

Slippery Bridge:
Chinese Diaspora & Narratives of Self and Community

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Abstract

This thesis examines the identities and the narratives of Overseas Chinese. Through discussing their history, I explore how the overseas Chinese came to imagine themselves as a community called 'Chinese Diaspora', which is ostensibly held together by the imagination of a 'homeland' in a faraway place in the distant past. By examining autobiographical texts, I discuss how the 'Chineseness' they maintained throughout the migration is founded upon such a virtual reality, and how this in turn is experienced by the individuals. Taking the narratives as something that both reflect and construct their identities, I explore the conundrum women in diaspora face in representing their own experiences of the community on the basis of Maxine Hong Kingston's memoir. Chinese women of diaspora have particular difficulties in claiming their individuality through narrations, especially because the community that sustains the 'traditional' Chineseness is rapidly transforming.

Sommaire

Cette thèse examine les identités et récits des chinois immigrants. À travers leur histoire, j'explore comment ils parvinrent à s'imaginer à l'intérieur d'une communauté qu'on appelle la 'diaspora chinoise', dont la force repose ostensiblement sur l'imagination d'une 'patrie', dans un lieu et un passé lointains. En prenant appui sur des textes autobiographiques, j'analyse comment les chinois immigrants ont perpétué leur « traits spécifiques » à travers une migration basée sur cette réalité virtuelle évoquée, et quelle a été l'influence de cette réalité sur les individus en particulier. Les récits sont entendus ici comme quelque chose qui à la fois réfléchissent et construisent l'identité; à partir de là, et en me basant plus particulièrement sur les mémoires de Maxine Hong Kingston, j'explore l'énigme à laquelle les femmes de la diaspora sont confrontées dans la représentation de leurs propres expériences de la communauté. En raison de l'évolution rapide de cette communauté qui est supposée conserver le côté 'traditionnel' des traits chinois, les femmes chinoises issues de la diaspora ont de grandes difficultés à faire valoir leur individualité à travers le récit.

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Clearly, these presences in my thesis are in no way accountable for the contents and styles of this thesis. Except, I cite here Umberto Eco's essay "How to Write an Introduction" (in *How to Travel with a Salmon & other essays*. New York: A Harvest Book, 1992) for the format and style of this acknowledgement.

Introduction

In beginning to write this thesis on the presence of the past in the narratives of Chinese diaspora, I too feel the need to travel back in time; to locate, in my past, the origin of my curiosity in this topic. Such a narcissistic exposition has now become the norm for the discipline, but it can also turn rather lengthy. And I can only ask you to endure this...

It begins with this scene in China in *The Memorial for the Nanking Massacre* a few years ago.

I'm standing at the doorway of a theatre. Inside, in the darkness, there is the crackling of film. It must have been one of those monochrome pictures with vertical lines flashing randomly. A sword would flash over a kneeling body, and the scene would shift to decapitated heads on sticks. You can tell from the rough cotton uniform that the killer is a Japanese soldier. And you would know that he has done more.

In the darkness, high-school girls are whispering and giggling. And I cannot take a step further into the theatre. I'm standing by the doorway of last part of the exhibition, and cannot complete it. 300,000 people, they say, died here at the hands of my ancestors. I am torn apart. Part of me urges me forward, to dare to enter the room, to declare the doorway to the past closed. But there is another part of me that holds me back, telling me to walk away, because I don't understand how these monsters can be any different from myself. I'm Japanese, too, probably about the same age as those soldiers, male. 10,000 girls and women were raped by Japanese soldiers, the panels outside the theatre say. I know that they are not me; I am not them. But would they know that? I scurry away for the fear of being feared.

Any movement across oceans or continents entails a magnification of national character. An anonymous Japanese student in Nanking merges with his precursor of more than half a century ago in this foreign land. The past is very much here among us, and we take on its shadows which follows us around. But in what past am I implicated? What past am I responsible for?

I was told when I was a child that ghosts cannot cross oceans. Maybe what they meant to say was that when you cross the oceans, either you can escape the past, or the past can escape you. "The Chinese I know," says Maxine Hong Kingston (1989:5), "hide their names; sojourners take new names when their lives change and guard their real names with silence". What does migration do to the past of individuals? What happens to the past in which we did not personally participate?

The past gets murky when we cross oceans. Earlier convictions of what we imagined to be our pasts are thrown into obscurity, either because others around us do not care, or because we no longer seem to have what is required for us to hold on to that image of the past. In this faraway place, the national guilt now condemns me to responsibility for the atrocities of World War II. In Japan, my familial legacy spared me from this guilt; but across the ocean, I know that I am more likely perceived to be that soldier in Nanking than an antiwar activist, or a victim of the Japanese-Canadian internment for that matter. One of my friends here cannot help, in seeing me, but to imagine a *kamikaze* pilot—as if there were any descendants of *kamikaze* pilots. Coming across the ocean, my ‘historical lineage’ got totally screwed up.

It puzzles me: if I were to become a Canadian citizen, would the internment camps become my history? Would I be a Japanese-Canadian *without* the history of the internment camps? It puzzles me also—though I recognize the danger of being misinterpreted as cynical or disrespectful—to hear that the Nanking massacre can be considered a *holocaust* for those Chinese people overseas whose ancestors had already migrated to Southeast Asia by 1937. Or how can the Canadian Jews whose ancestors were already in Canada by the time Hitler came to power in Germany claim the privileged position on the memory of Jewish *Holocausts* as victims? Can I visit Auschwitz and feel the rage a Jewish youth of my own age might?¹

Pasts not only possess us, but we are restricted to claiming only certain kinds of history as our own. The image of diasporas held together by this invisible string of memory has a certain resonance for me, both haunting and nostalgic, because of the salience of imagined pasts in their identity making. As Tu Wei-ming suggests, “the need to search for roots, despite the pervasiveness of global consciousness is a powerful impulse” for the Chinese diaspora; an obsession with roots is one of the central tenets of diaspora (1991:7). And here, in our remembrance of faraway places in the “mist of lost time”, I think, I found the lives of Chinese diasporas merge with mine. Nanking, therefore, has some sort of symbolic significance for this thesis, although I do not delve into it here so much. It has an iconic presence for our national identities, though we approach the history from opposite directions. Even now, Nanking demands certain conformity, or cautions me at least against making any comments that belittle the effort to bear witness to that atrocity. Unwittingly though it may be, I could easily slip into the image of those Japanese soldiers in Nanking half a century ago. A similar dilemma emerges in Chinese-American writer’s representation of her experiences which I will discuss in the second part of this

¹ I am thinking here of Jack Kugelmass’s article on North American Jew’s tours to the concentration camps in Eastern Europe. In this article, Kugelmass talks about the vicarious memories of these tourists, and how they discursively re-live the events.

thesis. Especially, I will explore the ambivalence of antagonistic relationship between individuals and their collective identity through the example of Chinese diaspora.

In Part One of this thesis, I will discuss the historical development of the 'imagined community' of Chinese diaspora. In particular I focus on the development of nationalism and the spread of the idea of 'Chineseness' both in China and in overseas Chinese communities. What is 'Chineseness'? What is the homeland that diaspora remembers? Or rather, how is Chineseness constructed, and how did overseas Chinese come to remember their homeland? Engaging with such questions, I hope to gain fluid and dynamic understanding of the notion of 'diaspora' and the national character of 'Chineseness'.

Arising out of this discussion is a question about the narrative of diaspora. Following a discussion of the diachronic development of this imagined community, I want to ask how the Chinese diaspora is discursively constructed contemporarily. Here, I want to explore how narratives of other diasporas, in particular the Jewish diaspora, may supplement the imagination of the Chinese diaspora. The appropriation of the word *holocaust* in referring to the Nanking Massacre in the dominant discourses of Chinese diaspora is one of the central topics here.

Such dominant representations of Chinese diaspora, however, do not necessarily express the experiences of all diasporic Chinese; individuals have their own stories, which may support or contradict the dominant narratives. But how are these individual narratives read and written in relation to the dominant ones? In beginning this introduction, I blurted out bits of my own story, but I must say, I sometimes wonder if this reflexivity business is not some kind of "white man's" ploy to entice our confessions. Will my relation to the Japanese past be taken as the reflexive account of the author of this thesis? Or will it be read as the 'experience' of Japanese students in Canada? The questions surrounding self-representations do not stop with my own paranoia. What are the ramifications of speaking about ourselves? In this treacherous world where any utterance is usurped as soon as it breaks into the public realm, can we articulate our own history and emerge as an individual with full humanity? Why do we even bother to speak about ourselves?

Some Western thinkers have suggested that self-disclosure is an essential passage to the understanding of ourselves. Others have dallied with the idea that self-disclosure might create an inter-personal self (cf. Rosenfeld 2000: 3). Because the "other is crucial in accomplishing individual consciousness", existing to the other through self-disclosure is an important element of self-engendering (Bandlamudi 1994: 462). But surely, we babble and chatter just to get to know each other, so we become less mysterious, so we are more understandable, or so we know that we are not alone in this world.

In speaking about her secrets, Maxine Hong Kingston says, “if only I could let my mother know the list, she—and the world—would become more like me, and I would never be alone again” (WW: 198). The list of her secrets grows into a sore in her throat, until one day it bursts forth in a recriminating tirade (WW: 197). But, as I will elaborate in Part Two of this thesis, its outcome is rather paradoxical.

Kingston is aware of the classical predicament of silent Others: shrouded in silence, unacknowledged, anonymous figures disappear into obscurity; never being asked but always *already known*, they remain mysterious, forever *inscrutable*, alien Others. Silence does not allow us humanity. So the silence must be broken, the argument goes. Furthermore, some scholars of suffering say that suffering requires a listener to *become*, and alleviated in turn by speech and the other’s acknowledgement (Das 1997: 70, Morris 1997).

But could it be that in speech, we exacerbate the loss we faced in silence? Declared to the world, secrets multiply? (Kingston 1979); shaped in speech, pain aggravates? In speech, we make ourselves at once placid and porous. Our innate narcissism overwrites our better judgement; we constantly risk ridicule and rejection, for what good such self-disclosures may bring.

Speaking about ourselves requires utmost attention to the subtle nuances and culturally mediated ‘*aesth-ethic*’ of individual-making. How can we be sure that our self-disclosure will have the desired effect? Animated re-enactments of past events and scenes; sombre recounting of buried memory—what tales draw us together and what wails pull us apart? Who can ‘pull it off’, and who will make a complete fool out of him or herself? What tales, under what context, make us humans in the eyes of other humans? This simple human inquiry, I think, is the gist of the question of intersubjectivity in self and narration.

Part II of this thesis involves a study of two autobiographies by the members of Chinese diaspora. My reasons for choosing the published autobiographies are twofold. Originally, I wanted to collect narratives by myself through life history interviews. However, having failed to do so because of time constraints and ethical indecisiveness (I did not know how to approach an individual with as predatory an intention as ‘extracting the life narrative’, especially when I did not have a sufficient time to get to know them), I opted for the published texts.

Autobiographical writings can provide us with expressions of the experiences of the author, consciously catered to the public. It allows us to gain insight into the perspective of the authors, as well as into the way the authors intend to represent their experiences to society. However, according to Sweeney, often “Western anthropologists spend much time reading everything written by other Western anthropologists about the Asian society they intend to study, but often devote little attention to what that society writes about itself” (cited in Jansen 1998:88). And

when the anthropologists are resorting to the expressions of the society, they tend to privilege direct observations or verbal correspondence over textual ones.

Unlike life histories collected through interviews, autobiographies are active reminiscences of their author's own volition; the author reflect on his or her own life in a seemingly private space, and having considered his or her own life story worth telling, come out and tell us this story. Thus, it might allow us to observe the dialogic element of the self that is not tied to the dialogue between the interviewer and the author. Because what I am interested in is the question of why we speak, perhaps written autobiographies are, after all, best suited to this study.

