

**A Healing Journey:
Preaching Narrative in Eugene Lowry's Model
to the Wounded Hearers
in the Context of Hong Kong**

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I. Introduction

Traumatized experiences, personal or collective, are rooted and hidden in people's hearts.¹ It is a vital yet a challenging task to generate a healing path for wounded people. The on-going Anti-Extradition Law Movement started in June 2019 is leading to a collective traumatized experience in Hong Kong.² When the Protest is invoked in the public

¹ Joni S. Sancken, *Words That Heal: Preaching Hope to Wounded Souls* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2019), 2.

² The Anti-Extradition Law Movement or the 2019 Hong Kong Protests started in June 2019. The pro-democracy movement has last for nearly six months, with the police arresting more than 4,000 people. Over 2,000 people were injured in the Movement. Details could be found in Jin Wu, K. K. Rebecca Lai, and Alan Yuhas, "Six Months of Hong Kong Protests. How Did We Get Here?," *The New York Times*, November 20, 2019, <<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/world/asia/hong-kong-protests-arc.html>> (accessed 3 December 2019)

sphere and with many similar tragic features of the Occupy Movement in 2014,³ the collective wounded memories are implanted in the city.

In this essay, I argue that Hong Kong pulpits should consider the use of narrative preaching as a response to a traumatized society. Wounded clergies, therefore, are able to sketch a healing journey in the pulpit and can go through a healing process with their overwhelmed congregations.

Among all the significant narrative homileticians, Eugene Lowry, in particular, emphasizes the connection between audiences and preachers, advocating reform of journey experiences in preaching. Thus, his preaching model can inspire and bring new enlightenment to the contemporary Hong Kong pulpits.

II. Definition of Trauma

Trauma is "suffering that remains,"⁴ which could be translated as "wound" or indicate "an injury inflicted upon the body by an act of

³ The Umbrella Movement ("UM") or the "Occupy Central in Love and Peace" Movement started from January 2013 to December 2014 in Hong Kong. It was a response to the decision the Standing Committee of the Chinese National People's Congress made on 31 August 2014 that the central government would reserve its control over the election and selection of the chief executive of Hong Kong. The Movement could be divided into three phases: (1) January 2013-September 2014: Before occupation. This is a period for Occupation consultation in the society; (2) September-November 2014: Street Occupation phase. Three significant sites - Admiralty, Mongkok and Causeway Bay districts - were occupied for two and a half months. Student Protestants became one of the most important icons of the UM and affect enormous followers of Hong Kong youngsters; (3) November-December 2014: Clearance stage. The various street camps were "cleaned up" by the government. After that, Hong Kong entered the Post-Occupation period. The society was polarized into different political camps, and protest leaders were continuously arrested. Further details are found in Yongshun Cai, *The Occupy Movement in Hong Kong: Sustaining Decentralized Protest* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2017); Leong Fong I, *The Implications of Bultmann's Existential Theologie, Interpretation and Proclamation for Hong Kong Churches' Preaching After Occupy Movement* (M. Div. thesis, Divinity School Of Chung Chi College, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2015).

⁴ Stephanie N. Arel, and Shelly Rambo, *Post-Traumatic Public Theology* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 3.

violence" in ancient Greek (τραῦμα).⁵ In other words, the Greek word is referred to as an external injury experience on a physical body. The term has extended to wound inflicted on physically and emotionally in its later usage.⁶

The overwhelming nature of traumatized experiences hinders the human processes of adaptation and integration.⁷ It is also a repeated event moving back and forth between different developing stages for years. Wounded survivors share common struggles and worldviews of their own narrative experiences, which reveals the communal and collective nature of traumatized events.⁸

Trauma, therefore, refers to a rupture in a timely experience such that the suffering remains. When a traumatized event occurs in the public sphere, the collective memories of wounded individuals would turn to a traumatized and narrative experience of the whole community. This suggests that the work of integration to generate a path from trauma to healing in the post-traumatic period of a society is especially challenging.

The context of the Occupy Movement and the on-going 2019 Protest has changed the face of religion in Hong Kong. Those events are invoked in public, and with many similar traumatized imageries of both Movements, the traumatized experiences carry on in the city.

In this essay, I use the term "trauma" to describe a narrative journey from the wound to the healing of individuals and communities over the course of years. The focus of this research is how Hong Kong church pulpits effectively react to a traumatized society in Hong Kong.

⁵ Serene Jones, *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 12.

⁶ Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 12.

⁷ Arel and Rambo, *Post-Traumatic Public Theology*, 3-4.

⁸ Arel and Rambo, *Post-Traumatic Public Theology*, 13; Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 13-15.

III. Hong Kong As A Traumatized City: The Paradigm Shift of the Pulpit

1. A Traumatized City:

From the Occupy Movement to the 2019 Protest

The Occupy Movement in Hong Kong in 2014 has brought a rupture associated with depression trajectories to the society.⁹ This major social movement changed the interaction and tensions of Hong Kong particularly as the relationship between young and old, government and citizens, polices and protestors. It is no doubt that the society experienced a collective and traumatized journey during and after the Movement.

