

RGC Ref. No.: UGC/FDS16/H09/19 <hr/> (please insert ref. above)
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**RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL  
COMPETITIVE RESEARCH FUNDING SCHEMES FOR  
THE LOCAL SELF-FINANCING DEGREE SECTOR**

**FACULTY DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (FDS)**

**Completion Report**  
(for completed projects only)

<p><b><u>Submission Deadlines:</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Auditor's report with unspent balance, if any: within <b>six</b> months of the approved project completion date.</li> <li>2. Completion report: within <b>12</b> months of the approved project completion date.</li> </ol>
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**Part A: The Project and Investigator(s)**

**1. Project Title**

Escaping Prestige: The Transmedia Aesthetics of Gao Xingjian's Post-Nobel Works

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**2. Investigator(s) and Academic Department(s) / Unit(s) Involved**

Research Team	Name / Post	Unit / Department / Institution
Principal Investigator	CHEUK Michael Ka-chi, Senior Lecturer	Department of Humanities, Language, and Translation, School of Arts and Social Sciences, Hong Kong Metropolitan University
Co-Investigator(s)		
Others		

**3. Project Duration**

	Original	Revised	Date of RGC / Institution Approval (must be quoted)
Project Start Date	1 Jan 2020		
Project Completion Date	31 Dec 2021	30 Jun 2022	24 August 2021
Duration (in month)	24	30	24 August 2021
Deadline for Submission of Completion Report	31 Dec 2022	30 Jun 2023	24 August 2021

## **Part B: The Final Report**

### **5. Project Objectives**

#### 5.1 Objectives as per original application

1. Examine the Nobel Prize in Literature as structural censorship. Areas to be looked into include the interaction between non-Western Nobel laureates and economic capital, symbolic capital, and celebrity capital.
2. Study the interaction between transmediality and structural censorship in Gao Xingjian's post-Nobel works. The PI is interested in examining Gao's self-proclaimed "cine-poems," "tripartite films," and "total theatre" as a result of the negotiations between Gao's transmedia aesthetics and the Nobel's structural censorship.
3. Re-evaluate the global politics of cultural recognition and China's Nobel complex. Drawing from the results of Objectives 1 and 2, this proposed study contends that Gao's Nobel Prize win paves way for a re-thinking of China's cultural identity as a global super power.
4. Contribute more sophisticated insights about censorship and freedom of expression in Hong Kong. Drawing from the results of Objectives 1, 2, and 3, the PI aims to address the current one-dimensional discourse about censorship in Hong Kong.

#### 5.2 Revised objectives

Date of approval from the RGC: \_\_\_\_\_

Reasons for the change: \_\_\_\_\_

1.

2.

3. ....

#### 5.3 Realisation of the objectives

*(Maximum 1 page; please state how and to what extent the project objectives have been achieved; give reasons for under-achievements and outline attempts to overcome problems, if any)*

Objectives 1-4 have all been addressed.

For Objective 1, I first conducted a literature review of major scholarship about the Nobel Prize in Literature, including Feldman (2000), English (2004), Lovell (2006), Engdahl (2008), and Braun (2011). Next, I obtained archival material about the event “The Olympic Gathering of Nobel Laureates” from the University of Georgia Libraries. The results are a conference paper entitled “The Nobel Prize as Censorship: The 1995 Atlanta Cultural Olympiad as Case Study” in August 2021. This conference paper was then expanded into a journal article entitled “Nobel Literature Prize and Peacebuilding: The Olympic Gathering of Nobel Laureates as Case Study,” which is currently under review in *Journal of World Literature*.

For Objective 2, I first conducted a literature review of major scholarship about intermediality and transmedia storytelling, including Rajewsky (2005), Jenkins (2007), Rippl (2015) and Lee and Liu (2018). In order to obtain further insights from other scholars in the field of transmedia studies, I organized an international symposium entitled “Transmedial Creations by Gao Xingjian and Others: An Online Symposium” in March 2021, which featured scholars from Hong Kong, America, United Kingdom, and Sweden. The above led to a conference paper entitled “Escaping Prestige: Transmediality and L’année Gao.” in April 2021. This conference paper was then expanded into a journal article entitled “Escaping Prestige: A Transmedial Reading of Death in L’année Gao,” which was published in *Journal of World Literature* in 2022. In February 2021, I also presented a conference paper entitled “Escaping through Sound: Gao Xingjian’s *Absolute Signal*.”