Through these autobiographies, I want to discuss issues of community, self and representation, in relation to individual experiences of Chinese diaspora. I begin Part Two with the assumption that there are prejudices against the cultural Others, in that we are often considered to be inscrutable. This lack of interest and failure on the part of the dominant society to recognize the individuality of the immigrants is what motivates the discussions in Part Two.

Intersecting with the question of individuation through narration is the relationship between the overseas Chinese community and self that is overdetermined by the collective representations. But what is Chineseness?

Imagining Chineseness in Diaspora

“I knew in that moment that being Chinese was some terrible curse” (Ang 2001:37). Ien Ang begins her essay, “Can one say No to Chineseness?”, with this quote from William Yang’s autobiography. By the end of Ang’s essay, Yang confesses that he has re-discovered his Chineseness; like a sublime revelation of his true self, at his first homecoming, Yang senses “the soil of the ancestors and feel[s] the blood of China run through [his] veins” (cited in Ang 2001:49).

Unravelling parallel to Yang’s life story, Ang’s narrative takes a slightly different path. As a descendant of *peranakans* (creolised Indonesian-Chinese) she agrees with Yang in that being a Chinese was “to all intents and purposes, a curse”—an indelible and venomous yet not easily identifiable mark (ibid.:40). So far removed from the historical ties with China proper, Ang says, *peranakans* have difficulties in claiming authenticity as Chinese; and yet, many *peranakans* do indeed identify themselves as Chinese. Were they to deny their Chineseness, the surrounding society would no doubt remind them of their ‘heritage’. Or, given Ang’s experiences with stigmatized Chinese identity in Indonesia (and later in the Netherlands and in Australia), the denigrating implications of being Chinese in alien societies might have been a constant reminder of her own Chineseness. But, where does “‘Chineseness’ acquire such persistence and solidity?” (ibid.:40).

People chronically embrace the argument of blood, or feel camaraderie for the “myth of consanguinity” (ibid.:50). Unlike Yang, who succumbs to the whispers in his ancestral veins, Ang persistently resists the seduction of primordialist arguments. She says,

we must resist the convenient and comforting reduction of Chineseness as a seemingly natural and certain racial essence; we must also be prepared to interrogate the very significance of the category of Chineseness *per se* as a predominant marker of identification and distinction (ibid.:50).

The intractability of categorical identity springs from two possible axes. From without, as Yang finds, individuals are embedded in the nexus of images and anecdotes of ‘racial markers’ and ‘corporeal schema’ (in Franz Fanon’s (1967) sense) existing in society, which *ascribes* them with their identities. From within, as Morrison (1991/70) gently insinuates, and as Foucault (1988) mercilessly reminds us, such identity insinuates itself as *prescribed* reality. Once declared, categorical identity becomes *a priori*; its denial smells of complicity; self-loathing perpetually

threatens. By saying No to Chineseness, does one end up saying No to oneself? Can one free oneself from that naturalized identity?

Foucault (1988) argues that in Western liberal societies, the process of 'subjectification' occurs via the requirement to be 'true to oneself' and through the particular organization of knowledge about reality, the source of which can be traced ultimately to a configuration of power (and historical contingencies). If, by chance, same can be said of the identity of overseas Chinese, how did this category of Chineseness in an overseas context emerge and become a ubiquitous category to identify by?

Her deep-seated suspicions of Chineseness led Ang to question the intentions of diaspora. Diaspora is at once an elusive, devious, and enchanting idea. If diaspora is said to represent something liberating, allowing us to move beyond the repressive confines of traditions and nation-states, then it is ironic that the idea of *homeland* has never ceased to haunt the imaginations of diasporas. Whether the Sikh's obsession with Khalistan; Zionists' passion for Israel; or the enduring hold China seems to have on its diasporas: while the degrees and extents may differ for each group, so called "imagining home away from home" continues to be the quintessential maxim of diaspora. And if this home, like Salman Rushdie says, no longer exists in the present but in the past, the sense of displaced *now-here*, or Gilroy's "syncopated...rhythm of living and being"(1993a: 224), seems to be the ever-present sentiment of diaspora.

...it's my present that is foreign, and that the past is home, albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mist of lost time... (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*: 9)

In the most basic sense, 'diaspora' refers to some sort of dispersion of people into multiple communities that nonetheless maintain a sense of horizontal camaraderie. Some scholars using the term "Chinese diaspora" use it in this cut-and-dried sense (eg. Mung 1998; Tu 1991). But such definitions fail to capture the subtlety and ambiguity of the diaspora concept. The current discourse of diaspora is deeply entangled with images and connotations that may elude easy definition; but unruly and capricious as the spirit of diaspora may be, nonetheless it evokes powerful sentiments whenever the term is used to refer to a group of people.¹ In this sense, nostalgic reminiscences of home and the cross-referentiality of narratives among different diasporas, too, are very important.

¹ There may be an objection to the use of 'diaspora' to refer to a group, because in a strict sense, diaspora refers to the practice or the act of dispersion rather than a community. But there seems to be an ambiguity on this point. On the one hand, some scholars take pain to use the adjective form 'diasporic' before the community when he/she is referring to the group. On the other hand, as Tölöyan writes, "...diasporas are the exemplary community of the transnational moment" (Tölöyan cited in Ang 2001:75), some uses it as a group name. In this essay I want to use the term 'diaspora' to refer to both the practice and the community it entails, and use 'diasporic' to refer to 'diaspora-like'...

In the following section I will briefly outline some of the contemporary discourses of diaspora that act as the stock of experiences, images, and narrative archetypes from which—unwittingly or consciously—the scholars and community leaders of the Chinese diaspora draw in conceptualising their own diaspora discourse. My purpose is not to demarcate diaspora; rather my interest is in how diasporas are dynamically construed, both as groups and as concepts. How does a group come to imagine itself as a diasporic group, and what does this imagination entail? How do the experiences of disparate diasporas factor into the imaginations of other diasporas, thereby shifting the concept of diaspora itself?

In trying to engage with these questions, I will devote the second section of Part One to a brief review of the history of the Chinese diaspora. Through this study a suspicion arises as to whether the prior existence of the notion of ‘Chineseness’, or the consciousness of shared national character that is retained through the process of dispersion—which seems to be at the heart of the diaspora concept—can indeed be assumed. Thus, in a very limited scope, I might venture to ask: How is the Chinese diaspora related to Chinese nationalism and the various nation-states with which they have come into contact? In other words, how did the emerging discourse of nationalism and the disciplinary power of nation-states take part in the construction of the Chinese diaspora?

The historical process of modernity, and especially the idea of modern nation-states, seems to have played a significant part in the development of the Chinese diaspora. At the same time, I suspect that diaspora is very much the product of narratives: in particular, the narratives of historical memories that hinge upon the temporality of journeys. Thus in the third section, I want to ask: what narrative forms and temporality take part in the narration of the Chinese diaspora, and how might they be related to the imagination of homeland and the contradictory ideology of rooted- and rootlessness? What kinds of pitfalls await them, when such narratives turn into iconic reincarnations of victimization, and what does it entail? Taking Tu Wei-ming’s (1991) article “Cultural China: The Periphery as the Centre” as the central axis, I want to explore the narrative construction of diaspora.

As these questions will be explored in more detail in the subsequent sections, I want to first delineate here, the contemporary discourses of diaspora and the passage of thought that motivated these inquiries.

On Diaspora

Several scholars have cited William Safran's characterization as the reference point of their own formulations of diaspora (eg. Cohen 1997, Clifford 1994). His list includes the following features (Clifford 1994: 304-305, Cohen 1997):

1. dispersion from some sort of original 'centre';
2. retention of collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland;
3. belief that they cannot be accepted fully in the host society;
4. an idealized image of the homeland and the vision of eventual return;
5. "commitment to maintenance or restoration of original homeland" (Cohen 1997: 23) and the present solidarity among the diasporic community that is maintained through the centrality of homeland in their consciousness.

While such a list is useful in organizing the ideas about diaspora, the diaspora concept is in no sense a category containable in a simple definition. New diasporas introduce fresh sentiments and problematics into the discourse of diaspora. And because the "writers and political leaders representing these people reinforce this classification [as diaspora] with their constant cross-references and comparisons to one another" (Cohen 1997: 31), the descriptions of new diasporic experiences influence the experiences of other diasporas. For instance, as Paul Gilroy reminds us, "the term 'diaspora' comes into the vocabulary of black studies and the practice of pan-Africanist politics from Jewish thought" (1993a: 205); beyond what has been proposed in Safran's list, the narratives of Jewish diaspora seem to have provided some kind of loose template for the imaginations of other diasporas. The Exodus story, for example, has been repeatedly appropriated by the African Americans in narrating their experiences of slavery as "a way of articulating their sense of historical identity as a people" (Raboteau cited in Gilroy 1993a: 207).

Given the primacy of the Jewish diaspora (and increasingly the African diaspora), some suggest that the criteria of a traumatic beginning—like the coerced eviction of the Jewish diaspora and the Middle Passage for the African diaspora—should be added to the criteria for diaspora (Cohen 1997: 23). This addition, however, leads to an obvious complication. Among the groups presently referred to as 'diasporas' there are more than a few groups that would not fit in this description. The Chinese diaspora is an example of such a group. Despite occasional emigrations motivated by wars and the shanghaiing of coolie labourers, the overwhelming proportion of the Chinese diaspora began as voluntary migrants engaging in (or aspiring to) trade or contract labours (Pan 1991). Does this mean, then, as some might suggest, that the 'Chinese diaspora' is an inappropriate use of the term?

Interestingly, according to Robin Cohen (1997: 24), the original usage of the term 'diaspora' by the Greeks referred not to the forced exile, but to the dispersion of people through conquests and trades. In this use it may be more appropriate to use the term 'diaspora' for Chinese overseas

than for Jews or African Americans. But such snobbish insistence on a rigid historical definition does not diminish the fact that the term is being used this way in practice. Perhaps out of respect for the antiquity of this original usage, Cohen adds 'voluntary migration' to the list as an alternative to coerced migrations (ibid.); and a seemingly ridiculous, null criterion ensues. However, as I will discuss later, its use as a rhetorical and political tool for normalizing the experience of diaspora through economy of representations still seems relevant.

In addition, Cohen adds two more criteria to Safran's list (ibid.: 23-24):

1. this 'homeland' central to diaspora imagination is not necessarily an entity that existed prior to their dispersal; it could also be an 'imagined homeland' constructed "*ex post facto*" like Kurdistan or Khalistan, or reconstructed like Israel, as Zionists re-imagined it after two millennia of absence from it;
2. a certain duration of time has to pass after the dispersion for the collective memory of the homeland to be consolidated and the group to properly become diasporic

These two points introduce interesting elements to the discussion of the Chinese diaspora. While there were several interruptions in and bursts of emigration caused by imperial bans, socio-political conditions and wars, the dispersion of Chinese overseas has been a more or less continual process. The enduring presence of the Chinese state (though in a conceptual sense, as I will suggest later, at the turn of the century, 'China' may have been an imagined homeland just like Khalistan and Israel), and of ties that overseas Chinese maintained with their homeland, seems to reinforce the sense that the Chinese diaspora is 'atypical'.

Having said this, diasporas seem to be such heterogeneous and fragmented groups that the project of identifying the typical diaspora seems to be a folly to begin with. Even the Jewish diaspora itself contains many different subgroups whose pasts deviate from the 'ideal typical' experience of diaspora: not all Jewish dispersion was coerced (Cohen 1997: 21); some Jewish diaspora (especially Sephardim after 1492) had more than one 'centre' (Clifford 1994: 305); and some doubt the claim that the Jewish diaspora was always held together by the longing for a lost homeland (ibid.). Furthermore, Safran's and Cohen's characterization of diaspora discussed so far does not cover the whole breadth of images and connotations that are, or could potentially be, associated with diaspora. The diaspora concept perpetually experiences "semantic contagion" (Hacking 1995), taking on different nuances and implications as new groups join the club and new experiences are articulated.² Meanwhile the shifting discourse of diaspora also reconfigures the experiences of diasporic subjects. In this chapter, I will look at the changing (Chinese) names used to refer to the overseas Chinese, and discuss how different names marked changes in consciousness as well as altering the consciousness and practices of people called by that name.