Five years later, another major political turmoil befalls Hong Kong, but this time it is bigger and more defiant. The Anti Extradition Law Movement in 2019 has similarities but yet many differences with the previous movement.¹⁰ Anger and frustration swept over the city, and many people have been pushed to desperation. Participants and witnesses are suffering from stress and mental health problems.¹¹ The two Movements have created an unprecedented traumatized experience to the society.

⁹ Michael Y. Ni et al., "Longitudinal Patterns and Predictors of Depression Trajectories Related to the 2014 Occupy Central/Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong," *American Journal of Public Health* 107, no. 4 (April 2017): 593–600, <<https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2016.303651>> (accessed 18 November 2019).

¹⁰ Details could be find in Adolfo Arranz and Jeffie Lam, "Hong Kong: From Occupy 2014 to Protests 2019," *South China Morning Post*, September 2019, <<https://bit.ly/2nIuxb3>> (accessed 8 November 2019); "The Difference between Occupy and Extradition Protests? Violence," *South China Morning Post*, July 2019, <<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3016842/difference-between-occupy-and-extradition-protests-more>> (accessed 18 November 2019).

¹¹ Rachel Cheung, "Mental Health, the Victim on All Sides of Hong Kong's Extradition Crisis," *South China Morning Post*, July 2019, <<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/health-environment/article/3017505/mental-health-victim-all-sides-hong-kongs-extradition>> (accessed 18 November 2019); Farah Master, "Mental Health Issues in Hong Kong Surging amid Tumultuous Protests, Experts Say," *Reuters*, July 2019, <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hongkong-extradition-mentalhealth-idUSKCN1U40UV>> (accessed 18 November 2019).

2. Preachers and Listeners:

Create A Healing Journey on the Pulpit

Church, as an important socialized place, also reflects the traumatized experiences of the society in the past five years.

Before the Movements: The Authority of Pulpits in Hong Kong

Focused mainly on the exegesis and the preaching experience of clergies, Hong Kong does not have any localized homileticians.¹² Local clergies serve as disciplined spiritual directors to give guidance to the congregation.¹³ They are also ascribed great respect under the influence of Chinese Culture. As the Bible is the highest knowledge, functioning as a source of guidance to people's spiritual life,¹⁴ preachers naturally become the teacher and authority in the church because they are the mouthpieces of God by ministering the Word in the pulpit. With this authoritative image of preachers, the wide use of the rational argument and propositional point-making sermon has dominated the pulpits in Hong Kong.¹⁵

The Hong Kong pulpits are therefore highly didactic and aim at providing the hearers a clear intellectual understanding of the content. Preachers develop a top-down communication style and a more authoritative relationship with the congregation.

¹² Po Ling Sun, *Scriptures, Interpretations, Preaching: Theories and Practices in Contemporary Homiletic* (《聖經·詮釋·宣講：當代宣講學的理論與實踐》) (Hong Kong: Tien Dao Christian Media Association, 2014), 17.

¹³ Eunjoo Mary Kim, *Preaching the Presence of God: A Homiletic from an Asian American perspective* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1999), 71.

¹⁴ Kim, *Preaching the Presence of God*, 101.

¹⁵ Three-point sermons are the most common preaching form in Hong Kong. However, preachers are suggested to preach in less or more than three-point according to the scripture. Johann Y.H. Lai, *Living Word on Expository Preaching* (賴若瀚：《活道聖言：釋經講道文集》) (Sunnyvale, CA: Sacred Logos Resource Center, 2016), 84; Lien Hwa Chow, *The New Homiletics* (周聯華：《新編講道法》) (Taipei: Chinese Christian Literature Council Ltd., 1989), 312-13.

From 2014-2019 Movements: The Paradigm Shift of the Church

The Occupy Movement is considered as the most severe political conflict since the handover of the sovereignty of Hong Kong to China in 1997.¹⁶ But the on-going Protest is obviously even more intense and has completely upended the power structures of the society.

One important feature of the two Movements is that it has a limited authority leadership group. The Movements have a decentralized structure with weak authority.¹⁷ New authority values were developed among this society. As a result, individual authority has been promoted. Supporters gained new power and rejected the "hard authoritarianism" of their country and government.¹⁸

When looking back to the traumatized journey from 2014 to 2019, pastors tried to be the mediators between the protestors and the police officials in the Occupy Movement. However, they were ridiculed and rejected by the demonstrators.¹⁹ After a few years, pastors have responded again to the 2019 Protest, this time by emphasizing "presence and to walk with people". Preachers and large-scale worship gatherings were accepted by the public for providing comfort to people who are suffering.²⁰

¹⁶ Siu Kai Lau, *The Central May Study to Strengthen its Authority in Hong Kong* (劉兆佳：〈中央或研強化在港權威〉), *Mingpao*, December 15, 2014, <<https://news.mingpao.com>> (accessed 3 December 2019).

