MRI FORUM 13

Chinese Urban Culture and the Ruins of Macau

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May 11, 2005

Unlike Hong Kong, and even more, Shenzhen, another mega-city on the fringe of Hong Kong, and equally aggressively confident and modern, Macau however modern is an old city. It has been in its time a colonial city, it is rapidly beginning to look like part of a world city, it is a modern city in the sense that it is highly networked.[1] Also, because its discontinuities and because of the different types of experience it testifies to its existence as a postmodern city.[2] Such postmodernism also shows itself in splintering, and in fragmentation, because fragmentation, defined with such names as "autoarchy, unilateralism, heterogeneity and separation", are as basic to modernity as globalization.[3] Some theorists argue that nationalism, for

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[1] For this comment on networking: "much of the history of modern urbanism can be understood, in part at least, as a series of attempts to 'roll out' extending and multiplying road, rail, airline, water, energy and telecommunications grids, both within and between cities and metropolitan regions" - Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin, *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, technological mobilities and the Urban condition*, London, Routledge, 2001, pp. 10.

[2] In Ryan Bishop, John Phillips and Wei Wei Yeo, *Postcolonial Urbanism: Southeast Asian Cities and Global Processes*, London, Routledge, 2003, pp. 5. The editors quote Saskia Sassen on the difference between the world and the global city: world cities may have been around for hundreds of years, but "the global city is a relatively recent phenomenon intrinsically connected with economic developments of modernity, and accounting for massively increased numbers of the world population". Many world cities have been transformed into global cities.

[3] Ian Clark, *Globalization and Fragmentation: International Relations in the Twentieth Century* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 33.

instances, fragments, because it is an interruption of a tendency towards globalization. Colonial, Macau was first possessed by Portugal in 1555, made a diocese in 1576, and first called a city in 1586 (when Macau, like Portugal, was under the control of Spain).[4] Between its founding and 1640, it built twelve churches. As a port on the way to Japan, it attracted Jesuit missionaries, such as Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), the mathematician and astronomer, who had been sent to Goa in 1578, and learned Chinese at the *Seminário de Sao Paulo* in Macau, (founded 1579) and then went on to Beijing in 1600, the year of the founding of the English East India Company, which we will say more about later. Macau's primary importance declined around 1640, with several coincidences: the ending of the Ming dynasty; Malacca being taken by the Dutch in 1641, hence limiting the influence of Macau; the Portuguese being expelled from Japan.[5]

Any city, and Macau in particular, constitutes an archive in itself, and it yields memories, both voluntary and involuntary. Think how many memories are buried in its street names: Portuguese, Chinese, English: “through its street names, the city is a linguistic cosmos” writes Walter Benjamin.[6] It has obvious ruins, the facade of St Paul's church (1602-1637), designed by an Italian Jesuit, Carlos Spinola, being the most obviously emblematic: the church was given a museum in 1994. That ruin may be aligned with the stone cross of 1638 in the churchyard of Saint Anthony's church (1638), or the stone cross in Saint Lazarus' church of 1637. Museums, of varying degrees of seriousness, are popular in Macau: the Maritime Museum (1990), the Grand Prix Museum (1993) the Wine Museum (1995), the Museum of Sacred Art in St Dominic's (1997), the National History and Agrarian on Coloane (1997), the Museum in the Monte Fortress (1998), the Taipa House Museum, the Tak On Seng pawnshop (2004). And that does not count the churches and temples and gardens which as much as they function, are also museum-pieces. Some of the old architecture of Macau, however restored in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is Baroque in inspiration - Saint Dominic's (seventeenth century), Saint Joseph's Seminary Church (1746-1758). Baroque culture has been much studied and speculated on, and has been seen as that which used as characteristic images the ruin, the labyrinth and the library. Ruins are not just what has been made of those early buildings, but are part of the European construction of Macau, and have always sold representations of it.

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[4] On Macau history, see César Guillén-Nuñez, *Macau*, Hong Kong, Oxford University Press, 1984. I have used colonial names in this essay, only because of the nineteenth century context.

[5] The point is made by R.D. Cremer, “Macau's Place in the History of World Trade”, in R.D. Cremer, *Macau: City of Commerce and Culture*, Hong Kong, UEA Press, 1987, pp. 35.

[6] *The Arcades Project* trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1999, pp. 522.

