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The Self as Cultural-Linguistic Hybrid in the Age of Globalization

Globalization has become a topic of central concern for the twenty-first century, especially in the fields of anthropology, communication, sociology, economics and literary studies. Globalization is a process that is still developing and also a reality that has already shown its effects on different parts of the world in newer relations of interconnectedness and interdependence that have to be defined. Various theories of globalization, such as those by Immanuel Wallerstein (1989) and Roland Robertson (1989, 1992), have been proposed since the 1980s to explain, as well as to predict, the trend of development toward possible homogenization and the tensions thus created. Many of these theories focus on the emergence of a world economy as trademark of globalization. Yet, in the recent decade, more and more attention has been paid to the cultural aspect of globalization.

The twenty-first century has been variously referred to as the age of globalization and as the information age. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, people who fail to recognize this fact are sure to lose sight of their own positioning in the structural transformation of society toward globalization. While globalization can be conceptualized as the shrinking of the world with possible threats to local cultures, what is of interest to scholars in the humanities and social sciences are the cultural effects, and not just the technological aspects, of this process that has produced more and more diversity. However diverse the theories of globalization and its effects may be, one fact which remains certain is that while the world has become seemingly less and less divergent in its shrinkage, there is evidence showing that the world has also become more and more pluralistic in its cultural development. The traditional categories of conceptualizing world cultures, such as the East versus the West, or the "first world" versus the "third world," may no longer be adequate in analyzing the world we live in today. This very shrinkage and

Canadian Review of Comparative Literature I Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée
CRCL/RCLC September - December / septembre - decembre 2003
0319-051X/03/30.3-4/504/J10.00/© Canadian Comparative Literature Association

restructuring of the world, paradoxically enough, has the effect of focusing more sharply on questions of localism, identity formation and cultural roots.

The "Global/Local" Paradigm in Cultural Formation

In the processes of globalization, the local and the global are co-implicated in complex and unanticipated ways. The global-local interactive processes of cultural formation have given rise to new spaces of contestation and resistance. As Mike Featherstone has envisaged, "Rather than the emergence of a unified global culture there is a strong tendency for the process of globalization to provide a stage for global differences not only to open up a 'world showcase of cultures' in which the examples of the distant exotic are brought directly into the home, but to provide a field for a more discordant clashing of cultures. While cultural integration processes are taking place on a global level, the situation is becoming increasingly pluralistic... " (1995, p. 13). Against this background, more and more efforts have been made in the past decade by culture-workers, such as journalists, film-makers, writers and critics, in Asia and the Pacific to reflect upon their particular situation of being globalized. Through the media of the written word and the visual images, these efforts, on the one hand, seek to mould the thinking of the public and, on the other, reassess what remains as local particularities when the world is shrinking. On this point, Mike Featherstone has a further observation:

> It is insufficient to assume that [local] cultures will simply give way to modernity or to regard their formulations of national particularity as merely reactions to Western modernity. Rather the globalization process should be regarded as opening up the sense that now the world is a single place with increased, even unavoidable, contact. We necessarily have greater dialogue between various nation-states, blocs, and civilizations, as well as a dialogical space in which we can expect not only cooperation and consensus but a good deal of disagreement, conflict, and clashing perspectives. Not that participating nation-states and other agents should be regarded as equal partners to the dialogue. Rather, they are bound together in increasing webs of interdependence and power balances. Because of this increased complexity and sensitivity to change, and the capacity to transmit information about shifts in fortune, it is more difficult to retain lasting and oversimplified images of others. It can be argued that the difficulty of handling increasing levels of cultural complexity, and the doubts and anxieties they often engender, are reasons why "localism," or the desire to return home, becomes an important theme — regardless of whether the home is real or imaginary, temporary, syncretized, or simulated, or whether it is manifest in a

> fascination with the sense of belonging, affiliation, and community attributed to the homes of others. What does seem clear is that it is not helpful to regard the global and local as dichotomies separated in space and time; rather, it would seem that the processes of globalization and localization are inextricably bound together in the current phase. (Featherstone 1996, 47)

