

How Not to Write History: Timothy Mo's "An Insular Possession"

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AN *INSULAR POSSESSION* (1986), Timothy Mo's third novel, represents a deliberate turning away from the more restricted domestic chronicles of his first two novels, *The Monkey King* (1978) and *Sour Sweet* (1982). Its subject matter, Sino-British conflict that led to the founding of Hong Kong as a city port by British imperialist forces in the Far East in the nineteenth century, is epical in scope. It resonates of Virgil's epic on the origins of Rome, but at the same time it sounds a recurrent note of ironic revision. The American nationality of the protagonists places them as outsiders to the Sino-British conflict and suggests history written from the vantage point of the insignificant third party. This, together with their frivolous antics, associates the novel with the mock epic. Most significantly, *An Insular Possession* is written in the reconstructed idiom of the nineteenth-century novel. This idiom is imprinted right from the beginning, in the opening panorama of the Pearl River as it flows into the delta region centred on the pre-eminent trading port of southern China, Canton:

The river succours and impedes native and foreigner alike; it limits and it enables, it isolates and it joins. It is the highway of commerce and it is a danger and a nuisance. Children fall off native craft; drunken sailors topple from the decks of the Company's chequered ships. Along with the rest of the city's effluvia the river sweeps the victims out to sea. Thus for centuries it has fulfilled the functions of road and, as rivers will, cloaca. Its appearance changes, if not its uses. Most often the water is a sullen grey. At its mouth it stains the clear blue sea yellow-brown, the colour of tea as drunk in London. Somewhere, at its source, the water must run pellucid from some untainted spring. Logic dictates this. Practice, as always, is another matter.

Where the river rises thousands of miles inland it seems already pregnant—with silt, with life, and with the opposite of life. (1)

This description situates the novel in the compass of nineteenth-century narratives, which includes, among others, Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* and Conrad's *Almayer's Folly*, both beginning with rivers, and *The Mill on the Floss*, where the river functions as a kind of discursive nexus. Here, in *An Insular Possession*, the river is at once the geographical site of imperial conflict, the spatial and temporal figuration of imperialism's changing fortunes, and the naturalizing trope of its processes.¹

The literary models I have alluded to are Western in origin, and that is deliberate, because despite its southern Chinese setting, there is little about the novel, from its cast of characters to its subliminal critique of historiography, that is constructed as authentically Oriental. In this and his other novels, Mo is patently uninterested in the nativist fictions of identity or projects of postcolonial cultural reconstruction and retrieval that characterize the novels of other writers with whom he is sometimes placed in uneasy community.² This is to be seen as much in the subject-matter and protagonists of his novels, as in his self-fashioning as writer.³

As a writer who was born and first educated in Hong Kong, Mo, in his fictional treatment of its early colonial history, could have laid claims to the privileged view of an insider. But *An Insular Possession* seems to have been deliberately conceived to frustrate any such claim. The scenes of Sino-British conflict are refracted through the two American protagonists, Gideon Chase and Walter Eastman, whose nationality places them on the periphery of the British opium trade and the imperial politics that sustain it. Their struggle for a place and a dissenting voice in the expatriate community dominated by the British is a central theme of the novel. Thus *An Insular Possession* is history seen by and through the experience of outsiders struggling for some form of cultural involvement. In this respect, it implicitly positions itself as the fictional alternative to both imperial (British) and nativist (Chinese) versions of history.

The aim of this essay is to examine the strategies of Mo's project of third-party history in *An Insular Possession* and its cri-

tique of the methods and assumptions of traditional historiography. My own reading of *An Insular Possession* draws upon the post-structuralist and postmodern theoretical perspectives of Hayden White, Linda Hutcheon, and others. At first glance, this essay appears to assimilate into Euro-American theoretical paradigms of reading a text whose author (a Eurasian born in Hong Kong and educated in England) and subject matter (the origins of Hong Kong as a colonial city) may be seen as marginal to western discourse.⁴ I would like to argue that the cross-boundary negotiations of identity that are recurrent in Mo's fiction resist precisely those binary structures of which the oppositions of imperial/periphery and Western theory/non-Western writing are too familiar rehearsals.

