1000 dollars if someone could remove Zhang from his position. In the 1990s the last Hong Kong governor Christopher Patten proposed a series of political reforms in Hong Kong, including exploiting the grey areas of the Basic Law in hopes of securing more democracy for Hong Kong before the handover.[110] Zhang, in response to Patten's actions, proclaimed a series of vociferous accusations, claiming that Patten was making a proposal that would infringe the agreements made between London and Beijing, making it impossible for them to maintain good relations if the reforms were to go through. In a famous quote of Zhang, he described Patten as "a prostitute who still wanted an arch to be erected to honour her as a chaste woman".[111] Hong Kongers in the 1990s were already sensitive to topics related to the takeover after the Sino-British Joint Declaration signed in 1984. Zhang's persistent protestation in addition to his special status as the *de facto* spokesperson for the Chinese government easily made him an irritating adversary in the public's eyes. Thus, Dayo's mocking of Zhang was received eagerly by his audience.

Immediately after the jokes on Zhang, Dayo followed up with a humorous interaction with the audience that revealed his statement about Zhang was a bait to make the audience take his side, thus exposing those who were uncertain of the Chinese rule. Using the audience's fear, Dayo's "meta-joke" has turned the subject of laughter into the audience and made fun of the joking process itself. Despite initial laughter, the atmosphere became heavier as Dayo continued with a more serious tone and summarised the source of tension: his material related

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[110] Joseph Y.S. Cheng, 'Sino-British Negotiations on Hong Kong during Chris Patten's Governorship', *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 48, no. 2 (1994): 231.
[111] Kang-chung Ng and Jeffie Lam, 'Zhang Junsheng: Beijing's Envoy Who Took Aim at Chris Patten', South China Morning Post, 20 February 2018, https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/2133871/remembering-zhang-junsheng-beijings-envoy-who-took-aim-chris.

to the takeover was funny because it was based on the fear of the Communist regime. The tension created by the raw disclosure of vulnerability was softened with Dayo's jab at the absence of freedom of speech in China, stating that Xinhua News Agency office was nearby and urging the audience to not laugh too loudly so that the Chinese officials could not hear them. This segment demonstrated how Dayo has skilfully used the general anxiety towards the future to create tension for laughter and that the political climate at the time was open enough for Dayo to explicitly reflect on the political situation.

3.3 *Goofing Away - A Ten-Year Anniversary*[112] (1999)

Dayo's seventh stand-up, *Goofing Away*, was performed in the Queen Elizabeth Stadium. It was one of Dayo's more themeless performances, in which he talked about a wide variety of topics including the post-handover Hong Kong, the unpredictable stock market, the hardships faced by different jobs, relationships, religion, and comments on current events. As *Goofing Away* took place in 1999, the tenth year after Dayo's first stand-up performance in 1990 which kickstarted his career in the entertainment industry, Dayo also included some remarks over his profession as an actor. On stage right, there was a tall table covered with a bright yellow tablecloth and a black curtain served as the stage's backdrop. Dayo was wearing a dark blue suit and black leather shoes. He has grown his hair to above-shoulder length and dyed it to a dark red colour.

56:06 - 57:58[113]

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[112] The title of the performance is a pun on the word 拾 (sap), which in this context means to goof around, but the word itself is the Chinese character for the number ten.
[113] 黃子華, 拾下拾下, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nSe3nhopbpg.

It is important for a person to have a faith, you see? Take me as an example, I am religious, I believe in The Great Sage.[114] (Laughter) (Pause) You all know who the Great Sage is. I think he is the most arrogant god there is. Normal people see things like this. (Puts his opened left hand in front of his forehead above his eyes, the stereotypical position a person takes to see things from afar, maintains position) The Great Sage does it like: (Opened left hand moves away from forehead towards the left and in a circular motion moves past the waist and returns to the forehead, but from the right side, both feet now face sideways and knees are slightly bent, pretentious expression, ending position is a more dramatic version of the previous pose) (Laughter, applause) Wow look at this move, his arm is two feet longer than yours. (Repeat the circular motion but to a smaller scale) (Slight laughter) But later (pause) I stopped believing in the Great Sage, even though it was super easy to believe in him because we only need to offer bananas. (Laughter) Later I felt that believing in the Great Sage in the long run seems to be a bit unfair to Pigsy and Sandy[115], don't you think? Some people not only offer bananas, right? They also offer roasted pig.[116] If Pigsy sees this, he will be really upset. (Slight laughter) If you are not careful you might have roasted Pigsy. (Slight laughter) Then should the Great Sage thank you or fight you? "Common man you roasted my fellow classmate[117]." (Slight laughter) (Pause) And there is one more problem: does

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[114] "The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal", also called the Monkey King or Sun Wukong, is a legendary mythical figure most famously known as one of the main characters in the 16th century Chinese novel *Journey to the West*. More details in the analysis.

[115] Pigsy and Sandy are Monkey King's fellow disciples of the Buddhist monk, Tripitaka, who is journeying to the West (India) to obtain the sutras and carry them back to China. Pigsy is a man with a pig head and Sandy is a sand demon in a river before following Tripitaka to the West.

[116] In Chinese communities, a roasted pig is commonly prepared to celebrate special occasions or is a form of gift offered by worshippers to their gods.

[117] The word used here does not have an English translation. It is a name used in ancient China by students under the same teacher to address each other. The teacher-student relationship is often compared to a father-son relationship, and so the relationships between disciples are also compared to the ones between siblings. This is reflected in the names students used to address each other and their teacher as the names are partly formed by characters that signify the sibling/father status.

anyone believe in Tripitaka? (Laughter) Nobody believes in Tripitaka now. Everyone has forgotten that the Great Sage has a teacher. Everyone believes in the student and not the teacher. In the TV series the Monkey King has grabbed enough attention. "Yo, what is there to be afraid of?"[118] Very eye-catching. Pigsy also became famous, look guys Pigsy is here today.[119] (Pointing towards the audience) (Cheers, applause persist and only die down during the next few sentences) Wayne Lai became a blond Pigsy.[120] Even a skinny guy who pretends to be Pigsy became famous.[121] Only Tripitaka is worried: "Oh no, what am I supposed to do?" Tripitaka can't just go and start a scandal with the spider demon.[122] (Slight laughter) So instead of "Amitabha"[123] he says (in English) "I love you"? (Laughter) (Pause) (In Cantonese) I think when it comes to religion it is important for us to choose a more legitimate one. Like me, I now believe in Guanyin.[124] (Slight laughter)

3.3.1 *Journey to the West*

Journey to the West is one China's four major novels and it has been translated into English twice, with the second version by Anthony Yu as the far more accurate and complete edition. Wu Cheng'en is generally considered to be *Journey to the West*'s final compiler and author in the Ming dynasty. The first half of the novel tells the story of Monkey, born from a

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[118] In 1996, the story of the *Journey to the West* is adapted to one of the most popular TV series in Hong Kong during the late 90s. This sentence is the Monkey King's pet phrase in the show.

[119] The actor who played Pigsy in the TV show, Wayne Lai, was present in the audience.

[120] A misspoken sentence. The Monkey King should be the blond character due to its golden hair, not Pigsy.

[121] Pigsy is often portrayed as a fat character who loves to eat, with his unbuttoned shirt exposing his big belly. Wayne Lai is skinny, which makes him playing a fat character ironic.

[122] One of the more famous adventures in *The Journey of the West* is the battle against the Spider demon, who often hunts men by seducing them with the appearance of a beautiful woman.

[123] In the Pure Land sect of Buddhism, chanting Amitabha's name with intense concentration would secure rebirth at the Western Paradise. Most people know this phrase from the monk stereotype portrayed by the media, recognising that this is something a monk would chant, but few know the origin behind the phrase.

[124] A Buddhist figure in Chinese mythology that was based on bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. She is the goddess of mercy and is currently still widely worshipped in East and South Asia.

divine rock, rebelling against the heavens, and was punished by the Buddha by trapping him under a mountain for five hundred years. This is then followed by the second half of the novel, where Monkey was released from his captivity in return for his accompaniment and protection of Tripitaka, a monk journeying towards India to obtain the Buddhist scriptures. Along with Monkey, Tripitaka would accept two more disciples on the way, Pigsy and Sandy, both of whom joined the journey to atone for their previous crimes. The three disciples travelled with and protected Tripitaka from various monsters and scheming humans, who believed that eating Tripitaka's flesh would grant them immortality. At the end, the group obtained the sutras in India, and safely returned to China. All four members attained Buddhahood and were given titles by the Buddha for their strengths and service.