Added to the complexity of interconnectedness in the globalization process is the transnational flow of people in the post-cold war era that has called into question the old thinking about national and cultural identity. Arjun Appadurai has made the point about the flow of people and the breaking down of boundaries set up by nation-states: "Carried in the repertoires of increasingly mobile populations of refugees, tourists, guest workers, transnational intellectuals, scientists, and illegal aliens, it is increasingly unrestrained by ideas of spatial boundary and territorial sovereignty" (Appadurai 1996, 161). David Wu, an anthropologist, has also argued in his book, *Emerging Pluralism in Asia and the Pacific* (1997), that the old paradigm of thinking about race, culture and identity is outdated and does not reflect the reality of today's world (141-47). The global-local interaction offers a new paradigm for understanding contemporary cultural formation, which is no longer conceived as a historical process of linear development from tradition to modernity, a concept that has been widely adopted in many fields of studies in the 1960s to 1970s. Contemporary culture has to be understood as a phenomenon of transnational formation resulting from the global stratification of local forces. The culture of any given historical conjuncture or geographical space should be seen as pluralized social formations, as an active mode of representation and foregrounding of social issues. The view that culture indexes a fixed and immutable corpus of social meanings is no longer tenable in the age of the global-local interaction. Many critics have pointed out from their diverse arenas of interest how cultures and their corresponding cultural products reproduce, challenge and subvert received social meanings, and how cultural products authorize themselves to play this critical and interrogatory role. The whole space of semiotics of cultural production foregrounds in interesting ways the interface between the global and the local. In the new spaces of globalized cultural formation, the self is thus left open to all kinds of global influences and a society's heritage simply fails to serve as the major means to define oneself and one's identity.

The Postcolonial Paradigm and Cultural Re-Visioning

To scholars in the humanities and social sciences, what is important in the processes of globalization is the emergence of new cultural forms and spaces, as well as the breaking down of old categories in the division of world cultures, which occurs as a result of the transnational (or global) flow of capital, culture, information and people. On top of all these four forms of flow, there is an extra dimension that deserves closer examination, that is, the mediation of a global language. Over the past twenty years, there has been a growing concern about the nativization of English as it spreads and develops into a global language. Such a development has to be re-examined in the context of the global-local interaction in contemporary cultural formation.

Whatever language that becomes the medium for global communication will own the power of mediation. David Crystal puts this as a dilemma and also an affirmation of the role of English: "If language dominance is a matter of political power, then a revolution in the balance of global power could have consequences for the choice of global language.... Small-scale revolutions in the world order would be unlikely to have much effect, given that... English is now so widely established that it can no longer be thought of as 'owned' by any single nation" (1997,21). On the one hand, diversification makes English spread different varieties, and on the other its unity paradoxically links up all these varieties to form a global circuit of flow. This dominance and flow of the Englishes, together with other forms that characterize the globalization process, is in one way or the other built on the emergence of postcolonial cultural spaces, which is the result of the collapse of the colonial center in cultural formation. In the reshaping of the world order, the various kinds of flow have to be reconceptualized as contestation in the form of dialogue and interaction with regard to the new modes of cultural production and language formation.

Postcoloniality, in its cultural implication marked by the breaking down of the colonial center of power, means the recognition of indigenous cultures, the hybridized forms of languages, and position shifts in identity construction. In the broader context of postcolonial world culture, there have been various calls for a spatial re-visioning of the world map and other cartographic representations of world cultures and world languages. Such a re-visioning calls in question the old paradigm of opposition between the center and the periphery, as well as the hegemony of the center over the periphery. Considering the global use of the English language, it is true that its

geographical spread to different parts of the world has much to do with the colonial expansion of Britain. Braj Kachru has put forth a postcolonial perspective linking English with cultural pluralism:

> English has 'multiple identities' in its international and intranational functions.... We must recognize the linguistic, cultural and pragmatic implications of various types of pluralism: That pluralism has now become an integral part of the English language and literatures written in English in various parts of the non-Western world. The traditional presuppositions and ethnocentric approaches need revaluation. In the international contexts, English represents a repertoire of cultures, not a monolithic culture. (Quoted from McArthur 1998, 64)

