

susan pui san lok, 'Take Outs', in *A to Y: Of 'British Chinese' Art*, 2004, PhD thesis, Chapter 2, pp.37-53. Parts of this chapter were re-worked for 'Inglorious Food,' exhibition catalogue essay for *Anthony Key* (Eddie Chambers, 2002), and 'If You Were There', exhibition catalogue essay for *Mayling To: If You Were There* (Margaret Harvey Gallery, 2005)

Take Outs

How to Wave Flags

In Anthony Key's *Free Delivery* (1998) [Figs.5,6], a map of the British Isles sits atop a military-style table, its papery topography delicately punctured by a swathe of miniature red flags. Each proclaims the name of a Chinese restaurant or takeaway, a procession of Bamboo Inns and Golden Dragons, Silver Lakes and Peking Gardens, usurping conventional landmarks to stake territories far and near. From metropolitan centres to rural outposts, these banners herald a steady encroachment in scattered guise, curiously transforming the landscape, unexpectedly uniting an otherwise discordant kingdom.¹

If flags speak of nations, empires, conquests, contests, and allegiances, *Free Delivery* can be located within historical continua of artistic interventions and contestations from within and traversing the West (from Jasper Johns to David Hammons, Sung Ho Choi to Kary Ka Che Kwok), speaking particularly to appropriations and usurpations of the Union Jack by its others. This history was approached some five years earlier, when artist and curator Eddie Chambers had organised the exhibition, 'Black People and the British Flag.'² Dating the Union Jack back to 1801, when Ireland joined Scotland, Wales and England in the United Kingdom, when "the cash from slavery was still rolling and the glory days of the British Empire were only just beginning," Chambers writes,

... the British flag has increasingly come to symbolise little more than British bigotry, racism, intolerance, and the remaining vestiges of the '*Rule Britannia*' Empire mentality. In more recent times, and to an irreversible degree, the British flag has been aggressively co-opted by right-wing groups such as the National Front, who peppered the streets and public utilities of Britain with ugly little 'flag' stickers (or stickers using the red white and blue colours) inviting patriotic Brits to kick shit out of Black people, then write in for more details....

It is now widely accepted that the British flag was degenerated into not much more than a vile and nauseous symbol of 'British' (or to more specific, a certain type of vulgar white working class *English*) jingoism.³

The persistent failure of Britain to acknowledge or recognise the centuries of contributions made by Black people in the development and prosperity of the country and its empire, and

Take Outs

the tensions of the immediately preceding decade – “the fire-storm years of protest marches, petitions, smash-ups, burn outs and sit downs as Black and Asian areas of the English cities cried out against unacceptable conditions, racist violence and policing”⁴ – forcefully determined Chambers’ view that the flag can offer “[no] prospect whatsoever of ever being any use to us, politically or in any other sense.” In his final analysis, “Black people and the British flag are ultimately irreconcilable.”⁵

And yet the exhibition itself paradoxically demonstrated the ‘usefulness’ of the flag for artists whose tactical appropriations insist upon the emblem’s political, historical, racial and cultural underpinnings and shortcomings, its ramifications and repressions, its power and fragility. Chambers’ own early work, *Destruction of the National Front* (1980), which juxtaposes the Union Flag with the National Front symbol, progressively disjointed and fragmented over four panels, makes blunt the affiliation between nationalism and fascism, its systematic dissolution suggesting a resolute resistance and will to overcome.⁶ The inclusion of David Hammons’ *African American Flag* (1990) [Fig.7] in the show, which sees another patriotic red, white and blue transposed into the pan-African red, gold and green, implied an affinity between parallel political struggles, situating ‘Black British’ politics within a ‘black atlantic’ context,⁷ while representing a less separatist, antagonistic perspective from which histories might begin to be redressed, and some sort of reconciliation or assimilation imagined, albeit idealised.⁸

Beyond the context of Chambers’ show, these politics and histories are inflected with immigrant experiences in Sung Ho Choi’s installation made in the same period, *American Dream* (1988-1992),⁹ [Fig.8] which like Hammons’ use of the stars and stripes, inevitably evokes the late 1950s avant-garde pop iconography of Jasper Johns. Choi conflates flag and target, the ideological promise rather than geographic reality of America constituting the immigrant’s goal, an ambivalent dream-landscape braided with Korean-language newspapers stories of immigrant struggles. Below it sits an open suitcase brimming with used kimchi jars, the kimchi (Korean spicy pickled cabbage) replaced with clippings from the *New York Times*, representing “an accumulation of time spent in America, in which private memories of Korea have been exchanged for American realities.”¹⁰ In the later *American Pie* (1996), a ceiling mural commissioned for a New York public school, Choi’s flag-target-pie chart is divided into forty-nine ‘slices’ “symbolizing the dream of entitlement.”¹¹ Incorporating newspaper clippings in a variety of languages – “public, quotidian documents of the diversity of immigrant life in the United States” – some might read the de-personalised imagery as an evolution, “from a symbol of immigrant disillusionment to one of affirmation and acceptance,”¹² although affirmation and acceptance do not necessarily go hand in hand.

Over the latter half of the twentieth century... several factors have emerged to challenge the framework of national identity and the sovereignty of the nation-state:

2

susan pui san lok, ‘Take Outs’, in *A to Y: Of ‘British Chinese’ Art*, 2004: 37-53. Parts of this chapter were re-worked for ‘Inglorious Food,’ exhibition catalogue essay for *Anthony Key* (Eddie Chambers, 2002), and ‘If You Were There’, exhibition catalogue essay for *Mayling To: If You Were There* (Margaret Harvey Gallery, 2005)

Take Outs

among them, the migration of peoples from disparate cultures (notably the ex-colonies) into the West, and the new media operating through transnational communications and corporatism which do not necessarily follow national agendas. As a result, British culture has become more overtly heterogeneous. The characteristics of national identity previously constructed by a self-interested élite class are now inadequate to define a nation composed of multiple ethnic, class and religious communities, each with differing and sometimes conflicting worldviews. Thus, the new and diverse ethnicities within the European metropolis have created a crisis in those cultural identities assumed to be unique and homogeneous. What have emerged in Britain are overlapping cultural and national identities, formed as simultaneously 'here' and 'elsewhere', and producing their own temporal and spatial cultural maps whose trajectories only partially intersect with a narrow definition of 'British' identity. With such internal pluralism, what now does it mean to be 'English', 'British', 'Asian British' or 'black British', or 'Italian British', 'Greek British' or 'Irish British', for that matter?