3.3.2 Pluralistic Religious Environment

It is clear from the start that the novel contains religious ideas and allegories, given that the plot covers themes such as pilgrimage, punishment, redemption, enlightenment, and Buddhahood. Tripitaka (birth name Tang Xuan-zang) is a real historical figure that is known for his pilgrimage from China to India to obtain the Buddhist scriptures and was given the honorific title of "Tripitaka" by the emperor at the time to commemorate his deed.[125] As his journey to the West (India) was long and arduous, the retelling of the monk's voyage was slowly infused with characters from folktales, legends, and religious lore over the years. With the incorporation of so many mythical characters from different religions, *Journey to the West* displayed the pluralistic religious environment in ancient China that allowed for such a novel to be written. A deeper analysis on the verses and prose in the book will reveal ideas that promote the unity of the three religions that were widely practised in ancient China – Buddhism,

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[125] Anthony C. Yu, *Journey to the West*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 24.

Confucianism and Taoism.[126] The adherents of each religion could borrow from, combine, and mutually influence each other's traditions and ideologies.[127] In late sixteenth century, which was around the time *Journey to the West* was published, the syncretism of the three main religions would eventually be described as 三教合一 (sanjiao heyi), meaning "the unity of the Three Teachings".[128] Principles from all three religions could be found in *Journey to the West,* such as the Confucian ideal of "unyielding loyalism to state, parents, and familiar patriarchs even in the face of death", or the need to purge harmful desires from both Buddhist and Taoist beliefs.[129]

3.3.3 Hierarchy Between Gods of Different Religion

The novel also incorporated Buddhist and Taoist divinities into the celestial hierarchy and, with "the unity of the Three Teachings" in mind and that all three of the religious should be treated equally, it is interesting to note that the narratives of the different gods were slightly different from one another in the novel. In the story, the Buddha and Guanyin exhibited a degree of wisdom and compassion that other characters, such as the Jade Emperor of Taoist origin, do not share.[130] In other words, the Buddhist gods were portrayed in a better light, possessing more qualities than the deities from other religions.

A similar remark can be observed in Dayo's segment regarding Guanyin (a Buddhist deity) as a more legitimate deity than the Monkey King. It is unclear from where Monkey's character is originated, although it may have drawn inspiration from other Chinese mythologies

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[126] Yu, 1:83.
[127] Timothy Brook, 'Rethinking Syncretism: The Unity of the Three Teachings and Their Joint Worship in Late-Imperial China', *Journal of Chinese Religions* 21, no. 1 (January 1993): 13.
[128] Brook, 13.
[129] Yu, *Journey to the West*, 1:95.
[130] Yu, 1:95.

with simian characters or even from the Hindu god Hanuman in the epic *Rāmāyaṇa*. It could also be the case that the story incorporated local monkey deities or that the story has inspired Monkey King cults that still currently exist in different areas. In any case, the Monkey King God is often revered in a local scale and never as universally venerated as Buddhist divinities such as Guanyin. The common sentiment of the Monkey King not being a "true" god can already be seen when the audience laughed at the Monkey King being Dayo's choice of worship. Furthermore, Dayo further diminished Monkey King's divinity by attributing the deity with human traits such as arrogance, as illustrated by Dayo's dramatic Monkey posture, and revengefulness. It is noteworthy that even though a hierarchy of the gods from different religions is never officially created or recognised by any establishment, Dayo's audience instinctively acknowledged the fact that Monkey King is one of the lesser gods, allowing Dayo to create the jokes.

3.3.4 Religious Fickleness

In the segment, Dayo also laughed at Hong Kong people's fickleness when it comes to religion. While there is still debate on whether there is a unified Chinese religion, it is undeniable that a multitude of deities are worshipped in Chinese regions. In Hong Kong alone, there is almost two thousand places of worship, with temples for Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism and more.[131] It is common to see small roadside shrines placed by stores in reverence of Tudigong, a tutelary deity, or Guangong, the martial wealth god. In such an environment, it is incredibly easy for Hong Kongers to worship several gods at once or switch between them,

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[131] Anonymous, 'Fact Sheet Religious Facilities in Hong Kong' (Research Office Legislative Council Secretariat, 8 December 2017); James L. Watson, 'Anthropological Analyses of Chinese Religion', ed. Arthur P. Wolf, *The China Quarterly*, no. 66 (1976): 358.

which is exactly what Dayo mentioned in his performance.[132] Tripitaka, despite being

Monkey's teacher, is forgotten because Monkey is much more powerful than he, showing how

humans will always side with the more powerful faction for personal gain/blessing. When Dayo

realised that worshipping Monkey might not be as easy as it seemed, Dayo's lack of loyalty

towards the Monkey King is apparent when he switched to Guanyin stating legitimacy reasons.

Although Dayo began the segment by stating the importance for a person to have a faith, his

later statements argued for the opposite, commenting on the superficial nature of religion with

a sarcastic tone.

3.3.5 Hong Kong Popular Culture

In addition to the religious aspects of *Journey to the West,* it is equally important to

discuss the influence of the novel on Chinese/Hong Kong pop culture and how Dayo plays

with this in his performance. The story of *Journey to the West* has been adapted into a multitude

of art forms, including Chinese opera, television series, movies, and comic strips.[133] Despite

Tripitaka being the only character that existed in real life, Monkey overshadowed his teacher

and fellow disciples and took the central role. Monkey is the most powerful out of the disciples,

possessing incredible strength, speed, fighting skills and magical abilities and most of the time

it is ultimately up to Monkey to save Tripitaka from danger. Frequently, Tripitaka, being the

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[132] A popular Cantonese idiom 入屋叫人, 入廟拜神 (jap nguk giu jan, jap miu baai san) literally translates to "when you enter the house you address the people inside, when you enter a temple you worship the god," meaning that one should always follow the customs of the place one is in. The idiom reflects the accommodating and respectful attitudes Chinese people value when in contact with others and upon a deeper look, it also shows the tolerance of Chinese people in worshipping a foreign god if it means giving respect to the host.

[133] Chinese opera - CCTV 戏曲, 《CCTV 空中剧院》 20180213 京剧《大闹天宫》 1/2 | CCTV 戏曲, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9Wfpv6JX8s.; Cartoon - 悟空闹影视, 大型系列动画片《西游记》第一集：猴王出世, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5EM6d0Gzr3c.; Film - Stephen Chow and Chi-Kin Kwok, *Journey to the West*, Action, Adventure, Comedy (Bingo Movie Development, Film Workshop, Huayi Brothers Media, 2013).; Comic book - Alex Jaffe, 'The Man, the Myth, the Monkey: Introducing the Monkey Prince', DC, 31 January 2022, https://www.dccomics.com/blog/2022/01/31/the-man-the-myth-the-monkey-introducing-the-monkey-prince.

only human mortal in the group, is depicted as a powerless and vulnerable, at times even ignorant and gullible.

Dayo in his performance made fun of this foible and linked Tripitaka's character to the need to seek fame and attention in the entertainment industry. A television series in Hong Kong playing at the time of Dayo's performance was adapted from the *Journey to the West* and became very popular among the Hong Kong people. It first aired in 1996 and its unexpected popularity led to a sequel which was aired in 1998. The show has led to the actors portraying the foursome to become famous, especially for those who played the disciples. Thus, Dayo's reference to Monkey King's quote in the series would be understood by the audience, and the presence of the actor Wayne Lai in the audience led to a prolonged applause. Dayo made fun of Tripitaka's inability to increase his favour among the audience, just like his incapability to fend off monsters in the novel. In the entertainment industry, it is not uncommon for actors to start a rumour related to their romantic status to increase their fame. Dayo's suggestion of Tripitaka being involved in a scandal is humorous since it is inappropriate for a monk to enter a relationship. On top of that, Dayo added a second point of laughter by conjuring the image of the spider demon, a well-known monster that disguises itself as a beautiful woman, as Tripitaka's potential lover, creating an image that put two vastly different characters side by side, provoking humour.