Braj Kachru (1990) further points out that Asian Englishes have important cultural implications for the construction of local identity and literary production. Braj Kachru calls this phenomenon "the Asianization of English." In terms of cultural production, what we can see in the case of Asia is particularly worthy of note. The Asianization of English is seen not only as a linguistic phenomenon, but also as a production of new "social meanings" created as a result of its interaction with "a verbal repertoire consisting of several codes" (1990, 11). Examples can be found in the creative use of English in multicultural settings by Singapore, Malaysian and Indian writers, much of which has to do with code-mixing and switching. It is evident that the more English is used to express local identity, the more it will become nativized, thus making world Englishes more and more diverse. In the past five years, there appeared many studies that adopt the postcolonial perspective to show how new hybridized forms of language have been forged as a result of "relexification," which is defined as "the making of a new register of communication out of an alien lexicon" (Zabus 1995,314). The phenomenon of "World Englishes" thus signifies the decentering of the English language into new hybridized forms, the emergence of which can only be seen as a result of contestation between the global and the local.

The Dynamics of Globalized Language/Cultural Formation

The creation of new hybridized forms of language actually has a long history due to the "relocation of languages and cultures" in the process of European expansion, as Walter Mignolo has observed in his article, "Globalization, Civilization Processes and the Relocation of Languages and Cultures" (1998).

In this article, Mignolo argues that language formation is closely tied to cultural formation, and vice versa. In the context of globalization, since cultural formation takes shape in the contestation between the local and the global, language formation is thus affected by such contacts and by the processes of localization. To put it in another way, the more globalized the English language has become, the more creatively localized it will be. Examples of the localization of English can be found in many studies that have appeared in the journals, *World Englishes* (since 1985), *English Today* (since 1987) and *Asian Englishes* (since 1998).

In his book, *English as a Global Language* (1997), David Crystal relates the dominance of a language to the domination of power: "A language becomes an international language for one chief reason: the political power of its people — especially their military power" (7). But, besides political power, there is another dimension that has to be taken into consideration. As Kachru has suggested in his article, "The Power and Politics of English":

> The study of linguistic power is not exactly of the same type as is the study of the form of power by the state, in the legal system, for religious commands, and so on. Linguistic power has to be understood essentially through symbols and manipulation of the symbols. On the other hand, the understanding of linguistic power is concerned with both "relations of power" and "relations of meaning".... (Kachru 1986, 123)

Hence, in any conception of power as the basis of a global language, what should also be considered is its use in relation to the production of culture, meaning and knowledge. It is power that has given English the dominant position in the world, but it is also this dominant position that has given English the power to dominate in the production of culture. In this relation between power and language, English is not a culture-free medium.

As discussed above, globalization brings about the breaking down of boundaries with regard to such traditional categories as nation-state, regional economy, and regional culture, in the sense that every different part of the world is interconnected with another. What one can see in the new world-order of globalization is interdependence, which is made possible by the various kinds of flow in economy, culture and language. Another effect of the various kinds of flow is to make "the local" come into contact more frequently with "the global," resulting in the formation of new sites of contestation in cultural production and language formation. Resulting from such new spaces of contestation, language contact and production in the global scale should be

understood as dynamic, shifting, and circuitry. This new conception of world Englishes will account for the language flow that corresponds to the econo-cultural flows in the context of globalization. Such a reconception will also account for the sites of contestation between the global and the local in the econo-cultural formations mediated by language. Hence, it also redefines the relation between, "world Englishes" and "global language."