¹⁷ Fuk Tsang Ying, "Hong Kong Christianity in the Anti Extradition Law Movement" (邢福增：〈反修例運動中的香港基督宗教〉), *Initium Media*, October 2019, <<https://theinitium.com/article/20191018-opinion-hk-protest-christian/>> (accessed 18 November 2019), Cai, *The Occupy Movement in Hong Kong*, 6.

¹⁸ Shambaugh indicates that the Movement happened in a political environment of "hard authoritarianism" instead of over time, when more political opportunities opened. David Shambaugh, *China's Future* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016).

¹⁹ Wu, Chi Wai, "Editorial: The Anti-Extradition Law Movement Brings Reflections to the Church." (〈本週評論：「反修例運動」帶來教會的思考〉) *Hong Kong Church Renewal Movement (HKCRM)*, June 2019, <<https://hkchurch.wordpress.com/2019/06/26/>> (accessed 18 November 2019).

²⁰ Wu, Chi Wai, "Editorial: The Anti-Extradition Law Movement Brings Reflections to the Church;" Ying, *Initium Media*, October 2019.

In other words, the reshape of authoritative interaction is also applied to church. Instead of developing a top-down relationship with the congregation, preachers learn to respond to a traumatized city by generating a more equal or even bottom-up relationship with the hearers, and also experience the process from being rejected to accepted after 5 years.

While both hearers and preachers are going through a narrative journey from trauma to recovery, the Hong Kong pulpits have to be reformed from didactic to narrative, so as to create a healing journey for this wounded society.

IV. Background of Narrative Preaching in the 1960s

The American Pulpits in the 1960s: from Deductive to Inductive

Similar to the Hong Kong pulpit, authority was regarded as a given characteristic of sermons from the early to mid-twentieth century in America.²¹ When preachers held the power of Bible knowledge, their authority was also reflected in the form of their sermons.

Preachers viewed sermons as instruments of instruction to reinforce the Bible values to the believers, thus Protestant preaching in the early 1950s was highly didactic. Sermons were built up with great principles and doctrinal propositions,²² which adopted a top-down authoritative style. The congregations gained knowledge of the Bible and learned proper social behaviors through preachers. Thus, they were socialized to accept the power of preachers, and gained fruitfulness from the rational and top-down preaching styles.

However, in the early 1960s, as a result of numerous social issues, the cultural revolution of the demise of external authority reached the church. People began to question and challenge authority figures of

²¹ William Hethcock, *How to Get your Sermon Heard: Preaching to Win Minds and Hearts* (Sewanee, Tenn.: Plateau Books, 2012), 16-17.

²² Long suggests sermons are like academic papers: logical, orderly, balanced, and symmetrical, with clear points and principles. Thomas G. Long, *Preaching from Memory to Hope* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 2.

their society, and thus commenced a growing sense of self-authority and individualism.²³ The individual became the unit of ultimate authority, while the external authority figures such as government and church leaders held a lower place.²⁴

As a result, the congregation became more skeptical to authoritative pulpits. They questioned the content of Scripture and asked that how the scripture responded to their lives. They resisted the imposed authority from preachers,²⁵ and the traditional unilateral and top-down sermon style was rejected as a result.

Sensing this boredom and disconnect with their audience,²⁶ homileticians hence revised sermons using a different approach, leading to the rise of narrative preaching, which involved changing the sermon form from deductive to inductive.

The Birth of Narrative Preaching: The Narrative Approach

"New Homiletics" describe a movement within homiletics, which originally had a distinct language from New Hermeneutics.²⁷ Eslinger further contrasted the New Homiletics with the "Old Homiletics."²⁸ Noticing the importance of moving preaching away from classical rhetoric, Buttrick suggested a patchwork in a phenomenological approach.²⁹ The differences are mainly the intention; while the traditional pattern shapes the sermon in an argument form of rational consideration, the New Homiletics emphasize experiencing in a narrative quality.³⁰

²³ O.C. Edwards, *A History of Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004), 798-99.

²⁴ In the 1960s American history, the new approach of education, generally law-breaking phenomenon and other social movements led to the change needs of the congregation. Hethcock, *How to Get your Sermon Heard*, 17-18; Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, 798-99.

²⁵ Long, *Preaching from Memory to Hope*, 48

²⁶ Long, *Preaching from Memory to Hope*, 2.

²⁷ Thor Hall, *The Future Shape of Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), xvii.

²⁸ Both Hall and Eslinger compared the preaching method of New Homiletics with the old. Richard Eslinger, *A New Hearing: Living Options in Homiletical Method* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 13-14.

²⁹ David G. Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

³⁰ Robert Stephen Reid, *The Four Voices of Preaching* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2006), 135.