In one of his memorable aphorisms, in a book on the Baroque, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, the German cultural critic Walter Benjamin (1982-1940) says that:

> The Renaissance explores the universe; the baroque explores libraries.
> Its meditations are devoted to books.[7]

Renaissance culture goes outwards, as if it finds a complete fit between the inner world and the outer: it is not marked by introspection. Its confidence, its desire for enlargement, which in the actual Renaissance licensed so much colonial activity, gives one clue to modernity, one instance of which is seen in the confidence of contemporary Chinese urban culture. But Baroque culture, Walter Benjamin also considers as part of modernity, and the second half of his statement, that the Baroque studies books, is unconsciously represented in Macau's libraries, its character as an archive. Archival study is melancholic in character. It knows that there cannot be such a confidence in the relationship between what is inside and what is outside. Since what is in the archive testifies to what has gone, it associates itself with the ruin, and therefore with melancholy.

The term "modernity" was first used by the nineteenth-century French poet Charles Baudelaire, whose poems are set in, and are of Paris, and it appears in an essay called "The Painter of Modern Life" (1859-1860). Part of the essay is devoted to Constantin Guys, as a contemporary artist of the crowd, and he makes an interesting cross-reference to Thackeray's illustrations, as though Thackeray was also, like Guys, an observer and *flâneur* [an idler in the city-street], a "painter of the fleeting moment". Modernity, as Baudelaire defined it, is "the transient, the fleeting, the contingent",[8] and as if in response to Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin wrote extensively on Baudelaire, as part of a vast and unfinished cultural study of nineteenth century Paris, called the *Passagenarbeit*. An exposé, or draft of the project was completed in 1935, with the title, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century". Material on Baudelaire followed: "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire" (1938), and then, in response to criticisms by his friend Adorno, the essay "Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (1939). As Baudelaire thought of modernity in terms of speed, to which may be added discontinuity, Benjamin adds in the city as the place of shock-experience, of which the Grand Prix (speed and shock) and gambling (shock, and speed) are two examples. They make Macau a paradigm of the modern city. Benjamin quotes Alain: in gambling "no game is

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[7] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* trans. John Osborne, London, Verso 1977, pp. 140.

[8] Charles Baudelaire, *Selected Writings on Art and Artists* trans. P.E. Charvet, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972, pp. 403.

dependent on the preceding one ... gambling cares about no assured position ... gambling gives short shrift to the weighty past on which work bases itself".[9] Macau, as dependent on gambling, rests on no foundation other than modernity, which is no foundation, while it has a history which only relates to part of Macau, the colonial part; as if the very idea of Macau's history excludes many of its people. William Hunter (1812-1981), the American writer on Canton, a member of the American company Russell and Co., emphasises how Macau was, from 1762 until the taking of Hong Kong, the "summer resort of the residents of Canton", so a place with a flexible European population, and how, in 1848, its population was 6000 Portuguese and 55,000 Chinese.[10]

Benjamin's title, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century" was not quite original to him: Paris had been thought of as the capital of the century, Europe, nations, the earth and the universe from the late eighteenth century onwards.[11] Marx, too, had called Paris "the new capital of the new world".[12] But Benjamin's direct source was a Vietnamese poet who published a book in Hanoi, that product of French colonialism. Nguyen Trong Hiep's *Paris, Capitale de la France* (1897) gives the following epigraph to Benjamin's work of 1935: "The waters are blue and the plants are pink; the evening is sweet to look upon; one goes for a stroll. The great ladies are out for a stroll; behind them play the little ladies" (157). The dominant ideological view of Paris, then, is that it may be defined in terms of leisure, of ladies out for a stroll, and significantly, the margin - the colonial capital - defines the centre: the imperial capital. It imagines it, or dreams it. The formulation, "capital of the nineteenth century" makes Paris not the capital of a geographical place, but the capital of a time-span. It defines the nineteenth century as European, as the colonial centre, as Eurocentric, following the Hegelian spirit which defined history in terms of Europe. Further, as used by Benjamin, the title, "Paris, capital of the nineteenth century" implies that all nineteenth-century values are to be found in Paris; that Paris is *the* capital to think through if you want to consider the nineteenth century. While it is therefore an ambiguous triumphalism that celebrates Paris as the capital, and the nature of the prize that it merits as being the capital is doubtful, it is nonetheless important to note that Benjamin's choice of capital of the nineteenth century was not London, but Paris, and there are several reasons for that, which impose the necessity on

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[9] Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Age of High Capitalism* trans. Harry Zohn, London, Verso, 1973, pp. 134.

