

# ■ Trips, Food, Language: The Tourist Gaze in Janice Y. K. Lee's *The Expatriates*

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## Abstract

COVID-19 has adversely affected the global travel industry and altered the landscapes of popular tourist attractions. Social unrest can exacerbate the situation. Apart from the pandemic, Hong Kong witnessed a marked deterioration due to continuing pro-democracy demonstrations. With the widespread use of technology and media, which often change worldwide imagination about a place overnight, an acclaimed tourist attraction can lose its appeal in no time. This phenomenon raises questions about how tourists imagine and gaze at their travel destinations. To what extent do preconceived images influence tourists? Do tourists travel to experience new things or to reinforce the pre-existing stereotypes about their destinations? Will their contact with local people challenge the stereotypes? Or will it perpetuate them? The paper attempts to address these and other related questions through a close reading of Janice Y. K. Lee's Hong Kong based novel *The Expatriates*. Adopting tourism scholars John Urry and Jonas Larsen's theory of the "tourist gaze" and further adaptations and appropriations made by other scholars, the paper analyzes how the tourist gaze is employed by Lee's American expats in terms of trips, food, and language. In the novel, it is found, otherness in the traveling eye contributes to the construction of Americanness. The paper also examines the relationship between the local gaze and cross-cultural understanding. The local gaze,

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meaning local people's responses to the tourist gaze, can be both positive and negative. Confronted with the local gaze, Lee's three women protagonists become more aware of their limitations as tourists and achieve varying degrees of familiarity with the local culture, though each of them progresses at her own pace. The tourist gaze entails a tourist's expectation to witness the "authenticity" of her travel destination. However, we can see there exists no such authenticity at all. When the tourist gaze and the local gaze are interwoven, more images about a place are created.

**Keywords:** the tourist gaze, the local gaze, Janice Y. K. Lee, *The Expatriates*

COVID-19 has adversely affected the global travel industry and altered the landscapes of popular tourist attractions: New York, Paris, and Osaka, to name a few, and Hong Kong is no exception. Photos and videos showing empty streets and closed scenic spots can change people's view about these famous cities. Hong Kong's situation deteriorated due to continuing pro-democracy demonstrations, with roads and streets blocked by crowds of protesters. On June 12, 2020, eighteen days before China passed the Hong Kong National Security Law, the U.S. Department of State issued a travel advisory urging American tourists in Hong Kong, among other things, to "keep a low profile" and "to be aware of their surroundings and avoid demonstrations" ("Hong Kong"). The advisory, which is an update of an earlier version issued for COVID-19, implies that Americans traveling to Hong Kong usually enjoy a high profile, and that demonstrations, together with the pandemic, can put these conspicuous American tourists in jeopardy. The advisory, then, provides a new frame for American tourists to cast an alternative gaze at Hong Kong, a prestigious global financial center that has attracted 85,000 U.S. citizens to reside and more than 1,300 U.S. companies to enter, "including nearly every major U.S. financial firm" (Brunnstrom). With the widespread use of technology and media, which often change worldwide imagination about a place overnight, an acclaimed tourist attraction can lose its appeal in no time. The case of Hong Kong raises some questions about how tourists imagine and gaze at their travel destinations. To what extent do preconceived images influence tourists? Do tourists travel to experience new things or to reinforce the pre-existing stereotypes about their destinations? Will their contact with local people challenge the stereotypes? Or will it perpetuate them? Employing tourism theories advocated by distinguished sociologist John Urry, mobility and tourism scholar Jonas Larsen, and several others, this paper is aimed at addressing the above and other related questions. Although the pursuit of authenticity constitutes a major part of the entire traveling experience,<sup>1</sup> I argue that there exists no such authenticity because a tourist attraction is constructed and re-constructed by the constant interaction between the tourist gaze and the local gaze. Since the tourist gaze perpetuates the division between self and other, only by interacting with the local gaze can a tourist become aware of their limitations as a tourist and achieve varying degrees of familiarity with the local culture, as will be demonstrated by a close reading of

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<sup>1</sup> The term "authentic travel" has a wide appeal. A google search of "authentic travel," made on April 16, 2021, yielded about 571,000,000 results. Although some of the result pages indicate that authentic travel is dubious, a great number of them are positive about the concept, aiming to share authentic travel experience or to promote authentic travel itineraries.

Janice Y. K. Lee's Hong Kong based novel *The Expatriates* (2016).

The analysis below consists of five sections. The first section introduces Urry's theory of the tourist gaze as well as criticism and amendment developed by various scholars, most notably Larsen, and two marketing scholars Arch G. Woodside and Drew Martin. The second section establishes the legitimacy of addressing the issue of the tourist gaze in *The Expatriates*. The third section demonstrates how the tourist gaze employed by Lee's women characters produces otherness in terms of trips, language, and food. The fourth section examines the tourist gaze in various levels of depth and the relationships between the tourist gaze and the local gaze. The section also explores how the local gaze fosters the characters' self-awareness of their limitations as tourists, and how they achieve varying degrees of familiarity with the local culture via cross-cultural understanding. The last section restates the gist of the paper and recommends directions worthy of further exploration.

### **I. The Tourist Gaze: John Urry, Jonas Larsen, and Others**

The term "tourist gaze" was coined by John Urry in *The Tourist Gaze* (1990), his most discussed and cited work on tourism. In this attempt to establish the sociology of tourism (Larsen 304), Urry maintains that the primary purpose of traveling is not only to experience new places, people, or events, but also to witness whether the tourist's preconceived images about these places, people, or events are "authentic" or not. Simply put, tourists expect that these places, people, or events correspond to their preconceived ideas about them. Urry names such expectations the "tourist gaze." Inspired by the Foucauldian gaze, Urry claims that the tourist gaze produces knowledge about a tourist's destination and generates discrepancy between self and other. The tourist gaze, or the set of preconceived ideas about a destination, is also a construction. When traveling, tourists are guided by their expectations, which are constructed by "a variety of non-tourist technologies, such as film, TV, literature, magazines, CDs, DVDs and videos" (Urry and Larsen 4). Based on different texts they encounter and different experiences they have, tourists see their destination through a variety of frames. As Urry claims, "There is no single tourist gaze as such. It varies by society, by social group and by historical period" (1). In other words, as tourism scholar Wei-Jue Huang and her co-authors argue, "tourists look at 'differences' differently" (424).

Urry made considerable revisions to the 1990 edition of *The Tourist Gaze*. He published the second edition of the book in 2002. A decade later, in 2011,

his collaboration with Jonas Larsen, the tourism scholar who “has brought fresh eyes on the book” (Urry and Larsen xii), gave rise to the publication of the book’s third edition. Naming the three versions 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0 respectively, Larsen details the major stages of conceptualization of the tourist gaze in his article “The Tourist Gaze 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0.” While the second edition includes new concern with mobilities and globalization, the third edition incorporates new ideas such as embodiment and performance into the discussion (Larsen 305-06). In 2015, Arch G. Woodside and Drew Martin proposed “the tourist gaze 4.0,” both as a critical response to and an extension of their predecessors’ theories. A study of authenticity in tourism, Woodside and Martin’s article focuses on nonconscious meanings and motivations in tourists’ stories about their destination experiences. Urry’s *The Tourist Gaze* has invited substantial criticism and amendment from various scholars since its publication three decades ago. Notwithstanding the book’s later revision, the premises Urry stated in 1990 remain the focus of scholarship.