In 1958, Davis suggested a moving, growing and organic-like sermon in *Design for Preaching*. In 1971, sensing the loss of the Word's power,³¹ and the ineffectiveness of an authority-oriented preaching,³² Craddock emphasized narrative preaching, which could transform audiences' internal authorities. In his book, he rejected the rational-deductive methodologies of preaching, and urged preachers to change from a deductive approach to one that was inductive, suspenseful, and narrative.³³

The work of Craddock had a great impact on Eugene Lowry. In 1980, Eugene Lowry called for preachers to build up sermons on the framework of a narrative plot.³⁴ Lowry was concerned with the audience – their listening process, thinking mode, and communication pattern.³⁵ This narrative approach was developed to counter the suspicious worshipers, so that hearers can truly listen to the text.

As a result, the way of preaching in twenty-first century has been irreversibly transformed. While congregations re-examined their relationship with the preacher, they were unlikely to return to the old preaching models.³⁶

Although the narrative preaching approach is on the wane, the pulpits still adopt a more listener-friendly preaching form, and preachers are inspired to create a timely inductive journey with their listeners, which is suitable to a traumatized society.

³¹ Fred B. Craddock, *As One Without Authority: Revised and with New Sermons* (Missouri: Chalice Press, 2001), 6-7.

³² Hethcock, *How to Get your Sermon Heard*, 20-21.

³³ Craddock indicates deductive and inductive are the two basic moves in sermons. Deductive movement is from general truth to particular experience, while induction is on the contrary. Craddock, *As One Without Authority*, 45-50.

³⁴ Long, *Preaching from Memory to Hope*, 3.

³⁵ Kim, *Preaching the Presence of God*, 2.

³⁶ Hethcock, *How to Get your Sermon Heard*, 15-16.

V. Eugene Lowry's Narrative Preaching Model: A Journey in Time³⁷

When narrative preaching can be applied in a traumatized society, Eugene Lowry's preaching model should be considered in Hong Kong pulpits.

Instead of a traditional top-down model, Lowry advocates a listener-oriented model, which could be achieved by sermon design, creating a timely experience, and addressing human problems and their particular culture. Emphasizing the intersection between hearers and the Gospel, preachers can create a healing journey with the congregation. And thus, his preaching model reforms the traditional authority relationship between preachers and hearers in different aspects.

1. A Listener-Oriented Sermon Design: Shape, Content and Goal

To communicate with hearers, Lowry promotes a hearer-oriented sermon design.

His central focus is about sermonic design.³⁸ He also focuses on a different sermonic shape or form.³⁹ In other words, he considers the way we preach, or the mode of our preaching. His narrative approach

³⁷ In this section, we will analyze some selected works of Eugene Lowry, and analyze his theory on narrative preaching.

³⁸ He suggests we can employ at least four narrative forms when preaching: (1) In *Running the story*: the text and the shape/form of the sermon are alternating; (2) In *Delaying the story*, preachers delay the story until a biblical insight is found. A current congregational concern can be addressed in the beginning before turning to the scripture for resolution; (3) In *Suspending the story*, preachers may move to a contemporary concern after beginning with the text; (4) In *Alternating the story*, preachers run the text by following the scripture's flow and form while alternates it with other stories, episodes, vignettes, or any other materials. The most arduous and important part of preparing a sermon is to decide its intention by choosing from these four forms. Reid, *The Four Voices of Preaching*, 38-40

³⁹ Eugene L. Lowry, "The Revolution of Sermonic Shape," *Listening to the Word: Studies in Honor of Fred B. Craddock*, eds., Gail R. O'Day and Thomas G. Long (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 101-5; Eugene L. Lowry, *Doing Time in the Pulpit* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 13; Mike Graves & David J. Schlafer, eds., *What's the Shape of Narrative Preaching: Essays in Honor of Eugene L. Lowry* (St. Louis, Missouri : Chalice Press, 2008), 3.

is primarily for non-narrative text.⁴⁰ That is, a sermon need not be the same art form, or genre, as the text.⁴¹ In narrative preaching, deductive moments are included in an overall inductive process. It is shaped for sharing exploration instead of providing detailed explanation. The emphasizing of a succession of ideas can also help listeners grasp the meaning of the sermon. Besides, Lowry observes that word choices and syntaxes in a traditional sermon are more formal and thus cannot be used to communicate effectively. Therefore, he suggests that narrative preaching opens up the possibility for more varied choices of words and syntaxes, and it is more listener friendly.

As for content, Lowry argues that narrative preaching not only provides more form and content options, but also seeks to understand the truth in a deeper way and conveys the aesthetic communication found in the Bible.⁴² Therefore, it is highly valuable towards making rational rhetorical arguments, and this kind of sermon can also evoke the active participation of listeners by the use of metaphor and image.