[10] William J. Hunter, *Bits of Old China*, Shanghai, Kelly and Walsh, 1911, pp.149-156.

[11] Christopher Prendergast, *Paris and the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1992, pp. 6.

[12] Quoted, from a letter of 1843, in Margaret Cohen, *Profane Illumination: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of the Surrealist Revolution*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993, pp. 4.

the reader of Benjamin of reading London differently. A first reason for Benjamin putting Paris first is that Paris, for him, was both the home of consumer culture and of revolutions. London, an imperial centre, with for instance Hong Kong taken in 1841, was also the home of the first, but not the second.[13] Although it has been called in a recent book, obviously deficient in irony, *Paris, Capital of the World*,[14] Paris surely could not be thought of as the capital of the twentieth or twenty-first century in quite the same way, for two reasons. First, because the twentieth century was, and the twenty-first so, far, continues to be, the American century. But also because the emphasis has also switched to Asia, to Japan first, and even more now to China. The question is whether any Asian city will prove to be the capital of the twenty-first. Beijing? Shanghai? But no one city now could be such a molar centre or capital, while it is the nature of capital cities both to represent a country, but also, by their multi-culturedness, to criticise such a national model: that is what makes them “world cities”.

Leo Ou-Fan Lee uses Walter Benjamin's work on Paris to discuss in a comparative mode, Shanghai, in its “modern” state between 1930 and 1945. He points out that Shanghai, which became a “treaty port” after 1842 (the Treaty of Nanking, which conceded Hong Kong to Britain) was often called the “Paris of the Orient”, saying which would also describe it as a capital. Leo Lee says that this description was owing in part to its French concession, but he adds that there was no Chinese concession in Paris. Like Britain, France had had a consulate in Shanghai (as also in Hong Kong, Canton, Tientsin and Honkow) since the Treaty of Tientsin (1858 - not ratified until 1860, after the joint expeditionary force had destroyed the summer palace in Beijing).[15] The Treaty of Tientsin also gave France a legation in Beijing. The result was that “the Paris of Baudelaire's time was less diversified and cosmopolitan than Shanghai, and far more monolithic and imperial in its architectural style; in fact the French metropolitan capital had itself become the model for French colonial cities. By contrast, with its mixture of Western and Chinese residential and commercial spaces, Shanghai presented a more "vernacular" landscape”. So Shanghai in the 1930s was a “modern city in a country yet to be fully modernised - a city of trams, buses, automobiles and

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[13] See David Frisby, “Walter Benjamin's Prehistory of Modernity as Anticipation of Postmodernity? Some Methodological Reflections”, in Gerhard Fischer (ed.), *With the Sharpened Axe of Reason: Approaches to Walter Benjamin*, Oxford, Berg, 1996, pp. 19.

[14] Patrice Higonnet, *Paris, Capital of the World* trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2002.

[15] Raphael Israeli, “Consul de France in mid-nineteenth-century China”, in Annick Foucrier, *The French and the Pacific World, 17th-19th Centuries, Explorations, Migrations and Cultural Exchanges* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005) pp. 209-241. He adds that consular agencies for France also operated in Macau, Fuchou, Ning-po and Amoy, pp. 210.

rickshaws".[16] Shanghai in the 1930s had features associating it with Paris in the nineteenth century, but with two differences, then: first, that it was a colonized city, whereas Paris was the colonizing capital, and it while it had more diversity, it was the centre of a culture much less modernised than Paris was, a city which dictated its fashions and values to all around. For Benjamin's sense of Paris as the capital of the nineteenth century fastens on the city as the place not of industrial development, but - one reason why his interest is in the capital - of commodity culture, of the shopping arcade as the place where everything was to be put on show. We may make another point about Shanghai, which aligns it more with London, than with Paris: unlike Paris, but like London and Hong Kong and Macau, Shanghai was a port, and a culture which is associated with a port is much more diverse, and much less confident about possessing a single, and unique identity, than a city more inland. It is on the boundary, and hence in the between-space between different cultures.

