

Jennifer Ching, author of "A Painted Moment" in conversation with Proverse Hong Kong. February 2010.

PVHK: How would you comment on the genre of Chinese writing?

JC: To date, I believe that much of the more well known work by authors of Chinese descent has focused mostly on new immigrant or second generation abroad experiences. I grew up on these books and these voices are imprinted in my memory. The discovery of heritage and identity is very much at the centre of these works and has come to epitomize Chinese writing.

PVHK: Your book certainly draws on Chinese culture - how do you feel your book differs from other books written by authors of Chinese descent?

JC: I most definitely do draw on Chinese culture as one of the major characters in "A Painted Moment" is Chinese. The aim was to integrate that into the daily lives and experiences of the other characters in the book, so it becomes part of the backdrop as opposed to the centre around which everything was to revolve.

I believe there is a growing group of people like myself, the adjusted-diaspora if you will, people who might have lived in different places at different stages of their lives, who don't need to seek their roots or puzzle over their cultural identity because we are comfortable being this combination of tradition and modernity. I draw strength from my varied upbringing and am content to be part of a growing new minority-majority.

PVHK: Do you see this characterizing your writing moving forward?

JC: I see myself using international settings as back-drops for my writing, yes. My generation tends to travel and our stories happen across borders, in the air, over time in different countries. I think these circumstances add extra dimensions to our stories in a way that our parents would never have imagined.

As for drawing on Chinese culture, yes I see myself doing that when it makes sense. I've lived most of my life in Hong Kong, so to me, it's natural to reference this city and the culture here. I'm keen to represent the city as I remember and know it, from the perspective of a local who's not quite local, a point of view that will hopefully be recognized by my fellow members of the adjusted-diaspora.