Critiques of Urry’s theory are not few. Some critics blame Urry for prioritizing the visual experience. These critics, as Peter Adey shows us in his monograph *Mobility*, believe that “it is the whole of the body and not just the eyes that sees, experiences and composes tourist activity” (172). Instead of a singular visual encounter, Adey argues, the tourist gaze implies “a kaleidoscope of other sensory mobile experience” (171). Larsen, however, maintains that gazing is crucial in building travel experience. “The tourist gaze may be virtual, and it may be corporeal,” Larsen points out, “but it is always bound up with the pleasure of gazing upon places that are out of the ordinary” (306). Another subject that has aroused critical attention is the depth of Urry’s theory. Some critics consider Urry’s tourist gaze a shallow one (Holmes and Rowley 409). Landscape and tourism scholar Dean MacCannell, for instance, asserts there is “no depth” in Urry’s adaptation of Foucault because it “renders everything as surface” (28). Taking different tourist behavior into account, tourism scholar Bob McKercher identifies five types of cultural tourists, which represent five gaze perspectives (32-33).<sup>2</sup> Claiming Urry’s theory represents merely “one type of gazing,” Woodside and Martin develop a “broadened theory of the tourist gaze” by illustration of a range of gazes that appears in three levels: shallow, mid-depth, and great-depth (2, 4). Furthermore, in response to Urry’s view that the tourist gaze can

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<sup>2</sup> The five types of tourists include (1) the purposeful cultural tourist, (2) the sightseeing cultural tourist, (3) the casual cultural tourist, (4) the incidental cultural tourist, and (5) the serendipitous cultural tourist. McKercher identifies these types by analyzing the relationship between cultural tourists’ trip purpose and depth of experience.

be destructive, marketing scholar Rouxelle De Villiers “highlights the two-way effect of the gaze” and studies how the local gaze can affect “travelers’ cultural themes and personal identities” (389). In this regard, tourism scholars Philipp Wessler and Ksenia Kirillova also make a valuable contribution with their in-depth analysis of various forms of local gaze. Urry’s pioneering work has invited criticism, but it has also encouraged a lot of scholars to modify, adapt, and appropriate his theory of the tourist gaze for further consideration. This paper attempts to make use of these concepts in due course. As the new subjects put forth in the second and third editions of *The Tourist Gaze*, such as globalization, performance, and embodiment, are not the major concerns of this paper, my discussion mainly relies upon Urry’s 1990 edition. However, I am not suggesting that the above-mentioned topics are not touched upon in Lee’s *The Expatriates*. On the contrary, they are identifiable and are worthy of exploration, as I will highlight in my conclusion.

## II. Identifying Lee’s Expatriates/Tourists and Their Tourist Gaze

Lee’s expatriates can be treated as tourists because they embody two distinctive characteristics Urry puts forth: movement and temporality. Urry maintains, “Tourist relationships arise from a movement of people to, and their stay in, various destinations. This necessarily involves some movement through space, that is the journey, and a period of stay in a new place” (3). Hong Kong, to Lee’s American characters, represents such a brave new place. Urry also highlights the characteristic of temporality when he says, “Periods of residence elsewhere are of a short-term and temporary nature. There is a clear intention to return ‘home’ within a relatively short period of time” (3). In the belief that her American characters will eventually go home, Lee repeatedly claims in her novel, “Everyone here is temporary” (261). Owing to their temporary stay in Hong Kong, Lee lets her expatriates watch and observe their surroundings in a way that tourists do. Lee developed such a point of view through her personal experience.

As a Korean American born and raised in Hong Kong before moving to America for education in her teens, Lee never felt like a true local in Hong Kong, but “being an outsider sharpens [her] powers of observation” (Alcosiba). As she remarks, “I was a constant observer in my own life, trying to see patterns and behaviors” (“An Interview”). Employing a shifting third-person narration, Lee examines Hong Kong through the perspectives of her American protagonists and presents her insightful observation as well as commentary about American,

Korean, and Hong Kong cultures. What these Americans observe and from what vantage points they make observations are crucial.

In the first place, the target of observation in *The Expatriates* is people's daily life. In her "Travel Writing and Gender," translation theorist Susan Bassnett points out several features in women's travel writing, among them "documenting the everyday" (229). Although there might be a risk of essentialism, Bassnett reads in many women's travel writing the emphasis on daily life. In an interview with Kelly Sarabyn, Lee shows the same preference: "Books about domestic life are about life. We don't have to read about battles or enormous whales to experience the complexity and grandeur of the world we live in." For Lee's women characters, interest in daily life helps capture the nuances of people and events around them.

In *The Expatriates*, Lee explores three American women's lives in present-day Hong Kong: Margaret Reade, Hilary Starr, and Mercy Cho. Both Margaret and Hilary are the so-called "trailing spouses," who accompany their husbands to Hong Kong when the latter are relocated by their organizations. Unlike Margaret and Hilary, Mercy, a poor young graduate of Columbia University, moves to Hong Kong looking for an opportunity she has been denied back at home. The three women provide very interesting perspectives in that they possess distinctive cultural/ethnic backgrounds. While Hilary is Caucasian, Margaret is quarter Korean, and Mercy is second-generation Korean American.

To locate the vantage points where Lee's characters stand, we have to explore what Lee means by the word "expatriate." According to BBC Worklife editor Kieran Nash, "The word expat is loaded. It carries many connotations and assumptions about class, education and privilege." The word, he further explains, "is [often] used to describe educated, rich professionals working abroad." Judging from Nash's definition, only the husbands in *The Expatriates* are "qualified" expatriates. Clarke Reade, Margaret's husband, works with a U. S. multinational and oversees the Asia-Pacific region. David Starr, Hilary's husband, works as a senior attorney at a law firm, and his career flourishes in Asia. However, Lee has adopted a more general definition of the word "expatriate." Her expatriates are not limited to those Americans who are privileged through mobility. Perhaps InterNations co-founder Malte Zeeck's words are more appropriate for Lee's characters: "I use expat in a much broader sense of the word, describing rather someone who decides to live abroad for a specific amount of time without any restrictions on origin or residence" (qtd. in Nash). Thus, Margaret and Hilary, housewives with a generous compensation package from their husbands' organizations, and Mercy, unemployed despite her Columbia degree, also fit exactly into the expat type.

The extraordinary setting these women are placed in deserves adequate consideration, for they are experiencing mobility, traveling from homeland to faraway lands and the exoticism of the East. In an article about the tourist gaze in the Spanish Civil War, transnational mobility scholar Jane Hanley highlights “mobility as a way of shaping the self through experience” (197). Travel experience, Hanley observes, not only informs the way people see pre-existing images of places but also influences the way they perceive themselves and the world. What changes Margaret, Hilary, and Mercy in the novel is their roles of being or becoming a mother far away from home. Reviewers highlight the theme of motherhood in *The Expatriates* (Pouncey; Simon). Matters such as mothers’ roles, mother-daughter relationships, and motherhood as redemption are recognized as important subject matters, which act as a node to connect Lee’s three women protagonists. Margaret’s four-year-old son G goes missing when Mercy works as his nanny during a trip to Seoul. Hilary decides to adopt Julian, a local child, because she and her husband David have strived to have a baby but in vain. Ironically, Mercy gets pregnant by David shortly after their serendipitous encounter at a hotel bar. These occurrences lead to departure from normal routes and enable the three women to widen their horizons and become more self-aware accordingly.