3.3.6 Language Switch

Lastly, the language switch is once again worth noting. Interestingly, the words "I love you" are spoken in English, even though Cantonese certainly has the vocabulary to represent the same meaning. One of the ways in which Western perceptions of love are different from that of Asian ones is that Western societies tend to be more individualistic while Asian

countries tend to be more collectivistic. Western style love is seen as "passionate" and "romantic" but love and intimacy in Chinese relationships are downplayed to accommodate for collectivist societal concerns, such as familial responsibilities.[134] Given the perception that Western love is more romantic, it is not surprising for Hong Kongers to use the English version of "l love you" to access the more romantic side when professing one's love. To emphasise the affection behind the words, Dayo said them with the tone typically used between a couple. By saying "I love you" immediately after "Amitabha", Dayo placed the amorous emotions evoked by the profession of love side by side with the stereotypical pious monk imagery, and the dramatic contrast created laughter in the audience.

3.4 *Inappropriate For Children* (2006)

Inappropriate For Children is Dayo's ninth stand-up comedy performance. In this show, Dayo commented on the working culture in Hong Kong and the lack of motivation, interest and ambition most people exhibited regarding their jobs. Moreover, Dayo also talked about relationships from both female and male perspectives and remarked on the increasing inability for people to come to a consensus because each person has their own agenda to fulfil. *Inappropriate For Children* was first performed in Queen Elizabeth Stadium in Hong Kong and was later performed again in Canada for a charity event. In his Hong Kong performances, the stage has a black curtain as backdrop, and it is empty except for a wooden stool and a small wooden table on which Dayo has put his water bottle. Dayo wore a black blazer that was adorned with several button badges on the left side, a white T shirt underneath that has the Chinese character for marriage printed on it, blue jeans with a jeans chain, and white sneakers.

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[134] Robin Goodwin and Charlotte Findlay, '"We Were Just Fated Together" ... Chinese Love and the Concept of Yuan in England and Hong Kong', *Personal Relationships* 4, no. 1 (March 1997): 85.

11:23 - 12:31[135]

My boss was an innocent man. He didn't understand that we as employees, our appearances are like an adult, but in reality, we have the same mentality as a primary school kid who didn't do his homework – every day we hope that there will be a typhoon tomorrow. (Laughter) (Pause) Right? For a man whose ideals are typhoons, why would he ever feel ashamed?[136] (Slight laughter) And indeed, what is happier than the fact that you know you must work tomorrow, but you heard the observatory announce, (spoken using the tone of a news broadcaster) "Typhoon signal number 3 is currently being issued. Typhoon Fung Fung[137] is gradually approaching Hong Kong. Signal number 8 may be issued later." You will instantly find yourself becoming a jockey fan, right? (Pretending to be jockey gambler, chanting, each repetition more enthusiastic than the other) Number 8, number 8, (laughter) number 8, number 8! (Talking speed gradually quickens) Sure enough at 2 am, Typhoon Fung Fung has officially risen to the level of signal number 8. (Miming a phone on his right hand) You immediately call your friends Bob, Bobby, and Robby[138]. Just when you pick up the phone, your doorbell rings. (Miming opening a door, surprised expression) You open the door and right in front of you **is** Bob, Bobby, and Robby. (Pause) (Slight laughter) (Expression of happiness, big smile, talking speed slows down) You start the game.[139] (Laughter) (Pause, right hand

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[135] 黃子華, 兒童不宜, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fIYdcaxqJqg.

[136] A reference to the joke made before this segment on how Dayo's boss is attempting to make his employees feel embarrassed about their incompetence in their jobs.

[137] A fictional typhoon name. Fung Fung is a Cantonese onomatopoeia of the sounds of strong wind.

[138] The names Dayo used are some of the most popular male Chinese names. In particular, the latter two names happen to rhyme with each other, and in combination with Dayo's quick pace, it forms a distinct rhythm that makes the mentioning of the names amusing. I have taken the liberty to change the names into English ones that have a similar humorous quality.

[139] The phrase used here means to "lay the table", which also means to play mahjong.

going in a circular motion)[140] Bliss, infinite bliss. (Smile drops, news broadcaster tone)

At 6 am, all typhoon signals are cancelled. (Laughter and applause)

3.4.1 Typhoons

In this segment, Dayo made use of three unique local Hong Kong experiences to portray the average workers' attitudes when it comes to their jobs. The first phenomenon Dayo referred to is the presence of typhoons in the Hong Kong daily life. Around five to six typhoons affect Hong Kong each year, usually taking place between April and September.[141] When a tropical cyclone approaches Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Observatory will issue a series of signals depending on the cyclone's windspeed and distance from Hong Kong. There are five typhoon signals: signal 1, 3, 8, 9 and 10, with signal 1 being a tropical cyclone within 800 kilometres of distance and may affect the territory, to signal 10 indicating a hurricane force wind.[142] If a typhoon signal 8 or above is issued before working/school hours, students and workers are strongly advised not to go to the office or school to ensure their safety. Hence, despite the destruction a typhoon might bring to the society, including the destruction of property, delayed transportation and flooding, most people, adults and children alike, greatly treasure the times when typhoon signal 8 are issued and see it as an opportunity to skip work. In the segment, Dayo illustrated one of the frustrations and disappointment most Hong Kong workers have experienced before - the typhoon signal 8 is cancelled before working hours, meaning their working day will proceed as normal. Dayo and his friends have assumed that the signal number 8 will last until the beginning of office hours, and when they are at the peak of their happiness

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[140] This motion is similar to the circular movements of the hand when shuffling the mahjong tiles at the beginning of a mahjong game.

[141] T. C. Lee and Y. Y. Cheng, 'Typhoon 5-6 (Average Number of Tropical Cyclones)', Hong Kong Observatory, accessed 23 April 2022, https://www.hko.gov.hk/en/education/tropical-cyclone/classification-naming-characteristics/00161-typhoon-56-average-number-of-tropical-cyclones.html.

[142] Anonymous, 'Hong Kong's Tropical Cyclone Warning Signals' (Hong Kong Observatory, October 2018), https://www.hko.gov.hk/publica/gen_pub/tcws.pdf.

reality turns on them with all the typhoon signals being cancelled. This sudden, but relatable reverse of expectations in the case of typhoon creates comedy and resonance among Dayo's Hong Kong audience.

The topic of typhoon is closely related to Hong Kong's working culture. There is a running joke among Hong Kongers about the billionaire tycoon Li Ka-shing having a force field that protects Hong Kong from typhoons during office hours, ensuring hundreds and thousands of his employees in the city will still have to go to work.[143] Moreover, people have also created internet memes on having to return to work the next day amid the aftermath of the typhoon, and criticising the lack of sympathy exhibited by the Hong Kong government which still insisted the Hong Kong population to go to work in the thick of fallen trees and structures, and delayed transportation.[144] Typhoons form an distinctive part of an ordinary Hong Kong worker's life and can be seen as a form of social glue that connects millions of Hong Kong working population together. Typhoons create a shared experience that forms an important part of the Hong Kong identity and culture, which cannot be understood by those who have not lived and worked in Hong Kong.

3.4.2 Jockey and Mahjong

In addition to typhoons, Dayo briefly mentioned two other Hong Kong experiences: the jockey and Mahjong. The Hong Kong Jockey club is the only legalised institute in Hong Kong for betting on horse racing and football, and there are over 100 off-course betting branches

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[143] Anonymous, 'Two Typhoons Set to Miss Hong Kong This Weekend as Memes Take Aim at Tycoon Li Ka-Shing', Hong Kong Free Press, 10 September 2021, https://hongkongfp.com/2021/09/10/two-typhoons-set-to-skirt-hong-kong-this-weekend-as-memes-take-aim-at-tycoon-li-ka-shing/.
[144] See appendix for examples.

around Hong Kong for people to place bets on horseracing, football, and lottery.[145] In each newspaper there is also a dedicated page that reports jockey news and predictions for the following competitions. Despite the lack of living space, the fact that there are two racecourses in Hong Kong is perhaps a telling sign of the importance of jockey culture in the population. It is not uncommon to pass by a betting branch and see a group of people staring intently at the screen which is showing the race, with some of them yelling the number of the horse that they have bet on.