For Objective 3, I conducted a literature review of major scholarship about the reception of the Nobel Literature Prize in different societies, including Young (2001), Hall (2003), Lovell (2010), and Mayer (2018). This paved way for the publication of a journal article entitled “Literary Celebrities as Counterpublics: A Comparative Study of Gao Xingjian and Toni Morrison” in *Journal of Applied Journalism and Media Studies* in 2021. Another journal article entitled “Gao Xingjian’s Escape from Orientalism” was published in *Archiv orientální* in 2021. I also co-presented one conference paper entitled “The Nobel Complex in Japan and China” in August 2022. In 2022, I launched and recorded 10 episodes for a podcast entitled “The Cultural Life of the Nobel Prize in Literature.”

For Objective 4, I conducted a literature review of major scholarship about Hong Kong culture and society, including Wong (1985), Leung (1995), Abbas (1997), Bordwell (1999), Lin (2007), Wan Chin (2008), Chu (2017). Next, I honed in a specific material about Gao’s relationship with Hong Kong, such as Fong (2004). I also visited the Gao Xingjian Special Collection Repository in the Chinese University of Hong Kong. This resulted in the publication of an encyclopaedia entry entitled “Gao Xingjian and the Hong Kong Handover” in *The Palgrave Encyclopaedia of Urban Literary Studies* in 2022.

#### 5.4 Summary of objectives addressed to date

<b>Objectives</b> <i>(as per 5.1/5.2 above)</i>	<b>Addressed</b> <i>(please tick)</i>	<b>Percentage Achieved</b> <i>(please estimate)</i>
1. Examine the Nobel Prize in Literature as structural censorship. Areas to be looked into include the interaction between non-Western Nobel laureates and economic capital, symbolic capital, and celebrity capital.	✓	100%

<p>2. Study the interaction between transmediality and structural censorship in Gao Xingjian’s post-Nobel works. The PI is interested in examining Gao’s self-proclaimed “cine-poems,” “tripartite films,” and “total theatre” as a result of the negotiations between Gao’s transmedia aesthetics and the Nobel’s structural censorship.</p>	✓	100%
<p>3. Re-evaluate the global politics of cultural recognition and China’s Nobel complex. Drawing from the results of Objectives 1 and 2, this proposed study contends that Gao’s Nobel Prize win paves way for a re-thinking of China’s cultural identity as a global super power.</p>	✓	100%
<p>4. Contribute more sophisticated insights about censorship and freedom of expression in Hong Kong. Drawing from the results of Objectives 1, 2, and 3, the PI aims to address the current one-dimensional discourse about censorship in Hong Kong.</p>	✓	100%

## 6. Research Outcome

### 6.1 Major findings and research outcome

(Maximum 1 page; please make reference to Part C where necessary)

The major findings of this project are as follow:

1. The Nobel Literature Prize is the most prestigious literary prize in the world. But the Prize selections are often associated with the (Western-centric) politics of peacebuilding. Such is why the Literature Prize is often derisively referred to as a “Peace Prize.” Specifically, the Prize rewards non-Western writers that help push Western sociocultural logics to the rest of the world. At the Olympic Gathering of Nobel Laureates in the 1995 Cultural Olympiad, non-Western Nobel laureates in attendance demonstrated some degree of anxiety, which serves as an example of the Nobel’s structural censorship towards non-Western writers.

2. Despite proclaiming to be a writer of “cold literature,” Gao Xingjian has never shied away from awards, funding, commissions, and patrons. Instead of refusing the Nobel and its structural censorship, Gao situates the monumentalizing effects of the Nobel’s prestige as a subject of his transmedial reflection. In his first major post-Nobel project – *l’année Gao* (The Year of Gao, 2003-2005), Gao portrays death in five different expressions (paintings, poetry, theatre, opera, and cinema) that echo and respond to each other, thereby presenting a coherent attempt to restore his sense of fragility and autonomy as a Nobel laureate.

3. The Nobel complex is informed by the tension between Nobel-related Orientalism and Nobel-related opportunities. Writers, officials, critics, and academics in China are mostly aware that the Nobel is structurally flawed as a global literary prize eg Eurocentric, reliant upon translation. And yet, China has traditionally perceived the Nobel’s prestige, as a strategic tool for national reconstruction, to be too useful to abandon despite its structural flaws. As such, the Chinese government pursued Nobel-related opportunities at the expense of Nobel-related Orientalism. The tension between nation re-building since the Chinese Cultural Revolution and postcolonial reflections has resulted in contradictory responses towards the Nobel (hence a “complex”). This is evident in the Chinese state’s contrasting response towards Gao Xingjian’s Nobel Prize win and Mo Yan’s Nobel Prize win.