Several characteristics of tourism featured in *The Tourist Gaze* are easy to perceive in *The Expatriates*. First, Urry argues that tourism is about “a leisure activity which presupposed its opposite, namely regulated and organised work,” and which occurs in “sites which are outside the normal places of residence and work” (2-3). In the novel, Margaret and Hilary, as trailing spouses, are engaged in activities like lunches, picnics, and parties. Mercy, usually out of a job, goes to bars or seashores. Then, Urry maintains that tourism involves “a movement of people to, and their stay in, various destinations” (3). Besides loitering in various spots in Hong Kong, the expatriates take trips to different places in East Asia and Southeast Asia. According to Urry, “Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is anticipation, especially through daydreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures” (3). The expatriates are given guidance duly before they set off for Hong Kong; they are also fed descriptions of tourist attractions through chats with friends, dramas, magazines, or online forums. Besides, Urry argues that tourists are provided with “new socialized forms of provision” (3). The most fundamental form of provision is the domestic helpers, who make the expatriates’ leisure activities in Hong Kong possible. Furthermore, the sightseeing industry in their travel destinations provide more exquisite service to meet their expectations. Urry maintains that the tourist gaze is focused on “features of landscape and townscape which separate them [features] off from everyday

experience" (3). Landscape and townscape in *The Expatriates* are undoubtedly objects of the tourist gaze; however, everyday life in Hong Kong captures the American expatriates' attention in a much more subtle manner. Urry compares tourism to "the collection of signs" and argues that "the gaze is constructed through signs" (3). Lee's American expatriates desire to see symbols and images, and they see them through stereotypical ideas about Asia, especially about Hong Kong. While they do "collect" signs enthusiastically, they also bring home to us the arbitrary nature of signifying practices.

Urry argues that tourists gaze through a window of their tour bus, or, in other words, through a frame. The tour bus isolates tourists from the real world and places them in a comfort zone. Urry borrows social historian Daniel J. Boorstin's term the "environmental bubble" (Urry 7) to illustrate tourists' insulation from the local environment. Boorstin notes that his contemporary American tourists, when traveling in a guided group, simply enjoy pre-arranged attractions and have no regard for the outside world (Urry 7). Sociologist Eric Cohen also develops his theory of the environmental bubble based on Boorstin's. Cohen's description of the bubble is aptly summarized by tourism researchers Holly E. Bosley and Gene L. Brothers as "a familiar, comfortable microenvironment within a novel, foreign macroenvironment" (166). In Urry's words, the American tourists' visits described by Boorstin "are made . . . within the 'environmental bubble' of the familiar America-style hotel which insulates the tourist from the strangeness of the host environment" (Urry 7). In a similar way, Lee's American expatriates, who are "always preparing for the inevitable return" (*Expatriates* 289), isolate themselves from not only the local people but also expatriates of other nationalities. They stay in an American bubble and gaze upon the framed outside world through the American lens. For them, living in the Far East can be a dream, and going home is something that will happen in the long run.

Lee's three major characters have a keen sense of the American bubbles. Hilary calls her neighborhood in Repulse Bay a "particularly homogeneous enclave of expatdom" (63). Americans see one another and exchange information around "this particular corner of Hong Kong" (63). While men get to work in Central, women, thanks to their live-in domestic helpers, devote themselves to pastimes or volunteer jobs. Hilary is quite sensible of her circumstances when she draws an analogy between life in Repulse Bay and the American film *The Truman Show*. Unaware that his life is a twenty-four-hour reality TV show, Truman, the protagonist of the film, is actually trapped in a studio, or, more precisely, a giant bubble. Margaret's opinion echoes Hilary's. In view of the "almost wholly American section of the former British colony, now China," Margaret

observes, “So many people here seem hermetically sealed, as if they live in Hong Kong but are untouched by it” (9). Tired of socializing with non-Americans, Lee’s American expats find themselves more American than ever: They call only other Americans, watch the Super Bowl, and celebrate Thanksgivings at the club with other families. Upon her arrival at Hong Kong, Margaret notices what is opposite to her imagination at a party: “Everyone was white, and they may have all been American, and even all from the left side of the country” (30). Instead of an “international and cosmopolitan” atmosphere, Margaret is welcomed with the Americanness she can find “in any suburb in Northern California” (30). From Mercy’s point of view, Americanness here is exclusive for the white people. Because of her Asian features, Mercy only partially belongs to the American bubble, but that affords her an alternative gaze.

### III. Otherness in the Traveling Eye

When discussing what makes a distinctive tourist gaze, Urry maintains that “potential objects of the tourist gaze must be different in some way or other. They must be out of the ordinary” (12). The distinction not only results from geographical difference, but also from cultural difference. Margaret is provided with books about following husbands abroad before setting off for Asia. She sees photos of bright and cheery women showing themselves in Beijing or Bangkok. On the other hand, she is reminded of the divergence that might challenge them in the new place. For the expats, life in Asia is in stark contrast to life back at home. Lee’s portrayal of a character named Mindy exemplifies such a distinction: Mindy is “a blond girl who has spent her entire life in the same one hundred square miles of North Carolina and suddenly finds herself on the other side of the world, with a Filipina housekeeper and shops on the street that sell vats of furry, dried deer penises” (159). According to Stuart Hall, “all identity is constructed across difference” (45). In *The Expatriates*, the American expats feel they are more American as they see the Other reflected in the traveling eye. Their encounters with Otherness will be discussed in three areas: excursions and trips, food, and language.

#### *A. Excursions and Trips*

Weekend excursions and trips abroad are common to Lee’s American expats. Weekend excursions, together with other social gatherings, afford them pleasant moments to “slip back into their national identities” (*Expatriates* 64). With

familiar food and drinks, with “mothers gossiping” and “the man laughing and relaxing” (34), they become “more American than ever” (46). One junk trip provides a classic example of the expats’ tourist gaze. The event is told through the perspective of Mercy, who sees things differently. Mercy is indistinguishable from local people if she doesn’t speak English. By virtue of her Asian features, in Hong Kong she identifies herself as an Asian instead of an American. On the boat, she notices that she and Barbara, a Korean woman married to an American man, are the only Asian people in the group. Because Mercy is single and unemployed, she is treated as the Other on the junk. Unlike those multinational-employed professionals and their spouses, the only title Mercy has is “a friend of Barbara’s” (42). A drunken man, who endorses human slavery, dares to grab her bottom. When a man tries to give her a lecture on shamanism, Mercy wonders why “it’s always the white person telling the Asian person about their culture” (41). As the junk trip involves service from locals, such as boaters and boat boys, it foreshadows what Mercy is going to see at Clarke’s birthday party: “a throng of Asian servers serving a bunch of white people” (264). The junk, like the tour bus, is an environmental bubble for the Americans. It is a safe place where they enjoy what they are familiar with, but they are reluctant to go into the water. Mercy is the only one who leaps into the water to swim, and she feels alone. On Mercy’s swim, a woman remarks: “I haven’t swum in Hong Kong waters since I saw a bloody Kotex floating by” (39). On the one hand, the woman implies that the waters in her homeland are cleaner; on the other hand, she suggests Mercy’s swim is a spectacle. Mercy’s Asian features and her state of being single and unemployed separate her from the crowd and make her an object of gaze.