The concept of contestation as a new form of cultural formation in the processes of globalization deserves closer attention. In the book *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary,* Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake have the following observation:

> The geopolitics of global cultural formations and local sites are shifting under the pressures of this new "spatial dialectic" obtaining between mobile processes of *transnationaliyption* and strategies of *localisation* or regional coalition. All along the Pacific Rim and inside the multiplex Asia/Pacific, outsourcing and immigration have created mingled processing zones and "global cities" of crosshatched and circular flow like Los Angeles, Vancouver, Taipei, Honolulu, or Seoul in which "all that is local becomes increasingly globalized, all that is global becomes increasingly globalized." Such regions, variously located, can virtually override national borders via the flextime flow of commodities, people, labor diasporas, images and information The nation-state, in effect, having been shaped into an "imagined community" of coherent modern identity through warfare, religion, blood, patriotic symbology, and language, is being undone by this fast imploding heteroglossic interface of the global with the local: what we would here diversely theorize as the *global/ local* nexus. (Wilson and Dissanayake 1996, 2-3)

What connects the diversified world are the "global cities" that serve as sites of contestation in the globalization processes of cultural formation. Here the point on the role of language in identity construction deserves closer critical attention, for the culture that unifies a nation on the basis of a shared language no longer exists in the age of globalization. Language identity in the global cities of the twenty-first century has become a site of contestation between English as the global language and the indigenous languages.

The Self as Linguistic Formation

The self is both object and subject in its process of formation. As an object, the self has been less a problem in philosophical and scientific investigations. As Foucault remarks in his essay, "The Subject and Power," there has been a

Western tradition in scientific and economic inquiries to make the human subject an object of study. In the Cartesian dichotomy of the self, the body and the mind are both objects that have to be ascertained of their existence vis-a-vis of a thinking subject. Hence, the self is objectified as a vehicle of thinking, without which there is hardly any proof of the self s existence. Such an approach makes the thinking subject a necessary condition and a means to prove the existence of the self, rather than to make it a central concern in the philosophical inquiry into its formation. In the Cartesian method, "I" is an active thinking subject, which has to be objectified into a physical "me." However, in such an approach, Descartes does not show how the "I" as a thinking subject becomes possible. He only shows its existence, but without delimiting its origin.

In later philosophical debates on the self, the focus is placed on the origin of the self as a thinking subject. In the continental European tradition, Kant regards the self as a cognitive subject. In the English philosophical tradition, both Hume and Berkeley actually do little to go beyond the limits of such a paradigm in treating the self as a vehicle of knowledge. Such an approach furthermore betrays a tendency to treat the subject as an effect of human cognition. In the classical Marxist view, the philosophical consideration of the self has not taken on any new turn except by concretizing the subject as an effect of class consciousness. Hence ideology comes into play in considering the formation of the subject. In general, the central concern of pre-twentieth-century debates is placed on how the subject comes into being as an effect of its knowledge of the world, which may be the physical world of nature, or the ideological world of social classes. Thus the self is projected into a knowing subject in its opposition to the otherness of the knowable world. By turning the logic of "I think, therefore I am" into the cognitive rationality of "I know, therefore I am," all philosophical considerations of the self before the twentieth century rely mainly on a paradigm which is based on the opposition between the self as subject and the world as object of cognition. This is the philosophical basis of the social constructivism of the self. All twentieth-century notions of the self along the line of cultural formation are further developments of this philosophical consideration.

The real turning point in twentieth-century inquiry of subject formation occurs with the discovery of the unconscious, due mainly to Freud's insights into the psychoanalysis of the self. In all considerations of social constructivism, what can be ascertained are only the effects of society on the self, but not the mechanism of how such effects have been internalized in the

formation of subjectivity. It is Freud's discovery of the unconscious and its formation that provides an answer for understanding the structure of the human psyche. In the later Freud, there is an attempt to make a connection between the psyche and civilization, and finally it is Lacan who succeeds in making this connection by examining language as a function of cultural cognition.

Social constructivism seems to be different from psychoanalysis in its approach to the formation of the subject, but actually they are different mainly in emphasis. Recent feminist theories of subject formation, especially in the French tradition, tend to integrate the two approaches in a similar vein to what Lacan has done. However, what is at stake here is that both of these approaches rely on frameworks that are based on the assumption of culture as a community that is stable and fixed, and hence there are boundaries. In other words, the study of the subject in the Western tradition has always been based on certain parameters that are limited to the cultural specifics of the West (Tarn/Tan, 2000).