(Jean Fisher)¹³

Echoing Chambers, Lola Young asserts that the Union Jack "cannot manage the dynamic process of cultural transformation and thus represents no more than an attempt to bind together the disparate elements of an imagined community"; the juxtaposition of Blackness with the red, white and blue constitutes "an irresolvable contradiction".¹⁴ A decade on, the coincidence of the 2002 World Cup and the Queen's Golden Jubilee sees Union Jacks and the avowedly English cross of St George proliferating in streets, hanging in the windows of homes, cornershops, and takeaways.¹⁵ England supporters play at being monarchists (the Queen Mother's death helps to shift apathy to sympathy) and vice versa, a blurring of loyalties summed up in a tabloid front-page image of England captain David Beckham against the flag of St George, with the inscription, "The King. We love 'im."¹⁶ (The other half of the full-page pullout window poster features the Queen against the Union Jack with the slogan, "The Queen. We love 'er'," although, as one critic argues, "official attempts to feed World Cup fever into the Golden Jubilee only highlight the irrelevance of the Royal Family today. When even the window-poster produced by the patriotic *Sun* puts Beckham on top of the Queen, you know just which institution the British revere."¹⁷) Beckham's image is pasted in windows and shop-fronts, sometimes jostling with posters of the latest Bollywood heartthrob, who happens also, in one instance, to be the owner of the small Midlands chip-shop in which they're displayed.¹⁸

In a scenario that, ten years ago, might have been presumed unlikely, if not impossible, yet today appears less unimaginable than one might expect, different traditional and contemporary cultural heritages seem to combine happily, while football fandom may no longer invoke white racist hooligans but the loyalty – or patriotism – of well-assimilated immigrants to a multicultural host nation. Some sort of 'reconciliation' then, a 'contradiction' resolved – a government-sanctioned idyll of diversity made real? Or a rose-tinted liberal fantasy based on mutual tolerance, belying essentialist and separatist ideologies? Against the

Take Outs

backdrop of devolution and the European Union, the resurrection of symbols long seen as “a badge of fascism, nationalism and hooliganism, a gesture of aggression, narrow-mindedness and brutality”¹⁹ continues to raise questions of contemporary, post-imperial constructions of ‘Britishness’ and ‘Englishness’ (and, by implication, the grounds against which terms might be constructed in opposition). Key’s *Three Lions on a Shirt* (1996) [Figs.11-12],²⁰ an England football shirt with Chinese lions – a counterpoint to the popular anthem, *Three Lions* - heralds the endurance of issues of allegiance and belonging for those whose ‘home-coming’ is less than assured.

If the question of ‘Britishness’ has also long been muddled with a London-centric ‘Englishness’ – Chambers points us to the Union Jack T-shirts emblazoned with ‘England’ sold in London’s tourist shops, and its revivals every time the city is deemed once again to be ‘swinging’²¹ – the flag has not only been repeatedly appropriated as “the vehicle for national identifications”, but also, as Kevin Davey notes, as a vehicle for dis-identifications and subversions, subjected to “multiple translations and ethnic recolourings – from the ripped t-shirt of Prodigy’s lead singer to the browns and yellows of the version worn on the cover of the new Asian style magazine, *Second Generation*.”²² Increasingly recognised as “the kernel of an ever-growing debate about what it means to be British – or, closer to the bone and blood, English, Scottish, Welsh or Irish,” ‘Britishness’ presents a dilemma not only for the country’s generations of economic and political immigrants, and newer waves of refugees and asylum seekers, but also for its supposed ‘natives’.²³ Successively cited by so-called ‘British Chinese’ artists, ‘Young British Artists’, and ‘Black British’ artists, among others, instances range from Vanley Burke’s *Flying the Flag* (1968) [Fig.10], a photograph of a young black boy with a Union Jack on the handlebars of his bike in Birmingham to Lesley Sanderson’s *Fuck the British Movement* (1984), a drawing depicting the St George flag on the artist’s face; from Jonathon Parson’s *Achrome* (1994), black and white rendering of the flag, to Colin Graham’s *Union Black* (1999), an image made up of names and organisations of Black and Asian origin within British history;²⁴ from Yukinori Yanagi’s *Union Jack Ant Farm* (1994) [Fig.9], a perspex-boxed formation in coloured sand progressively disrupted by its ant inhabitants, to Mark Wallinger’s *Oxymoron* (1997), the union flag in the colours of the Irish tricolor;²⁵ from Gu Wenda’s *United Nations: Hong Kong Monument: The Historical Clash* (1997) [Fig.13], consisting of a Chinese flag made of Chinese hair, a Union Jack made of British hair, and hair cuttings from Hong Kong scattered on the floor, to Mayling To’s *NFS Flag – Second Time Around* (1998) [Fig.14], which flies on alternate sides the ‘double standard’ of the Union Jack and Hong Kong SAR combined;²⁶ and Gonkar Gyatso’s *Soft Touch* (2003) [Figs.15,16]²⁷, a floor cushion made from Tibetan brocades and London charity shop shirts, and covered in needles.

Take Outs

With Hong Kong's return to China in 1997 and misplaced fears of an influx of Hong-Kong Chinese immigrants renewed, Key's sweeping of the late nineties British landscape with military standards offered a teasing provocation. Soon after, Mayling To raised her *NFS Flag* in a café interior of an arts organisation in Brixton, London, marking and intervening at a literal and metaphorical threshold, alluding both to the communities and histories invested in the locality and the ownership of a particular public space, and the contestations and negotiations over another. The Union Jack presides provocatively, yet closer inspection reveals a white flower against a red background on its reverse. The Hong Kong flag's central motif of a bauhinia or *bauhinia blakeana*, an 'impure' orchid botanically unique to Hong Kong and classified as a "chance hybrid" of unknown parentage, aptly reflects Hong Kong's indeterminate and contested origins, while its name, derived from one of its early governors, binds Hong Kong's colonial history to its postcolonial identity.²⁸ Adopted as the emblem of Hong Kong in 1965, the bauhinia represents not nation but region, retaining 'special administrative' status with the transfer of power from one sovereignty to another, from colonial master to motherland. The five stars and colour red symbolic of China are incorporated into its design as if to suggest Hong Kong's independence and self-determined character, inverting relations of power intimated on handover night, when China's flag rose literally over and above that of Hong Kong.

If the bauhinia's sterility is suggestive of Hong Kong's political impotence, its propagation from graftings nonetheless offers a metaphor for the historical migrations and 'para-sitical' adaptations of its at once 'native' and 'migrant' subjects.²⁹ To's *NFS Flag* – in actual fact a tea-towel – suggestively demarcates and domesticises both territory and subjects at stake, evoking duplicitous and ambiguous loyalties, sovereignties, nationalities, cultures, and ethnicities, brought 'home' to a place in itself at least double. Inspired by a tea-towel found in a charity shop, bearing the slogan 'Dry British' across the centre, To's oscillating version finds the slogan alternating with 'Wry Chinese'. 'Dry British / Wry Chinese': a coupling in which an exhortation to patriotic dish-drying activities begins to read instead as a statement of temperament, the one hinging upon the other; if the British are a 'dry' lot – "impassive; unsympathetic; hard; cold" ('dry' also carrying the meaning, interestingly, of advocating free trade), then their one-time colonial Chinese subjects are 'wry' – "contorted in disgust, disappointment, or mockery."³⁰

'Wry Chinese' might also be heard as 'Why Chinese', an affectation of poor pronunciation, an instance of Chinglish or latterday 'Chinese Pidgin English' (CPE), originally a form of linguistic exchange engendered by early trade in tea between China and Britain, to which the tea-towel as flag obliquely alludes. The probable etymology of tea from the Chinese via the Dutch to the seventeenth century English 'tay' / 'tey', signal its historical arrival in Britain, the precedent of

Take Outs

Dutch trade, the later monopoly of the British East India Company on commerce in China and India, and wider affinities between domesticity and empire.³¹ Tea exported from China was bought with opium imported from India, the former the most important source of profit for the British government, the latter an illegal trade which China's attempts to resist led directly to the Opium Wars in mid-nineteenth-century China and the subsequent cession of Hong Kong and the New Territories 'in perpetuity'.³² To's flag speaks of split sovereignties, loyalties, affinities; hybrid origins, the 'roots' and routes of identity as economic and political formations. The raising of the flag is a territorial act, an uncertain claim to 'British Hong Kong Chinese' identity, the honouring and remembering of an irresolvable, irreducible dilemma.