² as Clifford asks how the Chinese diaspora may be transforming the diaspora discourse (1994: 306)

As one of the most recent additions to these names, the English term, 'Chinese diaspora' (Chen 2001), now connotes successful business and 'flexible citizenship' (Ong's term), and has often become a source of pride in their identity (Ang 2001: 78).

There is a slightly different insight offered by Aihwa Ong, who suggests that there seems to be a "bifurcation" in the diaspora community between those who dwell on past sacrifice and victimhood, and those who emphasize the struggles of the diasporic experience (1999: 13). The latter often celebrate cultural hybridity, shifting positions and astuteness exercised in a hostile environment, while the former seems to use the immorality of past mistreatment as glue that holds together the present community. As biblical allusions made by African-American leaders in speaking about slavery helped create the image of a 'people', in the post-holocaust age, genocidal atrocities might provide a similar or possibly more powerful narrative that helps construct a cohesive diasporic community—in spite of the fact that holocaust has little to do with the traditional meaning of diaspora. In the following sections I ask how the metanarrative of Jewish diaspora may be reconfiguring the historical imagination of the Chinese diaspora. In particular I want to suggest a kinship between the increasing awareness, representations and remembering of the Nanking Massacre and Jewish Holocaust, and the rising discourse of 'Cultural China' and its teleological narrative form.

While such narrative and discursive shifts may be real in their effects, we must also remember that the experiences of diaspora entail more immediate costs and benefits. The loss of social networks and cultural familiarity are obvious examples of probable costs. A little more subtle—as Arjun Appadurai says of 'cultures' caught up in the web of representation and exhibition—are the taken-for-granted practices and dispositions (what Pierre Bourdieu calls 'habitus') that become "more an arena for conscious choices, justifications, and representation" (1996:44). As a benefit, Aihwa Ong suggests that mobility may have a "liberatory potential", allowing individuals to escape repressive traditions and customs (Ong 1998:15). But at the same time diaspora and mobility can also be restrictive. Using Foucauldian language, Ong asks how family, community, work, travel and nation-states discipline diasporic subjects (ibid.: 14). What are the effects of state 'governmentality' that are particular to the diaspora? How do different diasporas homogenize their experiences? (Ang 2001). In this chapter, I want to pay particular attention to the role of nation-states in constructing the Chinese diaspora.

The 'home' diaspora yearns for is not a house, a village, or a province, but a nation; it is the 'homeland' that is important. (Can internal migration within a nation-state be called a diaspora?) And if, as Cohen argues, "home is socially constructed" (1997: 105), how did homelands gain

such prominence in the imagination of diasporas? One obvious place to look at is the relationship between diaspora and nationalism.

‘China’ may have been an imaginary homeland for some of the diasporic nationalists at the turn of the century. Speaking about Sun Yat-sen, the founder of Republic of China, Cohen writes that “Sun’s key commitment was to maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity of the homeland...and a key means to realizing these ends was to mobilize the entire diaspora” (ibid.: 89). Several key Chinese nationalists at the turn of the century toured the overseas communities, eliciting the sense of unity and solidarity *vis-à-vis* the Manchu rulers of the Qing [Chi’ing] dynasty.

The Chinese practice of ‘Nanyang’ (South China Sea, or Southeast Asia) migration had existed for centuries. Yet this seemingly concurrent interest in nationalism and the emergence of diaspora may suggest that there are questions as to whether a diasporic consciousness existed prior to the rise of nationalism. Was there a ‘centre’ from which all overseas Chinese dispersed? Were there lateral connections between disparate diasporic communities? Did the aspiration of eventual return figure so high in the awareness of the Chinese living in overseas communities?

‘China’ as a timeless entity did not exist until recently. The word ‘China’, deriving from the Qin [Chi’n] dynasty of the third century B.C., was the name foreigners used to identify this political-territorial entity. But for the Chinese, the place name and people name, as well as the boundaries of their contents changed throughout history. Furthermore, the rulers of the Qing dynasty (1616~1911) were Manchu conquerors from the north, who, though Sinicized, were nonetheless susceptible to the nationalists’ xenophobia that targeted them as foreign invaders.

As Benedict Anderson (1991) suggests about states before nationalism, the power of the Qing government also radiated from the centre and dissipated near the periphery. Under this argument, the homogeneity and horizontal solidarity observable in the nationalist era did not exist in the dynastic age. Then how did overseas Chinese attain this coherence and unity? How did the outcasts of the Middle Kingdom turn into to the nationalist ‘*huaqiaos* [hua-chiao]’?

*From Outcast to Huaqiao:
Naming the Heterogeneity of Overseas Chinese*

Outcasts: The Nanyang Migration before the Opium War 1840

The mid-nineteenth century was a time of great transition in the relationship between China and the Chinese overseas. The humiliating defeat of the Qing imperial state by the British expedition force in the Opium War (1840) and China’s subsequent loss of confidence slowly

drew Qing mandarins' attention toward the overseas Chinese who had been dealing with the Europeans in Southeast Asia for centuries. At the same time, with the arrival of Europeans, the 'modern' ideology of government, foreign relations and commerce began to seep into China (Pan 1991:44; Wang 2000:45; Woo 1999:39). One of the results was the transformation of ideas about the relationship between the state and its subjects, which had a large implication for overseas subjects.

Prior to this period, the attitude of the Chinese state toward overseas Chinese was anything but amicable. At various points in history, they were referred to as 'Outcasts', and considered traitors to be beheaded upon their return to China. Traditional rhetoric went that "no loyal and law abiding Chinese would want to leave home" so anyone who left home was supposed to be only temporarily absent; otherwise they were "regarded by the society as unfilial sons and vagrants and by the imperial government as potential if not actual criminals, traitors and spies" (Wang 1976/92:3). Although much of such hostilities against the overseas Chinese derived from the Confucian bias of the mandarin government, its suspicions of Nanyang Chinese were not completely without tangible sources.

Centuries of pirate activity and illegal smugglings along the coast of Southern China were partly responsible for the imperial court's suspicion. From the Song period (960~1279) onward, the activities of Chinese traders in Nanyang had been on a steady increase (Pan 1990). In the last 150 years of the South Song dynasty, Nanyang trade saw unusual prosperity under the imperial government's encouragement (Wang 2000:17). Relative freedom of trade remained during the Yuan period (1206~1368) as Chinese traders sailed across the ocean as if travelling between the different prefectures of the Mongolian empire (Wang 2000:18). At the beginning of Ming period (1368~1644), China produced one of the greatest seafarers of the time, Cheng Ho, who led several expeditions (1405 ~ 1433) across Nanyang and the Indian Ocean, reaching as far as the coast of East Africa (Pan 1990: 3). Even after the Ming dynasty withdrew from their naval venture, the private Nanyang trade thrived as never before. However, as the Ming government grew increasingly insular, and began periodically to place bans on private trade to secure the monopoly of official trade, many of the coastal inhabitants turned to illegal activities and smuggling (Pan 1990:5-6; Wang 2000). Already deemed outlaws and villains, many of them joined the rank of what they called *wa-kou* (nominally, 'Japanese pirates'), and infested the coast of Southern China, endangering official coastline shipping (ibid.:8). The extent of this activity can be assessed from the fact that some of the later Chinese settlements in Nanyang were founded upon the pirates' and smugglers' lairs (ibid.:6).

The other source of unease for the imperial government was the fear of internal resistance from Nanyang. For centuries, Nanyang provided a place of refuge for aristocrats and warriors who harboured discontent with the government of the time. Regime changes often entailed the exodus of loyalists to the fallen dynasties. In 1644, when Ming dynasty fell to the invading Manchus, many Ming loyalists fled to Taiwan, the Philippines, and other parts of Nanyang. From these bases, they continued to launch resistance against the newly established Qing dynasty for decades (ibid.:8).

A particularly potent challenge came from a half-Hokkien trader called Koxinga. With the support of other Ming loyalists in Nanyang, Koxinga set up his base in Amoy, dominating Nanyang trade, and commanded fleets which put up a considerable resistance against the Qing government (Hori 2000:325). Fed up with their protracted struggle against Koxinga, and seeing that his success was linked to the supplies acquired from the coastal villages of Southern China, in 1661 the Qing government issued the Boundary Shift Decree. It banned all maritime travel and created a no-man's-land thirty miles wide along the coast by relocating the inhabitants inland and destroying their boats and houses on the coast (ibid.). There were two significant consequences to this decree: as intended, it crippled Koxinga's resistance, and he relocated to Taiwan to await a new opportunity (Hori 2000:326). At the same time, with the annexation of Taiwan in 1683, which put an end to resistance against the Qing dynasty, a virtual halt to Chinese maritime activities in Nanyang ensued, leaving the region wide open for European expansion (Pan 1990:7).

A slight relaxation in trade prohibitions followed in the early eighteenth century. But the subsequent decrees immediately stifled any hope of emigration or return by declaring that anyone returning from overseas would be beheaded as accomplices to rebels and enemies (Pan 1990:8). From this time on until the mid-nineteenth century, emigration was in principle illegal. This does not necessarily mean, however, that the relationship between China and the overseas Chinese communities was completely severed; a certain degree of ambiguity always remained in practice. Licensed trade with Nanyang persisted and Western merchants from Southeast Asia frequented the trade ports (Hori 2000: 327); coolie trade and the practice of "shanghaiing" started by the Dutch at the beginning of the seventeenth century presumably continued and increased until its peak in the mid-nineteenth century (Pan 1990:26); and no doubt other forms of illegal emigration continued as before (Wang 1991:23). Nonetheless, the imperial ban on emigration effected an abrupt decline in communications between China and its overseas communities. Many Chinese traders and labourers that were already in Southeast Asia became settlers; having lost any hope of return, they married the local women and formed creolised communities (Pan 1990).

After the Opium war was concluded by the signing of the Nanking Treaty (1842), many other European colonial powers followed suit and signed treaties with the Qing government. With these treaties opening up the borders to commercial activity and labour migration under European leadership, the imperial ban on emigration (which legally lasted until 1893) became virtually ineffectual (*ibid.*). From here on the emigration that was once a trickle became a “floodtide” which amounted to more than two million Chinese emigrating to Southeast Asia and to the West in the period between 1848 and 1888 (Pan 1990:43).

Increasing permeability of the border not only resulted in the intensification of contact with Europeans; as the Qing government shifted its gaze outward, its awareness of the overseas Chinese also increased. Before the mid-nineteenth century there were very few Chinese writings on Southeast Asia that talked about the overseas Chinese (Wang 1991:23). Partly, this was because the Chinese communities there were relatively few and small in size. But a large part of this representation vacuum can be attributed to the imperial ban on emigration. Many Western writings attest to continuing Chinese emigration during this period, yet, as long as the decree remained, the overseas Chinese were nonexistent for the Chinese officials. What followed was the invisibility of overseas Chinese in Chinese writings.³

The Qing government’s indifference to or ignorance of the overseas Chinese changed drastically in the years after the Opium war (Wang 1976/92:4). Especially when the British declared unexpectedly in 1844 that Chinese born in the Strait Settlement (Singapore and Malaysia) were to be under the British protection, the Chinese government not only realized the existence of a thriving overseas community; they became acutely conscious of the new modes of relationship between states and their subjects. No longer based on rule and submission, this “nation-state model” of citizenship was founded upon the idea of loyalty and obligation: that is, upon an expectation of protection, care and services provided by the state in exchange for the loyalty and support of its subjects (*cf.* Gidden 1987). Wang Gungwu (1976/92) puts it thus:

A great deal of confusion followed during which the Chinese government was made very conscious of the Chinese traitors who served the British and traded in China as British-protected subjects. Eventually it became clear that, whatever the Chinese might think about foreigners and the Chinese who worked and lived abroad, the formal references to them all concerned nationals, citizens and subjects, in short, categories of people for whom protection by government was expected (*ibid.* :4).