Recently theories on the self have shown a close relation between subject and language. While Lacan sees in language the mediating function in the formation of the subject, feminist-psychoanalysts like Kristeva emphasize the voice of the speaking subject in defining the self. In this reconception of the self, the Cartesian dichotomy between the mind and the body is reversed to become a unity, which emphasizes the voice of the speaking subject in its self-definition through language. After all, "to think," or "to know," is not just "to think about something," or "to know something," processes of thinking and knowing must follow the rules of language which structures human perception.

The traditional Chinese self has faced numerous challenges since the May Fourth, first in the transition from tradition to modernity in the realm of morality, and second from the national to the transnational in cultural identity. Both challenges have to do with two processes in modern Chinese history: modernization and globalization. It is in these processes that the concept of a cultural identity constructed on the basis of the parameters of the nation-state has become problematic in defining the self. In examining the complex issues in identity construction in the age of globalization, Hong Kong presents a case that shows how the self is negotiated between languages and cultures. Subjectivity, problematized in modernity jürgen Habermas and understood as the psychological and emotional state of the subject in literature, has been discussed by many scholars as a prominent feature of modern Chinese literature that can represent its break from traditional literature (Lee 1990). In both Anthony Giddens's book *Modernity and Self-Identity* (1991) and Stephen Frosh's *Identity Crisis: Modernity, 'Psychoanalysis and the Self*'(1991), the self is seen as a reflexive project: "We are not what we are, but what we make of ourselves" (Giddens 1991, 76). Identity is seen not as "object identity" as discussed by the philosopher David Hume, and the self under modern conditions is an amorphous self, which is "always in the danger of being undermined, of withering away or exploding into nothingness" (Frosh 1991, 187). Self-identity "is not something that is just given, as a result of the continuities of the individual's action system, but something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual" (Giddens 1991, 76), which, as a coherent phenomenon, presumes a narrative.

In Erik H. Erikson's classic definition, the term "identity" covers both concepts of "self-distinctiveness" and "social/cultural-identification," which in the words of Erikson is a matter of "sharing certain characteristics with other people" (Erikson 1959, 110). The concept of identity thus covers both aspects of the self as an individual and agent, and the identification of oneself with others. In this sense, identity speaks of one's relation not only with one's self, but also with others. Hence, the discussion of identity and its formation must inevitably begin with the formation of the self, and in particular with the mediating function of language in such formation. At the threshold of the twenty-first century with all the traditional cultural, political and geographical boundaries reshaped and redefined, the self has become ever more unstable in its configurations.

The formation of global circuits of cultural and language flows inevitably renders the formation of the self as effects of these flows, in which the English language plays a crucial role of providing global parameters in redefining the locality of the subject. In all the communities and geographical areas that use English as a second language, such as parts of Africa, the Caribbean and Southeast Asia, the influence of English is evident not only in language formation, but also in identity construction. The business, educational and professional contacts between countries that use English as the first language and countries that use English as the second, or foreign, language have brought about the interflow of people and the creative use of languages in hybridized forms.

The Interlingual/Intercultural Self in Hong Kong Chinese Identity

Historically Hong Kong has been situated politically within the British Empire and as an important part of the British presence in Southeast Asia, but culturally Hong Kong is part of East Asia and China. This dual politico-cultural identity gives Hong Kong a double advantage of being a bridge between the East and the West, but it also puts Hong Kong in an ambivalent situation of identity construction as distinct from both the East and the West. The postcolonial development in Southeast Asia in the past thirty years has given Hong Kong the opportunity for similar development toward a regional centre of finance, and Hong Kong had constructed for itself an identity as "bridge between the East and the West," where people cross boundaries and mix. This was an identity with a sense of certainty and a sense of niche. However, the development toward globalization since the 1990s de-stabilizes the world, in which Hong Kong has established its place. The political change in 1997 has also put Hong Kong in new relations with China. This growing sense of uncertainty among the Hong Kong people is now better reflected in the image of Hong Kong as a "floating city," floating in the sense of being rootless and drifted by currents.