Leo Lee's criticism of Paris in the nineteenth century, that it was a city given over to imperial splendour, which was reflected in its architecture, and in the rebuilding in the Second Empire of its centre by Baron Haussmann (1809-1891), in straight lines, is another reminder of why Paris had to be the "capital", and not London. Paris was centralised as London was not, first by the unfinished attempts of the first Napoleon to give the city a Roman structure, building on the point that the Louvre had been made a museum in 1793, and second by the work of the third Napoleon. Paris was an imperial structure.[17] There were certain things Paris could not understand, because of its confidence and centrality. Incomprehension also marks London, and I will give some examples, starting from Macau, with the Luís de Camoes gardens, and their grotto, a reminder of the Romantic cult of ruins; the gardens now called the Casa gardens. These were leased in the eighteenth century from Manuel Pereira, a Macanese merchant, to the East India Company and to William Fitzhugh in the 1780s, and then to James Drummond; here Lord Macartney stayed in 1794 after his embassy to Beijing. Here, too, in 1821, the Protestant cemetery came into being, as a witness to ruined lives, people drowned for instance, in the service of colonialism.[18] The East India Company lost its monopoly in 1834, and the gardens reverted to the family in the

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[16] Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1999, pp. 37.

[17] For France's relations with China, see Jean-Paul Desroches, "Beijing-Versailles: Relations between Qing Dynasty China and France", in Annick Foucrier, *The French and the Pacific World, 17th-19th Centuries, Explorations, Migrations and Cultural Exchanges*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2005, pp. 197-208.

[18] See Lindsay and May Ride, with Bernard Mellor, *An East India Company Cemetery: Protestant Burials in Macao*, Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press, 1996.

nineteenth century.[19] Hunter refers, as though it was fact, to Camoes having written part of the *Lusiades* in Macau (official homages being paid to Camoes beginning in 1923), as if Macau required that cultural capital.

Now the East India Company is a reminder of the British in China. In Dickens's *Little Dorrit* (1855-57), the main figure in the novel, Arthur Clennam returns, aged forty from spending twenty years in China. In draft, Dickens made Clennam say that the Clennam House "was in the tea trade". [20] *Little Dorrit* is, explicitly, set in 1825 ("thirty years ago"), and Flora Finching. who used to be Arthur Clennam's friend before he went to China, refers, on seeing him again, to tea chests (1.12.155). Since the tea trade was, in the 1820s, in the monopoly of the East India Company and the Clennams could not have been involved then, there seems a question whether Dickens is not referring to then contemporary 1850s practices, in which case we may wonder what connection the Clennam house had with the opium trade, what Hunter says the Chinese called "foreign mud". Certainly, Clennam has been in Guangzhou, and no doubt in Macau, and in Hong Kong, too, if, as I assume, the "real" action of the novel is of the 1850s, not the 1820s (Hong Kong not being a British possession until 1842, after the first Opium War, the event that for historians marks the beginning of "modern" China). I think that the action is assumed to be the 1850s, since Book 1 chapter 34 also refers to a Chinese consul, which could not have been the case until after 1842; this would mean that Clennam went to China in 1835, returning in 1855, highly contentious years to say the least of it, which Dickens must have known all about; if this is so, it adds to the repression about China which is within the text.

Clennam has come back to England declaring himself to be without a will. The editor of the Everyman Dickens, Angus Easson, says that "if Dickens ... never tried to recreate that past Chinese existence, he had in fact no need to. It is crucial that those twenty years are remembered only as a blank. Arthur cannot retrieve them and he is haunted by their losses.[21] Dickens makes China a gap in experience. There is something which is symptomatically colonial about Dickens making being in China a gap in experience, or in memory. Further, if the Clennam family have been engaged in opium, which would explain why the text is so silent on what happened in China, the

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[19] See Philip Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, London, Longman, 1993.

[20] See Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit* ed. H.P. Sucksmith, Oxford, Clarendon, 1979, pp. 20, note 4. Other references to this novel are to the edition by Angus Easson, *Little Dorrit*, London, J.M. Dent, 1999, pp. xxviii. On Dickens and China in *Little Dorrit* see Trey Philpotts, *The Companion to Little Dorrit*, London, Croom Helm, 2003, pp. 188-189.

[21] Easson, pp. xxviii. I have discussed Dickens and China in "Opium, Wholesale, Resale, and for Export: Dickens and China", *Dickens Quarterly* 21 (2004), 28-43 for part 1 and 21 (2004), 104-113 for part 2.

absence of memory is connected with repression, with a sense of guilt (which Clennam does definitely feel, attributing it to some secret of his parents" generation that he does not know). Dickens constructs Arthur Clennam's life as a series of breaks: before he was twenty, in England, a few details of which are recalled, a twenty-year silence, and then the figure back in England, and significantly, drawn irresistibly and unconsciously to the prison, to which he goes. These breaks which mark a character's life are symptoms of modernity in that this is seen as moments of discontinuity, where it is not possible to think in terms of continuous development. The crisis of memory which produces the souvenir and the museum responds to that in the present. Because for a present-day "greater China", the question is on what history it can build, or on what memories.