Playing Mahjong can be another occasion for gambling for the Hong Kong people, usually for the older generations. Mahjong is a four-player tile-based game that is popular in Asian countries, with each region having its own version of rules. In Hong Kong, Mahjong can be played involving real money in Mahjong shops or simply as a form of entertainment between family, friends, and neighbours. For the generations that grew up with little to no electronic entertainment, memories of children playing in the corridor while their guardians or parents were playing Mahjong with their neighbours and friends are common. In a study performed in 1977 which investigates how Hong Kongers adjust to the high-density living conditions, the playing of Mahjong was seen as one of ways that allowed Hong Kong inhabitants to cope with the stress that originated from the crowded living conditions, and such coping mechanisms is "closely tied to the social fabric of the Chinese society."[146]

Overall, Dayo's references to the typhoon, the jockey gamblers, and the playing of Mahjong are all derivatives from a distinctive Hong Kong heritage and memory shared by the

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[145] Anonymous, 'Off-Course Betting Branches', The Hong Kong Jockey Club, accessed 24 April 2022, https://special.hkjc.com/infomenu/en/channel/ocb/index.asp.
[146] Lawrence H. Travers, 'Perception of High-Density Living in Hong Kong', in *The Conference on Metropolitan Physical Environment: Held at Syracuse, New York, 25-29 August, 1975* (The Station, 1977), 413–14.

city's population. Without the common shared knowledge, it is difficult to understand why Dayo's jokes on chanting like a jockey gambler, or the happiness felt from playing Mahjong are funny. Dayo has skilfully interwoven these experiences towards his description of the apathetic attitudes of the general Hong Kong workers towards their jobs and how they would seize every moment outside of their employment for pleasure.

3.5 *Crowd Pleasing*[147] (2009)

Crowd Pleasing is Dayo's eleventh stand-up comedy show, performed in the Queen Elizabeth stadium. In the first half of this performance, Dayo talked about how the average people tried to earn money through the stock market and failed, and then he transitioned into the topic of how both genders each have something they are sensitive about in a relationship. After the intermission, Dayo proceeded with the unrealistic nature of advertisements and how they attempt to sell exceedingly expensive things to the common folks. He ended the show with a big part on the problems of technology and the internet, with people oversharing leading to a lack of privacy on social media platforms. Regarding the stage organisation, Dayo has changed from the conventional rectangular stage with three-sided audience seats to a central round stage with the audience sitting around it. This elevated circular stage has stairs on the side so that Dayo can walk up onto it and the stage was decorated as the opening of a volcano. This was not the first time Dayo has performed with this type of stage – the circular platform

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[147] Dayo has named this show with a Chengyu - 嘩眾取寵 (waa zung ceoi cung). Chengyu is a type of traditional Chinese idiom that consists of four characters. It is widely used in Classical Chinese as well as vernacular Chinese, even today. These short phrases sometimes originate from a moral story and the four characters are a summary of the lesson learned from the tale or can act as an admonishment. In this case, 嘩眾取寵 is a relatively simpler Chengyu because its meaning is what the characters mean – it literally translates to "saying exaggerated things to the crowd to please them." This corresponds to a big part of Dayo's performance in which he talks about the internet culture and people posting every detail of their lives onto social media.

first premiered in his stand-up in 2007. It is also from the performance in 2007 that Dayo's clothing and hair style on stage became more outlandish. In *Crowd Pleasing*, Dayo's hair was lengthened with hair extensions and is tied up in a loose ponytail behind his back. He wore a black blazer with a black vest and a white shirt with frills underneath, where some white frills are protruding from the blazer. He wore many more accessories than before with several long, beaded necklaces and multiple rings and bracelets on each hand. At the bottom, Dayo was dressed in grey ripped jeans adorned with several ornaments that are hanging on the side, and a pair of black boots. After intermission, he has changed his top to an oversized yellow long-sleeve T-shirt with a big clown image printed on it.

Disc 1 - 24:53 - 26:51[148]

> I think in general there are two types of people in the world of relationships. The first type (slight pause) is like Hong Ming, Zyu Got Loeng.[149] This is the same person, OK?[150] (Pointing and looking at the audience, smiling) (Laughter) I know what some of you are thinking. Someone once asked me (switching to a more serious tone and quicker pace, pretending to be the person asking) do you think Hong Ming or Zyu Got Loeng is more powerful[151]? (Laughter and applause) (Pause) Hong Ming is indeed **very** powerful. But I'm not talking about how he can call for the wind and the rain, and how he can predict the future like a god.[152] I'm talking about how Hong Ming's emotional

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[148] 黃子華, *嘩眾取寵 Disc1*, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNN_-JqrbDw.

[149] Hong Ming was a famous Chinese statesman and military strategist during the Three Kingdoms period and his name is associated with wisdom and strategy in the Chinese culture.

[150] In ancient China a person has several names: a surname, a given name from parents, and a name chosen by the person himself after the coming-of-age ceremony. Zyu Got is the surname, Loeng is the given name and Hong Ming is the self-made name. Dayo here is laughing at some people not realising that the two names refer to the same person.

[151] The colloquial adjective used, 勁 (ging), can be translated to "powerful", but it is also a more versatile character that is used to praise someone who excels at certain areas.

[152] The ability to "call for the wind and the rain" and "predict the future like a god" are two Chengyus often used together to praise the intelligence of certain intellectual figures in ancient Chinese history. These two Chengyus

capacity (slight pause) is immense.[153] Hong Ming's wife is **extremely** ugly. (Slight laughter) How ugly? So ugly that she has a reputation[154] for it. (Laughter) (Pause) Hong Ming's wife's surname is Wong, and her nickname is (slower pace) Ug-ly. (Slight laughter) (Slower pace to emphasise syllables in the name) Ugly Wong. You need to understand, if you are a porkchop[155] (slight pause), and when compared to another person whose name **is** "Porkchop" (slight laughter) (pause, hold two fingers out), those are two different levels. (Laughter) So how ugly does someone have to be to get the nickname of Ugly? (Expression of disgust and wonder) Wow, from afar, it looks like something is rotten. (Laughter, slight applause) After a closer look, (expression of relief) oh it's nothing, it's almost rotten. (Laughter) (Tone showing he was just messing around) No, no. Ugly Wong was not like that. Historical records have a description. So how was Ugly Wong ugly? (Slower pace, emphasising each word) Yellow hair, black skin.[156] (Pause, hand gesturing towards audience) Is anyone here like that? (Laughter) If there is, I will refund your ticket.[157] (Laughter) (Pause, searching in the audience,

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are obviously an exaggerated praise, but they are particularly applicable to Hong Ming because according to the legends, he has the ability to predict the weather through careful observation of the sky, and he has once used this ability to win a key battle.

[153] I have chosen not to literally translate the exact sentence Dayo has said. This is because he has used two vocabularies that are difficult to translate to English. He has used the word 勁 again, which I have explained in no. 151, above. Another word that he has used is 感情 (gam cing), which roughly translates to emotions. Depending on the context, it can also mean feelings or affection.

[154] Dayo is using the word 朵 (do) and it does not have a direct translation in English. The character means something similar to reputation, name and renown and it is often used in the term 撻朵 (daat do), meaning to tell another person your own status and position in order to receive benefits and respect. The term carries a negative connotation and is often associated with gang language. Dayo's choice of this word is funny within the context because being ugly is generally not considered as something that should be bragged about to other people to gain respect.

[155] "Porkchop" is a literal translation of 豬排 (zyu paai) and is a colloquial term used to describe ugly women.

[156] Ugly Wong's description of "yellow hair, black skin" is comprised of six characters: 黃頭髮，黑皮膚 (wong tau faat, hak pei fu). The first and fourth character denotes the colour, and the rest denote the corresponding body parts. Because of this short and symmetric structure, this phrase sounds like a slogan.

[157] Dayo has used the colloquial word 回水(wui seoi), literally translating to "return water." Water in vernacular Cantonese can also mean money, and so the term means to ask for refund because the performance is bad. This is a running joke between Dayo and his audience and it originated from a previous performance when a heckler yelled it during his show. The term became a word of support uniquely used by Dayo's audience who would shout it jokingly during a performance, and Dayo would always find a reason not to refund. Dayo volunteering

then point to a woman sitting in the front row) There is one here! (Laughter and applause persist over the next few sentences) You completely fit the description. Put the spotlight on her. Put the spotlight on her. Yellow hair, black skin. (Camera pans to woman with tanned skin and hair dyed brown laughing, mouthing the words "refund") 380 dollars. 380 dollars.[158] (Audience start to yell "refund") Oh, but the problem is (becomes silent) you are not ugly. (Laughter and applause)

3.5.1 Zyugot Loeng/Zhuge Liang

To grasp the humour behind Dayo's segment on Zyugot Loeng, it is important to first know the position of this historical figure in Chinese history. Zyugot Loeng, or more commonly known as Zhuge Liang with the Mandarin pronunciation, was a statesman and military strategist who was well-known for his broad range of knowledge and rhetorical skills during the Three Kingdoms Period. His brilliance was further exaggerated, recorded, and popularised in the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, one of China's four major novels along with *Journey to the West*, both written in the Ming dynasty. *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* was supposedly written by Luo Guanzhong and was based on the official history of the Three Kingdoms period, the *San Guo Zhi*. The novel tells the story of the three kingdoms – Wei in the north, Wu in the south and Shu in the west – and the struggle between them for power and territory after the fall of the Han dynasty.[159] The Shu leader Liu Bei, with his earnest and humble attitude, managed to acquire Zhuge Liang as his strategist and captured a base to establish the Shu kingdom with Zhuge Liang's help.[160] In the novel, various stories such as "the Chibi War" and "the Trick of

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to refund the ticket money makes this part even funnier as this is the opposite of what he usually does and that he was so confident that no one will match the description.