For Lee’s American expats, traveling abroad becomes much more available and achievable in Hong Kong. As Margaret points out, “Living in Hong Kong, the exotic became affordable and everyday” (36). Traveling entails leisure and expense, which the expats are not lacking. Everyone goes abroad on holidays because going on vacation is “what normal families do” (114). On holidays, the expats run across one another at tourist resorts in neighboring Asian countries. Margaret’s family trip once overlaps with Hilary’s in Bangkok. Family trips give men a sense of achievement. Clarke, for instance, is proud to see the life he has provided for his family in Thailand. With live-in help, women are able to afford “girls’ trips to other countries” (246). For single women like Mercy, joining group trips is a popular pastime.

When visiting the neighboring Asian countries, Lee’s American tourists collect signs for their future memory. According to Urry, “The gaze is constructed through signs, and tourism involves the collection of signs” (3). One

technology to collect signs is photography. Before going to Seoul as the nanny of Margaret's children, Mercy says, "I'm sure I'll have the chance to take great photographs. I've been learning how to shoot" (Lee, *Expatriates* 45). Hilary desires to have photos collected in an album to show how life is like in Asia. Photos produce frames and show what the tourist gaze captures. Tourists can "produce tangible memories to be cherished and consumed well after the journey" (Urry and Larsen 156). Another technology to freeze the fleeting traveling moment is the souvenir. Margaret has a Portman Ritz-Carlton bathrobe from a trip to Shanghai. She thinks it is a "trip from another life" (Lee, *Expatriates* 92). The bathrobe, then, is a sign that carries the meaning of mobility and exoticism.

Similar to what they do in weekend excursions, Lee's American expats seek comfortable and safe bubbles when they take trips abroad. The bubbles enable them to cast the tourist gaze without being threatened by Otherness. When tourists move from one place to another, they find themselves in a liminal zone produced by the distinction between familiarity and strangeness (Urry 10). Tourists are supposed to welcome the inversion of the everyday, but not everyone enjoys the experience of liminality. A story told by Frannie, Margaret's acquaintance, about traveling in Sri Lanka demonstrates why hotels with a familiar atmosphere are crucial. Staying at a remote villa with neither Internet nor cell signal, the husbands feel isolated. In order to connect to the familiar world they come from, they hire a driver, who collects these travelers' turned-on cellphones and drives for two hours to get emails for them. The first time when the Reads visit Phuket Island, labelled as the "expat starter vacation" (Lee, *Expatriates* 116), Margaret chooses to stay at an American chain hotel, which, as a bubble, provides a familiar environment. The disappearance of G, her four-year-old son, during a family trip to Seoul intensifies her anxiety in an unfamiliar place. She feels uneasy when going outside of the hotel in Bangkok, "as if she were swimming in the ocean" (165). The exotic can be inviting, but it can be threatening as well.

While the expats' trips abroad are mostly triggered by a need for pleasure and play, some trips are targeted at other purposes. Whatever the purposes, the destination is a place of pilgrimage for travelers. Journalist and social critic Donald Horne considers the contemporary tourist a modern pilgrim (Urry and Larsen 149). Anything can be an attraction for the tourist to worship. The tourist does not pay pilgrimage to a single sacred place, but to a lot of spectacular attractions (Urry 9). "Like the pilgrim," Urry maintains, "the tourist moves from a familiar place to a far place and then returns to the familiar place. At the far place both the pilgrim and the tourist engage in 'worship' of shrines which are sacred, albeit in different ways, and as a result gain some kind of uplifting

experience" (10). Here, the word "sacred" is synonymous with the word "extraordinary." As mentioned previously, Urry claims that objects of the tourist gaze must be out of the ordinary. He points out several ways in which tourists can experience the extraordinary: by seeing a unique object, by seeing particular signs, or by seeing "unfamiliar aspects of what had previously been thought of as familiar" (12-13). Lee's women characters aspire to such extraordinary experiences. Margaret thinks trips are educational, for her kids can get much more international exposure. In the words of Urry and Larsen, "museums have been central to the tourist experience, especially for tourists with high 'cultural capital'" (149). The Reades' visit to a museum in India is an example. Stepping out of the museum, Margaret feels her children are happy, "with this new knowledge inside them, with the bright sunshine" (Lee, *Expatriates* 44). The Chatuchak Market in Bangkok is a place of pilgrimage for Hilary and her mother. Hilary's mother loves the Chatuchak Market and always purchases a lot there, although her son-in-law describes the items she buys as "crap" and "shit" (139). As a must-visit place for tourists, the market becomes a sacred place for Hilary's mother, where her everyday life is suspended and where she goes annually in search of the signs of exoticism. As Margaret and Hilary's mother visit these places for purposes other than sheer entertainment, they cast a deeper gaze upon their destinations. I will return to the depth levels of the tourist gaze in the fourth section.

When traveling to countries in Southeast Asia, the expats see differences and distinguish self and other. Clarke considers these countries backward. To Clarke, the young men in Phuket seem to lead an aimless life, although Margaret expresses reservations about his viewpoint. Margaret observes meritorious service in the hotel: smiling employees who greet them in the traditional Thai way and the servile masseuse who humbly avoids eye contact. In Margaret's opinion, these trips turn the expats into a ruler: "The locals are the feudal servants, running to obey every whim. These small empires, these carefully tended paradises of sand and palm, shelter the expatriates from the brutal realities just outside the guarded gates" (141). Urry and Larsen notice the docile body under the tourist gaze: "servicing is increasingly a performative *doing*, a bodily performance that needs to please, seduce or entertain, especially visually" (78). In a broader sense, perhaps the submissive employees are not a pathetic sight. While Woodside deems tourism "drama productions" (374), De Villiers maintains that the tourist gaze can have a two-way effect (389). By reflecting back the gaze upon the tourist, the local people perform what the tourists expect to see and hence benefit financially. Although such a gaze is considered destructive as it commoditizes local cultural values (Woodside and Martin 2), it has

positive effects on local people. As Margaret sees in an organic garden, a poor island native, who lives in shabby staff quarters, can transform himself into a career horticulturist, providing useful guidance to tourists. Local people's smiles and docility are yielded under the tourist gaze, but they are also practiced in order to boost sales and increase profits.

### ***B. Food***

As the tourist gaze is cast through a frame, the tourists see distinctions between self and other and often reinforce their pre-existing imagination about the local (Huang et al. 424). One obvious sign is food. While food is often associated with cultural identities, culinary practice signifies the confrontation and negotiation between cultures. With distinctive appearance and taste, local food represents otherness to a tourist.

Mercy's loss of appetite results from the presence of an "other" in her body.<sup>3</sup> The intimate otherness produced by pregnancy interestingly parallels the cultural otherness represented by food. Mercy feels the otherness of food by sight. Without much appetite, what Mercy eats during the preliminary stage of pregnancy is lettuce slicked with oil and vinegar. When making salads, Mercy "will slice [vegetables] thinly and fan them into beautiful patterns, a vegetable mandala, courtesy of the mandoline, *a feast for the eyes*" (Lee, *Expatriates* 6-7; my emphasis). On the other hand, Mercy describes food on the streets around her as "improbable things: shiny cow innards; disembodied pigs' heads with floppy ears, stacked up in bloody piles; dried seahorses in burlap sacks" (6). The two passages above produce contrasting visual effects. Contrary to the "beautiful patterns" of Mercy's salads, local food on the streets exists in "peculiar and indeterminate forms" (6). Here is a distinction between order and disorder, or, more precisely, a distinction between self and other.