³ This is reminiscent of the disappearance of subaltern subjects in representations, as discussed by the scholars like Spivak(1999), or of liminality discussed by someone like Victor Turner (1979/69) or Liisa Malkki (1995).

In the years following these events, the Qing government tried to rectify their past neglect by extending their protective arms (within their capacity, which was in some sense rather limited) toward its overseas “subjects”, as they now considered them. However it appears it was a little too late. Benedict Anderson (1991:190) argues that one of the reasons Chinese communities in Southeast Asia never acquired the “cultural coherence and local political ascendancy” that colonies in the Americas attained was because of the absence of sustained and intense administrative ties with the home country. Beside the difference in the migration scales and the geographical conditions, unlike the Chinese mandarins, European metropole states brought “formidable bureaucratic and ideological apparatuses” to the colonies in the Americas (ibid. 189). Such institutions enabled immigrants in the Americas to imagine themselves “living lives *parallel* to those” people at home, who were “certainly proceeding along the same trajectory”, even if they had never met one another (ibid.:188). The sense of synchronic evolution not only permitted the metropolises to “impose [their] will on the creoles”, but also allowed the colonies to imagine themselves as communities “*parallel or comparable* to those in Europe” (ibid.:192).

Overseas Chinese communities never acquired such political ascendancy in Southeast Asia. Even when their numerical dominance in Singapore became the reality in nineteenth century, it was not the ‘synchronicity’ with their homeland, but the commercial interests under British protection that brought them together in this city. As a result, until the end of the nineteenth century, when the Chinese nationalists began to be active among them, overseas Chinese continued their ‘liminal’ existence; they either became more or less absorbed into local culture, or remained fragmented and were eventually “subordinated to the advancing Europeans”(ibid.:190).

The Splintering Practices of Nanyang Migration

Beside the absence of centralized administration, Anderson attributes the lack of cultural coherence and political strength among the overseas Chinese to the heterogeneity of the original population from which its members derived (ibid.:190). Unlike northern China where most people spoke some derivative of Beijing dialect, people from southern provinces like Guangdong⁴ and Fujian, where most of the migrants originated, spoke mutually incomprehensible dialects (Pan 1990: 14). Partly because of this, Nanyang migrations were often organized along the line of dialect groups. Hokkiens tended to migrate to places like Japan, the Philippines and Java, while Hakkas were numerous in West Borneo and Hawaii; Teochius went to Thailand, and Cantonese

⁴ There is still a great heterogeneity in alphabetizations of Chinese words in English literature. ‘Guangdong’, for example, is often written ‘Kwangtung’, and ‘Fujian’, ‘Fukien’. I tried to use pinyin system where possible. However, with some names, because either they had become familiar to English speaking audience in older spelling, or I could not find the pinyin spelling, I left it in the older form.

to North America (Wang 1991: 5). So my immediate questions are these: how did such heterogeneity develop and was sustained in the overseas context?

Division by dialect group emerged both through conscious political struggles and for historical and practical reasons. The presence of influential overseas Chinese individuals in the host country often allowed them to encourage their clansmen to migrate, or in some cases the collective pressure by the clansmen already there could persuade the rulers of host countries to favour the immigration of their own people (Pan 1990:17). In Mauritius, for example, Hakka immigrants' success in convincing the European rulers to give precedence to other Hakka migrants eventually drove the Cantonese migrants out of Mauritius and into Madagascar (Pan 1990:62).

Some scholars have suggested that Nanyang trade began as the extension of long distance trade within China (Wang 1991:5; Pan 1990). These traders and artisans maintained their connection with other such travellers from their hometowns and home provinces to facilitate the "successful lines of business for generations" (Wang 1991:5). Since Fujian and Guangdong were two of the major provinces that produced prolific traders within China, the Nanyang traders might have inherited the rather clannish and parochial practices of their Continental predecessors who saw no reason to regard the whole of China as a reference point for their identity.

Of course not all migrants were the sons of trading families, nor were they all traders. In fact most of the biographic stories in Lynn Pan's (1990) historiography, or autobiographical accounts like Tri Lam's (2001), speak of traders that sprouted from peasant stock, or labourers that went to work in tax-farms or mines. Even in these cases, divisive migration patterns continued for the simple reason that new migrants either sought or were sought by predecessors from their own home villages. Whether migrations were facilitated by the contractors, or (as in the case of Tri Lam's grandfather) individually planned by village youths inspired by the stories they heard, village connections and affinity among dialect groups provided the most natural avenue for migration (Pan 1990).

One of the ways the overseas Chinese communities might have reinforced this divisive immigration pattern was through clan associations. Often called *tong-xiang-hui* ("same-village-group") or *tong-xing-hui* ("same-surname-group"), such community groups were often organized by village of origin or common surname⁵ (Pan 1990: 18; for detailed ethnographical accounts also see Oxfeld 1993; Chen 2001). For new immigrants, such associations functioned as a landing pad, where they could expect to find aid to begin their lives in an unfamiliar territory. For older members of the community, it served as something like a cultural centre, where all seasonal

⁵ In Guangdong and Fujian many of the villages were consist of the people from the same clan. This meant that surname group and the village group was often the same thing.

Chinese festivities took place, and where they could expect to find themselves re-immersed in their 'Chineseness' (Pan 1990:18). Occasionally they also acted as village councils that arbitrated conflicts within the community, and they often served as the representatives for the whole community in dealing with the colonial governments (Pan 1990:112; Oxfeld 1993).

With such surname groups the requirement of common descent was not strictly followed, for if it had been, Pan (1990:113) reasons, some groups would never have acquired sufficient number to maintain a viable community in Southeast Asia. As in Pan's personal example, completely unrelated people with the same surname could be welcomed as a clansperson by such organizations (ibid.: 13). Despite their ostensibly primordialist outlook, these organizations occasionally followed more utilitarian and fluid conditions for their membership.

Even then, these association assumed imagined kinship; common dialects bonded them together; and the memory of home often reconfirmed their mutual loyalties. "The clan association was a home away from home" (Pan 1990:113). And if these clan associations brought harmony within, between these associations, members tended to act cold or reserved, if not outright bold and aggressive. Inter-clan rivalries and animosities were often quite rigid and real. Each dialect group in those two coastal provinces had some sort of prejudices against some other group; Hakka was pitted against Cantonese, and Teochiu against Hokkien (Trocki 1997:64). Intermarriage between these groups was virtually unthinkable in many Southeast Asian Chinese communities. And secret societies were often formed along these lines (Pan 1990:115). In Siam, the inter-dialect group rivalries were sometimes so intense that a mid-nineteenth century European observer commented that the Chinese there acted 'as if they belonged to rival nations' (Pan 1990:116). While colonial rulers found such inter-clan rivalries useful, these conflicts occasionally turned violent to the extent that the European rulers were grudgingly obliged to arbitrate disputes in order to avoid damages done to the running of the colonies (Pan 1990:115-118; also see Trocki 1997).

What seems rather paradoxical to me is that out of all these practices that seem to drive the fragmentation of overseas Chinese, Pan can still maintain that in the midst of alien environments that threatened their cultural survival, "the clan associations served as an oasis of *Chineseness*" (ibid.:113, my emphasis). Of course, as Chen Tien-Shi (2001:41) argues, clan identity and national identity are not necessarily mutually exclusive; one can quite easily claim simultaneously to be a Teochiu, Han and a Chinese. The extent of the divisiveness posed by such inter-clan animosities and its consequences for the identities of the overseas Chinese is hard to ascertain. But what is this insistence on *Chineseness*, if their social organizations never seemed to aspire to the pan-Chinese camaraderie?

Pan's suggestion that we see the Nanyang migration as an overspill of the southward movement of ever-expanding Chinese civilization may be insightful in thinking about these questions (ibid.: 9). "In Chinese terms Fukien[Fujian] and Kuangtung[Guangdong] are areas of fairly recent settlement by Han Chinese; they were cultural borderlands, places of in-migration by northern Chinese" (ibid.:13). Having arrived at these infertile and ragged coastal provinces, they continued on southward over the seas, expanding the horizon of their borderland. Along the way, their southward expansion always brought conflicts and assimilations (Li 1928:249). For example, as latecomers to this area (although the thirteenth century hardly seems late) the Hakka Chinese's struggle with the Cantonese continued well into the nineteenth century. In the war between these two groups from 1855-67, half a million people are estimated to have died and many of the defeated party—the Hakkas— were either driven into mountainous regions in the province or migrated to Southeast Asia to start a new life (ibid.:16).

Inevitable creolization with indigenous 'barbarians' resulted, as in the case of the Cantonese, in a population whose early twentieth century 'anthropomorphic measurements' (they used to do such thing back then) 'identify' them as closer in origin to the inhabitants of Indochina (Li 1928). In spite of this hybridity, or perhaps because of it, these people were particularly adamant about their Chinese identity (Pan 1990). Situated at the periphery of Chinese civilization, anxiety about the purity and authenticity of their Chinese identity was particularly strong in these provinces.⁶ For the people whose identity was so strongly influenced by the us/them, Chinese/barbarian binary, such 'miscegenation' was something quite repugnant (ibid.). As such they not only became particularly clannish; they became obsessive genealogists to prove how pure their Han lineage was (Pan 1990; Li 1928).

Most of these genealogies were said to be traceable to the mythical figure, the Yellow Emperor (~20 century BC).⁷ Although his prominence seems to have fluctuated from period to period, the Yellow Emperor is an enduring figure in Chinese cosmology. The Yellow Emperor is often considered to be the progenitor of all Chinese, as well as the founder of the Hua-Xia civilization, which originated in mythic time and stretches until the present (Li 1928; Liu 1999; Pan 1990).

Of course, who this 'Chinese' consists of was a continually debated question; the usual terms like 'fluid', 'improvised', 'ambiguous', and 'negotiated' that contemporary theorists of identity often use are also applicable here. The boundarist identification of Us versus Barbarians, defined

⁶ Bhabha's suggestion to see the nations from the periphery propels my fascination with this point, but so far I am not sure what to do with it. I will try to come back to it in the later section.

⁷ 'Yellow Emperor' in direct translation, but I am sure this had no racial connection, or derogatory connotation 'yellow' seems to have in English language

by the Hua-Xia civilizational discourse, was always there, implicitly defining the Chinese group (Chen 2001). And the primordial identification in terms of language (at least in script), common descent from the Yellow Emperor, and the enduring territorial polity which unified them were at least assumed (Anderson 1991). While these identifications potentially elicited the strong sentiment of kinship, one crucial factor remained missing: the name.

As Li Chi (1928) claims, until recently Chinese had never had a name of their own.⁸ In the overseas context, people of different eras referred to themselves using different names, such as Hanren, Tangren, or Huaren (Hori 2000:54). Even the name of the country changed each time there was a regime change. Hori Norikazu (2000) suggests that even the term 'Middle Kingdom', which is often used to avoid the West-centric term 'China', kept its original meaning as 'the city-state at the centre of the domain' until some time during the Qing period. As David Yen-ho Wu argues, "Chinese people and Chinese culture have been constantly amalgamating, restructuring, reinventing, and reinterpreting themselves; the seemingly static Chinese culture has been in a continuous process of assigning important new meaning about being Chinese"(Wu 1991:162).