For the people living in a floating city like Hong Kong, identity is not just a matter of cultural politics, but also an issue of personal anchorage, cultural root, self-positioning and self-assurance. In contemporary Hong Kong writings, there is a similar quest of identity that begins with seeking its roots in Chinese civilization. In the play, *Long qing hua bu kai* (Dragon sentiments, 1997), there is the expression of strong sentiments toward China as a source of roots in identity construction:

> Ah-Gun: No matter how many times I have to go to China, I must find out where my hometown is. (Tarn, ed, 1999, p. 140)

The disillusionment with China urged many Hong Kong writers to look back to Hong Kong and seek their identity in the immediate present of the reality. Hong Kong in the late 1970s was marked by its rapid and large-scale socio-cultural development, with the Mass Transit Railway (MTR)[1] being built as a

1 MTR stands for the Mass Transit Railway, the first phase of which was built in 1977-79.

signpost of urban transformation from a "floating city" to a highly modernized society beyond the imagination of colonialism:

> What Hong Kong most powerfully suggests is that it is no longer possible to define a culture by the presence or absence of any or all of these markings. For the first time anywhere a vibrant culture has emerged almost entirely from within the elements of mass consumerism. The vast bulk of Hong Kong's population may have come from China bringing language, lore and learning with it. But what is going back to China is patently not what was extracted. It is something else altogether — an identity forged through popular culture. (O'toole 1997,18)

In the midst of this urban transformation was the rise of consumerism and popular culture, which is a sign of the emergence of many global cities as regional centres beyond the cultural boundaries of colonialism. In his critique of Hong Kong, Gu Cangwu has the following to say in his poem "Taiping Shan shang, Taiping Shan xia" (From Victoria Peak):

> Oh!
> Is this the city in which I have lived
> For thirty years?
> Were it not that someone mentioned:
> We should thank Emperor Dao Guang[2]
> I would have forgotten:
> This harbour
> Has a name
> The British Queen
> Victoria — Victory!
>
> The weight of a hundred years' history
> Crushes on my long-numbed brain
> Thunder clapping
> My stubborn illness that was healed a long time ago
> Is made to re-surge
>
> In the pain:
> I see that on an island and on a peninsula
> Numerous

2 During Emperor Dao Guang's reign in the Qing dynasty, Hong Kong was ceded to Britain.

Golden poles
have been forced in
Between golden poles
Underneath the golden poles
Spilling blood
The harbour
Dyed fishy red[3] (Gu 1982, 68-70)

In their quest for identity, Hong Kong writers began in the 1950s and 1960s with seeing themselves as a "floating cloud" (Gu Cangwu 1988, 371), drifting between cultural parameters represented by China the homeland and the open world outside China. Instead of living self-deceptively in the past with the great Chinese cultural tradition, many Hong Kong writers are awakened to the fact that they have to live in the present and seek their identity in the future. This transformation originates from the inner change in the writers, to whom identity change is a matter of change in subjectivity. The grand socialist dream in China of the 1970s, unfortunately, turned out to be a myth.

While what puzzled many writers was the confusion of identity among the Hong Kong people in the 1960s and early 1970s, in 1997 when Hong Kong was ready to be reverted back to China, there was still this unresolved puzzlement of identity as evidenced in the play, *Wu ren di dai* (No Man's Land, 1997) by Tsim Sui Man and Tang Shu Wing, in which two prisoners assume the role of clowns and perform in an absurdist manner to make fun of both the mainland Chinese and Taiwanese identities. Yet to the two clowns, who are supposed to be representations of Hong Kong people, identity cannot be a choice between Mainland China and Taiwan, and in the process of constructing a separate identity, they can only choose the "Diaoyu Islands" as their symbol — the symbol of a place forsaken by both Mainland China and Taiwan:

J: Everyone has his own world, which is like a ball that rolls here and there and bounces up and down, but it cannot exist by itself apart from us. When we don't move, the world also does not move, but once it moves, we have to move with it. In case we are not careful, the world may fall down and we cannot get hold of it. We may think of changing the world, but it is no longer the world that we originally live in. Even though we may still pretend that the world is

3 Translation mine, unless otherwise stated.

the original world we live in, it nevertheless is not the same. Sometimes the world that we play with may also not be the world that we belong to. Where then is the world that we live in? Who is the master of our world? (Tarn, ed., 1999, 96)

The world here that the clown "J" talks about is of course the location that the Hong Kong people associate with in their construction of their identity. This existentialist view of an absurd world, in which one is not one's own master, fully expresses the sense of helplessness in Hong Kong people's uncertainty about their identity and their future.