Inglorious Food

Key's vision of a 'Chinese British Isles,' a Britain over-run and co-opted by an immigrant other, plays upon and makes mock of historically contradictory cultural perceptions of Chinese in Britain. These hark back to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century racist ideologies that proliferated disproportionately to the then-small concentrations of Chinese in London's and Liverpool's docks. Media representations continuously identified the Chinese as servile and submissive, "lowly and hardworking",³³ yet their perceived passivity and insularity also provoked suspicion and speculation, inspiring "tales of drug trafficking, secret societies and seductions of young white women", and feeding wider fears of an imminent 'yellow peril'.³⁴ Following Dragon Palace dictates ('palate' dictates?) *Free Delivery* stages a small-scale enactment, an invasion and inversion whereby one imperial power consumes another. However, the vaunting of a foreboding 666 flags (representing some 2000 establishments) is striking less for its triumphalism, than for the simple effect of making visible a presence which has until recent years remained largely unacknowledged across historical, cultural and political spheres.³⁵ Alluding to the economic niche occupied by the largely Hong Kong Chinese following their large-scale immigration to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s, thereby privileging the catering trade over other industries and professions, Key's map reflects the dominant narrative behind the widespread settlement and dispersal of Chinese in Britain over the last half-century. Each methodical, handwritten inscription adds to a sense of homage, even as the difficulty in differentiating one flag from another risks the reduction of the particular to the generic. The extent of the dissemination of Chinese across Britain may be surprising to some, yet, confined as this surveyed presence is to by and large welcome incursions within the specific territory of hitherto austerity-impooverished cuisine, the 'mock-peril' may only elicit a 'mock-fear'. In this seemingly inevitable expansion, are the Chinese staking a claim or do they remain in service? The title promises 'something for nothing,' a one-sided exchange; or does it hint at an ambiguous emancipation? The amusing yet unsettling sight of a 'Chinese British Isles,' sinified by stealth and delivered by a weakness of

Take Outs

stomach unto the tables and counters of innumerable restaurants and takeaways, gently turns notions of assimilation around – back to front, belly up.³⁶

Free Delivery relates to a larger body of work in which Key explores perceptions of 'Chineseness' within the contexts of migration and diaspora, playing on the fears and aspirations of immigrant and host, processes of assimilation and integration, and playing with supposedly discrete cultures of food and consumption. *Yellow Peril* (1997) [Fig.17] sees hundreds of bottles of soy sauce 'flooding' a gallery space.³⁷ Again, Key parodies the dreaded influx of immigrants (all looking the same), anticipating Anthony Gormley's later ethnicised spin on his own universalist visions of humanity in *Asian Field* (2003) [Fig.18],³⁸ an alternative terracotta army of in which 'Everyman' is Chinese. Key's innumerable subjects advance portentously, absurdly reduced, however, to a symbol of the industry with which they are most readily identified. The 'threat' is served up as both indictment and palliative – a mirror to preconceptions, an assurance of harmlessness, a salty condiment to ease consumption, or a pollutant and poison in disguise. (The sea of soy might invoke for a bilingual few the warning, "Ham see ah! / Death by salt!" – a melodramatic caution against an unlikely though not impossible hazard.)

Soy sauce has been deployed by other artists as a surrogate for calligraphy ink or sepia tint (Hongtu Zhang and Phung Huynh³⁹), its substance replicated via the installation of a small-scale fermentation factory in a gallery (Phillip Lai⁴⁰), and thrown from the bottle in battle as part of a soy/ketchup fight/performance piece (Cai Yuan and JJ Xi⁴¹). In contrast to this later anarchic, animated amalgamation, Key's 'self-portrait', *Soy/Ketchup (Naturalisation Series)* (1997) [Fig.21], a ketchup bottle filled with soy sauce, stands still, a sculptural 'still-life' that might be read as "foreign contents in a western body... an integrated body comfortable with itself,"⁴² a moment in an one-way transformation of acculturation, and addition to numerous metaphors that speak of fears of racial, ethnic and cultural 'dilution', from the outside in, or inside out (for example, 'banana' and 'bamboo' – yellow on the outside, white on the inside). The revelation that 'ketchup' derives from the Cantonese Chinese 'ke chap' for 'tomato sauce' casts doubt on the purity of origins and simplistic notions of assimilation; it is 'Englishness' as much as 'Chineseness' that is called into question.

Intimations of mutual change and exchange are also invoked in *Chopsticks/Knife Fork* (1997) [Fig.22], in which a knife and fork are painstakingly carved into the ends of a pair of chopsticks. Meanwhile, *McDonalds Napkin (Naturalisation Series)* (1997) strikes a slightly different note, rendering the disposable serviette of the ubiquitous fast-food giant in embroidered Chinese silk. Countering cultures of mass-production with the handmade, Key pitches the modern against the traditional, high against low, and 'West' against 'East', in

Take Outs

knowing yet troubling oppositions, Hongtu Zhang resorting to similar tactics in his later *Mai Dang Lao* and *Kekou-Kele* (2003) [Figs.19,20]. A similar inversion occurs in Key's *Peking Duck* (1996), in which three takeaway cartons of the eponymous dish rise diagonally, right to left, across a wall.⁴³ A play on the ceramic flying ducks typical of a particular clichéd, nostalgic image of English domesticity, these cooked birds make an improbable journey 'West'; impulses to 'home' and migrate are unevenly allied, the latter ill-fated flock destined for literal and metaphorical consumption.

The takeaway carton is a recurring material in Key's work, deployed in the singular and elevated to a plinth in *Stir-Fry with the Sound of its Own Making* (1997). A direct reference to Robert Morris' *Box with the Sound of its own Making* (1961),⁴⁴ Key's take transferring the troubling of the notion that an art object might somehow 'contain' an inherent meaning, onto the work of objectifying the 'other', her/his metonymic construction a process. Cooking sounds emanate, a sample recording from a series of audio cassettes of Chinese takeaway dishes being prepared by the artist. The exposition of hidden labour mimics the self-reflexivity of the post/modern artist, an introspection in which the economies of culinary and fine arts coalesce, with little disclosed of their agents. Elsewhere, the cartons are stacked upside-down and bound to resemble a miniature of the Hong Kong Shanghai Bank [Fig.23], a well-known Hong Kong architectural landmark and symbol of Chinese economic success;⁴⁵ arranged like gold bullion bars to evoke the dreams of wealth anticipated in nineteenth century migrants' name for San Francisco – 'Gam Saan' (Gold Mountain);⁴⁶ or assembled into the form of a monumental Chinese lion or 'Foo dog', usually found in pairs guarding the entrances to temples, palaces as well as homes and businesses such as restaurants, here comically galvanized into a solitary, invading body, a mythical creature whose danger and further hybridisation are intimated by the cross-cultural references in its name, *Trojan Horse (Foo Dog)* (1999) [Fig.24].⁴⁷

Another monument is mimicked and miniaturised in Key's *Great Wall* (1998) [Fig.25], a demonstration of the necessity and inevitability of subjective and cultural reinvention and transformation.⁴⁸ Like others before him who have attempted to walk its length, salvage its ruins or reproduce it,⁴⁹ Key symbolically appropriates the border to challenge the integrity of the cultures it mythically contains and excluded; *Great Wall* takes the English for a structure called 'The Long Wall' in Chinese, to name a temporary and incomplete version of comparatively modest scale, dissecting the space with 'bricks' cast from cartons. Two kingdoms, 'United' and 'Middle', are displaced, those dispersed to their margins commemorated by the throwaway-made-monumental. The ambiguous boundary demarcates not China, nor a 'Chineseness' intact, but the shifting territories, relations and permeable interfaces between native and emigrant, host and immigrant. Inside out and outside in, the

Take Outs

'majority-minority', 'same-other' view across the wall – an opaque looking-glass – is disorientating; dislocation becomes a shared predicament.