[158] The ticket price to Dayo's performance.

[159] Peter R. Moody, 'The Romance of the Three Kingdoms and Popular Chinese Political Thought', *The Review of Politics* 37, no. 2 (1975): 1780–179.

[160] Moody, 180.

the Empty City" helped establish Zhuge Liang's legendary status and illustrate Zhuge Liang's superior intelligence when compared to his contemporaries. Like the *Journey to the West*, the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* was also widely adapted into multiple media forms such as comics, films, and series, all of which solidified Zhuge Liang's intellectual abilities as his tales were extremely suited for audience entertainment.[161]

Although his abilities may have been amplified by the media, Zhuge Liang was indeed a truly accomplished man and has written several literary texts that contained his philosophies on military tactics, political strategies, and national administration. His works include *Art of Management,* which contained specific strategies for governing a country, and *Chu Shi Biao*, two memorials written to the second emperor of Shu, Liu Bei's son, Liu Shan, before embarking on a series of military campaigns against the kingdom Wei.[162] *Chu Shi Biao* is one of the epitomes of Chinese literature and contained straightforward but heartfelt advice for the young emperor on how to govern his country and fulfil his father's dying wishes of re-establishing the Han dynasty. The text is often referred to throughout Chinese history as a demonstration of utmost loyalty towards one's country and it is one of the obligatory texts in the Chinese language curriculum for the secondary school diploma in Hong Kong.

Having provided a small overview of who Zhuge Liang was and his influence on Chinese culture and language, it is much easier to understand how Dayo creates humour using Zhuge Liang as a subject in his performance. With the unexpected introduction of the extremely ugly wife, the contrast in the pairing of a legendary figure with a hideous woman

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[161] TV series - CCTV 电视剧, *老版《三国演义》 第一部 群雄逐鹿 第1集 桃园三结义*, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e8VWVvHjskM.; comic book - Luo Guanzhong, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, 1st edition (Chemical Industry Press, 2019).; film - Roy Hin Yeung Chow, *Dynasty Warriors* (HMV Digital China Group Limited, Tecmo Koei, 2021). These are some of many other examples.
[162] Low Sui Pheng and Ben S.K. Lee, '"Managerial Grid" and Zhuge Liang's "Art of Management": Integration for Effective Project Management', *Management Decision* 35, no. 5 (1 June 1997): 382.

creates a hysterical imagery. Dayo has dragged Zhuge Liang from his almost-mythical pedestal down to the level of a normal mortal man because despite all his glory and achievements, Zhuge Liang chose an ugly woman as his partner. Hence, Dayo's subsequent expansion on the wife's ugliness with excellent pacing and choice of words (such as 朵 for reputation and "porkchop" for ugly women) could only make things funnier. The hyperbole of the wife's unpleasant features as something almost-but-not-actually rotten has caused much laughter because it is such a simple yet effective way of describing someone ugly.

3.5.2 Play with Unexpectedness

Throughout the segment, Dayo skilfully toyed with the audience's expectations to create humour. Dayo's first twist in this section was when he introduced Hong Ming and Zyu Got Loeng and immediately followed up with an explanation on how this is the same person, laughing at the fact that some people may not be aware of the naming systems in ancient China. This joke is contradictive in nature because the unexpected explanation is only funny when most of the audience knew that the two names refer to the same person.

Near the end of the segment, Dayo created several consecutive laughing points when he further elaborated on the wife's appearances. The slogan-like description of "yellow hair, black skin" prompted the audience to create an imagery and subsequently conclude that Zhuge Liang's wife is indeed quite ugly. This short account of the wife's looks can be slightly disorienting because if the description had been "yellow skin, black hair", it would have been a normal description of a Chinese woman.

The first point of unexpectedness came when Dayo shifted the attention to the audience members themselves by asking if anyone matched that description, resulting in laughter. The second unanticipated point of laughter is when Dayo found a woman in the audience who

matched the description, which piqued everyone's curiosity to see the woman's appearance. If the performance was watched live then those who sat far away from the woman would not have been able to see her face, but those who watched the recording would realise the woman did not match the imagery that we conjured in our minds when the description was said. With brown hair and tanned skin, the woman did not possess precisely the features described by Dayo, but could be relatively described as such when compared to the appearance of a typical Chinese woman. Lastly, the final point of unexpectedness is when Dayo wriggled out of refunding the woman by saying that the woman was not ugly, implying that her style would be completely acceptable in modern standards. Dayo's play with the shifting female beauty standards in his quick-witted response and his highly interactive performance style demonstrated his control over his stage. Moreover, Dayo's culturally specific jokes and his adept manipulation of audience expectations exhibited his deep understanding of the assumed shared knowledge that his audience possessed.

3.6 *Temper Cleansing*[163] (2012)

  Temper Cleansing is Dayo's thirteenth stand-up show that took place at the Hong Kong Coliseum, one of the largest arenas in Hong Kong. Although it can be used for sports events, this 12,500-seat stadium is most famous for its role as a concert venue for popstars and

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[163] Although it is short, the Chinese name of this performance is more difficult to explain than it looks. The performance is named 洗燥 (sai cou), which sounds similar to 洗澡 (sai zou) , meaning to shower. 燥 and 澡 are also pronounced the same/similar to a third character, 躁. All three characters, 燥, 澡 and 躁 have the same phonetic component "喿" which gives the "ou" sound. By changing the radical, the smaller part on the left, the characters change in meaning and sometimes in pronunciation. 躁 with the foot radical means being impatient, hot-tempered (because an impatient person will walk around and stomp their feet in protest). This is correlated to the central theme of this performance where Dayo talked about how irritable Hong Kongers have become. 洗 means to wash and when hearing the title of the show, it sounds like Dayo is urging his audience to calm down and "wash away" their irritability. However, in writing, Dayo used the character 燥, which is the wrong character as it has the fire (火) radical and means dry. In one of the interviews, Dayo explained that he liked the visual clash between fire and water (the water radical 氵 in 洗) and he was not concerned about the usage of the correct character.

performing in this stadium is often considered a milestone in a performer's entertainment career. In terms of stage setup, *Temper Cleansing* is similar to *Crowd Pleasing* in that it is a circular central stage surrounded by audience seats. However, due to the greater distance between the stage and the audience sitting at the top of the arena, a central four-sided monitor screen hangs above the central stage showing close-ups of the performance on stage. The only decorative element was that the stage floor was furbished with a red forbidden sign (a red circle with a red diagonal line across) with a cartoon-style UFO behind it.

As the title has suggested, in this performance Dayo discussed the high-pressure lifestyle of many Hong Kongers which originated from their economic and societal worries, and the resulting irritability displayed in daily life. The year 2012 saw the beginning of student-led protests in Hong Kongm which was triggered by the government introduction of compulsory classes that many saw as an attempt to brainwash the city's students by the Chinese government. Dayo has also included a section where he talked about current political events and Chinese-Hong Kong relations, a topic that he has not discussed since the 1997 performance. At the beginning and during the intermission of *Temper Cleansing*, Dayo has shown a short film which he has created and acted in. The film tells the story of a white-collar worker, whose impulsive action was recorded by a passer-by and became a viral video which made him the city's most hated person in one night and most loved figure in another.

For the performance, Dayo has worn a white undershirt with a black vest and a black tailcoat on top, coupled with a short necklace and some bracelets and rings on his right hand. Below, he was wearing a beige pair of trousers and white sneakers. After the showing of the second half of the short film during intermission, Dayo re-entered the stage with an all-black outfit, wearing a black button-up shirt, black blazer, black skirt, and black boots. His hair was

gelled up into a standing fauxhawk position and his has now worn rings and bracelets on his left hand as well.