In *Bleak House*, earlier than *Little Dorrit*, Dickens had made gentle mockery of the art within a smart middle-class English home, featuring a "Native-Hindoo chair" which had been brought from India - nobody knew by whom or when and where - the sitting room has "framed and glazed, upon the walls, numbers of surprising and surprised birds, staring out of pictures at a real trout in a case, as brown and shining as if it had been served with gravy; at the death of Captain Cook, and at the whole process of preparing tea in China, as depicted by Chinese artists". India, the South Sea islands (the Sandwich islands), and China are all aspects of this commodity culture; Susan Shatto, in her commentary on the novel refers to pictures by John Webber (1751-1793), who also did drawings of Macau,[22] and by George Carter (1785) which were widely reproduced in engravings. One, in colour, is in Mrs Whimple's sitting-room in *Great Expectations* (chapter 46) alongside a picture of a ship-launch and another of George the Third.[23] Shatto says that "pictures (in watercolour, gouache or oil) representing stages in the manufacture of products such as tea, cotton, rice, silk and porcelain were produced by Chinese artists around 1800, and occasionally imitated by European painters".[24] The production of such art for the export market, whether by European artists or Chinese, such as Lamqua (Kwan Kiu-chin) in Canton,

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22 See César Guillén-Nuñez, "Macau through the Eyes of Nineteenth Century Painters" in Cremer, pp. 55-56; his illustration of the Mage temple from the sea (1788) is reproduced on pp. 36.

23 For Webber, and Carter, and for the idealisation of Cook in paintings after his death, see Bernard Smith, *Imagining the Pacific: In the Wake of the Cook Voyages*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1992, pp. 225-240.

24 Susan Shatto, *The Companion to Bleak House*, London, Unwin Hyman, 1988, pp. 68. She adds: "A series of twelve paintings representing the cultivation and manufacture of tea (from hoeing the ground and planting the seed through to packing the chests at Canton for shipment to the Western market) hung in the Prince Regent's bedroom in the Royal Pavilion at Brighton".

presents an "Orientalised" view of China to the European, and may be associated with the picturesque representations of Macau by George Chinnery (1774-1852), artist and landscape painter.

In Calcutta in 1814, Chinnery had painted Richmond Thackeray, a writer in the service of the East India Company, who had been in Calcutta since 1798, and the three-year old William Thackeray. In *The Newcomes*, written two years after Chinnery's death (153-55), Colonel Thomas Newcome, who has been in the Indian army, refers to a drawing done by his son, Clive, an art-student, named, of course, after Clive of India. Newcome says that "Chinnery himself, sir, couldn't hit off a likeness better" (ch. 12): it is a way of suggesting the provincialism of the Colonel and of Chinnery together. The picture by Chinnery of Thackeray's father and mother, and of the boy perched on five books seems gauche, and provincial: the boy and his mother are as if set back, and awkwardly framed, while the father in profile extends across the whole picture. No one is looking at the other, the over-rich neo-classical surroundings look out of place.[25]

In writing on Dickens before, I examined the point that Flora Finching in *Little Dorrit* assumed that Arthur Clennam in China would have found a Chinese wife, and I pointed out that actually, in the concession granted to foreigners in Canton (to keep the colonial name), women were hardly permitted: it was what aided Chinnery to keep on the run from his wife. The American Harriet Low (1809-1877), who was painted by Chinnery, describes in her journals coming to Macau as the niece of a shipping executive, William Henry Low, an employee with the large American firm Russell and co., for he wanted her to care for his invalid wife. Aged twenty, she arrived in Macau on 29 September 1829, living in a house next to the Cathedral, and left on November 19 1833. Her journal entries show her anxieties at being one of few women ("spinsters", as the term is used: "Oh hard is the lot of spinsters in Macao" - 224). [26] She describes, too, the impossibility of women being in Canton, which she did, nonetheless visit, as she also spent a holiday on the island of Lintin. She was the object of some attraction to men, and she writes about this in indirect ways, which gives to her narrative a certain Jane Austen-like quality for its sense of continually meeting the same people, and dancing quadrilles with them, and for both needing to marry and needing to keep her distance. Her diary is full of interest for the books she reads, fiction and history, for the reference to the library she visits, for the way that

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[25] For a reproduction of this picture, see D. J. Taylor, *Thackeray: The Life of a Literary Man*, New York, Carooll and Graf, 1999, pp. 144.