Key's work displays a sensitivity to the immigrant's habit and necessity of perpetual double-taking, of reading and walking between and beyond oppositional lines, invoking 'West' and 'East' in pleasurably deceptive union, belying the complexities and aspirations of the displaced. These are perhaps most poignantly evoked by *Wok/Satellite Dish* (1996) [Fig.27],⁵⁰ where the former is positioned on an interior wall to resemble the latter. Food and utensils become globalised commodities, objects and means of cultural exchange and transmission. If mobility is expressed through the acquisition and display of technologically advanced goods, the wok provides both surrogate and vehicle for such ambitions. Recalling the sometime Hong Kong-Chinese slang for those perpetual migrants of a certain class and wealth, 'commuting' between continents as 'astronauts,' *Wok/Satellite Dish* suggests, with pathos, a less affluent subject in orbit; and the loneliness of long distance flights.⁵¹ Elsewhere, the terrestrial realities of life in a new not-yet home are summoned up by *Window 39* (1998), in which a temporary wallpaper of Home Office tickets line the walls of a waiting room. Recalling the days-long queues annually endured over a decade by the artist, among others, as temporary residents seeking to extend stays in Britain, the backdrop of slow queues and stalled journeys is a reminder of the often bureaucratic landscapes of migration.⁵²

Service Not Included

The dominance of the takeaway as a recurring motif in 'British Chinese' art and culture over the last decade affirm its centrality in the consciousness and experiences of both host and immigrant communities, the archetypal British-Chinese institution.⁵³ Work by artists Kwong Lee, Mayling To, Yeu Lai Mo, Julie Fu, and across the performing arts by theatre companies Yellow Earth and Mulan, as well as BiMa Contemporary Dance, have all drawn on the sights, sounds, and paraphernalia of the takeaway in their articulations of British and Chinese cultural exchange and (con)fusion. To and Mo in particular have pointed to the restaurant and takeaway as gendered and sexualised spheres of labour. Deploying ceramics to invoke both traditional Chinese culture and their necessary function as accoutrements in the construction of an 'authentic' experience of cultural and culinary consumption, an experience that often includes service by 'oriental' women in 'oriental' dress, To's early work includes a rice bowl which, once emptied, offers the terse reminder, "Waitress Not Included."⁵⁴ Mo's *My Mother's Moulds* (1994) [Fig.28],⁵⁵ a series of taut, wrung dishcloths, bear the imprints of exertion, a prosthetic portrait of a subject articulated through petrified signs of her labour. In *Wok-Wave* (1994) [Figs.28,29],⁵⁶ stylised waters swirl about the shallow well of a cooking pan, caught mid-curl, stilled tidal waves in the manner of Hokusai rising over an inverted sea-bed. Fusing 'high' and 'low' perceptions of the 'East' in the pairing of fast food and print art traditions, the

Take Outs

movements of the 'wok-chan' (the wide spatula-like utensil used for stir-frying) and circuits of labour and consumption that pass through the kitchen are evoked alongside the expansive ocean waters crossed in migration and imagination.

Where Key returns repeatedly to the formal possibilities of the carton, and notions of containment and disguise, Mo empties them out to debunk exoticising myths around the consumption of 'foreign food,' with a stress on sensory, visceral experience. Recalling Helen Chadwick's works with food, from *Carcass* (1987) to *Meat Lamps* (1989), which speak to Western academic traditions of still-life, invoking plenitude and decay, notions of beauty, desire, and repulsion, and questioning the limits and borders between and within bodies, Mo's manipulation of animal and vegetable matter transgresses distinctions of sameness and otherness, indigenous and foreign, through culinary combinations that irreverently ignore the sanctity of the anachronistic notion of national cuisine.

In *Yeu Lai's House* (1997) [Fig.30-31],⁵⁷ a mocked-up takeaway interior includes photographic light-box menu combinations, in which cucumber petals circle pools of curry, prawn cracker blooms garnish nests of noodles coiled in sweet and sour sauce, finished with carrot florettes. *Food Jars* (1998) [Figs.32,33] (an unintended pun?) and *Foodscapes* (2000) [Figs.34,35] comprise series of seductive yet stomach-turning vistas in tanks and jars, variously layering chips, noodles, lard, vinegar, vegetables, oil, cornflakes, water, tinned spaghetti, rice, beans, bread, whole chicken, pigs' trotters, ox tripe, goat tripe, brown sauce, curry sauce, tomato ketchup, 'hundred year-old eggs,' black fungi, lily bulbs, and vermicelli – the staple ingredients and condiments of a contemporary 'British Chinese' hybrid kitchen, perhaps.⁵⁸ Tapping the phone of a West Midlands takeaway in the later *Untitled Sound Piece* (2002) [Fig.37], Mo demystifies and deflects myths of the at once supposedly 'exotic' and hygienically dubious contents of Chinese cuisine, by foregrounding the equally exotic and dubious tastes of its clientele.⁵⁹ Brief verbal encounters hint at the sexual and illicit, as cravings are divulged and assured imminent satisfaction. The scenario hints at a subtext of hierarchical, gendered power relations, and 'miscegenation' of a culinary sort, which might, in other contexts, be more glamorously invoked as 'fusion cuisine.' Yet if food serves as metaphor for sex, and "eating represents consumption in its crudest form,"⁶⁰ those venturing into the "playground"⁶¹ of the other may do well to heed Coco Fusco's reminder that "we who serve you could be eating as well."⁶²

Assimulations (sic)

Both Key and Mo's practices involve deceptively simple acts, droll and disarming – 'set meals' as 'set pieces' consisting of pragmatic, preposterous, and exquisite marriages of convenience and food. Key's work finds popular cultural symbols hybridised, the proverbial rendered

Take Outs

familiar and unfamiliar via unexpected transpositions, reversals and inversions. Preconceptions are played out to their (il)logical conclusions, uprooting certainties, upturning orders – yet provocations and animosities are diverted with a subtle, defensive, deprecating humour.⁶³ Masking mutual vulnerabilities and saving face, ‘integration’ is enacted, assimilation a sly simulation of harmonious hybridity – a jesting, jousting, or ‘passing’ to get by. Despite submitting to service not only with a smile, but also licks and kisses⁶⁴ (and almost invariably, chips), Mo’s position is less than appeasing, with a menu that proffers assimilation with indigestion. Playing mockingly to happy eaters of the exotic, and desires for cultural consumption as subsumption and literal incorporation, Mo suggests the historical necessity of acculturation by serving exaggerated “stylised adaptation[s] of Chinese cooking to suit British tastes and British purses,”⁶⁵ while her aesthetically striking yet gastronomically challenging arrangements belie a sardonic and nauseated ambivalence toward notions of the hybrid and authentic.