4. Before winning the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2000 and obtaining global fame, Gao Xingjian was already a reputable writer within the Hong Kong academic and cultural circles. Through the lens of the 1995 production of *The Other Shore* in Hong Kong, Gao Xingjian lends insight into the complexity of political participation. The last generation of colonial-rule Hong Kongers are traditionally recognised as “politically apathetic.” Political apathy carries the negative connotation that one is selfish and ignorant and does not care about the present and future interests of society. Yet Gao’s perception of Hong Kong as a “free society” is predicated on the freedom to be politically apathetic. Instead of participating in the shaping of politics at an institutional level, pre-Handover Hong Kongers, one could argue, were politically involved in terms of a detached and proactive observation of society.

6.2 Potential for further development of the research and the proposed course of action  
(*Maximum half a page*)

Further research is necessary regarding the Nobel Prize in Literature. Reflections about the nature of the Nobel have gained a new urgency since the 2018 Swedish Academy scandals. Despite the mounting skepticism towards the legitimacy and credibility of the Nobel as an arbiter of global literary excellence, its status as the world's most recognised literary prize remains. However, our understanding of the Literature Prize's prestige has yet to be fully fleshed out. Beyond its mission of recognizing the greatest writers in the world, what is or are the value(s) of the prestige of the Nobel? Why would a non-Western society or country (eg China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, India) seek national pride and glory via winning a Eurocentric cultural prize that is the Nobel? Rather than putting forth another critique of its failures as a canonization mechanism, more investigation is needed in how the Literature Prize's international prestige and global presence have paved way for peoples and societies from different parts of the world to develop their own initiatives, and assist them to realize their own definitions of Alfred Nobel's famous words: "the greatest benefit to mankind."

**7. Layman's Summary**

(*Describe in layman's language the nature, significance and value of the research project, in no more than 200 words*)

With Gao Xingjian's Nobel Literature Prize win as case study, this project has offered an original understanding of how a non-Western writer responds to the productive and restrictive forces of the global literary marketplace. The selections of the Nobel Prize in Literature are often associated with cultural Eurocentrism. And while the Nobel's prestige remains strong in Euro-American societies (eg America), the pursuit of Nobel glory is a sociopolitical obsession in Chinese-speaking communities (eg China, Taiwan, Hong Kong). A year after receiving the 2000 Nobel Prize in Literature, Gao Xingjian remarked that he had to embark on a "second escape" from the "public's halo, flowers, prizes, and crown." Although the Nobel's prestige has objectified Gao into a symbol of freedom within and beyond Chinese-speaking communities, Gao's "second escape" is not a literal rejection of fame. Rather, Gao situates the monumentalizing effects of the Nobel's prestige as a subject of his transmedial reflection. In his first major post-Nobel project – *l'année Gao*, Gao portrays death in five different expressions (paintings, poetry, theatre, opera, and cinema) that echo and respond to each other, thereby restoring his sense of fragility and autonomy as a Nobel laureate.

**Part C: Research Output****8. Peer-Reviewed Journal Publication(s) Arising Directly From This Research Project**

(Please attach a copy of the publication and/or the letter of acceptance if not yet submitted in the previous progress report(s). All listed publications must acknowledge RGC's funding support by quoting the specific grant reference.)