The role of the Yellow Emperor was not completely unrelated to the shifting and ambiguous boundaries of China and the Chinese. The idea was that common descent could be established through tracing genealogical records and the encyclopaedia of surnames. But even if, on paper, one could trace one's surname back to the Yellow Emperor, such a link was nothing so immutable; many Sinicized 'barbarians' adopted these surnames in the past, rendering the genealogies unreliable markers of ethnic purity. However, this uncertainty was persistently ignored by both the genealogists and by the people (Pan 1990). The political uses of the Yellow Emperor also required ambiguity and a deliberate forgetting of certain historical facts. The nationalists of the twentieth century, for example, initially used the Yellow Emperor as an icon of anti-Manchu struggle and considered him the ancestor of Han 'race', only to declare after the revolution of 1911 that the Yellow Emperor was in fact the forefather of all *Zhonghua minzu* (Chinese race) which at the time included Hans, Manchus, Mongols, Tibetans and Xinjiangese (Liu 1999:608-609).⁹ Throughout history, China has produced several non-Han dynasties. These dynasts, while they did not necessarily claim their descent from the Yellow Emperor, nonetheless performed the ritual ceremonies at the Yellow Emperor's mausoleum in Shaangxi province in order to enhance the legitimacy of their rule. Such precedence might have allowed the twentieth century nationalists to transform the Yellow Emperor into the icon of Pan-Chinese nationalism.

⁸ Of course Chinese is not an exceptional case. Anderson's discussion of German identity also resembles to this.

⁹ People's Republic of China, expanded this definition to include 'Han and fifty-six minority ethnic groups'.

In the summer of 2001, I happened to visit this mausoleum by fluke. Among the gigantic trees, and the inevitable gift shops, there were several stone tablets with engravings on them. On these plaques, one could find the names of China's top leaders—Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kaishek, Mao Zedong, and even Jiang Zeming—with messages pertinent to the political struggles and incidents of their times. Some spoke of anti-Japanese resistance, and others of nation building. What caught my attention, though, was not one of these magnificent stone plaques, but one of the most recent exhibitions assembled in commemoration of the repatriation of Hong Kong in 1997. The message struck me as paradoxical at the time: it celebrated the reunification of the Chinese race (of course) advanced by this event; but at the same time it took particular pain to acknowledge and call for the support and loyalty of the overseas Chinese.

According to Liu, some present-day overseas Chinese “nostalgically regard the Mausoleum as a spiritual support linking them to their homeland and ancestral kin” (1999:610). No doubt such sentimental attachment to the Yellow Emperor was facilitated by the propaganda of the state to reclaim the overseas Chinese under its influence (*ibid.*). Nonetheless the re-identification with the Yellow Emperor must have required a considerable willingness on the part of the overseas Chinese to suspend their cynicism and disbelief, especially in the overseas context.

But before the time arrived for the tide to shift toward their consolidation and crystallization as a group, the Chinese overseas community remained disaggregated and fragmented; it seems there was little reason for coherence or unity among the overseas Chinese before the turn of the century. Enhanced by inter-clan hostilities at home, and sustained by intermittent and splintering migration patterns, the divergent tendency of Nanyang migration seems to have pervaded the diffuse and fractured ‘imagined community’ of overseas Chinese. Then how did such a group come to imagine themselves as nameable? And how did their environment become ripe enough for the overseas Chinese from the Southern hinterland to come to yearn for, as for their home, the catacomb of a dead emperor in the northern ‘heartland of the Chinese civilization’?

Nation-States and Naming: Changing Politics and the Making of Huaqiao

Once again we return to the mid-nineteenth century, the cataclysmic period in the aftermath of the Opium war, and the dramatic changes that took place then. From the mid-eighteenth century on, the Qing imperial government began to show its increasing unease about the activities of the Europeans in the vicinity. Following the commercial activities of the Dutch, English merchants began to arrive in Chinese ports in earnest in the mid-eighteenth century, as the demands for Chinese products like tea and ceramics increased in their home country (Hori 2000:327-328). The Qing government resisted this increasing Western incursion by restricting their trade port to

Canton, and allowing only a handful of licensed merchants to monopolize all dealings with the Europeans.

Meanwhile, the industrial revolution was coming into full swing in Britain; and as the mercantilist monopoly of the East India Company finally gave way to liberal capitalism, the industrial capitalists began to mount pressure on the British government to dissolve the restrictive trade barriers of China (ibid.:329). Given this context, in which the Opium War broke out, the 'coming of the West' had a particularly "decentring" effect on China, not only because it was (allegedly) experienced as a great humiliation, as Tu Wei-ming (1991) contends; as they increasingly became embroiled in worldwide changes in governmental rationality, it also transformed the idea of Chinese citizenship and institutions.

The "Governmental state", as Foucault (1991:104) calls it—beginning in the late eighteenth century Europe, the idea of government started to coalesce around its *population*. Traditionally, the object of the state was considered to be its territoriality. Borders were the frontiers where the sovereigns' powers dissipated, or came into conflict with other sovereigns (Gidden 1987:88). Territories united under one sovereign could include a population with little sense of unity.¹⁰ But starting in late nineteenth century Europe, borders as clear-cut demarcations of territory between exclusive states began to be pervasive, along with the idea that such borders ought to reflect "greatly expanded coherence of the state as an administrative unity" (ibid.:90). 'Natural frontiers' began to merge with the linguistic and cultural boundaries of populations (ibid.), and the management and welfare of those populations became the object of the government (Foucault 1991). This meant that the consciousness of individuals who constitute the population became of utmost interest to the government (ibid.:100). New governmental rationality required not only that the subjects be "aware of their membership in a political community and of the rights and obligations such membership confers" (Gidden 1987:210); subjects must be willing and quite 'naturally' consent to becoming a productive member of the society (Gordon 1991:16). But as the limitations to a state's knowledge limits its attempts to manage and coordinate the population (ibid.), governmental technologies like statistics, census and political science, along with the establishment of various governmental apparatuses, became the obsession of nation-states.

Having defeated the Qing imperial army, the British did not appear to be so interested in conquering China, but seemed quite content with keeping themselves to commercial activities in the newly expanded treaty ports. Yet the impact of British presence on society and the world view of the Chinese at the time were anything but negligible: their domination seemed insidious and

¹⁰ Although these discussions were based on historical reality of Europe, I think more or less the same can be said about generations of Chinese empires.

their cultural insolence, persistent and insistent. Beside the secession of Hong Kong, their treaties led China to compromise its sovereignty in at least two ways: 1) the Qing court virtually surrendered their tariff autonomy (Hori 2000:329); and 2) it granted the Western powers the right to set up their own court on Chinese soil, allowing them to extend their jurisdiction over their own subjects in China and sometimes even over Chinese (Woo 1999:39). What was particularly disconcerting for the mandarins of the Qing court was the assertion of the inferiority of Chinese juridical system ('khaki justice' as Max Weber called it), which supposedly justified the imposition of 'superior' foreign law (Woo 1999:39).

In the past, China had experienced numerous invasions by foreign powers. It had seen outright conquests, subjugations and humiliations under them. Yet, whether it was the Mongols, Manchus or Khitans, the dynasties that ruled over China were eventually Sinicized: they adopted the bulk of mandarin bureaucracy; they accepted, through voluntary 'acculturation' (so the argument went) the superiority of the Chinese culture (Tu 1991); and they were eventually assimilated into the continuous narrative of terro-centric Chinese history which considered them not as "Conquest Dynasties" but as one of their own Chinese dynasties (Hori 2000:254). On the other hand, this new stock of invaders, the Western powers, not only seemed completely unassimilable, but demanded with unwavering certainty recognition of their cultural superiority. In this sense, as Tu Wei-ming (1991) argues, the incursion of the Western powers not only came with political and military domination, but also domination in cultural forms, shattering in the process the previous Chinese conviction of its own superior political culture.

Tu's perspective on this whole series of events is essentially a 'cultural' and sentimental one. With a sleight of hand, Tu bridges the span of half a century to link the Opium War to the iconoclastic May Fourth Movement of 1919, attributing the urgent demand for a radical transformation of Chineseness to the 'backwardness' China's intelligentsia was made to realise through the Western incursion (Tu 1991:5). (I shall return to this in a later section.) But judging from the insights offered by Anderson (1991) and Ong (1999), the radical shifts in the ideas about Chinese identity—especially as far as the consolidation of the categorical identity is concerned—do not seem to be merely elicited by an 'inferiority complex' (as Tu seems to suggest); rather, the new techniques of governance and ideas about subjects that began to proliferate around this time were also instrumental in this change. Especially in the overseas context, at the crossroads of expanding (colonial and non-colonial) host states and at the ambivalent margin of China's swelling national consciousness, these changes may have played a significant part in the construction of Chinese identity.

As I mentioned earlier, the idea of ‘protection’—that the subjects of a nation are something to be protected—was introduced into Chinese political thought by the British in the aftermath of the Opium War. Increasingly from the 1860’s on, the elites of the Qing government became aware of the amount of attention Western governments paid to their overseas subjects (Wang 2000:45). Having inadvertently joined the “family of nations” (combined with the opportunist motivation to enlist the wealthy overseas Chinese to finance the dwindling imperial coffer), mandarins of the imperial court began “to show concern for the fates of Chinese under foreign jurisdiction” (Wang 2000:45-46).

One significant change came from the establishment of Chinese consulates in the countries where Chinese migrants had gone. Slowly but surely, these consulates began to exercise influence over overseas Chinese. Given the decreased power of the Qing government at the time, little could have been done in the way of protecting and improving the conditions of migrants (Wang 1991:24). Yet they still tried: they attempted to oversee the coolie trade (Duara 1997:43), negotiated with host countries for better contracts and conditions of migration (Wang 1998), and in a wider sense, began to organize overseas Chinese into communities loyal to the imperial government. Several institutions established under the leadership of consuls aided in this development of collective consciousness among overseas Chinese. The first Chinese newspaper press in Southeast Asia was established by the initiative of the consul in the Straits Settlement, and began to disseminate messages intended to foster pride in Chineseness (ibid.:25). Eventually modern Chinese schools also began to emerge in Southeast Asia (Reid 1997:52). Some of these schools used Mandarin as the medium of instruction rather than the dialects of the migrants, likely as a part of a concerted effort to nurture a sense of pan-Chinese consciousness.

Another set of changes came in the form of conspicuously increased references to overseas Chinese; the mandarins of the Qing government began to use the terms like *hua-min* (Chinese people) or *ren-min* (citizens, or people) to refer to Chinese inclusively, and *hua-shang* (Chinese merchants) and *hua-gong* (Chinese labourers) in referring to the overseas Chinese (Wang 1976/92:4). Not only did these terms reflect a shift in the government’s attitude toward its subjects; according to Wang (76/92), this recognition of overseas Chinese implicitly demonstrated the willingness of the Qing government to accept its responsibility for their protection. This change in the Qing government’s attitude, in turn, virtually nullified the ban on emigration (ibid.). An abundance of names referring to the Chinese abroad emerged around this time. With the subsequent introduction of *huaqiao* as the ubiquitous term referring to overseas Chinese of every trade, some sort of consolidation of word use began to take place, followed by much wider recognition of this common identity.

The term originates in the Southern-Northern dynasty period of the fourth to sixth century, when it was used to refer to northern aristocrats who were forced by foreign invasion to abandon their homes and live in exile in the South (Wang 2000:47). As such, the name bore a romantic ring of nostalgia for home and the ephemerality of the present. Thus when the term was hijacked in the late nineteenth century—and especially after the lifting of the emigration ban in 1893 when it became more commonly used and its connotations crystallized—the term maintained a similar spirit. It stressed the ideal that all overseas Chinese were sojourners, who were expected to return home eventually: and this home, the rhetoric continued, was no longer the provincial home villages from which most of them sprouted, but the whole of China, and Chinese civilization (ibid.).

