

Confrontation and Collaboration: The Evolution of Localism in Hong Kong Literature

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Abstract

As many Chinese left-wing writers moved to Hong Kong in the 1930s and established numerous literary publications there, Hong Kong literature developed rapidly. Since the 1940s, novels focusing on local society have appeared in Hong Kong. From the 1940s to the present, the theme of such novels has transformed from criticizing British colonialism to resisting the People's Republic of China (PRC). In the 1940s, some Hong Kong writers such as Huang Guliu (黄谷柳) and Lü Lun (侣伦) revealed the oppression of British colonizers over Hong Kong in their novels. After the 1950s, local writers like Xi Xi (西西) and Ye Si (也斯) expressed a sense of recognition of the colony in their works. During the 1990s, a group of Hong Kong writers, represented by Wong Bik-Wan (黄碧云) and Dung Kai-Cheung (董启章), started to construct the locality of Hong Kong in their novels as a way to resist the actions of homogenization that they believed the PRC would implement in Hong Kong after handover. The same anxiety continues to drive these writers after 1997. This paper examines this shift in the theme of novels revolving around Hong Kong's local society. Combined with historical contexts, this paper argues that the shift results from the ideological environment forged by British colonizers since the 1950s. Through this investigation, this paper also attempts to show the colonization of cultural products in Hong Kong.

Keywords: colonization, ideological environment, local society, shift, theme