Name: XIANMIN SHEN

Dissertation Title: DESTINATION HONG KONG: NEGOTIATING LOCALITY IN HONG KONG NOVELS 1945-1966

Abstract: Recent clashes between China and Hong Kong have attracted worldwide attention. Behind such clashes, I see anxieties over the Hong Kong identity. Based on Ackbar Abbas’ theorization of the “politics of disappearance” in Hong Kong, this dissertation focuses on the postwar period in Hong Kong from 1945 to 1966. I argue going back to this historical era, which help us understand how Chineseness in Hong Kong influences people’s imagination of Hong Kong. Concentrating on four novels written between 1945 and 1966, this dissertation pays close attention to the ways in which the (re)interpretations of Chineseness in these Hong Kong novels make it possible for people to find their place in Hong Kong. I contend that these various possibilities to find one’s niche in postwar Hong Kong reflect the flexible locality of Hong Kong. I include fictions written both in English and Chinese, and by native Hongkongers and non-native Hongkongers. My juxtaposition of them will show that all four novels reflect how negotiations of locality in postwar Hong Kong is possible through a reinterpretation of Chineseness in Hong Kong, regardless of the different nationalities of the author, the languages of the novels, or their different focuses on the city of Hong Kong. More specifically, I analyze the nostalgia for “authentic” Chineseness as imagined by expatriate writers such as Richard Mason; the mixedness of Chinese world and western worlds in Han Suyin’s Hong Kong; Lü Lun’s socialistic realistic depiction of Hong Kong from the perspectives of refugees; and Liu Yichang’s dilemma between his elitism as a Chinese intellectual and the overwhelming commercialization of literature in Hong Kong. These different representations of Hong Kong in the 1950s and 1960s in my opinion, are negotiations between colonialist, nationalistic, and
capitalistic perceptions of local Chineseness. In other words, negotiations of Chineseness make it possible for people to reinterpret their ethnicity, customs, cultures, and ultimately their identities in the city of Hong Kong.