As reviews of Key's work, among that of other so-called ‘British Chinese’ artists, begin to appear, so parallels with the wider critical reception of mainland Chinese artists in the West are intimated, in terms of the dual, contradictory expectations and desires for indisputable essences or inscrutable differences to be inscribed or manifested, but also dismissed; that is, for ‘Chineseness’ to be in evidence as a distinguishing marker within the hegemonic languages of contemporary aesthetic discourses, assimilated into Western cultures, yet paradoxically ‘timeless’ and disposable, immutable and irrelevant, a sometime party-trick. Capricious views are often held wilfully and precariously in balance: the migrant, on the one hand, may be expected to lay the ghost of her or his ‘Chineseness’ to rest, and on the other hand, to (clairvoyantly?) summon and display an authentic ‘otherness’ on demand – a ‘Chineseness’ equivalent to the sum of so many romantic or derogatory exoticising clichés.⁶⁶ Harsh criticisms are typified by the position of mainland Chinese artist, curator and critic, Wang Nanming, who vehemently opposes the “standards placed upon Chinese contemporary art that are defined by Western hegemony and are derived from a forced distinction between Eastern and Western art, as well as the class-like distinctions inherent therein.” Deriding the West’s evaluation of Chinese contemporary art as “at best, based on outdated and rarified stereotypes,” he also targets those “Chinese artists living abroad” whose survival strategy is to carve out a cultural market niche by “conform[ing] to the ‘Chinese characteristics’ mandated by the West.” Arguing that the appropriation and formulation of traditional motifs and symbols into “some ‘essential’ markers of Chinese-ness” have “hardened into standards by which to measure Chinese-ness” and resulted in the production and perpetuation of a “Chinatown culture,” Wang dismisses such work as cultural side-shows, capitulations to the West that simply service the foreign tourism industry.⁶⁷

Almost as if taking orders at a trade fair, China’s local curators, critics, and artists busily vie for a way in... the so-called ‘contemporary art’ of China’s tourist culture has

Take Outs

departed from its own audience and culture, largely to offer Western audiences the romance of faraway, imagined lands.⁶⁸

Wang's indictment is also a call for 'contemporary Chinese art' to engage "its own audience and culture",⁶⁹ a priority reflected in "current Chinese criticism." Academic and curator, Wu Hung, distinguishes these writings from comparable Western studies, which demonstrate strong connections to specific cities, institutions and social contexts within China, and thereby "reveal regional and institutional variations inside contemporary Chinese art." 'Chinese art' is considered "an independent tradition with its own missions and dilemmas"; like Wang, "most of [these critics] oppose the kind of 'fake' Chinese art created in their view to cater to western tastes based on orientalist fascination of Cold War rhetoric."⁷⁰

While the implication is that 'real' Chinese art is authenticated by engaging audiences and social and political contexts within local, regional and national frameworks – conflating cultural and geographical boundaries – it would seem that those artists of Chinese ethnicity and heritage born or based outside of China are disqualified from speaking of or to the question of 'Chineseness.' For some, attempts to address resultant experiences and dilemmas of dislocation and "transmigration between cultures"⁷¹ are automatically invalidated for failing to be 'true' in the sense of authentic, but also in the sense of loyal – seen instead to be pandering to the tastes and whims of the West. Categorized by one critic as a preference for "works that appear political, fashionable, subversive, psychopathic, mixed in with a little of China's traditional art... with a pinch of postmodernism"⁷² Charges of inauthenticity come from the West too; Francesca dal Lago observes that while the likes of Cai Guoqiang, Chen Zhen, Wang Du and Huang Yongping (artists from mainland China living and working in Europe and the United States since the late eighties and early nineties), find "the purity of their 'Chineseness'... often disputed by fellow artists and critics in mainland China", they have also become "a stable fixture in any 'serious' multicultural art show" precisely on account of "their supposedly 'authentic' Chinese character." Again making a distinction between artists based in and out of China, dal Lago rebukes "the ingratiating works of artists versed in Western artistic practices" who capitalize on ready supplies of ignorance and awe by employing cryptic and esoteric "'Chinese'-indexed symbolism," to construct a version of 'Chinese' contemporary art "– rarely seen by a Chinese public, created either in Europe, America or China, but mostly exhibited, judged and prized in Western contexts..."⁷³

Praised by others for their invocations of contemporary postcolonial discourses of globalisation and migration, accusations of dilution, capitulation and betrayal persist. The devaluation of artists of Chinese descent neither born nor based in China is made possible by the presupposition of a geographically bound, imaginary core of 'Chineseness', that denies its

Take Outs

historical and contemporary ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity, a myth perpetually resuscitated by Western and Chinese critics alike. Artists in the West who wear their problematic 'Chineseness' on the sleeve may find that they simultaneously please, fool, bemuse and aggravate their audiences, in search of varieties of authenticity; artists who fail to do so play an obvious game, seeking perhaps to evade a dilemma, risk disappointment and dismissal for their lack, reduced to imitators, parodists. Featured in a group exhibition themed not by ethnicity but food, Key was nevertheless singled out by a reviewer for his 'Chineseness,' a difference noted inconsequentially and without elaboration,⁷⁴ an instance of the 'harmless' habitual distinction of those outside the 'norm' of an unspoken 'white ethnicity,' which serves to reaffirm the latter's continued hegemony like a reflex (a habit that begins to register if the reverse is imagined and all the artists in the show, excepting Key, are systematically qualified as 'white'). Another critic has summarised Key's work as "Warhol pop and Koons-pap given an extra-ironic immigrant twist,"⁷⁵ the artist reduced to a clever signatorial flourish, an ethnic embellishment, a witty but mere addendum to the post/modernist tale. Happily falling back on orientalist suppositions and colonial expectations, yet another concludes, "The East accommodates itself to life in the West."⁷⁶ Checking the works' irony, symbols of 'Chineseness' are unquestioningly taken at face value, in careless readings that gloss over the ambiguities of Key's and others' practices. If Key's 'culinary poetics' display a wit and lightness of touch effecting immaculate fusions and pleasing miscegenations, whose apparently effortless syntheses hint at a liberal, multicultural idyll, it may also, unwittingly, play into neo-orientalist 'poco-Chinese-lite' hands.⁷⁷

Subsequent works by Key arguably complicate such appropriations of 'culture to go' [Fig.26], shifting the accent onto the 'host' nation, and deploying items of 'English' food to raise questions of indigeneity. *Pork Scratchings* (1999) [Fig.39] taxonomises the products of a local Walsall industry, the resultant collection, curious puffs of cocoon pinned like odd butterfly-parts, framed and exhibited in the town's museum, an anthropological artefact or archaeological find.⁷⁸ The title, *Chips with Everything* (2000) [Fig.40], digs gently at humdrum eating habits, unearthing unhomey truths from native/foreign soils (the spud is a sixteenth century Peruvian import); the simple ensemble of standard office furnishings – a desk, a chair, an angle-poise lamp – establish a faceless bureaucracy before which are stood several sacks of still-lush potato plants, stocky bodies huddled patiently, aloof or anxious, as if waiting for permits to enter, or 'leave to remain'.⁷⁹ *Trespassing* (2000) [Fig.41],⁸⁰ a laboriously woven reel of 'instant noodle'-barbed wire, speaks of the self-perpetuated or imposed folly of fixations on territories and boundaries both cultural and economic, whose conscientious construction may lead to an unwittingly confinement. Such a presentiment is advanced by *Shopping Trolley (with cable ties)* (2002) [Fig.44],⁸¹ recalling both Michael Landy's *Closing Down Sale* (1992/2002) [Fig.42], Sylvie Fleury's *ELA 75/K, Easy. Breezy. Beautiful (No.6)*