[26] Helen Hillard, edited by Katherine Hillard, *My Mother's Journal: A Young Lady's Diary of Five Years Spent in Manila, Macau and the Cape of Good Hope, from 1829-1834*, Boston, George H. Ellis, 1900. Page references in the text.

newspapers come in, for the lateness of news, for the visit from an Italian opera group performing Rossini, whose life she reads about in the library, for the meeting with Dr Bennett, a phrenologist travelling round the world, who discusses Dr Spurzheim, who had died in America (pp.232), and who also gives her a sense of novelists then active - in 1833 - in Britain - Mrs Hemans, Mrs Norton, Miss Jewsbury, and Mr Bulwer. The sense of distance is noted when she says that it was exceptional for a ship to arrive from Calcutta in seventeen days (pp.142), and when she notes that it took two full days to sail to Canton from Macao. When she arrives in Canton, "the Celestial city", she describes a "hong" [a factory, a word which OED gives, for its first English use, 1726] as "a range of houses built one back of the other, and entered by arches, with a passage under the houses to get to each ... The rear houses are like prisons, as there is nothing to be seen from them but the walls of the houses in front" (pp.79). It is unconsciously interesting material for living conditions in China, as experienced by Clennam before he enters the prison in London, the Marshalsea. As an American, Harriet Low is hostile to what she knows about Mrs Trollope's writing about America, which appeared in 1832. As an American Protestant, calling herself a Unitarian, she regards the Portuguese Catholic population of Macau with horror and distaste. (It fits with this that the Americans seem to have been independent of the Portuguese restrictions on who lived in Macau; Harriet Low says that "the government of Macau is only nominally Portuguese" (pp.86), after the family has ignored a request to go.) This colonization of the Portuguese means that the Chinese population are regarded at a double distance, first seen as "most singular" and "most united" of any people (pp.33), but otherwise not seen at all except as objects, as when she sees them as slaves, as the women with feet bound as "mere toys, for the idle pleasure of their masters, crippled and tortured merely to please them" (pp.177), and as when she says she "came home and talked to Uncle about the Chinese, their cruelty, their recklessness of life, their belief concerning a future state, etc. It is almost impossible to know what they do believe, there is such a variety of sects... " (pp.220). Chinese beliefs are expressed here wholly in Western terms. At the same time she refers to a Chinese Hong [factory] merchant saying "that if he should live again as a man, he would be a Chinaman, but if a woman, he would be an Englishwoman" (pp.221). Her attitude is otherwise only looking at Chinese as objects, as when she notes that the Empress of China has died and that there are to be a hundred days of mourning throughout China,, and "the men are not allowed to shave for that space of time, so we shall have some beautiful-looking servants" (pp.217). She sketches with George Chinnery, and sits for her portrait with him, and in her observation of Macao, though it notices the weather, the typhoons, and that each typhoon drowns seafarers (pp.106, pp.137-8), she follows his sense of the picturesque, which means that this seems a technique for repression, for not seeing other lives:

How I wished for Mr Chinnery's talent for painting, that I might sketch

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> for you [her sister, to whom she writes] the beautiful scene before me, the large and handsome church, milk-white, with a splendid flight of stone steps, and surrounded by trees and shrubbery. Just beyond the fort, stretching into the bay. Beyond this again, you can see the roads [Oxford English Dictionary: "A sheltered piece of water near the shore where vessels may lie at anchor in safety": the derivation is connected with "riding"], and the little boats skimming over the surface. In the distance, two islands of high ground can be discerned, and the beautiful ship heading towards her much desired home. A little farther in, is a little European boat flying along under her full sail, and any quantity of Chinese boats are in sight. Now can you not imagine that we have a pleasant view from our terrace? (pp.61-62)

The whiteness of the church makes the point that the scene as she describes it must be uninscribed, or that it cannot be read, just as its whiteness points to a poverty of inspiration within it. All depends on a sense of aura, moving out towards the distance. Her vision is composed in a mode which suggests that she cannot see. Once she refers to a steamboat, the "Forbes", "loaded with that precious drug, opium" (pp.65) on its way into China, but that is as close as she gets as to what the East India Company was doing with the China trade. She notes that there is occasional trouble with the Chinese, who are antagonistic to the East India Company (pp.95-96), but the limits of the antagonism she notes comes when the "hong" merchant Monqua tells her that she cannot go to Canton that was given over as a concession, because "too muchy men want to look" and "Canton too small, no walky" (pp.38), another statement with relevance for the nineteenth century prison.

