

Abstract of thesis entitled **Critical and Creative Approaches to the Detective Genre in a South China Setting**

This dissertation examines the position and roles of female protagonists in the English language detective genre, with emphasis on the works of Hong Kong author, Nury Vittachi. The objective of the study is two-fold: firstly to find models for creative text production so as to produce a collection of stories in the detective genre; secondly to analyse the female gender roles in the traditional and contemporary detective fictions so as to understand how gender roles in this genres have changed or could change.

There are three chapters in this dissertation. In Chapter One, I examine the basic history and ideology of the detective genre. I explore the following questions: When did the detective genre begin? What is the genre about? In particular, I am interested in looking at what the women's roles in this genre are.

Chapter Two analyses Robert van Gulik's translation work, *Celebrated Cases of Judge Dee (Dee Goong An): An Authentic Eighteenth-Century Detective Novel* (1949), and his own creative product, *Judge Dee at Work: Eight Chinese Detective Stories* (1967), in order to consider the roles of female characters in traditional Chinese detective stories or *gongan xiaoshuo*.

In the last chapter, I investigate the role of the female protagonist in Nury Vittachi's detective works *The Feng Shui Detective* (2000) and *Feng Shui Detective's Casebook* (2003). Taking Vittachi's female protagonist, Joyce McQueenie as the key example, I explore the current validity of Kathleen Gregory Klein's hypothesis that female protagonists in the detective fiction are either unsuccessful as detectives or as

women.

**Submitted by Cassenna Chan Cheng Lei (MA-2-6370-8) for the degree of
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