Disc 1   29:14 – 31:06[164]

Everyone in Hong Kong is now so irritable, and people will no longer shake hands with each other. Why? Because a big man, the biggest man in Hong Kong[165]:(speaking as the man, extends one hand) "I give you my hand, and this kid just bowed.[166] (Slight laughter) Just bowed and walked away. (Pause) (Applause is slow at first and picked up later) What am I supposed to do after that?[167]" So this is a problem of reaction, OK? If you extend your hand for a handshake, (pause, re-extends one hand) and the other person bows, or does a roly poly, (laughter) what should you do? Don't forget we are Chinese, it's very simple. (Retracts the extended hand and forms the fist and palm salute with the other hand, rocking the palm forward and backwards, both knees slightly bent) (Laughter and applause) Good match, good match.[168] (Laughter) (Moves into two more stereotypical Chinese martial art positions) (Laughter) (Speaking as the man, annoyed tone) "These kids are yelling at me all day long, even during holidays this whole group of people is still yelling in front of my door.[169] You have the right to yell, which I can

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[164] 黃子華, *洗燥01*, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1Mir8ZR-Lo.

[165] The biggest man refers to Chun-ying Leung, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong between 2012 and 2017.

[166] A reference to the meeting between Leung and Joshua Wong, the student activist who led the protest against the newly announced moral and national education curriculum. Leung attempted to shake hands with Wong, but Wong denied the handshake and bowed instead.

[167] Dayo used the word 落台 (lok toi), which literally translates to go down the stage. It refers to a metaphorical stage two people are on when they interact while others are watching. The word means to get out of an embarrassing situation and it is usually used in a negative way.

[168] There is no translation for the word 承讓 (sing joeng). It is mostly a phrase of politeness and humbleness used by competitors at the end of a martial arts competition, signifying that it was a good match and that they admire each other's skills, regardless of their actual skill levels.

[169] Joshua Wong has staged an occupation in the area in front of the government headquarters.

tolerate, but of all the things why do you have to yell (one hand with open palm moves downwards like a knife cutting) 'cut it out'[170]? (Laughter, applause and cheering) (Pause, upset expression) Don't say you didn't do this on purpose. Can't you say 'withdraw'? (Laughter) You have to yell 'cut it out'. I am a man! (Laughter, applause and cheering) (Pause) How am I supposed to 'cut'? Besides, I have softened already."[171] (Laughter and applause) Now everyone is feeling much calmer. Because he has finally publicly admitted: "Actually, not cutting it, is not that different from cutting."[172] (Expression of pain) (Laughter and applause)

3.6.1 Moral and National Education

It is interesting to note that after years of not telling political jokes, Dayo chose to tell them in this performance. In fact, for his following two stand-up performances, which were also his last two, he has allocated a big part to political commentaries. Perhaps the events that were happening in the political arena had an increasing impact on the Hong Kong society that it was no longer possible for Dayo to ignore in his performances. Dayo's segment on Wong and Leung's encounter should be analysed after a deeper look at the source of their conflict and each of their backgrounds situated in the Hong Kong society.

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[170] A pun that involves the words 撤 and 切, both pronounced as "cit" with the same tone. 撤 means to withdraw and it was part of the protest slogans, asking the government to withdraw their decision. 切 means to cut, and the way that it was used here is related to a Cantonese saying that expresses the confidence someone has in something else. For example, if someone is certain something will happen, they can say "if this does not happen, I will cut it!" with "it" being implied as the male organ. It this context, it sounds like the protestors are shouting for Leung's penis to be cut off. I have translated this as "cut it out" because this phrase carries the meaning "to stop doing something" while containing the word "cut."

[171] Another pun related to the previous joke. One can soften their position on something, but it can also mean the male organ is softened.

[172] Another innuendo. On the eve before the Legislative Council election day, Leung announced that it was no longer obligatory for schools to teach the subject. However, the government refused to withdraw the programme, hence the joke of not cutting the programme was, in reality, the same as cutting it.

During colonial rule, Hong Kong citizens had developed their own sense of identity and localness that was in a large part based on the pride in civil liberties and urban worldliness that was absent in mainland China. The fundamental difference in national identity and citizenship prompted the Chinese government to intensify its "patriotic education" in order to promote the sense of national unity and belonging in Hong Kong. [173] In the Chief Executive's 2010 Policy Address, it was announced that Moral and Civic Education, the non-political educational programme aimed to promote a national identity in students, would be replaced by Moral and National Education (MNE), a curriculum with marked expansion on topics related to national image and patriotism. MNE would be a mandatory subject in primary and junior secondary classes after a three-year transition period. [174] The distribution of the course's guidelines has triggered large-scale social movements in Hong Kong including student-led protests and hunger strikes, and the formation of multiple social groups by parents and/or politicians. The protestors were concerned about the biased nature of MNE towards PRC and saw it as a method of indoctrination of the young students in Hong Kong.[175,176]

3.6.2 Joshua Wong and Student-led Protests

The social movement in 2012 saw the rise of student participation in mass protests and in particular, the then fifteen-year-old Joshua Wong became the face of the campaign. Wong,

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[173] Morris and Vickers, 'Schooling, Politics and the Construction of Identity in Hong Kong', 307–8.

[174] George Siu-Keung Ngai, Yan-Wing Leung, and Timothy Wai-Wa Yuen, 'The Turmoil about Efforts to Implement National Education in Hong Kong: An Overview and Analysis', *The Social Educator* 32, no. 1 (2014): 7.

[175] A controversial example from the new teaching manual is a paragraph that described the Communist Party of China as an "advanced, selfless and united ruling group" while calling the Democratic and Republican parties of the United States of America as a "fierce inter-party rivalry [that] makes the people suffer."

[176] Despite widespread opposition, it is important to remember that there are Hong Kong people who supported the national education. This is because the ties between China and Hong Kong are strong, especially in commercial aspects where businesses become increasingly reliant on Chinese connections. Moreover, the tendency of mainland Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong to be pro-Beijing is not surprising, and the better funded and in general more cohesive pro-Beijing political parties help in consolidating support among the Hong Kong people.

along with his school mate Ivan Lam, set up Scholarism, an activist group for secondary students and rallied up to 100,000 people to protest against the national education in the streets.[177] His campaign would prove to be successful as Leung announced on the eve of the Legislative Council election that it would no longer be obligatory for schools to teach the MNE curriculum. Wong and Scholarism would eventually be involved in the Umbrella movement in 2014 and become known internationally as one of the leading figures in Hong Kong political activism when Hong Kong's political situation was broadcasted worldwide. The growing body of younger participants in the political scene is also related to the negative outlook of their future in Hong Kong and the rising anti-mainland sentiment that became more widespread among the more youthful population. Many saw the Chinese regime as the barrier that prevents Hong Kong from being a fully democratic city and the influx of mainlanders as tourists and businessmen slowly became a threat to the Hong Kong culture and livelihood.[178] Events such as the rocketing property prices caused by mainland buyers, or the shortage of beds in maternity wards due to wealthy mainland pregnant mothers crossing the border to give birth to their child for full Hong Kong citizenship benefits, have tainted the younger generation's impression of mainlanders and Chinese rule, prompting the youths to stand up and protect their future in Hong Kong.

3.6.3 Chief Executive Chun-ying Leung

Contrary to the pro-democratic outlook and freshness of Joshua Wong, Leung was a well-known politician with a rigid pro-Beijing stance. He was an unpopular candidate for Chief Executive even though he has won the election. The election process of the Chief Executive

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[177] Ada Lee, 'Scholarism's Joshua Wong Embodies Anti-National Education Body's Energy', South China Morning Post, 9 October 2012, https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1032923/scholarisms-joshua-wong-embodies-anti-national-education-bodys-energy; Demetri Sevastopulo, 'Teenager Joshua Wong Picks up Democracy Baton in Hong Kong', *Financial Times*, 22 September 2014.
[178] Ngok Ma, 'The Rise of "Anti-China" Sentiments in Hong Kong and the 2012 Legislative Council Elections', *China Review* 15, no. 1 (2015): 57–58.

has already induced anger towards the Hong Kong government because the top position is elected by a 1,200-member Election Committee that is comprised of mostly business and professional elites, most of whom have strong political links with Beijing. In other words, all Chief Executives are Beijing-approved because most of the Election Committee would vote according to Beijing's wishes. Moreover, the Basic Law's Annex I stated that only the National People's Congress Standing Committee in Beijing has the power to alter this election's procedures.[179] This means that the Hong Kong government has in fact only limited say in the electoral policies and that the Beijing government is the ultimate obstacle towards building a fully democratised Hong Kong.