Specifically, in *An Insular Possession*, Mo moves away from the colonialist/nationalist paradigm of historiographic narrative that informs a certain tradition of postcolonial discourse and confronts history and identity as constituted of voices whose possibility has not been previously imagined. That these voices are invested with an American nationality clearly suggests that Mo has taken into account the situation of the United States during the period of the novel as an ex-colony and anti-imperial though as much interested in trade with China as the European imperialists.⁵ But it is the release of these voices that also marks the novel as late twentieth century, as contemporary. They articulate the novel's inquiry into the constructed nature of history, and through this, see ideological alignment as the key to identity formation. There are other problematic interfaces of past and present, and I will return to them. For the moment I shall elaborate how, as it writes the history of the period, the narrative also casts doubts on traditional historiography.

I

In a number of essays, Hayden White has drawn attention to history as fabrication that employs the strategies of creative literature and whose claims to factual truth and objectivity are always open to question. More recently, Linda Hutcheon argues that contemporary historiographic metafiction raises the same issues about the relation between literary and historical discourses

earlier theorized by White. *An Insular Possession* participates implicitly in the critique of those truth-bearing claims of history-writing that prompt White's and Hutcheon's inquiries. It could be read as a fictional demonstration of how historical "fact" is created out of the experiential "event" by different narrative strategies.⁶ And by counterpointing these strategies throughout the text, the novel further constructs the context of the ideological forces at work to shape the history of the period. *An Insular Possession* is a historical novel that is also metahistorical in that it parodies the lack of self-reflexiveness of much traditional historiography.

History, as it is told in *An Insular Possession*, is not written in the form of a master narrative but as a jumble of narratives, all jostling each other for supremacy. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that *the devices*—the objective journalistic report, realistic visual representation, firsthand or eyewitness accounts—in which master narratives are often justified are counterpointed in the text, and each revealed, in turn, as inherently flawed. Foremost among these devices is the "factual" report of the type seen in newspapers and journals. Much of the narrative of *An Insular Possession* is taken up by editions of the two publications, *China Monitor* and the *Lin Tin Bulletin and River Bee*, arranged successively in the text and often reporting similar events.

The *China Monitor*, the voice and, very often, the propaganda of belligerent British commercial and imperial interests, is the establishment paper of the Pearl River Delta. Attacking all that stands in the way of British trade and, specifically, the traffic in opium, to the point of openly castigating Captain Charles Elliot for being "soft" on the Chinese, the *China Monitor* is history seen on a daily basis from the point of view of the colonialist supremacist. Against its version of "facts," Chase's and Eastman's *Lin Tin Bulletin* resists with sympathetic reports on Elliot's activities and features on Chinese rituals, customs, and literary culture. It tells of a world outside the expatriate cloister and of a history that takes place elsewhere, to which its editors, Chase and Eastman, claim greater freedom of access and knowledge by virtue of their alibi as exiles from their own race. The narrative of *An Insular*

Possession itself encloses the contest between two competing versions of history narrated by the newspapers. In doing so, Mo underlines the conflicting ideologies that inform them—one asserting its hegemony and the other seeking to insert itself into the public discourse of the time by transgressing established boundaries and by fashioning itself as alternative.

The *China Monitor* and the *Lin Tin Bulletin* also raise questions about what the New Historicists have called "the textuality of history" (Montrose 20). Newspapers are frequently regarded by historians as primary documents and indispensable in the verification of "facts." But the entire relation between such documents and historical truth is called into question by the novel. The two newspapers in *An Insular Possession* are clearly shown to be embedded in the socio-cultural and ideological situation of those who produce them and to put strikingly different constructions on events. The self-fashioning of Eastman and Chase, through the medium of their newspaper, as idiosyncratic outsiders who are not afraid to make their voices heard further thickens the textual (and ideological) mediation of their reporting. In casting a critical eye on contemporary records of events as *post-facto* constructions, Mo also challenges implicitly the historiographic practice of asserting the truth of "what happened" on the basis of a study of extant "sources."

The novel also scrutinizes other devices of recording the past and underlines their questionable relations with truth. One of the prominent characters aside from the two protagonists is the Irish painter O'Rourke, well known for his painting of local scenes and events, who makes his living doing portraits of the wives of the merchants and traders. Very early on in the novel O'Rourke corrects a drawing by Eastman of the Praia Grande at Macao, and adds the following caution: ". . . at your stage you might well be better advised to copy from the work of a master, than to draw it from the life!" (11). The painter novice may well progress from being twice removed from reality, but the gap between his imagistic record and "life" is one built into the artistry of painting or drawing itself and is unbridgeable by even the most seasoned master.