Take Outs

(2000) [Fig.43].⁸² Fleury's sometimes literal elevation of the fruits and vehicles of adventures in designer consumption (here, a golden trolley on a plinth) has been interpreted as a blurring of distinctions between art and commodity culture, without criticality or irony⁸³ (although a hint might be detected in the allusion to a gilded cage), while Landy's exposition of the gallery as a shop "filled with shopping trolleys and day-glo signs with their desperate messages exhorting the viewer to buy with tales of economic woe ('Gone Into Receivership', 'Meltdown Madness Sale'...)", drew a direct connection between the country's economy and the art market, the former "still in recession," the latter "in deep retrenchment."⁸⁴ Invoking issues around "mass commercial culture"⁸⁵ in contemporary China (the publicity for the exhibition, 'Supermarket Art for Sale,' held in a Shanghai shopping centre in 1999, featured a trolley crammed with brightly packaged goods⁸⁶), as well as the commercialisation of 'Chinese culture' in the West, Key's arresting, bristling, embodiment of compulsive behaviour addresses the allure of art-with-a-touch-of-the-forbidden as cultural consumption, whose trade serves as therapy, liberation, bondage and entrapment.

The presumed staples of diet, tradition, and culture harbour sometimes bloody histories of import and export, production and consumption, their routes, crossings and acquisitions simultaneously constructing the 'foreign', and confounding as much as confirming the 'native'. If Mo and Key's ironic citations and amalgamations point towards an ambivalence that risks occasional oversight – the very 'success' of aesthetic forms and pleasurable puns overriding ambiguities – some works can be seen to confront the short-sighted 'recognition' of both naïve and 'knowing' subjects, by explicitly turning the exoticising eye back onto itself. "Busting through" Kipling-esque assertions of unbridgeable, unknowable difference, the fictional Chinese American hero, Wittman Ah Sing, affirms,

'Twain shall.'... There is no East here. West is meeting West. This was all West. All you saw was West. This is The Journey *In* the West.⁸⁷

'Othered' by the same, 'Englishness' becomes quaint and mysterious, its 'norms' rendered arcane, its eccentricities impenetrable, an 'essence' reduced to tired clichés and archaisms. The 'West' is accommodating to life in the 'West,' an exotic wonderland it turns out, in which no one really lives.

NOTES

- ¹ Anthony Key, *Free Delivery* (1998), wood, map, printed flags.
- ² *Black People and the British Flag*, curated by Eddie Chambers, Cornerhouse, Manchester and City Gallery, Leicester, in collaboration with inIVA, 1993.
- ³ Eddie Chambers, *Black People and the British Flag*, exhibition catalogue, unpaginated (Cornerhouse, Manchester and City Gallery, Leicester; London: inIVA, 1993).
- ⁴ Sarat Maharaj, 'Introduction: Black Art's Autobiography,' in Gilane Tawadros and Victoria Clarke, eds., *Run Through The Jungle: Selected Writings by Eddie Chambers* (London: inIVA, 1999) p.4.
- ⁵ Chambers, *ibid.*
- ⁶ Eddie Chambers, *Destruction of the National Front* (1980), collage.
- ⁷ Paul Gilroy, 'The Black Atlantic as Counterculture of Modernity,' in Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993) pp.1-40.
- ⁸ David Hammons, *African American Flag* (1990). The American flag has also been a recurring motif in Faith Ringgold's work: *The American People Series #18: The Flag is Bleeding* (1967), oil on canvas; *The Black Light Series: Flag for the Moon: Die Nigger* (1969), oil on canvas; *Flag Story Quilt* (1985), acrylic on canvas, dyed, painted and pieced fabric; *The Flag is Bleeding #2* (1997), acrylic on canvas; painted and pieced border.
- ⁹ Sung Ho Choi, *American Dream* (1988-1992), acrylic, newspaper, wood, glass jars, suitcase.
- ¹⁰ Sharon Mizota, 'Sung Ho Choi,' in Elaine H. Kim, Margo Machida, and Sharon Mizota, eds., *Fresh Talk / Daring Gazes: Conversations on Asian American Art* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2003) p.93.
- ¹¹ Sharon Mizota, 'Gallery,' in Elaine H. Kim, Margo Machida, and Sharon Mizota, eds., *ibid.*, p.56.
- ¹² Sharon Mizota, *ibid.*
- ¹³ Jean Fisher, 'Vitrines from the Pathology Museum,' in Jean Fisher, *Vampire in the Text: Narratives of Contemporary Art* (London: inIVA, 2003) pp.258-259; first published in David Burrows, ed., *Who's Afraid of Red White and Blue?* (Birmingham: ARTicle Press, 1988).
- ¹⁴ Lola Young, 'The Union Jack: Not Waving But Drowning' in Chambers, ed., *Black People and the British Flag* (London: inIVA, 1993, unpaginated) [ref Benedict Anderson]
- ¹⁵ "Despite this English devotion to St George, he was feted elsewhere. And here, perhaps, lies his strength and even his relevance today. For George is venerated not just by the Church of England, but by the Orthodox and Coptic churches. He is the patron saint of Aragon, Bavaria, Catalonia, Georgia, Lithuania, Palestine, Portugal, Germany and Greece; and of Moscow, Istanbul, Genoa and Venice (second to St Mark). He is the patron saint of soldiers, cavalry and chivalry; of farmers and field workers, boy scouts and butchers; of horses, riders and saddlers; and of sufferers from leprosy, plague and syphilis. He is - remember Agincourt - the patron saint of archers." Jonathan Glancy, 'By George!' *The Guardian*, 20 June 2002.
- ¹⁶ *The Sun*, 29 May 2002.
- ¹⁷ Jennie Bristow, 'Golden Jubilee Blues,' 30 May 2003, <http://www.spiked-online.com/Articles/00000006D914.htm>
- ¹⁸ See Timothy Garton Ash, 'Two Flags, One Muddle,' *The Guardian*, 13 June 2002; and Emma Brockes, 'Grease is the Word,' *The Guardian*, 28 November 2002, a profile of Ram Asra, "a major Bollywood heartthrob" who runs a chip-shop in Long Eaton, a small Midlands town near Nottingham.
- ¹⁹ Jonathan Glancy, 'By George!' *The Guardian*, 20 June 2002.
- ²⁰ Anthony Key, *Three Lions On A Shirt* (1996), football shirt and badges. The song, *Three Lions*, was written by comedians David Baddiel and Frank Skinner, with Ian Broudie of 'The Lightning Seeds,' as the anthem for the England Euro '96 squad, with the repetitious refrain "football's coming home."

²¹ Chambers, *ibid.*

²² Kevin Davey, *English Imaginaries* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1999), p.117.

²³ “For some, an older generation, it symbolises a time of greater certainty, when Britain had an empire, the king was on his throne and a pound was worth a pound... For [others] it represents outdated political and social beliefs: it can be read as the standard under which Ireland was annexed and subdued with the subtlety of a sledgehammer. It can be seen as the banner of an empire that made white people feel superior to black people. It has been worn as a badge of fascism, nationalism and hooliganism, a gesture of aggression, narrow-mindedness and brutality.” Jonathan Glancey *The Guardian*, 5 January 2000.