The narrative here is of undevelopment, of not being allowed to be modern, to which the woman, excluded because of her gender bears witness, as does the point that the East India Company was engaged with the Chinese in an unequal relationship which precluded knowledge of the situation. It is relevant to think of modernity having these two sides, development in an urban form, and an underdeveloped territory which is represented, as in Chinnery, in pastoral terms which correspond to the lack of urban culture there. It is worth noting Baudelaire's scepticism about Auguste Borget (1808-1877), who had sketched in 1838 Canton, Macau, and Hong Kong before the territory was captured by the British, and whose work he reviewed when writing about the Salon of 1845:

> Eternal views of India and China. Doubtless it is all very well done, but they are too much like travel-essays or accounts of manners and customs. There are people, however, who sigh for what they have never seen - such as the boulevard de Temple, or the galeries de Bois! M. Borget's pictures make us sigh for that China where the very breeze, according to M. Heine, "takes on a comical sound as it slips past the

little hanging bells, and where nature and man cannot look at each other without laughing".[27]

Baudelaire's comment indicates what is meant by "Paris: Capital of the Nineteenth Century". The metropolitan critic comments on underdevelopment where everything to do with the non-European is comic, miniature, insufficiently differentiated from the non-human, and where the metropolitan taste that likes the picture is nostalgic: as indeed, there is something of nostalgia within Chinnery's landscapes, and, to a lesser degree, Borget.

Now, when neither Macau nor Hong Kong nor Canton could be thought of in these pastoral terms, when everything has been developed, there is a nostalgia for what their art represented, which may, again, be associated with museum-culture and the idea of a "heritage". Instead of Macau's pastoralism and sense of ruins, there is a confident and bustling urban culture, which is also a reaction to the myth of non-development. But it carries with it a certain nostalgia, and it contains within it the fear that there can still not be enough competition with European or American art. To explore this I turn back to Walter Benjamin.

The essay "Paris: Capital of the Nineteenth Century", puts together six pairs of ideas or oppositions of ideas into six short essays. Each time, Benjamin names a person influential in nineteenth century Paris and then links each of these with an historical phenomenon with which they seem, apparently, unrelated. So, the first of these is "Fourier, or the Arcades". Benjamin compares the new architecture of the arcades of the 1820s with the Utopian ideas of Charles Fourier (1772-1837), who adopted the building style of the new arcades in his "phalansteries". The second is "Daguerre, or the Dioramas". Benjamin has begun his essay with the commercial arcade, as a reminder that, like London, Paris was not an industrial capital (though the arcades showed the new development of textiles, which were dependent on imperial trade). The "diorama" was the panoramic view of a city, filling the walls of a circular room. The first London example opened in 1823 in the new Regent's Park, designed by Daguerre and Bouton, prefigured the invention of photography, in 1839, and Benjamin sees it as signalling - as the architecture of the arcades did - a new relationship of art to technology (pp.162). The third section is "Grandville, or the World Exhibitions". Grandville, a significant pseudonym (big city), was the caricaturist of *Le Charivari*, the journal which preceded *Punch*. Here Grandville is seen as the artist who extended fashion "over the objects of daily fashion" (pp.168). While the first Great Exhibition

[27] Jonathan Mayne, trans. and ed. *Art in Paris 1845-1862: Salons and Other Exhibitions*, New York, Phaidon, 1965, pp. 26. For Borget, see Robin Hutcheon, *Souvenirs of Auguste Borget,* Hong Kong, SCMP, 1979.

took place in 1851 in London's Hyde Park, and in 1855 in Paris, Benjamin nevertheless gives the precedence to Paris on account of the national exhibition of industry, which took place in 1798 on the Champ de Mars. These exhibitions are for the display of the "fetish commodity", and they show the dominance of the image, the "phantasmagoria".[28] Significantly, the poem quoted by Benjamin which opens the section refers to "le monde entier, de Paris jusqu'en Chine" (pp.164): the commodity is the universal display.