Painting shades, highlights, and conceals as much as it reveals. Such aestheticizing strategies are what constitute the painter's

style. The kind of painting that O'Rourke does pulls in one direction towards an aesthetic mimesis, and in the other towards a historical discourse—a discourse that is itself double, as it addresses both its manifest subject (scene, event, or person) and the latent subjectivity of the painter himself. This bifurcated movement enforces a relationship between painting as historiographic record and “life” that is always mediated, ambivalent, and open to distortion and falsification. It is significant that at the end of the novel most of O'Rourke's paintings are supposed to be destroyed in a fire; what is left behind are only “a sketch for a theatre programme” and, more pointedly, “[t]wo early Daguerreotype photographs by an unknown hand” of two of his paintings. These “do not inspire the conventional veneration which contemporaries appear to have felt” (582). The judgment of O'Rourke's work underlines the fact that it is the subjectivity, or style, of the painter that is of historical interest and not the paintings themselves as objective records.

It is of course ironical that a remnant of O'Rourke's work should be preserved by the very medium, the “Daguerreotype photographs,” that has displaced it as historical record. O'Rourke himself correctly perceives that the photograph is the greatest threat and challenge to his continued monopoly of “life representation.” Chase and Eastman, in articles in the *Lin Tim Bulletin* promoting the novel medium of the photoheliograph, show an awareness of its constructed nature, which makes it akin to the strategies of the painter that it is about to displace:

No two individual operators will ever take the same scene or portrait in quite the same fashion. We do acknowledge this. The minutest deviation in angle (viewpoint and perspective), framing (that is, where to place the border between that which shall be represented and that which shall not), and moment selected to make the exposure . . . —all or severally each contribute to the final result. It is quite surprising how tiny and apparently insignificant differences will be productive of hugely distinctive results . . . (523)

At the same time, they contextualize the new medium by seeing it as a site of negotiation between the contending political forces in which they themselves are situated:

The heliographic method is at once *Democratic* and *Imperial*. Democratic because after a little simple trial and error, not to be compared

with the labour of learning the painterly craft, excellent results may be secured by all. Imperial because it is a most voracious medium, which is capable of annexing the entire solid world and recreating it in two dimensions, instead of three. It is possible, in theory, to expose sufficient plates so as to capture the entire little world one daily inhabits, not to mention his friends, acquaintances, and . . . mortal foes. (523)

For Chase and Eastman, people and journalists who are operating between the "Democratic" and the "Imperial," the photo is the natural medium. Eastman grasps the potential of the photograph as manufactured record and how this record can, in turn, become alibi to their own evolving identity, from outsiders to alternative voices querying the British enterprise. In the midst of a devastating British naval bombardment of the Chinese forts on the Pearl River, Eastman, with Chase as a silent witness, arranges a photograph to be taken of a dead Chinese soldier:

Eastman and Wheeldon have a dead Chinese artilleryman between them, his bare powder-blackened arms around their necks, feet trailing on the ground — Eastman, who, Gideon notices, has not even the grace to give a guilty start. They drape the corpse over the breech of the cannon. Walter spots the rammer and his eyes brighten. He puts it into the dead man's hand, but it falls out. And again. "Damnation."

Wheeldon tries to break the stick across his knee and fails, but, standing it against the cannon, he uses his sword to hack it in half. He strews the pieces at the dead gunner's feet. "Capital." . . .

Walter kicks at a ruptured sand-bag to bring more debris down. Pulling at some wicker baskets filled with earth, he completes the scene of destruction. Wheeldon brings a tasselled lance from where it has been flung down by escaping soldiers, another pleasant touch. Walter now addresses himself to the management of the camera, he, Wheeldon, and it the only standing whole objects in the devastation.

(442-43)

History is made as the fighting goes on, and is remade by Eastman, eyewitness and photographer. The photograph duly appears in the *Lin Tin Bulletin* and confirms the *Bulletin* as friend to the Chinese and the conscientious objector to British military aggression. But the production of the photograph testifies to ideological manipulation that begs the question of the *Bulletin's* difference from its imperial competitor, *The Canton Monitor*. In this respect, the narrative maps onto the critique of historiography that of the ideological appropriation of new technology.

These diachronic processes are as germane to the history of the period being narrated as they are to succeeding ages and to the present.