²⁴ Vanley Burke’s *Flying the Flag* (1968), black and white photograph; Lesley Sanderson’s *Fuck the British Movement* (1984), pencil on paper; Johnathan Parsons, *Achrome* (1994), sewn polyester flag with rope and toggle; Colin Graham’s *Union Black* (1999), computer-generated image, board.

²⁵ Yukinori Yanagi’s *Union Jack Ant Farm* (1994), ants, coloured sand, Perspex; Mark Wallinger, *Oxymoron* (1997), fabric. Wallinger’s piece was later echoed by U.S. based artist Jack Daws’ *Agreement* (2003); Daws had previously made *White Flag* (2002), an American flag bleached white, and *Reconstruction* (2002), the Confederate flag in colours of the Ethiopian flag.

²⁶ Gu Wenda, *United Nations: Hong Kong Monument: The Historical Clash* (1997), ink, rice paper, hair. Part of an ongoing series, the *United Nations* installations have been sited in Australia, Canada, China, France, Great Britain, Holland, Hong Kong, Japan, Italy, Poland, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Taiwan, and the United States. *The Mythos of Lost Dynasties: Wenda Gu 1984-1997* (Hong Kong: Hanart TZ Gallery, 1997), exhibition catalogue; Mayling To, *NFS flag – Second Time Around* (1998), acrylic, cotton.

²⁷ Gonkar Gyatso, *Soft Touch* (2003); made specifically for the exhibition, ‘Leave to Remain’ at the Central Space, London, the title is a pun on a phrase used to describe Britain as an easy target for asylum seekers.

²⁸ The *bauhinia blakeana* was named after Sir Henry Blake, governor of Hong Kong from 1898 to 1903.

²⁹ “... para-sites... never take over a field in its entirety but erode it slowly and tactically...” Rey Chow, ‘Introduction,’ in Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993) pp.1-26.

³⁰ Delia Thompson, ed., *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

³¹ A recent exhibition at the The British Library’s on the East India Company met with protests from the Chinese community and criticisms from the media for ‘Whitewashing the past’. “In its day, the company occupied and manipulated the interstices of a truly global economy. Tea from China was bought with opium from India; Indian and later British textiles (made from cotton grown in India) purchased slaves in west Africa, who were sold in the Americas for gold and silver, which was invested in England, where the sugar harvested by the slaves ensured a booming market for the tea from China. The big winners sat in the City of London. The more numerous losers could be found in every corner of the globe.” Mike Marquese, ‘Whitewashing the past’, *The Guardian*, 24 May 2002.

³² For a discussion of another ‘imperial commerce,’ see Anne McClintock, ‘Soft-Soaping Empire: Commodity Racism and Imperial Advertising,’ in Nicholas Mirzoeff, ed., *The Visual Culture Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998) pp.304-315.

³³ Chinese began to appear in British ports such as Cardiff, Glasgow, Liverpool and London from the late eighteenth century, mostly male, mostly seamen comprising “a lowly, hardworking [community]”. Hugh Baker, “Branches All Over: The Hong Kong Chinese in

the United Kingdom,' in Ronald Skeldon, ed., *Reluctant Exiles?* (New York: M.E.Sharpe, 1994) p.292.

³⁴ As epitomised by the popular fictional villain Fu Manchu, the creation of writer Sax Rohmer, which appeared in popular fiction and a succession of B-movies from the 1920s to the 1960s. See Jenny Clegg, *Fu Manchu and the 'Yellow Peril': The Making of a Racist Myth* (Staffordshire: Trentham Books, 1994), p. ix.

³⁵ The number of restaurant proprietors and managers in Britain rose from thirty six in 1951 to some seven thousand in 1984, with growth slowing down since the 1970s. Baker, op.cit., p.295.

³⁶ As does the opening of the first English takeaway, or fish and chip shop in Beijing in the summer of 2004, by two Chinese friends with British wives. Louisa Lim, 'The Beijing chippy,' *From Our Own Correspondent*, broadcast on BBC Radio 4, 12 June 2004.

³⁷ Anthony Key, *Yellow Peril* (1997), soy sauce bottles.

³⁸ Anthony Gormley, *Asian Field* (2003-2004), 192,000 clay figures made by villagers from the Huadu district in Guangzhou, first installed in Guangzhou, and subsequently in Beijing, Shanghai and Chongqing. David Ward, '380,000 eyes fulfil a sculptor's vision: Antony Gormley collaborates with Chinese villagers on huge project,' *The Guardian*, 25 March 2003.

³⁹ See for example Hongtu Zhang's *Soy Book* (1994 – 1995), soy sauce, rice paper and plywood; and *Soy Calligraphy: The Sweat-shop Help Wanted Ad* (1996), soy sauce on rice paper, sealed in epoxy resin. Phung Huynh uses soy to achieve a sepia tone in the painting, *You Will Attract Cultured and Artistic People to Your Home* (2001), oil and mixed media on unstretched canvas.

⁴⁰ Co-commissioned by The Showroom, London and inIVA (the institute of International Visual Arts), Phillip Lai produced two distinct but linked environments, one a working soy-sauce fermentation unit and the other a room with 'automatic' drawings on the gallery walls and skulls mounted on sticks. *Phillip Lai*, The Showroom (1997).

⁴¹ Cai Yuan and Jian Jun Xi, *Naked Soy Sauce and Ketchup Fight At Buckingham Palace* (2000), performance. Nick Paton Walsh, 'It's a new Cultural Revolution,' *The Observer*, 11 June 2000.

⁴² Anthony Key, *Soy/Ketchup (Naturalisation Series)* (1997), ketchup bottle, soy sauce; unpublished artist's statement (2002).

⁴³ Anthony Key, *Chopsticks/Knife Fork* (1997), chopsticks; *McDonalds Napkin (Naturalisation Series)* (1997), napkin, embroidery thread; *Peking Duck* (1996), takeaway cartons.

⁴⁴ Robert Morris, *Box with the Sound of its Own Making* (1961), walnut box, speaker, and three-and-one-half-hour recorded tape.

⁴⁵ Anthony Key, *Hong Kong Shanghai Bank* (1996), takeaway cartons.

⁴⁶ Anthony Key, *Gam Sann* (1997), takeaway cartons.

⁴⁷ Anthony Key, *Trojan Horse (Foo Dog)* (1999), takeaway cartons.

⁴⁸ Anthony Key, *Great Wall* (1999), cast bricks.

⁴⁹ For example, Xu Bing's *Ghosts Pounding the Wall* (1990), a performance in which the artist and a crew of students and peasants made ink rubbings of a thirty metre section of the wall, over twenty four days, to produce a paper wall subsequently exhibited as an installation; Zheng Lianjie's *Big Explosion Series* (1993), photographs documenting a performance in which fallen bricks are recovered, bound in ribbon and placed along the top of the wall; and Marina Abramovich and Ulaus's *The Lovers* (1988), a performance in which the artists set out from opposite ends of the Great Wall of China, walking for ninety days and over 1,250 miles to meet in the middle. See Wu Hung, 'Counter-Monument,' in Wu Hung, *Transience: Chinese Experimental Art at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Chicago UP, 1999), pp.30-34; C. Carr, 'A Great Wall,' in C. Carr, *On Edge: Performance at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1993) pp.25-48. I also draw on

personal notes on Gao Minglu's unpublished paper 'Wall as intermediary: Chinese art in a global context,' presented at the conference, 'Contemporary Chinese Art in the International Arena,' British Museum, London, in collaboration with Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester, 18 – 20 April, 2002.