A look at Hong Kong drama presented in the year 1997 will also show that there is the quest for a postcolonial identity, as distinguished from that of Mainland China and Taiwan. In the play, *Fei ba! lin liu niao, fei ba!* (Archaeological bird, 1997), there is the description of Hong Kong in its quest of a postcolonial identity, which is not the colonial British, nor is it Chinese (Mainland and Taiwan), but distinctly Hong Kong:

D: The songs of the Che people attracted many, many more boats to this seaport. But when more and more people came to this place, the Che people suddenly disappeared with reasons unknown. It is like deleting a file in the computer, and no one knows what happened.

E: The whereabouts of the Che people has become a riddle since. Some people say they had gone to the sea; but the fishermen's descendants think otherwise and say that the Che people could not have been their ancestors: it should be that the fishermen had relocated themselves on the land and then later on they became the Che people. (Tarn, ed., 1999, 210)

By tracing the origin of the Hong Kong people as descendants from the Che clan, which had been deleted from the collective memory of the Chinese in recorded history, the play attempts to redefine Hong Kong people as distinct from the mainland Chinese or Taiwanese. The redefinition of Hong Kong people can thus be seen as an effort in constructing a new Hong Kong subjectivity. Yet, in the midst of the process of redefinition, there is a tone of sadness and helplessness in the face of China's take-over in 1997:

Father: ....
Da . . .da ... da ... da ... da ... da! Listen, this is the sound of burial. Let the gigantic wheels of the bulldozer rush toward us. Let them run over your ancestors, smash your homes and crush all empty memories. Time is up. A great monument is going to be set up on our dead bodies.

> Time is up. What are you digging here?
> Time is up, except for my body, what have you excavated? (Tarn, ed., 1999, 164)

The Sense of Place and Voice in Identity Formation

In the past thirty years of Hong Kong's history from the 1960s to the 1990s, there has been the persistent quest for identity shown in literary writings. The disillusionment with the political reality in China has led to an awakening among many Hong Kong writers that their future lies exactly in their immediate present. History is both remembered history and reality in the contemporary Hong Kong literary writings. In studying the cultural critiques and literary writings produced in Hong Kong in 1997, one can have a more thorough perspective on the complex interplay not only of politics, but also of cultures between the East and the West, the colonizer and the colonized, the Rightist and the Leftist, and the colonial and the postcolonial in the emergence of a Hong Kong identity since the mid-1980s. The writers' search for identity is actually a process of decolonization, in which the poet finds dissatisfaction with the British Hong Kong, the old exploitative colonizer. This pattern of identity quest has a strong personal tone in many Hong Kong writers, but it can also be seen as a general pattern in Hong Kong people's collective search for identity. In the Hong Kong play, *Archaeological Bird*, such a pattern of identity quest at the levels of Personal-National-Cultural can also be discerned. Through the process of archaeological excavation, the play attempts to show the complex relations among personal identity, location, family history, ethnicity and nation. In the scene, "Family Heredity: My Tail," which parodies the history lesson typical of Hong Kong education, there is an exercise in the form of "filling in the blanks":

> I am in my_____, I am about _____ tall, and quite _____ built, but I have rather _____ shoulders.
> I have _____ hair. My eyes are _____. I have got rather _____ face, with a _____ chin, a _____ nose. I have _____ lips, and I usually have a _____ expression. My face changes a lot when I _____. I have a _____ forehead: I like to think it looks _____.
> I have a Chinese tail, the most special thing on my body that I've got from the Chinese heritage.[4] (Tam, ed., 1999, 247)

4 The passage quoted here is given in English in the original.

The "blanks" that need to be filled in are the missing links between personal identity and ethnicity in contemporary Hong Kong. The linkage with Chinese heritage is seen in the play as a "tail," which not only appears to be redundant, but also makes Hong Kong people feel uneasy about themselves. In another scene, "A Game of the Tail," the quest for identity is parodied in the style of an absurd play as a game of children chasing after their tails (Tarn, ed., 1999, 244). In this sense, the quest for identity in the 1960s-1990s generation of Hong Kong people is seen as a sad, futile game. The use of English in this section of the play has the effect of lamenting not only the lack of a native language, but also ridiculing the reliance on English, the language borrowed from the colonial master, in the construction of identity. It points out the reality of Hong Kong people's being situated, linguistically and culturally, in between the Chinese and English languages.