Gideon Chase takes a different route in his own participation in history and history-making. Against prohibitions from both native and expatriate communities, Chase learns and acquires expertise in the Chinese language. If O'Rourke's and Eastman's domain is that of the visual, Chase, who serves as Captain Elliot's interpreter and translator, enters into complex negotiations with the verbal and discursive systems that are contending for domination over him and history. Far more than the others, he is aware of the need of verity, the difficulty of achieving it, and the implications of failure. To his first effort at rendering into English the letter from the Chinese Commissioner, Keshen, to Elliot, he adds: "A true translation" (413). But clearly dissatisfied with this, he includes a postscript in which he re-reads the letter for its subliminal messages:

N. B. This letter is unsatisfactory in the extreme. As well as employing the objectionable term Barbarian Eye for the Plenipotentiary [Elliot] and the offensive term *pin* for his ultimatum, neither of which characterised the mode of communication as between equals in the Peking River, the author of this most evasive message clearly means to indicate that he proposes a resumption of the Canton trade on the old terms and within the old system. . . . The reference to the line of battle ships and the welfare of their crews represents a desire to indicate a consciousness of the possible weaknesses of the British expedition. . . . The parting good wish with which his communication concludes is a barely disguised insult, which represents an attempt to degrade the Plenipotentiary and Superintendent of Trade to the status of a merchant and speculator. (413)

In a reversal of this situation, he warns the commander of the British fleet, General Gough, that a proclamation he has to translate inviting the Chinese villages to surrender

requires a large amount alike of thought as to its content and careful expression as to its wording that the language should not demean its subject and thus be productive of an effect opposite to that which is intended. The Chinese are most sensitive to such blunders. The difficulty is increased by the circumstance that while it is requisite the notice should be intelligible to the populace at large, it should at the same time prove acceptable in its forms to the mandarins. (473)

Chase's rendition of the proclamation is again labeled "A true translation." In both instances quoted above, Chase demonstrates his linguistic and cross-cultural access, one that enables him to intervene in historical decisions and historical processes. The marginal has become (or so it seems) the hybridized negotiator, travelling between conflictual worlds and discourses, who has the responsibility—and hence the authority—for fostering or breaking communication and for directing the course of history. In a much more subtle form than Eastman's cavalier manufacture of record, Chase's efforts underline how history is made of texts and by texts.

But Chase's implicit attempts at shaping history come up inevitably against the power of the dominant discourses. The indirect result of his first intervention in the dealings between Elliot and Keshen is a Chinese proclamation offering a reward for his death and that of his patron. In the second instance, his culturally aware translation of Gough's proclamation is exploited by the General to lull the citizens of Canton into a false sense of security before a devastating bombardment. "In what sense," Chase asks accusingly in a letter to Gough, "may the civilian population of the city understand any similar future declarations from the leader of the British Expedition other than as cynical and heartless pleasantries?" (475). In Chase's implicit lament at his loss of credibility, the novel, as a critique of how history is made, retreats from any privileging of an attempt at hybridized discourse. The Chinese and British reactions enact the closure by violence of a historical process, the dynamics of which, from the point of view of the radical outsider, are textual negotiation. The novel in the end distinguishes between the forms of power that control the making of history.

In its own narratorial method and the substance of its critique, *An Insular Possession* resists the notion of history as a master narrative produced by a dominant discourse. The narrative, as we have seen, is an interaction of letters, journalistic articles, dialogue, and third-person narration. It exposes the constructed or fictional nature of history—an appropriate theme for a historical novel, or a metahistorical or pseudo-historical novel. But the original nineteenth-century epical novel, which *An Insular Posses-*

sion pastiches, from *Vanity Fair* to *War and Peace*, recognizes the distinction between history and fiction and uses history as resource for the storyteller to interpret more or less accurately. However, for *An Insular Possession* this external resource, this history, is not there. The novel scrutinizes the ways in which history is an ongoing dialogue between different forms of records and ideologies and the potential for shaping history's progress and production this offers to peripheral characters and points of view. History, any history of the period (in the words of the *Lin Tin Bulletin*, speaking in another context), "must be an unfinished story, not a rounded tale" (523). *An Insular Possession* is one of the most recent versions of this "unfinished story," in its critique of older forms of telling the story, its imagination of a hitherto unrecognized marginal, American perspective, and its shifting ideological underpinnings. At the same time, it continues to point towards a history that is unfolding elsewhere, in the domain of the gunboats that enact periodical closures upon ideological and textual negotiations. "The only end, Gid, is death" (575), remarks a rather trite Eastman, in the final chapter of the novel.