The goal of narrative sermonic event focuses on helping the congregation to experience the truth.⁴³ So the goal of a preacher is to comprehend the plot or thrust of the text by moving toward an event-in-time, and thus motivates his hearers to apply the Scripture in their daily lives.⁴⁴ The sermonic goal is not communicating information, but aims at revealing the Word and engaging with hearers.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ This approach is different from Thomas Long offering questions for preachers to ask of a narrative text. Thomas G. Long, *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 66-86. Lowry writes, "...I do not utilize the five-step process when preaching a biblical narrative sermon. The reason is clear: the biblical narrative already has its own plot, and hence its own ambiguity to be settled." Eugene L. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form*, expanded edition (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 90-91.

⁴¹ Eugene L. Lowry, *How to Preach A Parable* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 25; Eugene L. Lowry, *Living with the Lectionary* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992), 80.

⁴² Eugene L. Lowry, "The Revolution of Sermonic Shape," 105-7.

⁴³ Lowry, "The Revolution of Sermonic Shape," 110-12.

⁴⁴ Abraham Kuruvilla, *A Vision for Preaching: Understanding the Heart of Pastoral Ministry* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2015), 83.

⁴⁵ Eugene L. Lowry, "Narrative Renewed," *The Renewed Homiletic*, Allen Jr., O. Wesley (S.I.: National Book Network 2010), 91.

In sum, the participation of wounded hearers is essential for integrating a healing journey in pulpit. Lowry does not prefer an "either-or" approach when comparing the form of traditional and narrative preaching. Rather, the focus is the primary point of establishing and maintaining contact with the audience,⁴⁶ which is evident in his suggested hearer-oriented design of sermon shape, content, and goal.

2. Lowry's Loop: A Journey in Time

To Lowry, a sermon should be co-created with the Spirit, preachers and listeners, and therefore it should exist in time rather than in space, and must be unfolded just like real life.⁴⁷ As an accomplished pianist and homiletician, he illustrates sermon as an "acoustical event" in which both music and preaching are temporal events.⁴⁸ Sermonic time is not a linear presentation of ideas but rather a succession of experiences:⁴⁹

Sermon Time is...	Sermon Time is not...
Experience	Ideas
Event	Theme
Plot	Outline
Goal to help listeners to undergo an experience	Understand the meaning of the speaker

He uses recital as the analogy to explain "sermon as an experience in timely form".⁵⁰ Narrative preaching is a time sequence event, and it should be moved from tension to resolution.⁵¹ Thereby, rather than

⁴⁶ Lowry, "The Revolution of Sermonic Shape," 105.

⁴⁷ Lowry, "The Revolution of Sermonic Shape," 48; Lowry, *The Homiletic Plot*, 25.

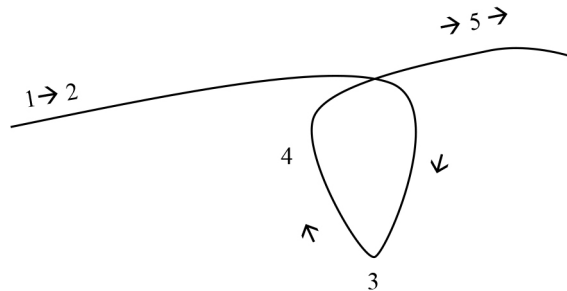
⁴⁸ Eugene L. Lowry, "The Narrative Quality of Experience as a Bridge to Preaching," *Journeys toward Narrative Preaching*, ed. Wayne Bradley Robinson (New York: Pilgrim, 1990), 72-73.

⁴⁹ Lowry, *Doing Time in the Pulpit*, 27.

⁵⁰ Eugene L. Lowry, *The Homiletical Beat: Why All Sermons are Narrative* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2012), 9.

⁵¹ Lowry, *The Homiletical Beat*, 5-6,22.

engage in Old Homiletics where sermons are organized in space and by outline, Lowry argues that a new approach of relating time and plot in sermons, creating a narrative art form,⁵² and is more hearer-friendly. Therefore, sermon is an experience instead of ideas, and the most important part is to shape the sermon rather than organizing it.⁵³ To illustrate the idea of preaching by comparing it with good jazz, he suggests a good sermon should resolve in disequilibrium instead of in the approach of linear argument,⁵⁴ which is illustrated by his famous "Lowry's Loop".⁵⁵



Lowry argues that a narrative sequence should involve a bind or discrepancy, an attempt at resolution, and then consequences for good

⁵² Lowry, *The Homiletic Plot*, 5-6.

⁵³ O.C. Edwards, *A History of Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004), 813.

⁵⁴ Lowry, "The Narrative Quality of Experience as a Bridge to Preaching," 67-84.