In addition to the already biased election system, Leung's road to victory has added further anxiety to Hong Kong citizens because of the events that happened during the election process. Henry Tang, the son of a wealthy textile family which has good relations with China and the business community in Hong Kong, was Leung's main competitor. Most people believed Tang to be Beijing's choice of Chief Executive. However, a sudden series of scandals led to the rapid decline in support for Tang and the unusual event was suspected by many as the result of the intelligence services from Beijing.[180] Leung's close ties with the Chinese government did not help when his administration began with a controversy regarding an illegal structure that he has built in his house, leading to further mistrust by the Hong Kong public with many calling him a liar and demanding him to step down.[181]

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[179] William Case, 'Hybrid Politics and New Competitiveness: Hong Kong's 2007 Chief Executive Election', *East Asia* 25, no. 4 (December 2008): 371.

[180] Karita Kan, 'Beijing's Visible Hand: Power Struggles and Political Interventions in the 2012 Hong Kong Chief Executive Election', *China Perspectives* 90, no. 2 (2012): 81.

[181] Joseph Yu-shek Cheng, *Evaluation of the C. Y. Leung Administration* (City University of HK Press, 2020), 474.

3.6.4 The Handshake

It was under the context of conflict in the education system between the unpopular Chief Executive and the youth protestors that formed the basis of Dayo's jokes in this segment. Although Wong's bow to Leung's attempt at handshake was criticised by pro-Beijing commentaries as rude, many praised Wong's for his political savvy as the bow showed his disapproval of Leung's position and avoided any potential disruptive media portrayal, while maintaining one's civility in conversation. [182] Moreover, Wong's articulate and precise proclamation of his beliefs shone a bad light on Leung's standard jargons used by government officials in response to dissenters of any governmental policies.

Dayo's mocking of Leung would already be favourable among his audience since Leung was such a widely disliked figure. Furthermore, Dayo made fun of the Chinese concept of 面子(min zi, literally translating to face), the need to maintain the appearance of respect and honour especially for those who are in position of power. It must have been embarrassing for Leung, the head of the Hong Kong government, to be rejected by a teenager for a handshake on public television. Dayo's emphasis on Leung being "a big man", and the tone of distress and helplessness he used when he pretended to complain as Leung all suggested that the appearance of power is merely a façade.

The "solution" Dayo offered for Leung to exit the embarrassing situation was humorous because of its ridiculousness and unexpectedness, but also because of the irony of Leung's close ties with the Chinese government and that the "solution" was a typical traditional Chinese greeting. Dayo further linked Leung's "face" with his masculinity through the clever pun of 撤

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[182] Demetri Sevastopulo, 'Teenager Joshua Wong Picks up Democracy Baton in Hong Kong'; 陶傑, *Politically Correct 政正係理 3* (CUP Magazine Publishing Limited, 2013), 82; 黃之鋒拒與梁振英握手, accessed 30 May 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uwgaCP1GQds.

and 切. The comical aspect of this pun continued to run through the next few sentences and the increase in desperateness in Dayo's tone corresponds to the increase lack of control Leung exerted over the people of Hong Kong.

In addition, since Leung was essentially handpicked by the Beijing government as the Chief Executive, many saw him merely as a puppet of the Chinese government carrying out their wishes, hence even his actions were not in his control. The feeble character that Dayo has portrayed in comparison to the serious and important Leung people see in the news becomes a source of laughter. Dayo's representation of Leung is directly inspired from the power dynamics observed in the incident between Wong and Leung, where the Chief Executive had been outmanoeuvred by a teenage student leader. It was unclear what Dayo thought of Wong's actions as could be seen by the audience's confusion at the beginning of segment. After describing how Wong just bowed and walked away, Dayo paused for a second, giving the impression that he was waiting for an audience reaction, resulting in the hesitant applause that followed. However, the pause could also very well be part of Dayo's rhythm in delivering his lines. Regardless of Dayo's opinion of Wong, Dayo has chosen to focus on Leung's embarrassment in his segment because while Wong's bowing is undefined in terms of moral correctness, Leung's embarrassment at the end of this encounter was an undeniable fact. This segment is a good example of how Dayo discloses his political position in a rather covert way, and it is not always clear what his political stance is. Perhaps in midst of an increasingly divided society, ambiguity is the way to survival in the entertainment industry.

3.7 Summary of the Analysis

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3.7.1 What is the assumed shared knowledge underlying Dayo's performances?

Dayo has covered a wide range of topics in his stand-up performances, and in the segments that I have selected, he has talked about one-night stands, the Daya Bay Nuclear Power Plant, criminality, local religions, pop culture, working culture, unique Hong Kong local experiences, female beauty standards and current political events. Despite the explicit reference to these topics, Dayo's humour was mostly based on the assumed shared knowledge, which could be separated into two levels. The first and more superficial level is the knowledge of facts and the events that took place in Hong Kong, be it the news in current events or experiences in everyday life. Because of this knowledge, the mentioning of key words or a basic description of the event would suffice for the audience to understand what the joke was a reference to. The second and deeper layer of assumed knowledge is the collective emotional response to an event or the unspoken mutual agreement on a topic. The identification and manipulation of this level of knowledge was what truly made Dayo a master of his art as Dayo understood the emotions and beliefs that would be triggered by the mentioning of certain events. For example, the mentioning of the Daya Bay Nuclear Power Plant would induce the memory of the protests against its construction (first level), which was a result of a deep-rooted fear of the Chinese Communist regime (second level).

From Dayo's material, not only can we analyse the overall sentiments and attitude of the Hong Kong population at the time, but it is also possible to discern Dayo's own opinions and worries about the contemporary situation. By organising the segments in a chronological order, it is possible to observe the evolution of Dayo's topics of discussion and the maturation of his comedic deliverance of the material.

One interesting observation is the lack of political material in his performances after the sovereignty handover until the stand-up in 2012. Although Dayo never explicitly mentioned his political stance, it is clear from his jokes, especially in his earlier works, that he supports the pro-democratic parties. One possible explanation of his lack of political content may be his lack of confidence in the political situation and the uncertainty of the extent of freedom of speech after the handover.

Although we lack sources that would provide insight into Dayo's reasoning in his choice of material, it is an undeniable fact that Dayo is also part of the Hong Kong community and shares the same cultural background and viewpoint as many of his audiences. His massive fan base suggests that his material possesses a level of relatability and creates enough resonance with a large part of the Hong Kong population.

3.7.2 How did Wong play with the assumed shared knowledge to create humour?

As noted above, Dayo's comedy mainly arises through the playing of the second level of assumed shared knowledge – the collective emotions and beliefs on a topic. One way he did this was by speaking through a character who can be an imaginary version of himself, a fictional character, or a real figure from the past or present. When speaking as himself, the narrative created would usually create sympathy and resonance among the audience members because they have experienced similar events and emotions themselves. For example, the happiness and the ultimate disappointment Dayo expressed during the typhoon segment (section 3.4.1) would be something every local Hong Konger would have been through, and thus putting Dayo in the same ingroup, that is the Hong Kong community, as his audience, and giving him the power to mock their shared experiences without offending.

Conversely, when talking through the voice of a well-known character, Dayo created

humour by offering a fresh perspective that would contrast the audience's typical image associated with the individual. For instance, the representation of Dayo's Leung was feeble and weak, which created a contrast with Leung's public persona of importance and power. In a way, Dayo has dragged Leung down from his pedestal of authority and, by presenting his more vulnerable side, placed him on an equal footing as the rest of the Hong Kong people. In fact, Dayo has portrayed other authoritative characters in a similar way. Be it a deity like the Great Sage or a historical legend such as Zhuge Liang, Dayo humanised them by depicting their flaws and weaknesses, making them common objects of ridicule that drew the audience closer to Dayo. Moreover, Dayo's alternative portrayals of these personages contradicted and challenged the audience's assumed knowledge of these figures, and at a deeper level poked fun at the so-called shared heritage and encouraged his audience to rethink their beliefs.