Several decades before the Chinese government began to ‘invent’ and disseminate categorical names referring to the overseas Chinese, in Southeast Asia, the same population was being moulded to fit another name through the newly acquired passion of the colonial states: the census. Anderson (1991: 164-166) observes that the mid-nineteenth century saw several distinguishing shifts in colonial census making: 1) the census categories turned exclusively racial; 2) smaller ethnical categories were subsumed by larger racial categories (i.e. ‘Chinese’ instead of ‘Cantonese’); and 3) the eradication of ambiguous identities became the obsession of the census makers. For example, previously, Chinese in Dutch Indochina were identified by the more ambiguous categorical name “foreign Orientals” (ibid.:122), or by occupational categories like “*sangle*” (originally, ‘trader’ in Hokkien) (ibid.:168). But by the early nineteenth century, these names were replaced by the racial category, *chino* (ibid.:168).¹¹

The condensation of the identity names was eventually followed by a colonial tendency to dissolve the practices that encouraged internal fragmentations among the overseas Chinese. In a comparative study addressing the roles of Jews and Chinese in the early modern transformation of economy and states, Anthony Reid (1997) argues that, working as a middleman between the rulers and the indigenous populations, these two groups were instrumental in the expansion of states during the nineteenth century. In particular, the Chinese in Southeast Asia were “economic arms” of the government as tax farmers or contracted miners (ibid.:45 & also Pan 1990:30). Among both the colonial and non-colonial governments in Southeast Asia, the practices of contracting out licence and monopoly over certain commercial items such as opium and mineral rights to Chinese headmen had been common since the seventeenth century (Trocki 1997; Reid 1997). These practices had two opposite effects: on the one hand, they allowed the government to rule and collect taxes from remote areas of the domain where the states’ power dissipated

¹¹ Anderson argues that “the colonial state imagined a Chinese series before any Chinese”(1991:184)

(thereby expanding the state control); on the other, they aided the development of syndicates that often ignored colonial boundaries but were instead adamant about other boundaries, like the ones between different dialect groups (thereby compromising the state's total control). Toward the end of the nineteenth century, however, the states enriched and strengthened by such a system began to take over the roles of these syndicates. A New bureaucracy began to bypass the headmen, collecting the taxes straight from the farms, and started to rule the Chinese subjects more directly (Reid 1997:50). From then on, the Chinese in these Southeast Asian countries were ruled less as Chinese belonging to particular syndicates or dialect groups, and more as Chinese who fell within a particular tax bracket under colonial rule (Anderson 1991:169).

At the same time, with the changes in the colonial circumstances, what Wang Gungwu (1998) calls an “upgrading” of the migrants was taking place. By the end of the nineteenth century, with the diminishment of uncultivated hinterlands, work for menial labourers was decreasing in many countries (including the United States and Southeast Asian countries), and was being replaced by jobs requiring skills and education (Wang 1998:18). Host countries began trying to secure a quality labour force by creating a hierarchy of migrants. Things like health, education, capital, and entrepreneurial potentials became attributes on the basis of which host countries regulated immigration. This trend continued and in the later years, manifested as the differentiation of contract labourers who were “expected to leave after the end of their contracts” and skilled immigrants who were expected to assimilate and become permanent residents, or even nationals, loyal to the host country (ibid.:17-19).

The sending country, on the other hand, had little means to regulate the quality of the emigrants. By ensuring the health and quality of the emigrants, the sending country did attempt to arrange better contracts for their subjects abroad. But, such upgrading by the sending country sometimes ended up encouraging their skilled subjects to assimilate and settle in the host country (ibid.:18). Thus, ironically, by extending the protective gesture to the overseas population, the sending nations also increased the risk of losing these populations to other nations altogether.¹²

The alternative path taken by the Chinese government to ‘upgrade’ their overseas subject, according to Wang, was through more symbolic means (Wang 1998: 17). The different names it began to use in referring to the overseas Chinese may be thought of as one such upgrading (ibid.). In particular, *huaqiao* was an especially powerful label, which implicitly claimed the loyalty of all overseas Chinese by naturalizing their sojourner identity (ibid.). There was a sort of

¹² If the object of the state is no longer territory or things, but population, the idea that a nation can lose its citizens by caring for them seems to demonstrate its contradiction.

competition between different states for the loyalty of the Chinese subjects at this time.¹³ If Southeast Asian states tried to counter the Qing government's new interest in the overseas Chinese by allowing the migration of family members, and thereby encouraging settlement (Pan 1990:73), the Qing government sought to make Chinese identity more attractive by giving honorary official titles to prominent merchants in exchange for investments or philanthropic activities (Wang 1998:18; Duara 1997:44).

Coupled with these title-givings were a revival of Confucianism and a rise in investment opportunities for overseas Chinese after the New Policy Reform of 1902. Ever since the Boxer Rebellion was quenched by the coalition of Western and Japanese imperialist forces in 1900, foreign intervention in the Chinese economy was intensifying. Title-giving to elicit investment from overseas Chinese was a measure to compete with the foreign monopoly in industries such as mining and railroads (Duara 1997:44). Meanwhile, as a part of the effort to reverse the trend among overseas Chinese of assimilating into indigenous or Western culture, imperial consuls promoted the Confucian revival movement in Southeast Asia; they hosted Confucian ceremonies or literary contests in order to foster the increasing interest of overseas Chinese in Chinese culture (ibid.:45; McKeown 2001:88). But above all, title-giving was what reinforced the type of Chineseness advanced by the imperial government, which was an upper-class, or "gentry model" of Chineseness. As such, the titles frequently appeared in *huaqiao* newspapers, endorsing the local leadership, as well as constructing the ideal typical figure of *huaqiao* as "gentry-merchants" (Duara 1997:44).

The second half of the nineteenth century saw an intensification of relationships between the states and their subjects.¹⁴ Through the inventions of categorical names, obsessive classifications, and the establishment of governmental apparatuses servicing the population, various nation-states that overseas Chinese encountered made a concerted attempt to remake them into more legible¹⁵ and 'horizontal' modern subjects. In this sense *huaqiao*, as the product of a series of state interventions in the nineteenth century, may be called a *national* categorical identity with indelible marks left by the disciplinary power of various nation-states. But what are the contents of such diasporic identity? Toward the end of the nineteenth century the hegemonic leadership of

¹³ In the United States, this shift in trend came around in 1882 when the Chinese Exclusion Act prohibited all entries of 'Chinese labourers'... This reversal of trend came as a result of the decrease in demand for the labourers. With the completion of railways, the 'manifest destiny' of their drive westward came to a sudden halt, and along with it, the need for the labourers (Takaki 1998).

¹⁴ (In speaking about the development of modern government in the West, Foucault has argued that the states' concern became simultaneously to 'totalize' and to 'individualize' (Gordon 1991: 3). Across the globe in China and in Southeast Asia where many of Chinese migrants went, similar trend seems to be observable since the Opium war.)

¹⁵ by 'legible', I mean something more friendly to categorization and management.

the Chinese state began to dwindle and different nationalist factions started advocating different visions of 'Chineseness' among the overseas communities. Ostensibly, the nationalist activists were all preoccupied with the 'loss' of Chineseness among the overseas population. But the question arises as to what this 'Chineseness' they had allegedly lost *was*. Ien Ang argues that any object of interest—like 'Chineseness'—is not an innocent reflection of reality, but comes to exist under the directed gaze and the inquiry about what it is (2001:39). If this Chineseness was invented, or at least refashioned, in the overseas context, what can we say about the centre-periphery relationship between the homeland and the diaspora? Was 'homeland' for the Chinese diaspora an 'imaginary homeland' constructed *ex post facto* in the midst of nationalist upheaval at the turn of the century by disgruntled and homesick exiles and sojourners? To what extent did overseas experiences contribute to the nationalism at home? What is the relationship between nationalism and diaspora?

Huaqiao & Nationalists: Imagining 'Chineseness'

At a first glimpse of the history of nationalist movement in China, the often-reiterated rhetoric that the overseas communities were the breeding ground of Chinese nationalism seems quite plausible (McKeown 2001:90). Whether we take reformists of traditional school like Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, or upstart republican revolutionaries like Sun Yat-sen, Yang Chü'yün, or Huang Hsing, at one time or another they all based their activities in overseas communities. Some of them were exiled there. Many were sent there on 'consciousness raising' trips, preaching nationalism, and trying to raise funds for the revolutionary activities at home. The nationalist connection with overseas communities was not one-way thing either. Particularly the early revolutionaries were dominated by individuals with prior overseas connections. They had either lived in overseas communities themselves, or had family members that lived abroad; some had travel experience, foreign schooling, or lived in Treaty Ports or Hong Kong (Wang 1991). This intimacy between nationalist revolutionaries and the *huaqiaos* has sometimes led scholars to seek an origin of the revolution in contacts with foreign traditions (Hsüeh 1971).

Sun Yat-sen, the nominal founder of the Republic of China, also began his overseas experience at an early age. Born to a peasant family in Guangdong province, Sun Yat-sen moved to Hawaii in his early teens to live with his brother who had been working there. He attended a missionary school, and upon completing his studies he returned to China to begin his medical studies in Hong Kong and Canton. In 1894, he began his political career by presenting a reform plan to the government. Although his reform idea slipped by without notice, he was given an official endorsement to raise funds abroad for agricultural reform. With this mission in hand, he

once again set off to Hawaii. There, within the overseas Chinese community, he formed Xingzhonghui (Revive-China society), which is considered the first of the Chinese revolutionary organizations. Upon his return to China, Sun Yat-sen joined forces with other activists like Yang Chü'yün and began to organize different chapters of Xingzhonghui with the purpose of organizing "progressive elements" both at home and abroad (Hsüeh 1971).

Many of the founding members of this association had overseas connections. Yang Chü'yün, for example, had a grandfather who lived in Penang. And although he himself was born in Hong Kong, his education and careers also had a strong international flavour; he attended an English school, and worked in a shipping company when he began his revolutionary activities. Another ring leader of early revolutionaries, Tse Tsan Tai was born and raised in Sydney until he was fifteen years old.

Until the year 1900, revolutionary movements were dominated by people from Guangdong Province who had overseas connection and experiences of travel. And rather than the traditional mandarin education, many of them had foreign education. These experiences may be reflected in the particular model of Chineseness the revolutionists envisioned, which emphasised enterprising, adventurous and astute Chineseness (Duara 1997:54).

One reason for this attitude can be attributed to the discourse of Social Darwinism that engulfed nationalists in the wake of the successes of Japanese modernization. The defeat of the Qing imperial army in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894 was particularly influential in the political consciousness of these revolutionaries. It not only manifested as the urgent demand for modernization; entangled in the global discourse of Social Darwinism, they began to think that what was at stake was the survival of the whole Chinese civilization (Duara 1997).

In 1895, when their first revolt failed, many of the ring leaders of Xingzhonghui were forced into exile. Sun Yat-sen moved to Japan, and from there launched political agitations, advocating anti-Manchu revolution, organizing the overseas communities, and raising money and support for revolutionary activities in China. Later, Sun was joined by monarchist reformers like Kang You-wei and Liang Qichao. In 1898, when the "A Hundred Day Reform" led by the young Guanxu Emperor under the guidance of Kang You-wei ended in a coup, Kang too was forced into exile in Japan.

Earlier relationships between the reformists and the revolutionaries were more or less cordial, although Kang persistently refused to meet Sun. Gradually, however, their relationship deteriorated. When Kang began to tour the overseas communities, building support, and established *baohuanghui* (Save the Emperor Society) as an organization rivalling Sun's

Xingzhonghui, the groundwork was laid for the eventual split between them in the aftermath of revolts in 1900.

Originally from Guangdong province, Kang and Liang already had their bases in overseas communities, as their home communities had produced by far the largest number of emigrants. In addition, in contrast to the revolutionaries—most of whom had dubious Western or Japanese education (Hsüeh 1971:94)—many reformers like Kang and Liang were well known scholars of traditional Confucian schools. Kang's acclaim as the "tutor of the emperor" (Hsüeh 1971:120), in particular, gave the reformers a distinct edge over the upstart revolutionaries among the overseas Chinese, "who always had great respect for scholar officials from home" (Hsüeh 1971:115). At the same time, their experiences of travel among overseas communities gave them a particularly nationalistic view point as well. Commenting on the condition of Chinese in Victoria, BC, Liang laments the clannishness and parochialism of overseas Chinese, who lacked the character of modern citizens (Pan 1990:124). Such experiences undoubtedly influenced reformers' ideas of Chineseness.