⁵⁵ The Loop could also be presented in other ways. The steps are: (1) *Oops*: begins by upsetting the equilibrium to attract audience; (2) *Ugh*: second move usually analyzes the conflict of discrepancy, which is the most difficult part of the sermon. To be more precise, he uses other terms like escalate or indicate the plot "thickens" rather than using the word "analyze" in his latter works; (3) *Aha*: then go through complication that things become worse, start the problem-solving processes, and disclose the clue to solution; (4) *Whee*: a sharp turn or reversal would appear after the third stage since listeners are now ready to experience the gospel. But he finds out that the turn is not necessarily an absolute reversal, so he names it a "surprising turn" later; (5) *Yeah*: finally the text moves toward resolution or closure that issues may not be solved but solution now become possible. Lowry, *The Homiletic Plot*, 23, 25, 47, 62; *Doing Time in the Pulpit*, 69-76; *The Homiletic Beat*, 32, 68; *The Sermon: Dancing the Edge of Mystery* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 23.

or evil. He later refines his model by emphasizing that experiencing the Gospel can occur in any part of the sermon.⁵⁶

His plot is clearly a co-creation strategy. Hearers are co-creators of meaning along with the preacher. To him, the Bible is "non-propositional" and thus a propositional approach on a sermon may distort the experiential meaning of listeners. To shape sermons in plots can therefore best convey the "aesthetic communication" that we find in Scripture.⁵⁷

Unlike the traditional authoritative preaching that requires a lot of memorization and information, this plot design can help Diachronic listeners understand the Scripture as a story, and Episodic hearers can still seize some meaningful moments and benefit from reflections in a sermon.⁵⁸ The plot is also experienced as an image. The use of imagination is thus essential to help preachers find a strong tension from the text, and therefore provide visualize and powerful moment in the pulpit.⁵⁹

In sum, Lowry believes that sermon is more about God's activity than God's explanation. Hence, sermon is akin to a journey leading the listener to a deeper encounter with God.⁶⁰ The congregation gathers to approach a homiletic insight by following a preacher's design of a sermon journey. The journey mainly focuses on moving listeners to discover a new reality, which is different from their prior Bible understanding, and leads them onto greater self-discovery.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Though he proposes Wheel/experiencing the gospel at around three-quarters of the way is usually the best. Eugene L. Lowry, *The Sermon: Dancing the Edge of Mystery* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), *The Sermon*, 78.

⁵⁷ Lowry, *Doing Time in the Pulpit*, 79-80.

⁵⁸ Long, *Preaching from Memory to Hope*, 14.

⁵⁹ Lowry, *The Homiletic Beat*, 29-30. Richard L. Eslinger, *Narrative and Imagination: Preaching the Worlds that Shape Us* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 163.

⁶⁰ Lowry, *Doing Time in the Pulpit*, 25, 83.

⁶¹ This kind of sermon approach focuses on listeners' ability to go through a psychological gestalt. Lowry, *Doing Time in the Pulpit*, 146, 150.

The relationship between preachers and listeners has been reformed. Preachers are no longer the authority figure but a tourist guide and a peer, embracing the Bible knowledge with their audience, and thus leading the sermon to shape in the healing journey from trauma to recovery.

3. A Problem-Solved Sermon: Encounter to Human's Culture

Both Craddock and Lowry propose that a sermon is preached to answer a problem or question, making meaning from the actual text and from the listeners' daily felt needs and problems instead of announcing any headings or topics.⁶² And Lowry's problem-finding process is similar to Bryan Chapell's "Fallen Condition Focus." The difference is that Chapell is more concerned with the sin-induced problem in the text,⁶³ while Lowry prefers to opt for a particular personal and social behavioral problems over the text.⁶⁴

To address the related human problem of audiences, we need to consider the hearer's culture and daily life. Lowry begins by heeding the dramatic change of the pulpit induced by media, calling this phenomenon "a screen culture."⁶⁵ The shift from books to all kinds of screen or communication technology shows the emergence of a new cultural form of understanding information. This rapid transformation of communication has become a cultural revolution and has led to the discussion of the context of preaching in its current state.⁶⁶

Given this new condition, Lowry therefore recommended that preachers fully utilize media to understand today's human communication

⁶² Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in An Age of Skepticism* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2016), 306-7.

⁶³ Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1994), 40-44.

⁶⁴ Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 46-47.

⁶⁵ Lowry writes, "We are moving from a print to screen culture," *Narrative Renewed*, 83.

⁶⁶ Eugene L. Lowry, *Narrative Renewed in Allen Jr., O. Wesley, The Renewed Homiletic* (S.I.: National Book Network, 2010) 84-85.

and use sermonic plot as a tool with the potential to connect with the life of today's hearers.⁶⁷ He also mentions that we should reconsider the use of screens in congregational worship. New homiletics should respond to the cultural influence of the screen revolution in congregations. In a media-oriented world, episodic sermon is closely related to our contemporary communication methods and culture, therefore preachers should pay greater attention to its theoretical study to allow sermons to truly address the daily difficulties of the hearers.⁶⁸

With Lowry's problem-solving approach, the pointing out of the collective traumatized experience is effective in terms of providing the chance of healing to the listeners. Hence, the congregation can encounter God in their real life.

4. A Summary of Lowry's Narrative Theory: A Journey in Time

To Lowry, the key element of preaching is that preachers should connect with audiences, so that the role of a distant and authoritative preacher is weakened. And the relationship between preachers and listeners no longer adheres to the traditional top-down authority-led rapport.