As discussed previously, tourist activities can be experienced not only by sight, but also by the whole body. For Margaret, food as representation of otherness is not only visual, but also olfactory. For instance, she describes a local Cantonese woman's box lunch as "a pungent lunch" (24). In Korea, her quarter home country, which she has never visited before, Margaret is obsessed with peculiar smells. Korea embodies strong smells. A barbecue restaurant leads to

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<sup>3</sup> Here I borrow Julia Kristeva's concept about pregnancy and otherness. Commenting on the maternal body, Kristeva indicates, "Within the body, growing as a graft, indomitable, there is an other" (303). Pregnancy provides women a chance to recognize the existence of the other within the self. Although Mercy describes her baby as "this tiny accumulation of cells inside her, which is so minuscule and so easily ignored" (Lee, *Expatriates* 198), this "other" can significantly reshape her life.

smoky hair and pungent clothes. An underground shopping arcade smells “like a thick soup of kimchee and garlic vapors” (48). The tourist gaze is envisioned by the local people to the extent that they strive to remove the smells. This effort is interestingly represented by a toothbrush ultraviolet light cleanser in the company headquarters Clarke and Margaret visit. According to the staff in the office, Koreans brush their teeth after lunch in order to get rid of the smells from the food they eat, and the cleanser is there to sterilize all the toothbrushes. The tourist gaze enables the local people to gaze upon themselves and try to tackle the problem of strong smells.<sup>4</sup>

For Hilary, local food represents exoticism. Hilary experiences the strangeness of food by sight: “an entire steamed fish with head on” (68). Like Margaret, she also senses the otherness by smells: “The house smells like a Chinese restaurant on Julian’s days, all soy sauce and deep-fried Mazola” (68). Food as a target of the tourist gaze plays an ambiguous role for the tourist. While the tourist casts a doubtful gaze at the alien food, she gets attracted to its exotic appeal anyway. In Seoul, Margaret and her family resist fried silkworms from a food cart, but they get roasted chestnuts from the next vendor instead. Placed side by side on the street, fried silkworms and roasted chestnuts are comparable in shape and texture. By “cracking and peeling the soft shells and eating the warm meat of the nut” (51), it seems as if Margaret and her family were experiencing imitation silkworms.

As mentioned earlier, the tourist gaze works two ways. Besides the tourist’s gaze at the local food, how local people gaze at the tourist’s hometown food, food that is exotic for the locals, demands our attention. One response to American food can be represented by Mr. Park, the Korean police officer, who takes hamburgers as an example of the Western values that have had negative effects upon the Korean society. Another kind of response is shown in the localized American food. Contrary to the local food which incurs uneasiness, American food implies home and comfort for the expats. To “grill hot dogs, and drink beer on verdant lawns” means “the best of America” (288). Mercy craves a party filled with smells of “the California cabernet and the chicken with garlic cloves roasting in the oven” (222). The expats feel nostalgia for American food; however, American food and culinary skills are localized in Asia. Margaret, for instance, finds Dunkin’ Donuts “shiny and new in Seoul and filled with well-dressed customers, unlike back home” (47). Besides, the stores sell

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<sup>4</sup> A news story about kimchi illustrates such a reaction to the tourist gaze. According to the *Washington Post*, Korean scientists are trying to get rid of the smell of kimchi, which most Western people dislike, in order that they can promote the side dish abroad (Fifield).

chocolate-glazed tofu doughnuts, a local flavor. The expats complain that iced coffee in Hong Kong is improper and terrible. Margaret claims the Starbucks in Hong Kong tastes totally different because the water and milk are not as good. In Margaret's point of view, Essie, her Filipina helper, when making spinach salads and grilled salmon in the kitchen, is merely "making approximations of the dishes" (169). Since the kitchen literally belongs to Essie, Margaret has no say in the dishes and her children know nothing about "how [the dishes] were supposed to taste in their own home" (169). Essie's role has complicated the division between the local and the exotic as she is also an expat, learning to cook various dishes depending on her employer's ethnic and cultural backgrounds.<sup>5</sup>

Given Hong Kong's highly multicultural environment, Lee's expats go to a variety of places for talk and food: a Japanese izakaya restaurant, a Vietnamese place, a Starbucks, the American club, Four Seasons Hotel, to name a few. However, they have never had the "real" local food: dim sum.<sup>6</sup> This is manifested by a short conversation between Hilary and Taiwanmum on an online forum. When Taiwanmum posts about a new dim sum place in Kowloon, Hilary wonders how she gets there but receives a derisive reply: "Not everyone sits around in their air-conditioned mansion in Repulse Bay and refuse (sic) to go to Kowloon" (135). Living in the bubble of Hong Kong Island, Hilary has never been to Kowloon, a more authentic area with more elements of traditional culture according to travel writer Rory Boland. She distrusts Taiwanmum's information about a chef from Four Seasons Hotel working at the dim sum place, perhaps taking it as downward mobility. Hilary, like the tourists described by Urry, is insulated in an environmental bubble and unaware of anything but the itinerary.

Besides gazing at local food, the tourist also casts gaze upon local people's culinary habits. When Mercy meets Charlie Leung at a small place for sushi, she examines the way he consumes Japanese food. Mercy sees Charlie but never speaks to him in college. The first time Mercy sees Charlie in Hong Kong, she guesses he is not an expat, but a local: "She has never seen him around in Hong Kong, which means that he must not go to the same places she and her friends

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<sup>5</sup> This is also what happens when Puri, Hilary's Filipina maid, fries rice for Julian, although Hilary may not be able to tell whether Puri's fried rice is an authentic Chinese dish or not.

<sup>6</sup> Despite a wide range of ethnic foods served and consumed, Cantonese dim sum is still considered the real local food in Hong Kong. According to Sally Gao, editor of *Culture Trip*, "Hong Kong is a dining paradise for hungry travelers. You can find cuisines from all over the world, but it would be a sin to miss out on traditional Cantonese food, Hong Kong's native cuisine." Dorothy So and Holly Graham, food and drink writers, are more specific when they say, "No Hong Kong experience is complete without a dim sum meal."

do. Maybe more of a local. Hong Kong is so small that if you go out enough, you will run into every expat at some point in the same five restaurants that people frequent” (86). Mercy measures Charlie against her expat friends, with a conviction that one’s culinary knowledge is a manifestation of his/her cultural taste. Charlie is praised because he “knows enough to order [sake] cold” (203), but he is also criticized for incorrectly dipping the rice-side of sushi into the soy sauce. In a multicultural society like Hong Kong, authenticity of food is hard to pin down. When Filipina maids cook American or Chinese dishes and a Korean American assesses a Hongkonger’s knowledge about Japanese food, a question arises: Who has a say in determining food authenticity? I will return to the issue of authenticity later in the conclusion of this paper.