In all its discourse strategies—direct speech, the epistle, journalese, or third-person narration—*An Insular Possession* imitates and re-creates the idiom of a previous age, familiar to readers of novels such as *Vanity Fair*. But the idiom is, of course, a contemporary fantasy, made by craft like the characters, events, and the fiction of a third-party history. As a twentieth-century redaction of a nineteenth-century historical novel, *An Insular Possession* participates in the postmodern exchange of realism and fantasy. The two are folded within one another—rather than counterpointed—throughout the novel, and this discursive interaction situates the novel intertextually as much with *Midnight's Children* as with *Vanity Fair*. Such interaction is once again emphasized in the final narrative strategy, the use of appendices.

"Appendix I" consists of entries from "A Gazetteer of Place Names and Biographies Relative to the Early China Coast by An Old Hand," which is supposed to be published in Shanghai in 1935 (577). The second appendix contains passages from a book, *The Morning of My Days*, authored by "Professor G. H. Chase" (586). In

traditional historiographic scholarship, such appendices help to authenticate the account that precedes them, and this is no doubt the function they are imitating in the novel. While the work cited in "Appendix II," like its author, is more clearly fictional, "Appendix I" brings into focus a number of enigmatic exchanges between fact and fiction, realism and fantasy and, furthermore, draws the reader into its ludic process—and, by extension, that of the novel—by placing her/him in an unconscionable position as arbitrator. First of all, the truth-status of "*A Gazetteer*" is highly questionable. It has the semblance of the real; and indeed, among the entries taken from it are the names of real places and people, just as the characters, Captain Elliot and the Chinese Commissioners Lin and Keshen, for instance, in the novel proper are real historical persons.

Prominent among the entries under "C" is a short biography of "Chase, Professor Gideon Hall," enclosed by references to "Caine, Colonel William" and "Chek Chu" (578-79). The two latter names are historically verifiable: Caine was a governor of Hong Kong, and Chek Chu is a fishing village that even now exists, albeit much gentrified, on the south side of Hong Kong island. The truth-status of these two names seeps into that of Chase, mystifying it with the aura of verity. Eastman is not among the list of entries, but his name poses a problem of another kind. In the novel, he is the one to acquire the rudimentary know-how of photography, to use such know-how to augment verbal reports, and, as we have seen, to manufacture news itself. This fictional nineteenth-century photography enthusiast bears the same surname as the actual nineteenth-century American photography enthusiast who was to invent the Kodak camera and to found Eastman Kodak. It is as if Mo is challenging his reader not to wonder naively—just for a moment—whether the two might be related. In this way, Eastman figures as another signpost of the intersections between the real and the make-believe that tantalize and tease.

The reader may be tempted to verify the existence of the gazetteer, the sources of the entries of real historical persons and places, and perhaps even the real-life models of Chase and

Eastman. Tempted, yes; but to proceed to do so would be an attempt to determine what is fact and what is fiction, to separate the real from the fantastical, and thus to fall into the novel's ludic trap, which precisely subverts established boundaries between the two. It would also be an attempt to enact closures upon the debates about the mimetic, which it is the project of the novel to re-imagine and carnivalize. Tantalized, teased, tempted, the reader is invited instead to embrace such processes as the pleasure of his/her reading, and in doing so, to enter into community with the choric voices of the postmodern novel.

Embedded in the doubling of past and present, there are aspects of the novel's strategy that may be seen to undermine its critique of orthodox discourses. This relates to the hackneyed representation in the novel of Chinese characters and the Chinese community as a whole. They are disheartening stereotypes, made up of inscrutable speakers of pidgin, alternately xenophobic and abject in their interaction with outsiders. In this respect, the novel looks backwards at an Orientalist tradition of caricature, which it animates but does not challenge. Ironically, it is here that the novel is aligned with an outmoded imperialist and Orientalist discourse and its revisionist historiographical agenda disrupted. In making this observation, however, it is not my intention to point to some "authentic" Chinese-ness against which Mo's representations are measured and found wanting. There are, however, other voices speaking of the early history of Hong Kong, and not necessarily all by locals or so-called "insiders," that can be entered into a dialogue, or dispute, with Mo's version of the colony's founding moment.⁷ What concerns me here, specifically, is that the representations in *An Insular Possession* of the Chinese as "ethnic" subjects lack the kind of fictional frame that is so necessary to locating them in a specific space and time. Such location is the achievement of Mo's earlier novel, *Sour Sweet*. There, he takes on board one of the activities that stereotypes the Chinese immigrant—that they all work in the catering trade—and constructs from it a narrative of immigrant subjectivity. In *Sour Sweet*, "Chinese-ness" is explained in terms of a number of cultural practices and kinship and social values; these