On the contrary, instead of serving as a traditional authority knowledge figure, preachers now act as fellow travelers and tour guide along the journey of a designed sermon, so that both the pastor and hearer can embrace the healing power of the Bible through preaching. The vertical and distant role of preachers/listeners becomes ambiguous, leading to an attenuation of bystanders in time of preaching. The co-creation of a healing journey in Lowry's narrative preaching model can be seen in the following diagram:

⁶⁷ Lowry relies on television (the older screen) for the purpose of narrative modeling. Lowry, *Narrative Renewed*, 84-88.

⁶⁸ Lowry, *Narrative Renewed*, 95-96.

Traditional Sermon Event	Lowry's Sermon Journey
<p>Preachers (Bystanders/Passerby)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>Propositional, Top-Down, Argument, Rational</p> <p>Listeners (Passive and Skeptical Observers)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">A Communal Journey in Time and in Collective Experience</p> <p>Traumatic Experience (Individual and Collective)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">←————→</p> <p>Preachers (Fellows/ Tour Guides) Listeners (Active Participants)</p> <p>Listener-oriented design, Plot experiential journey, Daily Problem, Particular cultural context</p> <p>Healing (Repeated event for years)</p>

Further, clergies would benefit from taking the initiative to understand the various cultures of hearers, so their sermon may address the current social traumas of the congregation and help both preachers and hearers to be active participants in the preaching on their healing journey of self-discovery.

VI. Eugene Lowry's Model as a Response to the Traumatized Hong Kong Pulpits

1. Evaluation of Eugene Lowry's Preaching Model

In all of the listener-oriented preaching models, Lowry is distinct from other homileticians in that he advocates shaping a sermon with a dramatic plot to allow preaching to become an experiential journey rather than an authoritative argument.

The strength of Lowry's method is enabling a church to name and analyze a community's existing disequilibrium.⁶⁹ Further, his emphasis of sermon as a time event encourages and invites preachers to observe problems happening in everyday life, thus the sermon in

⁶⁹ Ronald Allen, *Patterns of Preaching* (St. Louis: Chalice, 1998), 94.

this model echoes and addresses the situations that the congregations face. Moreover, Lowry's effort on restoring creativity and excitement in the preaching process enables listeners to become active participants and experience truth in the preaching event.⁷⁰ Therefore, by naming the communal wounded experiences, Lowry's model makes preaching as a narrative journey that enables both preachers and hearers to simultaneously experience the healing power of the Word.

However, Lowry's model faces many questions. Critics of "preaching as event" find the approach too individualistic,⁷¹ and argue that its emphasis on problem solving may narrow down the proclamation of the Good News despite the fact that individualistic orientation is needed to effectively show concern for the communal nature of the church.⁷² Responding to all these critics, narrative preachers demonstrate the use of narrative preaching to exercise the preachers' power in a less authoritative way.

While Hong Kong clergies are also in the narrative of traumatized experiences, they should lift their own experience to a universal level, and help hearers fit in different life experiences in the sermons, which shows that preaching can help people to see God's work in our everyday lives, including all our wounded experiences.⁷³

2. The Significance of Lowry's Model to Hong Kong Congregation

As previously mentioned, Hong Kong churches face a paradigm shift in the era of the traumatic Movements. The traditional top-down authoritative sermons have become ineffective, and believers seek for healing from the Word of God. Lowry's preaching inspires Hong Kong's sermons in several aspects.

⁷⁰ Lowry, "The Revolution of Sermonic Shape," 129.

⁷¹ Paul Scott Wilson, "Preaching at the Beginning of a New Millennium: Learning from Our Predecessors," *Journal for Preachers* 20, no.4 (Pentecost, 1997), 3-8.

⁷² Charles L. Campbell, *Preaching Jesus: New Directions for Homiletics in Hans Frei's Postliberal Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997), 144

⁷³ Long, *Preaching from Memory to Hope*, 9-10.

A Listener-Oriented Sermon Design

Lowry emphasizes the connection between preachers and listeners. In the context of a traumatized society today, sermons should also adopt an audience-oriented approach. Preachers need to be aware their communication with their hearers. Sermons are shaped for communicating and exploring with listeners instead of chiefly relaying information or knowledge as they did formerly.

All the choices of words, syntaxes and images in delivering the sermon content serve to achieve the goal of helping the wounded congregation to experience the truth and the healing of God. Hence, sermons in the design of helping listeners undergo a Gospel experience in a timely form is crucial to Hong Kong pulpits.

Creating an Experience: Time Journeying with the Listeners

Traumatized by the major social movements, believers have become skeptical to the authority of preachers. Thus, a sermon using a rational, authoritative and argument-based approach has become rendered ineffective. What the Hong Kong congregation truly needs today is a self-discovery journey and experiencing the healing of the Gospel through preaching.