Thus, at the turn of the century, there were three breeds of Chinese nationalist agitators that preached different visions of Chinese destiny among the overseas Chinese: 1) imperial nationalists, 2) reform nationalists, and 3) revolutionary nationalists (Duara 1997). There were some obvious similarities among them. As the foreign imperial powers poised to 'carve up' the country, these nationalists were all inspired by the urgent call to strengthen the nation and to repel the foreigners. To finance programs to such ends, they all turned to the economic potential of the overseas communities. And because naturalizing the loyalty of overseas Chinese toward China was essential for soliciting their support, the loss of Chineseness among the overseas population was something that occupied their minds; in one form or another, they took to heart the mission to raise the image of the 'Chineseness' abroad (Duara 1997). But here the amicable unison ends. This 'problem' of lost Chineseness gave them the pretext for articulating vastly different visions of Chineseness, which in a sense were visions of their future—the heart of nationalism—and the revolution that eventually exploded on the mainland once the twentieth century dawned.

The first group—the Qing imperial court and the institutional and ideological apparatuses it wielded—advocated the Confucian and civilizational model of Chineseness (Duara 1997:44). I have already mentioned the resurrection of the term *huaqiao* from antiquity, particular claims implicit to this name, title-givings, and various other consular programs to foster a 'gentry-merchant' image of Chineseness. This model of Chineseness was surprisingly popular among the merchant class in the overseas communities. Despite the traditional Confucian bias against

merchants, the tradition and the prestige of imperial government provided sufficient authority for this model to be desirable and acceptable among the overseas communities (Duara 1997:45).

Much more so than the imperial nationalist, the latter two strains of nationalists were engrossed in the discourse of modernity and were convinced of the urgent need of the reform. As such, the mission to refashion Chineseness was an essential part of their idea of Chineseness (Duara 46). The reformists, however, formulated a vision of modern Chineseness within the framework of Confucian civilizational discourse (ibid:47). On top of what the imperial nationalists had already achieved, the modern Chinese schools established under their leaderships taught both Confucian values and a modern scientific curriculum, and rallied support for the foundation of constitutional monarchy (Ibid.:49). Thus the Chinese they envisioned were loyal subjects of the emperor who was at once a pragmatic modern citizen and a philanthropic ‘gentry-merchant’. This, according to Duara, provided the prototype for the contemporary phenomenon of “Confucian capitalism” (ibid.:50).

Envisioning such model of Chineseness involved a certain ambiguity, or what Duara calls the “Classical nationalist predicament”; the question of whether Chineseness refers to something that already is, once was, or should be, was always held in abeyance (ibid 47). Insofar as lost Chineseness was something to be ‘restored’ to the overseas Chinese, the nationalist leaders must resort to past traditions in establishing an enduring quality of Chineseness; yet given China’s dire circumstances, the *new* Chineseness must be imbued with a promise of enhanced potential. In advancing their own hybrid view of at once modern and traditional Chineseness, the reformers were able to benefit from the prestige of the imperial court’s traditional authority and Confucianism, while they could also appeal to the demand for change in fostering the consciousness of modern citizenry in Chineseness (ibid. 49).

But this dilemma of national character was much trickier for the revolutionaries. The revolutionaries tended to envisage modern Chineseness in an anti-traditionalist vein (ibid.:52-53). The radical break created by this move entailed the necessity of new narratives to establish the continuity of their vision of Chineseness. As the tenet of revolutions requires the “resurrection of ancient symbols” (Anderson 1991), the revolutionaries also resorted to revisionist histories. Particularly salient was the construction of narrative history that painted the image of valiant but tragic overseas Chinese as the last bastion of Han resistance against the barbarian invaders (Duara 1997:52-53). Such narratives turned Koxinga, (ironically) a half-breed anti-Manchu resistance leader, into a Han nationalist hero, along with other resistance leaders. Half-forgotten founding oaths of secret societies to overthrow the Manchu were resurrected after centuries. And the treacherous act of the Manchu government in colluding with foreigners to victimize overseas

Chinese was re-emphasized to elicit anti-Manchu sentiment (ibid.:53). Like the Yellow Emperor who was used as an icon of the anti-Manchu struggle, Nanyang-centric historical narratives constructed a conspicuously revolutionary and Han-chauvinist Chineseness.

It was not only the republicans that dug up such dubious historical materials to refashion the image of overseas Chinese. Perhaps even more audaciously, one of the reformist leaders Liang Qichao attempted to rewrite the history of overseas Chinese communities into colonial expansion of Chinese empire (Wang 1991:27). Among the works Liang compiled were essays entitled *Biographies of the eight great men of Chinese colonization* and the biography of Cheng Ho (ibid.: 27-28). Many such semi-historical essays appeared around this time, and together with the aforementioned revolutionist narratives, eventually made their way into the textbooks of Southeast Asian Chinese schools (Duara 1997:57).

In a sense, despite their rivalries in overseas communities, the revolutionist and reformist nationalists shared many interests. They were all expansionists at heart; they all believed that modernization was indispensable for the revival of the nation; they believed that central to this modernization was the rise of nationalism both at home and abroad; and by fostering pride in national identity among the overseas population, they sought to gather support from the overseas communities to influence policy on the mainland. One may be tempted to say that overseas communities not only offered a safe haven to the exiled nationalists, but provided the budding notion of Chineseness with incubators in which different visions and versions of Chineseness could be fomented, battled over, cross-fertilized and made to coexist in relative freedom from the state's hegemonic power while it increased in salience and rigidity of shape.

Several scholars, however, have cautioned us against the overzealous search for the origin of Chinese nationalism in overseas communities (eg. Duara 1997; Wang 1991; Hsüeh 1971). In the first decade of the twentieth century, with an increase in foreign interventions and the Qing imperial court's inability to manage the situation, the revolutionaries experienced a steady rise of influence in China. In the overseas context, however, Kang's reformists seemed to be gaining in influence (Duara 1997). Even in 1908, on the eve of Guanxu Emperor's death, the boycott of Japanese goods *baohuanghui* organized in protest to Japan's bully politics in the aftermath of the Tatsumaru Incident¹⁶ achieved great success in Southeast Asia. With the Emperor's death toward the end of the year, the reformers' manifesto—to restore the Guanxu Emperor and carry out reform—virtually lost its legitimacy. Even then, in the overseas communities, neither the revolutionary fervour that swept across the nation, nor the revolutionist idea of Chineseness, took

¹⁶ Taking advantage of the capture of a Japanese trade ship, which was engaged in illegal activity, by the Chinese authority, the Japanese government demanded compensations.

significant roots until the late 1920's. Because of this, Duara argues that the development of nationalism on the mainland and abroad was "quite nonsynchronous"(ibid.: 57).

The generalized rhetoric went that the experience of living abroad, of Western influence and education, and the "anguish of displacement", as Appadurai (1996) puts it, made the overseas populations more nationalistic. But in reality, the spread of nationalism in Overseas Chinese Communities was a tedious and negotiated process even for the reformers (Wang 1991:41). Surprisingly, the name of the reformer's association "*baohuanghui*" was a product of a concession by the reformers to overseas Chinese who were afraid of offending the imperial government.¹⁷ While it is true that many of the earlier revolutionaries had overseas connection, and certainly some of the creolised and assimilated *peranakans* and *babas* 'regained' Chineseness around this time, no overseas Chinese leaders became nationalist leaders, not all creolised Chinese became re-sinicized, nor did such a significant number of people become nationalistic (Wang 1991:42). The nationalist agitators ultimately came from the mainland; all nationalist activities in overseas communities were initiated by mainlanders who were more knowledgeable about China, and thus had pride in it. Without their constant goading, nationalistic fervour may never have developed overseas.

However, one must also recognize the fact that some nationalists had overseas connections *before* their revolutionary career. As Hsüeh argues, exposure to the prosperity of the West and the efficiency of colonial administrations changed the consciousness of the 'would-be' nationalist revolutionaries. Some argue that the seriousness of China's predicament was much more saliently felt in the overseas context, even if it was only because that context provided a space in which young people could debate national issues without the fear of authority (Hsüeh 1971). Other rhetoric that circulated among the overseas Chinese communities was that foreigners' discrimination against them was due to the weakness of China (Takaki 1998/89). The argument went that when the foreigners discriminated against you, they did not care whether you were Teochius or Hakka, either way they would discriminate against you as Chinese. And there the overseas Chinese realised the fact that their future was inextricably intertwined with the predicament of their motherland (McKeown 2001). According to Wang, however, such understandings were 'taught' nationalism, invented and articulated by nationalist leaders from the mainland (Wang 1991:42).

Tan Kah Kee, who was later to become the virtual leader of the Nanyang Chinese community, noted regrettably at a later time the illiteracy, lack of unity, and immaturity of nationalism among

¹⁷ Originally they had a term "save the country" in the name, but this faced some resistance from the merchants who had some investment interests in China.

the Nanyang Chinese (ibid. 43-44). And according to Skeldon (2003), even now the dialect group divide is strong. Even within the same dialect group, there were huge diversities. Wang classifies them into three groups: 1) the China-oriented group, 2) the community-oriented group, and 3) the group consisting of individuals seeking upward mobility in the host country (Wang 1991:44). Generalization is difficult, but nationalists found ready support among the first group. The third group were knowledgeable about Chinese nationalists but deliberately turned away to demonstrate their loyalty to the host country. As for the community-oriented insular group, their awareness as Chinese might have increased, but they were, in general, politically noncommittal (ibid.:46).

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After 1911, and increasing more after the late 1920's, the impact of Chinese nationalist schools in Southeast Asia began to show some effect in the consciousness of the overseas Chinese population. Close communication between China and the overseas communities was achieved through an increased literacy rate and the increased availability of printed matter from the mainland (Wang 1991:50). However, in the decade after the 1911 revolution, the motherland itself did not see much unity, nor true leadership. Regionalism perpetually hindered national unity. In 1902, for example, Ou Qujia had argued for the independence of Guangdong province (McKeown 2001:91; Duara 1997:55). He argued that because China's enormous size was its weakness, only local origin can serve as the heart of a revolution. National unity, then, should be deferred until a later date (Duara 1997). For the Nanyang Chinese, too, the reference of attachment could not go beyond their province of origin. They came to desire a strong China for their protection; but at the same time their interest remained with the prosperity of their own province (Wang 1991).

Near the end of the 1911 revolution, such regionalism was also about to tear the revolution apart. Because of this, some says (eg. Hsüeh 1971), Sun and Huang gave up their power to the warlord Yuan Shikai who eventually turned against the Republic. Even after the reunification of the republic under Chiang Kai-shek, warlordism prevailed, indicating little national unity. Under such conditions, many overseas Chinese considered Chinese nationalism unreliable (Wang 1991:49).

On top of such difficulties, after 1925, the host countries began to take their own counter-nationalist measures against the overseas Chinese. They put a check on the Chinese schools; put a halt on free immigration; and deported some of the radical elements (ibid.:52). This process was quite effective. The first and third group in Wang's classification were fairly easy to manage; the nationalist zealots were still a minority in many of the overseas Chinese communities, and the

groups aspiring to upward mobility in the adopted country were easily seduced by increased opportunities in local education, politics and the economy. The inward-looking community-centred type had to be treated with care. Its number was the largest, and it appeared they could turn either way at any moment. But by encouraging fragmentation and dealt with tolerance (a prototype of multiculturalism?), the host countries were usually successful in containing the Chinese nationalism (Wang 1991:52). At the same time, however, the rise of local nationalism was taking place.

Often this local nationalism took the form of anti-Chinese sentiments. In Thailand, for example, after the revolution of 1911, the image of Chinese as the “harbingers” of republicanism, together with the anglicized monarchs’ association of Jews with Chinese, resulted in a conspicuously anti-Chinese official nationalism (Anderson 1991:101). Thus the overseas Chinese were often faced with the dilemma of assimilation or nationalism (Wang 1991:53). As the latter was not much of an option given the uncertain circumstances of the homeland, many turned to exercising the ambiguity, avoiding the choice as much as possible (ibid.). Thus, until 1937, when the Japanese invasion of China sent a surge of nationalism throughout the region, nationalism was not of such central importance for the majority of *huaqiaos*.