are, in turn, traced back to a particular identity formation of the protagonist, Lily Chen, in her early childhood in rural China. The novel is largely concerned with the retrenchment of these "ethnic" traits *in a condition of diaspora* where Lily finds herself and her family as an alien minority in Britain of the 1960s. That such retrenchment perpetuates racialized thinking about self and other and closes down any cross-boundary or transgressive possibilities is the paradox of the novel. It is also the measure of Mo's ironic distance from his protagonist, and his version of the problematic of re-placing ethnicity in the diaspora.

"Chinese-ness" in *Sour Sweet* is an identity formation that has a specific temporal-spatial location that precludes it from slipping into generalized abstraction, essentialistic character, or a rehearsal of motley stereotypes. But such is not the case with *An Insular Possession*, in which, first of all, there are very few Chinese characters of dramatic significance. Of those who appear in the novel, they are either mandarins of the inscrutable Chinese variety or gaggles of peasants engaged in activities that mystify the expatriates in the novel as much as they did Christopher Isherwood more than half a century ago in *Journey to a War* (1939). No doubt this has to do with the assignment of narrative modalities in the novel: "Chinese-ness" is mediated by expatriate observers and narrators who are, in turn, trapped within the discourses of imperialism of their time. But this particular point seems to have escaped the notice of a novel that seeks to rewrite history from a full awareness of history's fictionalities.

Apart from the problem of the handling of the Chinese as "ethnic" subjects, it is possible to say that an expatriate character like Eastman replicates nineteenth-century novelistic types of the gentleman-maverick. It is by no means clear that *An Insular Possession* is self-consciously aware of the different—and conflictual—ideological implications of the dual processes involved in the postmodern project of pastiche. What is therefore also at issue is a larger question that one can ask of this project to which Mo's rewriting of nineteenth-century idiom in *An Insular Possession* belongs: to what extent does this involve imitation—with nineteenth-century novels as referential models—and to what extent does this engender mimicry as radical revision?²⁸

NOTES

- 1 Edward Said talks about the great rivers in nineteenth-century narratives that codify and reproduce what he calls "a structure of attitude and reference" (73, *passim*) which, in turn, form the cultural bedrock of the imperial enterprise and its enduring legacy. See Chapter 1, Parts 1 and 2.
- 2 A recent article by Pico Iyer, "The Empire Writes Back," discusses Mo and novelists such as Salman Rushdie, Kazuo Ishiguro, Ben Okri, and Michael Ondaatje in terms of their cross-cultural mobility, which provides the subject matter and creative energy of their fiction. *The Empire Writes Back*, edited by Bill Ashcroft *et al.*, is, of course, also the title of an earlier, and quite different, critical-theoretical work, where cultural retrieval and reconstruction are given prominence as major paradigms of postcolonial fiction. Apart from a few writers such as Rushdie, who feature in both publications, each tends to draw together a different community of writers.
- 3 In the other three of Mo's novels, the protagonists are all affiliated with more than one culture. Walter Nolasco in *The Monkey King* is a Portuguese from Macao who marries into a Chinese family in Hong Kong; the Chens in *Sour Sweet* are southern Chinese immigrants to Britain. Adolph Ng in *The Redundancy of Courage* (1991) has an identity invested with the complex history of the communities that have been brought into contact and conflict by imperialism. He is born of Chinese immigrants in the fictional island colony of Danu, educated in Canada, and becomes involved in the Danuese struggle for independence against the Portuguese and then the resistance against the invasion by a neighbouring state.
- 4 Some recent critique of this interface includes Mukherjee, Mishra and Hodge, and Loomba.
- 5 Edward Said reminds us of the "imperial cast" of much of American writing in the first half of the nineteenth century—"the Puritan 'errand into the wilderness' . . . expansion westward, along with the wholesale colonization and destruction of native American life"—which is paradoxical with its "ferocious anti-colonialism, directed at the Old World" (74-75).
- 6 This is Hutcheon's distinction. See Chapters 7 and 8.
- 7 See Scott and Ho.
- 8 The use of the term cannot but invoke Homi Bhabha's complex imbrication of colonial critique and agency, though to explore fully its relevance to Timothy Mo's work lies outside the purview of this essay.

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