Therefore, instead of using a propositional sermon form, a sermon delivered within a plot can create a time journey and make preaching an experience. And forming a sermon with a plot provides a strategic delay that can help hearers to follow the designed sermon journey. From tension to resolution, both preachers and listeners go through the narrative journey from wounded to healing, and therefore removes any tension between preachers and listeners. Hence, the truth can be revealed effectively to the congregation, thus refreshing our faith in God's words.

Go in the Wounded People's Culture and Daily Trauma Experiences

In a traumatized society, we should be aware that sermons are not born in isolation, rather in particular cultural contexts that requires different preaching forms, language and rhetoric aimed at

communicating with participants. Lowry proposes that a sermon could begin with a particular daily problem of the congregation. In other words, sermons should address the stressful experiences faced by the listeners every day – and Hong Kong youth sermons should follow suit.

When the Movements were incubated and finally erupted, the political awareness increased among the society, and the recognition of authority figures was reduced. The new generation focuses more on issues of public and justice and look forward to understanding how God's Word relate to social dilemmas.⁷⁴ Therefore, preachers should be aware of the cultures and daily struggles of their audiences, including the political and social issues of their local and immediate listeners, thereby helping both preachers and hearers encounter God in our overwhelmed life.

VII. Conclusion

In this essay, the definition of trauma provides the features of a wounded city. After the outbreak of the two major social movements, Hong Kong is undoubtedly a traumatized society. Both preachers and listeners are undergoing the process from wounded to recovery. Hence, a reshape of Hong Kong sermons is essential, especially when the traditional propositional sermon has lapsed into ineffectiveness in a traumatized world.

Contributing to a listener-oriented preaching model in the New Homiletic era in the 1960s, Lowry's preaching theory is insightful and persuasive for today's preachers in Hong Kong. Instead of a traditional top-down preaching method, Lowry advocates preachers to connect with audience by the sermon design. The sermon is a plot, creating a gospel experience journey which engaging to the particular culture and daily problems of the listener. From disequilibrium to resolution, the

⁷⁴ Wu Chi Wai, "Understand the New generation's Dissatisfaction with the Church (明白「新世代」對教會的不滿)," *Hong Kong Church Renewal Movement (HKCRM)*, February 2, 2017, <<http://www.hkchurch.org/single-post/2017/02/02/>> (accessed 3 December, 2019).

role of bystanders is weakened, thus encouraging the co-creation of a healing journey of both preacher and hearer in church. I also wrote three sermons in different narrative forms and purposes, targeting mainly for Hong Kong people. Please refer to Appendix A, B, C.

While narrative preaching has its strength and weaknesses, just as Lowry proposes, this essay is not suggesting an "either-or" approach when comparing the form of propositional and narrative preaching. Rather, we should blend Episodic and Diachronic tendencies into one sermon. But the key is how the preacher will connect with audience to generate a narrative journey from wounded to healing of individuals and communities in this traumatic society for years.

As St. Augustine suggests, sermons should delight their listeners.⁷⁵ When the believers facing a overwhelming situation, the design of a sermon should follow this cultural context of the congregation, so that the Gospel can be conveyed to traumatized people through effective preaching, and thus can keep God's Word alive, leading a faith-healing journey with our listeners.

ABSTRACT

Traumatized experiences, ruptures in a timely experience, are rooted and hidden in people's hearts. The task to generate a healing path for the wounded is vital yet challenging. When the on-going Anti-Extradition Law Movement started in June 2019 is invoked in the public sphere and with many similar tragic features of the Occupy Movement in 2014, it leads to a collective traumatized experience in Hong Kong. Both preachers and listeners are undergoing the journey from wounded to recovery for years. Eugene Lowry, one of the most significant narrative homileticians, emphasizes the connection between audiences and preachers, advocating reform of journey experiences in preaching. Thus, his preaching model can inspire and bring new enlightenment to the contemporary Hong Kong pulpits. Wounded clergies, therefore, are able to sketch a healing journey in the pulpit and can go through a narrative healing process with their overwhelmed listeners.

⁷⁵ Long, *Preaching from Memory to Hope*, 14-15.

撮 要

於時間突現的創傷經歷，會植根於受創者的心底深處，並須漫長年日方能治癒。因此，牧者要為受創信徒提供治癒之旅，是重要而艱鉅的牧養工作。2019年始的反逃犯修定條例運動，與2014年的雨傘運動有許多相類特徵，兩者同樣為香港帶來持續而重覆的集體創傷經驗。教會中不論是牧者或信徒，也因而經歷了漫長的傷癒之旅。尤金·洛里（Eugene Lowry）是其中一位重要的敘事講道倡導者，他強調聽眾和講員之間的聯繫。他提出的敘事講道模式，能啟發已然受創的香港牧者，藉宣講勾勒出一段由創傷至復原的旅程。講員因而能與同樣受創的會眾，一起經歷敘事宜講帶來的傷癒之旅。