### *C. Language*

Tourists see their destinations through framed ways of seeing. Lee’s American expats demand that the language spoken in Hong Kong be “standard” American English. On arrival at Hong Kong, the expats are encountered mainly with the Cantonese language.<sup>7</sup> Cantonese is understandably “incomprehensible” (5), and Cantopop can raise distaste. Margaret requests the cab driver to “turn down the radio” when “[loud] Cantopop fills the interior of the cab” (10). In his monograph *English as a Global Language*, linguist David Crystal notices “signs of linguistic complacency” in “the archetypal British and American tourist who travels the world assuming that everyone speaks English, and it is somehow the fault of the local people if they do not” (17). Lee’s expats display such linguistic complacency when they have difficulties in communication with local people. Margaret senses “the presumption of the expatriates in Hong Kong” (*Expatriates* 24). They, and she as well, would demand a local’s understanding of the English language by raising their voice, but usually in vain. Margaret’s feelings are well articulated in this passage: “Every time she spoke louder than a local because he or she didn’t understand what Margaret was asking, every time she insisted on her way, was rude, she felt it in her and was ashamed” (25). According to Crystal, English as a global language has stopped native English speakers from learning other languages. Lee’s expats perfectly exemplify Crystal’s observation.

When communicating with English speakers, the expats also experience

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<sup>7</sup> According to David Crystal’s 2003 study, Cantonese was the mother tongue of over 98 percent of the population of Hong Kong (59). In 2016, the year *The Expatriates* was published, Cantonese was still found to be “the L1 of around 90% of the population and a major marker of local identity,” as reported by linguist Stephen Evans (9).

something unfamiliar. For example, they are confronted with new vocabulary words from British English, which are thought to be “vestiges of the British colony Hong Kong used to be” (63). Then, a local’s accent of English is always introduced as a prominent feature. Accent is recognized as a social marker to distinguish between “us” and “them.” At a charity party, Margaret finds a Chinese socialite speaks with “an indecipherable pan-European accent” (163). Mercy notices Charlie’s “slight Chinese accent” (86) and her doctor’s “British-accented English” (240). While Hilary is worried about Julian’s accented English, she is startled by Belle Liu’s “blunt, accented English” (65). When Belle mentions “the retard children” in an orphanage, her accent draws Hilary’s attention to a lack of politically correct terminology.

In the eyes of Lee’s expats, the locals are putting on a performance when they speak English. Hilary observes this in CK (Cheng Kiang), a freelance waiter and bartender working for the expatriate dinner parties. Lee delineates how uneasy Hilary feels when she realizes that CK is different outside of these parties:

His deference was gone, and he seemed decades younger as he talked in Cantonese on his mobile phone and gesticulated with his other hand. His voice carried over as he talked easily, loudly. Where was the exaggerated bow, the ingratiating smile? Her heart sank as she thought of how he put on his face for his job. (80)

Charlie and Olivia, Lee’s two local characters, also endeavor to perform when speaking English. Charlie’s English, though, according to Mercy, “still a little bit foreign, with a bit of an accent that surfaces from time to time and grammar that can be off” (204), earns him a Columbia degree and a promising future. According to Hilary, Olivia speaks “perfect” English. When having lunch with Hilary in the club, Olivia speaks English rather than Cantonese to the local staff. Her mastery of the English language needs to be seen. As is indicated by Hong Kong based linguist Chit Cheung Matthew Sung, “[in Hong Kong] a native-like accent was perceived to be closely associated with a high level of English proficiency and a positive self-image as a bilingual speaker” (554). In Hilary’s view, however, Olivia is a performer: “Her English is perfect but stiff, as if she is elocuting, not talking” (Lee, *Expatriates* 73). By performing perfect or near perfect English, Charlie and Olivia are able to meet the tourist gaze.

When Lee’s expats criticize the local people’s English, whether concerning accent, grammar, or register, they are claiming their ownership of the language. In other words, they claim they are entitled to assess whether people from other cultures are using English in an appropriate way. Another matter that arouses interest among Lee’s expats is local people’s English names. Apart from

merriment, the expats feel irritation at strange names such as Rosacea, Johnakin, or Zeus. One woman condemns adopting such names as “a bastardization of an English name” (30). Again, the woman speaks as if she were the owner of the English language. However, the spread of English around the world has made it difficult to claim sole ownership (Crystal 141). Variations arise and become acceptable when the usage of English is not restricted by countries. While speaking “perfect English” satisfies the tourist gaze, adopting “curious names” demonstrates local people’s assertive self-identity regardless of the gaze.<sup>8</sup>

#### IV. The Local Gaze and Cross-cultural Understanding

Apart from varying in depth levels, which will be discussed later in this section, the tourist gaze induces complex local gazes. The local gaze, being powerful and reflective in nature, helps the tourists see themselves more clearly (Wassler and Kirillova 71). Lee portrays few local characters, but in several scenes local gazes are perceived by her three protagonists. Here, “local” refers to Hong Kong in particular, and East and Southeast Asia in general. The three women’s reflections on the local gaze and the degrees they become familiar with local culture are especially worthy of notice.

According to Wassler and Kirillova, the local gaze is “lived through primarily as an objectifying exposure by local people” (121). Wassler and Kirillova identify several forms of local gaze, which can be positive on the one hand but alienate or discriminate against a tourist on the other hand. Generally, Lee’s American expats experience positive exposure to the local gaze; in other words, they feel pleased when being gazed upon. As Mercy observes, “There are the servers and the served” (Lee, *Expatriates* 261). In Hong Kong as well as in other Asian tourist destinations, the expats are accustomed to being served or admired, thanks to the noticeable difference in their physical features. To save his Western clients the bother, for instance, Cheng Kiang the bartender tells his Western clients to call him CK. In a supermarket when Margaret commands another customer, whom she mistakes for the store clerk, to find her the corn syrup, the customer is willing to cooperate. On her first visit to the orphanage which accommodates Julian, Hilary finds Belle Liu, the orphanage representative, “very excited about rules and regulations and following them to the letter” (66). Belle, however,

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<sup>8</sup> According to Joyce Man, a freelance writer based in Hong Kong, many Hong Kong people love to create their English names and love to be unique.

acquiesces in Hilary's plan to "try out" Julian, which is against their policy.

While Lee's American expats take being served for granted, the service may come from another form of local gaze: gaze as discriminating exposure. Wassler and Kirillova maintain that local gaze as discriminating exposure renders an inauthentic relationship between hosts and visitors. Tourists are treated as "the other" and gazed on as "revenue-generating objects" (Wassler and Kirillova 122). Because Lee's American expats take locals' ingratiating manners for granted, they mostly disregard their gaze as discriminating exposure. Hilary, however, senses gaze of this kind in Olivia:

If Hilary pressed her to be honest, the truth would be that Olivia feels superior to all the expats here. Hong Kong is her real home. She owns her apartment, [and] her daughter goes to a local school and speaks Cantonese and English perfectly. To her, the expatriates are just visiting, naïve galoots who come and screech about the jade market and getting dresses copied in Shenzhen. Not for them the rarefied rooms of the Hong Kong Club or the Stewards Box at the Jockey Club on race day. They are temporary and best ignored or tolerated until they receive their orders to return home. (Lee, *Expatriates* 271)

When accompanying Hilary to Clarke's birthday party, Olivia feels all the expats categorize her as local waiters or staff: people who serve. The expats care nothing about her: "Olivia is heard politely, then dismissed as foreign, ironically" (261). However, by casting a discriminating gaze on the tourists, Olivia is enabled to resist the tourist gaze and take pride in who she is and what she possesses.