The Latest Status of Publications				Author(s) (denote the corresponding author with an asterisk*)	Title and Journal / Book (with the volume, pages and other necessary publishing details specified)	Submitted to RGC (indicate the year ending of the relevant progress report)	Attached to this Report (Yes or No)	Acknowledged the Support of RGC (Yes or No)	Accessible from the Institutional Repository (Yes or No)
Year of Publication	Year of Acceptance (For paper accepted but not yet published)	Under Review	Under Preparation (optional)						
2022				Michael Ka-chi Cheuk*	"Escaping Prestige: A Transmedial Reading of Death in <i>L'année Gao</i> ." Special Issue on "Marketing World Literature: Book Fairs, Festivals, Prizes," ed. David Damrosch. <i>Journal of World Literature</i> . 7:3, 2022. 401-426.	2020	Yes [Attachment 1]	Yes	Yes
2022				Michael Ka-chi Cheuk*	"Gao Xingjian and the Hong Kong Handover." In <i>The Palgrave Encyclopaedia of Urban Literary Studies</i> , ed. Jeremy Tambling, Springer Nature Switzerland, 2022, 730-36.	No	Yes [Attachment 2]	No (Publisher has agreed to add acknowledgment onto the "live version" of the encyclopedia)	Yes
2021				Michael Ka-chi Cheuk*	"Gao Xingjian's Escape from Orientalism." <i>Archiv orientální</i> . 89:2, 2021. 365-87.	2020	Yes [Attachment 3]	No (Publisher has agreed to add acknowledgment onto the online version of the article)	Yes
2021				Michael Ka-chi Cheuk*	"Literary Celebrities as Counterpublics: A Comparative Study of Gao Xingjian and Toni Morrison." <i>Journal of Applied Journalism and Media Studies</i> . 10:2, 2021. 153-167.	2020	Yes [Attachment 4]	Yes	Yes
		2022		Michael Ka-chi Cheuk*	"The Nobel Literature Prize and Peacebuilding: The Olympic Gathering of Nobel Laureates as Case Study." Special Issue on "World Literature in the Nobel Era: New Approaches to the Nobel Prize in	No	Yes [Attachment 5]	Yes	Yes

					Literature,” ed. Carlos Spøerhase. <i>Journal of World Literature</i> .				
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**9. Recognized International Conference(s) In Which Paper(s) Related To This Research Project Was / Were Delivered**

*(Please attach a copy of each conference abstract)*

<b>Month / Year / Place</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Conference Name</b>	<b>Submitted to RGC</b> <i>(indicate the year ending of the relevant progress report)</i>	<b>Attached to this Report</b> <i>(Yes or No)</i>	<b>Acknowledged the Support of RGC</b> <i>(Yes or No)</i>	<b>Accessible from the Institutional Repository</b> <i>(Yes or No)</i>
Aug 2021, Marbach	The Nobel Prize as Censorship: The 1995 Atlanta Cultural Olympiad as Case Study	Literature in the Nobel Era: Theoretical, Archival, and Critical Approaches to the Nobel Prize in Literature	No	Yes [Attachment 6]	Yes	Yes
Apr 2021, Online	Escaping Prestige: The Nobel Prize, Gao Xingjian, and Transmedia Aesthetics	2021 American Comparative Literature Association Annual Meeting	No	Yes [Attachment 7]	Yes	Yes
Feb 2021, Online	Escaping through Sound: Gao Xingjian’s <i>Absolute Signal</i>	Music, Sound, and Trauma: Interdisciplinary Perspectives	No	Yes [Attachment 8]	Yes	Yes

**10. Whether Research Experience And New Knowledge Has Been Transferred / Has Contributed To Teaching And Learning**

*(Please elaborate)*

Findings on Gao Xingjian and the Nobel Prize in Literature have contributed to my teaching of the undergraduate course “Chinese Literature in English Translation.” Students have obtained a more critical understanding of the relationship between Gao and the Nobel, and also the cultural life of the Nobel in China.

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**11. Student(s) Trained***(Please attach a copy of the title page of the thesis)*

Name	Degree Registered for	Date of Registration	Date of Thesis Submission / Graduation
N/A			

**12. Other Impact***(e.g. award of patents or prizes, collaboration with other research institutions, technology transfer, teaching enhancement, etc.)*

In 2022, I launched a podcast entitled “The Cultural Life of the Nobel Prize in Literature.” The podcast features conversations with scholars and writers from around the world about the Literature Prize’s social, ideological, and institutional functions as the most recognized literary honor in the world. Podcast guests include Shelley Chan (Wittenberg University, America), Howard Choy (Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong), Gloria Fisk (City University of New York, America), Alice Hall (York University, UK), and Jeremy Tambling (University of Manchester, UK). Season 1 (a total of 10 episodes) is now available at <https://nobelculturallife.wordpress.com/>

I have also mentored 12 students and provided them various types of research experience, such as digitizing research material, brainstorming research ideas, and research writing skills.

**13. Statistics on Research Outputs**

	Peer-reviewed Journal Publications	Conference Papers	Scholarly Books, Monographs and Chapters	Patents Awarded	Other Research Outputs (please specify)	
<b>No. of outputs arising directly from this research project</b>	5	3	N/A	N/A	Type	No.
					Podcast Episodes	10

**14. Public Access Of Completion Report***(Please specify the information, if any, that cannot be provided for public access and give the reasons.)*

Information that Cannot Be Provided for Public Access	Reasons
N/A	