⁵⁰ Anthony Key, *Wok/Satellite Dish* (1996), wok.

⁵¹ Aihwa Ong, op.cit., p.761.

⁵² Anthony Key, *Window 39* (1998), paper; unpublished artist's statement (2002),

⁵³ See for example Yellow Earth theatre company's *Behind the Chinese Take Away* (1997), directed by Erika Tan and David K.S. Tse (founder and artistic director); BiMa Dance Company's *Chinese Takeaway* (1997), choreographed by Pit Fong Loh (co-founder and artistic director); and Mulan Theatre Company's *Takeaway* (1998), by Stephen Clark, directed by Paul Courtenay-Hyu (artistic director).

⁵⁴ Mayling To, *Warning: Waitress Not Included* (1995), ceramic bowl, ink.

⁵⁵ Yeu Lai Mo, *My Mother's Moulds* (1994), stainless steel shelf, dish cloths set in plaster.

⁵⁶ Yeu Lai Mo, *Wok-Wave* (1994), open etching on iron wok.

⁵⁷ Yeu Lai Mo, *Yeu Lai's House* (1997), the Gallerette, London, and Quay Art Gallery, Kingston upon Hull (2000).

⁵⁸ Yeu Lai Mo, *Food Jars I – VI* (1998), mixed media; *Foodscapes I – III* (2000), mixed media.

⁵⁹ Yeu Lai Mo, *Untitled Sound Piece* (2002), framed photographs, headphones, cassette tape.

⁶⁰ Coco Fusco and Nao Bustamante, 'Stuff,' in Fusco, *The Bodies That Were Not Ours* (London: inIVA, 2001), pp.111-127, p.111.

⁶¹ "When race and ethnicity become commodified as resources for pleasure, the culture of the specific groups, as well as the bodies of individuals, can be seen as constituting an alternative playground where members of dominating races, genders, sexual practices affirm their power over intimate encounters with the other." bell hooks, 'Eating the Other,' in hooks *Black Looks* (1992), pp.21-25, p.23; cited in Fusco, *ibid.*, p.232.

⁶² Fusco, cited in Caroline Vercoe, 'Agency and ambivalence,' in Fusco, *ibid.*, pp.231-246, p.243

⁶³ See Sigmund Freud's essay, 'Humour', in *Art & Literature*, ed. James Strachey (London: Penguin, 1988), pp.426-433.

⁶⁴ Yeu Lai Mo, *Service, Licking, Kissing* (1997), video, 5 mins looped.

⁶⁵ For a history of Chinese takeaways in post-war Britain, and adaptations of cuisine, see J.A.G. Roberts, 'The Globalisation of Chinese Food since 1945,' in Roberts, *China to Chinatown: Chinese Food in the West* (London: Reaktion, 2002) pp.161-203, p.

⁶⁶ The predicament of 'contemporary Chinese art' in terms of the expectations and interpretations of different audiences are articulated in Stanley K. Abe's essay, 'No Questions, No Answers: China and *A Book from the Sky*,' in Rey Chow, ed. *Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies in the Age of Theory: Reimagining a Field* (London and Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), pp.227-250.

⁶⁷ Wang Nanming, trans. Robert Bernell, 'The Shanghai Art Museum should not become a market stall in China for Western hegemony,' in Wu Hung ed., *ibid.*, pp.265-268.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p.268.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p.268.

⁷⁰ Wu Hung, 'Reflections on Contemporary Chinese Art by Chinese Critics,' in Wu Hung ed., *ibid.*, pp.68-70.

⁷¹ Huang Du, 'Existence of Art and Cultural Identity: Changes in Chinese Contemporary Art and its Position,' in Wu Hung ed, pp.82-90, p.84.

⁷² Zhu Qi, 'Do Westerners Really Understand Chinese Avant Garde Art?' in John Clark ed., *Chinese Art at the End of the Millenium: Chinese-art.com 1998-1999* (Hong Kong: New Art Media, 2000) pp.55-60.

⁷³ Francesca dal Lago, 'Chinese Art at the Venice Biennale: The Virtual Reality of Chinese Contemporary Art,' in John Clark ed., op.cit., pp.158-166.

⁷⁴ Neal Brown, 'Wait and See (What's for Dinner?): Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne,' *Frieze*, November-December 1997, issue 37, pp.87-88.

⁷⁵ Robert Clark, *The Guardian Guide*, 20-26 February, 1999, p.6.

⁷⁶ Laura Cumming, 'Making a meal of it', *The Guardian*, 19 August 1997.

⁷⁷ Referring specifically to Cuban art, Fusco suggests that "postcolonial chic" is characterised by "muted and aestheticized references to the local," dubbing "the style of choice" for those who want to take part in "biennials and other blockbuster exhibitions" as "Havana-lite." Fusco, 'Bridge Over Troubled Water,' op.cit., pp.154.162. Also a reference to Julian Stallabrass' notion of 'high art lite' [----], Stallabrass, *High Art Lite* (London and New York: Verso, 1999).

⁷⁸ Anthony Key, *Pork Scratchings* (1999), pork scratchings.

⁷⁹ Anthony Key, *Chips with Everything* (2000), potato plants, table, lamp, chair. The work's humour was undercut by its own melancholic undercurrents, heightened by the timing of the exhibition's opening, the day following the tragic deaths of fifty eight Chinese illegal immigrants, found suffocated in the back of a container lorry in Dover. 'Leave to remain' refers to terminology employed by the Home Office for several types of visas allowing an applicant to stay in the UK for a limited period or an indefinite period of time. The phrase was used to name an exhibition of "artists who are or have been refugees and/or asylum seekers," organised by artist and curator, Margareta Kern; 'Leave to Remain,' 16 - 22 June 2003, The Central Space, London.

⁸⁰ Anthony Key, *Trespassing* (2000), noodles, MDF reel.

⁸¹ Anthony Key, *Shopping Trolley (with cables ties)* (2002), trolley, cable ties.

⁸² Michael Landy, *Closing Down Sale* (1992), mixed media installation originally at Karsten Schubert Gallery, London, reprised for the exhibition 'Shopping,' Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt (2002) and Tate Liverpool (2002-2003); Sylvie Fleury's *ELA 75/K, Easy. Breezy. Beautiful (No.6)* (2000), supermarket trolley on pedestal, also featured in 'Shopping.'

⁸³ An observation made by Julian Stallabrass in his essay, 'Shop Until You Stop,' in Christoph Grunenberg and Max Hollien, eds., *Shopping: A Century of Art and Consumer Culture* (Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2002), exhibition catalogue, pp.222-230.

⁸⁴ Julian Stallabrass, *High Art Lite* (London and New York: Verso, 1999), p.8.

⁸⁵ Wu Hung, 'Reinventing Exhibition Space in China,' in Wu Hung ed., *Chinese Art at the Crossroads: Between Past and Future, Between East and West* (Hong Kong: New Art Media; London: inIVA, 2001), pp.162-176, p.171.

⁸⁶ Cited in Wu Hung, 'Reinventing Exhibition Space in China,' *ibid.*, p.170.

⁸⁷ Maxine Hong Kingston, *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* (New York: Knopf, 1989).