No matter in which form, the local gaze contributes to the increase of tourists' self-awareness, but only by stepping out of their environmental bubble can tourists achieve cross-cultural understanding. Lee's three protagonists get closer to local life due to their shared concern about motherhood. Margaret travels between Hong Kong and Seoul, desperately looking for her lost son G. Mercy gets a job at a local store, expecting a baby. Hilary visits Julian and takes him out more and more, contemplating adopting him.

Woodside and Martin provide a model that illustrates the tourist gaze in three levels: shallow, mid-depth, and great-depth. They argue that the shallow gaze is entertainment oriented (3). While the mid-depth gaze is equivalent to Urry's "tourist gaze," the great-depth is equivalent to a visit and report made by a professional or a near-native (4). Woodside and Martin observe that "shallow and mid-depth tourist gazes occur automatically; deep tourist gazes are more effortful and explicit than shallow and mid-depth gazes" (9). Marketing scholars Roger Marshall and Rouxelle De Villiers provide another model. They maintain that a tourist with a shallow gaze is like a paddler, who "would get very little

of the wider ocean” and “could only develop a rudimentary understanding of its nature” (420). A tourist experiencing a deep gaze, however, is like a swimmer or a scuba diver, who would “learn far more than the paddler about life beneath the surface” (420). When tourists choose to stay at their destination and try to fit in, Marshall and De Villiers argue, they cease to be tourists and there remains no tourist gaze at all (421). The above two models illustrate that the tourist gaze is multiple in levels and that a deep tourist gaze is consciously achieved. Based on both models, I propose that Hilary, Margaret, and Mercy are moving forward to a higher level of engagement with the local place. To solve their problems, the three women make efforts to establish connection with “the wider ocean” (Marshall and De Villiers 420), though each progresses at her own pace.<sup>9</sup>

Based on how long they have stayed in Hong Kong, Hilary classifies the expats in Repulse Bay into three groups: the new expats, the intermediate expats, and the old Hong Kong hands (64). Although the length of time can distinguish one category from another, the extent of cultural distance is crucial to decide how much they have been immersed in the local culture. Hilary, Margaret, and Mercy display three different kinds of immersion, as reflected in language and food.

Hilary's connection with the local stems from her connection with Julian, a local child. Having separated with her husband, Hilary decides to adopt the child and take him back to America. What she has in mind is to uproot Julian and Americanize him. We can see this with respect to language and food. Hilary has no intention to adopt the child's original name. The first thing Hilary does is to rename him Julian, although she thinks the act “an enormous encroachment into his life” (67). Also, Hilary makes no attempt to learn Cantonese so as to better communicate with Julian. Unlike some trailing spouses who “improve themselves” and “become fluent in Mandarin” (260), Hilary decides to improve Julian's English, which she considers “almost nonexistent” (60). To immerse him in English is her top goal, and to change his food habit is another one. Hilary describes Julian as “a child who does not know what to do with a carrot stick, or celery filled with peanut butter, or a cream-cheese-and-jelly sandwich” (68). When Hilary takes Julian to the buffet at the American Club for an international spread, he “picks at everything” (234). Hilary desires to familiarize

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<sup>9</sup> Two examples previously mentioned in this paper show that Lee also uses ocean imagery to describe her protagonists' milieu. First, Lee describes Margaret's uneasiness about stepping outside of a hotel, “as if she were swimming in the ocean” (165). Then, Mercy's swim on the junk trip is not only spectacular, as discussed previously, but also symbolic. Mercy feels alone because very few of the American expats would like to be a swimmer, that is, to experience far more than a paddler about the “ocean” (Marshall and De Villiers 420) around them.

Julian with what she consumes. In other words, she wishes to domesticate the otherness represented by the food Julian is accustomed to. The tourist gaze Hilary employs is shallow. Although she perceives power relations in her gaze, Hilary does not intend to modify her position.

Margaret gets closer to Hong Kong's local scene after losing G in Korea. To follow her doctor's instructions to live life, she rents a small, filthy room in a building of flats. Margaret gets to know the neighborhood around her and purchases food and cheap daily necessities in shops. She cleans her secret room and feels at home: "Her small collection of possessions filled her with gratitude in a way that her house full of furniture in Repulse Bay did not" (27). Without her domestic helper, Margaret gets out of the role of the served and experiences the place in person.

What endows Margaret with a deeper gaze is her several-month stay in Seoul for her missing child. Margaret is a quarter Korean, and she is also a VFR traveler, that is, a traveler who travels to *visit friends and relatives*. In an investigation of second-generation immigrants who travel to their ancestral homelands, Wei-Jue Huang and her co-authors broadly define VFR travel as "trips that are motivated by family relationships and by other personal connections with the destination" (423). They maintain that the tourist gaze mediated through family-related connections can affect a VFR traveler's personal identity and foster a deeper sense of the place being visited. Unlike the research subjects in the study made by Huang and her co-authors, however, Margaret is no more familiar with Korea than general tourists. Raised by a white mother and a father who hates growing up Asian in California, Margaret speaks no Korean and feels "her 75 percent Americanness very strongly" (Lee, *Expatriates* 52). In the very beginning, she flies to Korea mainly for Clarke's business and for sightseeing. As visiting her father's relatives is not her major purpose, she is neither seeking family roots nor expecting any connections with the place. At that moment, the tourist gaze she casts is an entertainment-oriented, shallow gaze. In the words of Marshall and De Villiers, Margaret is only a paddler who gets very little of the wide ocean.

After the event of G, Margaret starts to swim a little bit deeper. Besides immediate assistance provided by Margaret's Korean relatives, Margaret acquires a VFR experience through what sociologist Jennifer Mason terms as "co-presence," that is, being co-present not only "with people" but also "in place" and "at occasions and events" (Huang et al. 423). The case of G forces Margaret to stay longer and alone in Seoul, while her husband and two elder children return home for work and school. As a quarter Korean, Margaret arouses considerable public concern; however, she has never felt more foreign. She regrets not learn-

ing Korean, realizing that speaking English loudly cannot save her. While G remains missing, Margaret becomes familiar with the local culture. To develop some understanding of modern Korean, Mr. Park recommends her to watch Korean television dramas. Margaret watches them and finds the people and their interactions compelling. Then it is the smell of food. Now she recognizes the “peculiar Korean smell” from the “accumulated smell of a thousand bygone boxed lunches” (Lee, *Expatriates* 125) in the police station. By trying all the different food in many small restaurants, Margaret feels as if “she were connecting to her Korean roots a little bit, having a tiny taste of what it must be like to live in Korea and be Korean” (125). Although she is not staying with her Korean relatives all the time, she is co-present with them by watching the same television programs and eating the same Korean food. Co-presence helps awaken “the usually dormant 25 percent of herself that is Korean” (115) and her identification with local people. In a broader sense, Margaret “cannot leave Asia any more than she would ever think of giving up on G” (289). Asia is her homeland now because G, her one-eighth Asian child, is there, like a small drop of water in the wide ocean.