In many Hong Kong writers' search for identity, there is also a shift of perspective from seeing the self as the "unhomed" drifting in the floating city of a *colonial Hong* Kong to considering the self as the "homely" living in the local bridging culture of *a postcolonial Hong Kong* (Bhabha 1992, 5-18). In the history of Hong Kong, the city has also been represented as a bridge between the East and the West. Now this is a bridge that gathers, and not just crosses. When Hong Kong is considered as "home" and when "the boundary becomes the place from which *something begins its presenting"* (Bhabha 1992, 5), Hong Kong writers have also found their own position in the emergence of a Hong Kong identity which, according to Homi Bhabha, is a bridge that *"gathers* as a passage that crosses" (Bhabha 1992, 5).

The depiction of Hong Kong as a location on which Hong Kong identity can be constructed is also found in the play, *Archaeological Bird*, which affirms that Hong Kong is a *place* with an identity. The play ends with an ambivalent voice between optimism and pessimism:

> Voice Over: . . . About our future, we need not have any fear!
> ... Do not give birth to children! Do not buy any property!
> ... After the return of sovereignty, we will then become masters of this land!
> ... Daughter, be careful with your boyfriends. Now Hong Kong people have become Chinese people!
> ... In this circle, so long as you remain nice, you will become famous!
> ... If we do not want to have any burden, let's not have it!
> ... Do not give up so soon. Give more time to other people, and also give more time to ourselves!
> ... Mum, do not listen to Dad for everything. If you find anything incorrect,

> you have to raise objection!
> . . . Do it well, I will support you!
> . . . We have to create Hong Kong here and now! (Tarn, ed., 1999, 270)

This voice is given in the play in the form of a voice-over, which has the effect of speaking out what is in the mind of each and every one of the Hong Kong people. The "Mum" is a feminized postcolonial Hong Kong, while the "Dad" is mainland China which is asserting its authority over the fate of Hong Kong people. One may also note that, like many other Hong Kong literary works written in the period, this is a Chinese play with many key passages given in English. The fact that the passage quoted above appears in English in the original points exactly to the complexity of interlingual/intercultural formation of identity, with the self-voicing its feelings of loss and uncertainty in a state of being caught in-between China and the West, as well as in the middle of a place which does not promise where it will lead to.

This voice given in English but set in a Chinese context presents an example of how the Hong Kong people assert their voice, which is that voice of an identity as cultural and linguistic hybrid. No single language can adequately express the identity of the Hong Kong people, who are caught in-between a postcolonial politics of self-reinvention and a culture of globalization. Viewed from such a perspective, the images of Hong Kong around the 1997 issue are reflective of a voice that attempts to question the social representations, in a desire to reconstruct the subject. In the study of identity, what is interesting is how identity as a psychological process can be discussed in terms of voice and discourse. Ian Parker has offered his view in this respect, as he says,

> The object that a discourse refers to may have an independent reality outside discourse, but is given *another* reality by discourse. An example of such an object is the subject who speaks, writes, hears or reads the texts discourses inhabit... a subject, a sense of self, is a location constructed within the expressive sphere which finds its voice through the cluster of attributes and responsibilities assigned to it as a variety of object. (Parker 1992, 9)

Hence, through the construction of a voice on the 1997 issue, the Hong Kong writers have actually voiced their desire to reconstruct the Hong Kong people as subjects caught in the envisioning of a postcoloniality that is threatened in its very lack of a sense of subjecthood. This lack of a subjecthood results from

a language mix that points at the interculturality and in-betweenness of contemporary Hong Kong identity.

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