Although humour relies on unspoken shared knowledge, there were times when Dayo deliberately broke the rule and disclosed the implicit knowledge on which the joke was based. When Dayo explicitly stated that the audience laughed at his jokes because of their fear of the Chinese Communist regime, tension began to rise because he exposed the collective emotion and made the audience feel vulnerable. Dayo eventually reduced the tension with another joke, but the revelation showed that his light-hearted material was based on heavier subjects that remained unspoken because of their gravity.

Dayo's style of humour is heavily dependent on the play of language, primarily because of the nature of the stand-up art form, but also due to Dayo's style of stand-up comedy which mostly consisted of observational humour with occasional injections of satire. With the play of language comes many culturally specific jokes that are confined by the boundaries of the language, which can be felt during the translation process when certain Chinese vocabularies,

phrases, and expressions have proven to be difficult to be converted into English. These terms carry with them a particular set of assumed shared knowledge, such as the identity of their users or the contexts in which they are used, that once translated will be lost. In other occasions, the English lexicon simply does not have the terminologies to describe certain Chinese concepts and expressions, such as Chengyus or the comparison between the father-son relationship to the teacher-student relationship. In addition to the loss of vocabulary history, the Chinese language itself is a vastly different language system when compared to English, adding extra hurdles in translating linguistic-based humour such as puns and jokes that are based on the formation of Chinese characters.

It is clear that Dayo was acutely aware of the cultural specificity behind language as he fully made use of the code-mixing nature of Cantonese in his stand-up performances. Knowing that the different languages each represents a different set of values, Dayo purposefully merged them together and created a cultural clash that generated humour. When incorporating English words in his performance, these words often appear out of audience's expectations, which further increased the comedic value of the language jokes. Due to Hong Kong's colonial history and the sovereignty handover in 1997, the use of Western languages also possesses an extra layer of political significance and appealed to the Hong Kong collective identity formed from a shared past. From using English to impress a girl to mocking his friend who used English lyrics in a Chinese opera-style song, Dayo's usage of English reflected his sensitivity to the meaning of Western culture to the Hong Kong population at different times and adjusted his language jokes in response to it.

Other than linguistic humour, Dayo's material was often supplemented by non-verbal actions such as physical gestures, speaking tones and facial expressions. These movements and

mannerisms made Dayo's character portrayal more realistic and helped the audience to see things from the character's point of view. Over time, Dayo has developed a better grasp of comedic timing and rhythm and the mature use of pauses and silences contributed greatly to humour production. Although non-verbal communication plays in general a more supportive role in Dayo's stand-up performances, the physical actions themselves could sometimes be the punchline because they represented something bigger that was part of the assumed shared knowledge. For example, Dayo's humorous fist-and-palm salute solution to the rejection of a handshake (section 3.6.4) is a unique form of ingroup greeting which is only used by Chinese people.

Dayo's non-verbal humour can also be seen in the decoration of his stage and his costumes. In his early stand-up years, the use enormous ordinary objects as stage decorations seemed almost surrealistic and challenged the audience to see everyday items with a different light. As Dayo's stand-up career developed, Dayo simplified his stage decorations but made his costumes more outlandish. Although the lack of sources prevents us from understanding the reasoning behind these choices, it is fair to say that these changes drew the attention of the audience more towards Dayo himself and his performance, and away from the stage setup.

Conclusion

Joking is a form of discourse that is often used in a group context and helps in confirming group identity and foster the sense of belonging. Each group has their own culture, history, and traditions and hence the joking culture of each community is unique and is based on a set of assumed shared knowledge.

In this thesis, the Hong Kong heritage is examined through the stand-up performances of the Hong Kong comedian Dayo Wong. My aim is to explore what this set of unspoken shared knowledge is and how Dayo played with it to generate humour.

My analysis has shown that there are two levels of assumed knowledge that Dayo plays with: the first level is factual knowledge while the second level is the collective emotional knowledge. Dayo played with these levels of knowledge in various ways, including role playing as a character, using language and the cultural specificity behind it to trigger certain emotions, and using non-verbal gestures to support his linguistically based jokes.

Significance of Humour for Heritage Studies

The research methodology used in this thesis is not common in the fields of either heritage or humour studies and I hope through this investigation, I have contributed to the body

of knowledge by showing that humour can act as an ideal gateway towards unpacking the heritage of a group. Because of its ability to cover a wide range of topics, humour allows us to examine larger subject matters such as the collective emotions in a community, but also the smaller and often overlooked day-to-day activities which play an equally important role in shaping group identities and values. Moreover, humour facilitates the discussion of heavier topics by reducing tension through laughter and allowing sensitive topics to be left unspoken, even though they are actively being referenced. The art of comedy is nuanced, and through academic research, its layers and threads can be systematically taken apart and examined separately.

Currently, most literature focus on using a linguistic perspective to examine the mechanisms of humour and ignore the social and cultural aspects of humour. By examining jokes with through a more sociological and cultural point of view, we can broaden "the horizon of linguistic semantics by trying to understand not only whether a particular piece of language is a joke, but also under what conditions this joke will be amusing, and to whom."[183]

Limitations

Although the analytical method of this thesis can approach subjects matters in the heritage field with a fresh perspective, the use of performance as a base of investigation also comes with its limitations. The analysis is based on the experiences of humour through watching recordings of performances; the analysis would be different if it were based on a live performance where emotions could be experienced collectively with other audience members. Moreover, performances are always unique and even if Dayo delivered the same material, the overall experience of the performance can be affected by many uncontrollable factors such as

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[183] Kuipers, 'Knowledge About Humour', 95.

Dayo's state of being on the performance day or the different combination of people present in the audience. The recordings only captured one of many versions of the performance and my analysis will be, to an extent, limited by this recording.

Furthermore, the primary aim of a stand-up comedy performance is to entertain, and this goal may limit the breadth of Dayo's political and social engagement in his content. Another limitation encountered when dealing with humour-related research is that humour is subjective, and different people react differently to the same joke because of their personalities and backgrounds. Moreover, since joking discourses are based on assumed shared knowledge, my analysis is limited by my own knowledge of the culture and that the joke may be interpreted differently by Dayo or another person who possesses a similar but not identical shared knowledge. In my analysis, I have discussed how Dayo leans towards pro-democracy political parties, albeit not in an obvious way, and my examination of Dayo's political material may be biased because I have a similar political stance to Dayo. Nevertheless, our agreement in political viewpoints allows me to inspect Dayo's material as an ingroup member, who is more able comprehend Dayo's humour and shares more assumed knowledge with him than those who do not agree with him politically.

Future Research

Although only six segments were selected from Dayo's recorded performances, a wide range of topics were already discussed and examined in this thesis, some of which included daily life experiences and collective attitudes that had not been investigated by other scholars. This shows that there is still much to be explored about Hong Kong heritage, especially Hong Kong humour culture in more underground comedy clubs and in other more mainstream media forms such as film and online content. Despite Dayo's prevalence and popularity among the

Hong Kong population, there is close to no research done on Dayo's comedy nor on his influence on Hong Kong popular culture. With this thesis, I hope to reduce this knowledge gap and to inspire other scholars to explore Dayo's comedy and his position in Hong Kong culture. With a stand-up career spanning thirty years, Dayo's humorous material is vast and awaits future reflections and unpacking to uncover its layers of assumed shared knowledge. Dayo's perceptive and witty commentaries on the Hong Kong society has become so influential that, while making jokes on the Hong Kong way of life, he himself has also become an important part of the Hong Kong heritage.

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Appendix

Both pictures are obtained from the website of Hong Kong Free Press.[184]

Figure 1: A mock movie poster created using a viral picture of a man trying to get to work but is instead staring into the fallen trees caused by the typhoon that are obstructing his usual path to work. The film is "directed" by the "Hong Kong Government" with "main character" being played by "Hong Kong Employees." The maker of the poster is criticizing the lack of empathy displayed by the Hong Kong government resulting in the average worker having to go to work in such harsh conditions.

Figure 2: Another mock movie poster created using a viral picture of the crowds of people being stuck in the metro station due to the transportation delay caused by the typhoon. The movie is "directed" by Carrie Lam, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, whose government saw some of the biggest protests in Hong Kong history and the passing of National Security Law. This poster criticizes her incompetence in dealing with the aftermath of the typhoon but can also be seen as a result of an accumulation of anger from the population towards her government.

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[184] Kris Cheng, 'In Pictures: Hongkongers' Post-Typhoon C... Hong Kong Free Press, 18 September 2018, https://hongkong... typhoon-commutes-spawn-memes-photoshop-wizardry/.