While Margaret gets familiar with Korean culture because she loses a child, Mercy gets connected with Korean culture after she becomes pregnant and decides to raise the child on her own. Unlike Margaret, Mercy gathers her VFR experience in Hong Kong, “surrounded by fellow Koreans in a foreign land” (287). That is, she becomes acquainted with Korean immigrants in Hong Kong. As a second-generation Korean American, Mercy is hesitant about her gaze. When David echoes Mercy’s exclamation about the way domestic maids serve small children from a Southeast Asian family, Mercy identifies with his tourist gaze: “They have ascertained that they are both American, both sarcastic, both a little bit bitter” (88). On the other hand, Mercy feels being gazed upon as a local because of her Asian features. Once in an elevator, a Western man in a suit scans and teases Mercy carelessly as if she were invisible just because she is not supposed to understand English. Another time a woman, who considers Mercy a local, speaks English loudly and slowly in order that Mercy can understand her. Mercy recognizes she is “the other” for the American expats. Being partially responsible for G’s case and becoming pregnant with David’s baby, Mercy desires to conceal her identity as a native English speaker and pass for a local in the hospital. By telling her mother her story in halting Korean and attending local Korean church gatherings, Mercy receives solid support for her pregnancy.

At the end of the novel, Mercy stops being a tourist. Instead of the tourist gaze, the gradual familiarity with everyday life of local people enables her to

see things differently. Exhausted from her time in the expatriate world, Mercy chooses to live in a new world where everyone is Korean and where her mother prepares various Korean foods for her: spicy naengmyun and mung-bean pancake, for instance. Her new job with Mrs. Choi's antique shop in Kowloon shows her a different kind of expat. Mrs. Choi's kids, second-generation Korean immigrants, go to local universities; they speak fluent Cantonese and Korean but halting English with a Hong Kong accent. They demonstrate to Mercy what her child would be like if she chooses to stay in Hong Kong. Mercy also extends her new life further by connecting to local people's life. She loves the braised sea cucumbers at a small Szechuan restaurant. For work, she takes the MTR to Kowloon every morning and steps into the heart of Hong Kong's traditional culture. Away from the environmental bubble inhabited by the American expats, Mercy is moving towards the life of a near-native.

## V. Conclusion

This paper examines the tourist gaze in Lee's *The Expatriates*. Urry and Larsen's theory and several scholars' modifications and amendments are used as a critical approach. The tourist gaze exercised by Lee's American expatriates is discussed in detail in three aspects: trips and excursions, food, and language. While the local people are placed under the tourist gaze, they also cast a local gaze which effectively affects a tourist's self-identity. By getting more connection with the local culture, Lee's three women protagonists become aware of their limitations as tourists. At the outset, they cast a shallow gaze at Hong Kong in particular, and East and Southeast Asia in general, but gradually they develop gazes in different levels. Thus, they widen their horizons and see themselves more clearly.

The tourist gaze entails a tourist's expectation to witness the "authenticity" of her travel destination. However, we can see there exists no such authenticity at all. When the tourist gaze and the local gaze are interwoven, more images about the place are created. Mr. Park recommends Margaret to watch Korean dramas so that she can understand Korean society better. Do Korean dramas truly reflect Korean culture? Yes, partially. However, they also represent the local gaze which desires to construct a Korean society for tourists and foreigners to see. Given Marshall and De Villier's model, a tourist participates in constructing images of the local culture, whether she is a paddler, a swimmer, or a scuba diver. The tourist gaze and the local gaze affect each other considerably.

As mentioned previously, new issues incorporated into the second and

third editions of *The Tourist Gaze*, such as globalization, performance, and embodiment, are identifiable in *The Expatriates*. First, in her prologue to the novel, Lee describes the new expatriates arriving at the airport as “a veritable UN of fortune-seekers” (1), signifying the global mobility of people as well as capital. Then, the discussion about trips and language in this paper shows that, by virtue of performance, Lee’s local characters are able to meet the tourist gaze and to benefit financially or culturally. Finally, performance entails embodiment, as is shown by the servile masseuse Margaret sees in the hotel as well as by Charlie and Olivia, the local characters who endeavor to speak “perfect” English. The above-stated topics have not been discussed at great length in this paper due to its limited scope. However, they are worthy of further exploration in the future.

One aspect that the paper does not touch is Hong Kong’s relationship with China, although it is a crucial element given Hong Kong’s precarious autonomy under China’s “one country, two systems” policy, as well as the U.S.-China tension resulting from the implementation of Hong Kong’s national security law.<sup>10</sup> As mentioned earlier, Lee focuses particularly on her characters’ daily activities, without much regard for their political milieu. Perhaps due to the American community’s tendency to “avoid direct statements criticizing mainland China and Hong Kong’s relationship” (Shao), in this 2016 novel Lee curiously ignores “Occupy Central,”<sup>11</sup> the 2014 demonstration that had a huge impact on Central, where her American expatriates frequent. However, one comical scene, in which an American expatriate’s Chinese mistress in Shenzhen demands she be able to move to Hong Kong and be entitled to whatever the expatriate’s wife possesses, does reveal Lee’s concerns over China’s likely threat to American business interests in Hong Kong. Given Lee’s unspoken concerns and fragmentary depiction of shoppers from China, the Chinese tourist gaze in *The Expatriates* can be a topic worth researching.

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<sup>10</sup> On June 30, 2020, China imposed a national security law on Hong Kong despite the “one country, two systems” policy, which allows Hong Kong to have its own Basic Law. Considering the national security law can place Hong Kong’s autonomy in jeopardy, the U.S. government threatened to remove Hong Kong’s special status in revenge. Under the United States-Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992, Hong Kong is treated as a region distinct from the rest of China by the U.S. law in terms of trade, economics, and immigration.

<sup>11</sup> Occupy Central, a non-violent movement pushing for Hong Kong’s full democracy, began on September 28, 2014 and lasted until December 15, 2014. The movement called on protesters to block the roads in Central, Hong Kong’s financial center.

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## 旅遊、食物、語言： 李倫京《旅外者》中的觀光凝視

### 摘要

新冠肺炎重創全球旅遊業並改變著名景點的風貌，倘若加上社會不安，情勢將更加嚴峻。新冠疫情之外，持續的民主抗爭嚴重影響香港旅遊。無所不在的科技與媒體一夜之間改變世人對地方的想像，旅遊勝地也因而在瞬間黯然失色，這個現象引導我們關注旅遊者如何想像及凝視其旅遊目的地。先入為主的印象如何影響旅遊者？旅遊究竟是為了體驗新鮮事物或是印證對目的地的既有印象？與在地人接觸後，旅遊者會改變或延續其刻板印象？本文透過閱讀李倫京以香港為背景的小說《旅外者》來回答這些問題。首先援用旅遊學者厄里及拉森的觀光凝視理論與相關學者的批判與補充，由旅遊、語言、及食物三方面分析小說中的觀光凝視。我們發現小說中描述的美國性是經由旅遊者眼中的他者建構而成。其次，本文檢視在地凝視以及跨文化理解之間的關係。在地凝視乃在地人對觀光凝視的回應，影響所及良窳互見。小說中的三位女主角各自以不同的步調熟悉在地文化，並且理解本身作為旅遊者的限制。旅遊者期盼親眼目睹旅遊目的地的真實面貌，然而真實道地並不存在，更多地方形象將隨著觀光凝視與在地凝視的交會而產生。

**關鍵字：**觀光凝視、在地凝視、李倫京、《旅外者》