The fourth section is entitled "Louis-Philippe, or the Interior," and it begins with the bourgeois king, while it continues with the interior space, now as much a dream-space as the arcade, and the collector in it, who "dreamed he was in a world which was not only far-off in distance and time, but which was also a better one" (pp.168-9), the very dream that sustained imperial rule. Part 5 is "Baudelaire or the Streets of Paris", and it begins with a quotation from Baudelaire, from the poem, "Le cygne", which I translate:

> Paris change! mais rien dans ma mélancholie
> N'a bougé! palais neufs, échafaudage, blocs,
> Vieux faubourgs, tout pour moi devient allégorie,
> Et mes chers souvenirs sont plus lourds que des rocs.
>
> Paris changes! But nothing in my melancholy
> has changed. New palaces, scaffoldings, blocks
> old neighbourhoods, everything for me becomes allegory,
> and my dear memories are heavier than rocks.

If everything becomes allegory, everything in the city is de-realised; it is no longer the place of permanent structures, but of memories which persist though the form of the city has changed.

In the last section, "Haussmann, or the Barricades", Benjamin discusses Baron Haussmann's aim to drive the proletariat into the outskirts of Paris (some 350,000), and, by building wide boulevards, which were "unveiled like monuments" when they were complete, to secure the city against civil war by making the building of barricades impossible. It was a deeply reactionary aim, and Benjamin discusses the burning of Paris that followed in the Commune. He concludes by saying that "Balzac was the first to speak of the ruins of the bourgeoisie". He then summarizes the development that he has described:

> The developments of the forces of production had turned the wish-symbols of the previous century into rubble, even before the

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[28] For Benjamin, modernity is "the world dominated by its phantasmagorias" - *The Arcades Project* trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press, 1999, pp. 26.

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> monuments which represented them had crumbled. This development during the nineteenth century liberated the forms of creation from art, just as in the sixteenth century the sciences freed themselves from philosophy. A start is made by architecture as engineering. There followed the reproduction of Nature as photography. The fantasy creations prepare themselves to become practical as commercial art. In the *feuilleton*, poetry submits to the exigencies of montage. All these products are on the point of entering the market as commodities. But they still linger on the threshold. From this epoch spring the arcades and the interiors, the exhibition halls and the dioramas. They are the residues of a dream-world.

The sense of one city-structure giving place to another conveys the idea of each moment dreaming the next. No urban development can stay still, rather, "with the upheaval of the market economy, we begin to recognise the monuments of the bourgeoisie as ruins even before they have crumbled".[29] Ruins here are not romantic signs of decay, but markers, that any structure is marked by incompleteness. The new building put up has at the same time the signs of its death upon it, indications that it cannot survive, but must be a dream of how it can be upgraded. As soon as a building goes up, dreamed of beforehand in the last building that occupied that site, it becomes a dream of the next building and development; it becomes obsolescent; it has the sign of death upon it. It is not a matter of saying that the building is fine now but will be a ruin later on, rather, of seeing the ruin in the supposedly perfect building, which is a form of ironic reading. For Benjamin, there can neither be a complete building, or a complete city, any more than there can be a complete thought, hence *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* declares that "allegories are in the realm of thoughts what ruins are in the realm of things" (pp.178). It is because the city exists in the form of a ruin, however highly developed, that it lends itself to memory, one which is an alternative to official forms of memory in the museum. This capacity, whereby modernisation produces alternative memories, may be a third reason why it is Paris and not London that is the capital of the nineteenth century: that Paris enters into then contemporary artistic representation much more than does London, producing an art which concentrates on its changes more than London could do.

Jacques Derrida, the philosopher of that movement called "deconstruction", who died in 2004, writes about the ruin; there being an obvious relationship between interest in ruins, and interest in deconstruction.

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[29] Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* trans. Harry Zohn, London, Verso 1973, pp. 176.

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> Ruin is not a negative thing. First, it is obviously not a thing. One could write ... a short treatise on the love of ruins. What else is there to love, anyway? One cannot love a monument, a work of architecture, an institution as such except in an experience itself precarious in its fragility: it has not always been there, it will not always be there, it is finite. And for this very reason one loves it as mortal, through its birth and its death, through one's own birth and death, through the ghost or the silhouette of its ruin, one's own ruin, one's own ruin - which it already is, therefore, or already prefigures. How can one love otherwise than in this finitude?[30]

Derrida's comment is consolatory, even reconciliatory; it is a way of thinking about what may not present itself as the ruin, but where attention needs to be given. If everything we love is the ruin, that applies also to the city in which we live. Even if Macau thinks it has absorbed the ruin.

[30] Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion* ed. Gil Anidjar, London, Routledge, 2002, pp. 279.