Even then, if what I am interested in is not nationalism but Chineseness—a categorical identity that turns into something indelible once it becomes something to think about—one might still say that the nationalism of the early twentieth century had a huge effect on the imagined community of *huaqiao*.

Recapitulation

Having hurriedly examined the historical development of the relationship between China and its overseas population just before the World War II, the Chinese diaspora appears to be intimately tied to the idea of nationalism. We have seen that the notion of ‘Chineseness’ emerged and developed alongside the increasing influence of the nation-states model of citizenship that was introduced to this area in the nineteenth century. Prior to the late nineteenth century, overseas Chinese communities were fragmented, and their identification did not go beyond dialect groups. Also, we must pay attention to the role of emerging state governmentalities in the construction of diaspora. In a sense, the needs of the expanding states not only gave rise to the solidification of ethnic identity; an increasing interest in the population and various technologies to manage it was extended beyond nation-states’ territorial boundaries, and affected the formation of the consciousness of the overseas Chinese as a ‘People’.

For the overseas Chinese living in those tumultuous years at the turn of the century, the 'homeland' was an imagined homeland emerging midway through their overseas experience; for many, a 'homeland' suddenly materialized while they were abroad in a foreign land. In this sense, the assumption of a original centre from which diasporas dispersed, and the idea of sentimental attachment to the 'homeland' as requisite of diaspora, must be reconsidered.

One must be cautious about overstating the relationship between nationalism and diaspora, as we saw the heterogeneous development of nationalism in overseas communities and at home. However, the overseas experiences of the early nationalist leaders still seem to have been instrumental in the emergence of a consciousness of national unity, and the ensuing rise of Chinese nationalism. Perhaps, nationalism was a necessary condition for the development of modern diaspora, but the diaspora requires slightly different narratives than those of nationalism. So what are these narratives of diaspora?

Narrating Diaspora

He will raise a signal for the nations,
and will assemble the outcasts of Israel,
and gather the dispersed of Judah
from the four corners of the earth...
(Isaiah 11:12).

If the history of Chinese diaspora were to be periodized, Laurence Ma (2003) would choose the 1960's as a kind of an end of one era. Not only was this the time of transition in the immigration policies of the Western nation-states, who began to open their borders to Chinese immigrants, but a marked increase in emigration also resulted in the diversification of the migrants population (Takaki 1998, Ma 2003). Previous migrants from Fujian and Guangdong provinces often emigrated as merchants or labourers, but the new migrants from places like Taiwan, Hong Kong and other parts of China (as well as overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia who re-migrated) were often motivated by the fear of political persecution in their decision to migrate. Furthermore, when China opened its border in 1978, the large outflow of Chinese emigrants resulted in 'unprecedented diversity' of overseas Chinese.

Meanwhile, the late twentieth century saw an incredible rise of the Pacific-Asian economic bloc, to which the overseas Chinese had no small contributions. Transnational studies on the Asia Pacific celebrated this recent success of Chinese businesspersons who straddled different nation-states, exploited their 'flexible citizenship' and capital accumulation, and spearheaded what seemed to be the 'Pacific Century' to come (Ong 1999). Under the context of such increased

interest in overseas Chinese business networks, in 1992, the first International Conference on the Chinese Diaspora was convened (Reid 1996).

The term 'Chinese diaspora' began to emerge in the 1980's, slowly replacing names like *huaqiao* and *huayi*. In the general scholarly discourses, " 'diaspora' [replaced] such post-1960's names of communities of dispersion as exile groups, overseas communities and even ethnic and racial minorities", and it appears that this also spilled over to the Chinese diaspora (Ma 2003:5).¹⁸ The question one must ask now is, what sort of additional baggage could diaspora bring to the imagined community of overseas Chinese? Surely, as Ien Ang (2001) argues, dispersion, or a simple migrations would not make any group a diaspora; there is no Indonesian diaspora, and as far as I am aware, 'Japanese diaspora' is unheard of.

At the 1992 Conference on the Chinese diaspora, some of the Chinese representatives from Southeast Asia objected to the use of the word 'diaspora' for its "messianic implications that the diaspora would one day be regathered to the motherland" (Reid 1996: 36). The anguish of exile, the assumption of victimization that marked the beginning of diaspora (Skeldon 2003:51), the evanescent quality that comes along with this banishment from home, and the promise of eventual return: naming it diaspora, never comes as an innocent description of the reality. In asking how Chinese diaspora is discursively constructed, therefore, I want to keep in mind these additional baggages the Chinese diaspora acquire from other diaspora discourses.

At the same time, this section is intended to bridge distinct sections of analyses in my thesis. Up to this point my focus was mainly on the historical development of the imagined diasporic Chinese community; as I turn inward to the individual experiences of this imagined community, I focus on the narrative of Chinese diaspora—and the new historicity that emerges from it. I want to take the Harvard professor, Tu Wei-ming's (1991) article, "Cultural China: The periphery as the Centre", as the central narrative of this section, and guide it toward the question about how the hegemonic discourse of the Chinese diaspora might exert normalizing effect on the individual members of the diaspora. As an elite ideological powerhouse of the Chinese diaspora, Tu's influence does not stop at the intellectual level. Since the 1980's, Singapore has been treading the path toward a revitalized 'Confucian' capitalist society (Ong 1999:69). Tu Wei-ming, a well-known neo-Confucian and anti-Communist scholar, who is trained in the Western Orientalist school, was invited by the Singaporean state to oversee the programs to facilitate the instructions and researches in Confucian ethics (ibid.). Tu's article, which is essentially a narrative of

¹⁸ The use of the term 'diaspora' is not exclusive to academic discourses. Some community representations, or websites such as www.huaren.org uses the term 'diaspora' in referring to the overseas Chinese, along with such words as *Huaren*, *huaqiao*, and overseas Chinese.

Chineseness, provides some insight into the newly instated hegemonic discourse of Chineseness, in which Chinese diaspora emerges as one of the central purveyor of this 'National Character'.¹⁹

The extensive exploration of the cross-referentiality of narratives of Chinese diaspora is beyond the scope of this thesis. Through my reading of this influential narrative, I traverse from the narrative construction of diaspora, to the question of how this diaspora discourse might 'patrol' the boundary, so to speak, of the diaspora. I hope this will lead in to Part Two, where I discuss individual experiences of Chinese diaspora through autobiographical analyses.

Quest for Chineseness: What is the form of Chinese diaspora narrative?

"Whither China?", *Whither Chineseness?*—coming through a decade of incredible economic successes of Pacific-Asia, at the beginning of 1990's, Tu Wei-ming (1991:5) asks this fundamental question of Chinese identity with a sense of urgency for its recovery. The journey begins with a rupture caused by the encounter with the West: the aforementioned ramifications of the Opium war (1840) and the rejection of traditional Chineseness during the May Fourth Movement (1919). At the end of the article, he closes with the projected restoration of 'renewed' Chineseness that is continuous with the 'true' Chineseness of the past. Meanwhile, the not so subtle assumption here is that somewhere in history, the authentic Chineseness was lost to the People—so the quest for Chineseness must begin.

According to Tu, nineteenth century for China was a long tumbling decline towards a semi-colonized state. Unable to cope with the demand for modernization, China seemed to slip away from the international political scene. In particular, it discombobulated the Chinese intellectuals.

Their sense of impotence, frustration, and humiliation, prompted by a curious mixture of political nationalism and cultural iconoclasm, framed the context for their quest for identity not only as Chinese but as thinking and reflective Chinese in an increasingly alienating and dehumanizing world. (Tu 1991:2).

In this context, the May Fourth movement was instituted with the assumption that the traditional Chineseness was incompatible with the modernizing process (ibid.:7). "Chineseness... was made to stand for the *modus operandi* of an authoritarian, conservative and brutal ruling minority"(6), and this led them to believe that the "total transformation of Chinese [as] the precondition for China's modernization"(5). The purging of Confucian intellectuals from the

¹⁹ Let me put this in Capitalized form because later, I want to treat it as the protagonist of Tu's narrative of quest.

political and cultural scene, “willing and wilful” acceptance of Westernization, and the wholesale rejection of Chineseness, all in concert introduced the “radical otherness” to the Chinese identity.

If this trend to displace Confucianism was equated with the loss of identity, Tu also emphasized the placidity of the past prior to the Western incursions.

The Western impact fundamentally dislodged the Chinese intellectuals from their Confucian *haven*. Having loosened their moorings in a society which had *provided a secure and respected anchorage for their predecessors for more than two millennia...* (my emphasis, *ibid.*:2)

While the mainland was entrenched in self-doubt and iconoclastic movements, many intellectuals left China for overseas communities where traditional Chineseness found its safe-haven. As I mentioned in the previous sections, at the turn of the century, Confucianism and Chinese traditions were receiving a renewed enthusiasm in the overseas communities. Thus, in Tu’s symbolic universe, the genuine location of Chineseness was shifted to the overseas communities, along with those who fled China ostensibly in order to preserve their Chineseness (*ibid.*:21). Despite their seemingly treacherous move to abandon their home, overseas Chinese maintained their nostalgia for home. According to Tu, in the 1960’s the “decision to renounce Chinese nationality to adopt local citizenship was for many Chinese in the diaspora, a matter of great agony” (22). And now with the tremendous successes of overseas Chinese, Tu calls on to the overseas Chinese’s “role in creatively constructing a new vision of Chineseness that is in tune with Chinese history, and sympathetic resonance with Chinese culture” (28).

Such narrative form of a loss and recovery of identity is not an uncommon one. In his article, “Human experience of Time and Narrative,” Paul Ricoeur (1991) argues that our experience of temporality is related to the narrative structures. What is of particular interest here is the narrative form of the ‘quest’, which “duplicates a *travel* in space which assumes the shape of a return to the origin” (*ibid.*:113).

As we see in Tu’s gesture, the quest for Chineseness began with its loss in the past. The radical rupture of the May Fourth Movement and the subsequent fragmentation of Chinese community led them astray from their true identity. Now with the rise of overseas Chinese, they head homeward to recover the true identity of the Chinese National Character. As Ricoeur says that such quests aim at the “retrieval of our own most potentialities inherited from our past in the form of personal fate and collective destiny” (1991:111), the narrative of identity traverses the passages through which the heroes become “who they *were*” (*ibid.*:114).

In the case of the Chinese diaspora, this occurs in parallel to the process of exile of Chinese intellectuals abroad, and their imminent return to the cultural scene of ‘Cultural China’. So the spatial movement of *origin-and-return* traces the temporal journey of the quest for identity in the

past. And we observe in the hero (in singular, I think) of this saga, the *Chinese-Diaspora*, the faithful purveyor of the civilization, that reclaims his (probably) 'true self': the long lost 'Chineseness'. This movement, of course, does not occur as the perfect repetition of the original. As Tu argues that "the sharp dichotomy between tradition and modernity must be rejected as untenable" (Tu 1991:7), in the advent of what many call the 'Pacific century', the vision of Chineseness as modern phenomena seems to be within our reach.

It is not only the diaspora community as a collective character that rhetorically experience this "spiral movement" of enhanced return. In her study of Guatemalan migrants, Patricia Foxen (2001) suggests that the Guatemalans engaged in the circular migration to North America anticipate enhanced status at home. Such expectations of gain (both financially and experientially) through the journey forms a 'spiral' movement toward the origin, which entails the *re-discovery* of "true identity" in the homeland that somehow encompasses growths of the migrants (Ricoeur 1991: 113).

In this light, it seems, James Clifford (1994:306) underestimates the emotional force and metaphysical centrality of "the teleology of origin/return" when he argues that lateral communication between different diasporic communities is just as important for the diasporic consciousness. While I do not doubt the importance of a horizontal network in a practical sense, the structure of the 'quest' that this teleological narrative of 'origin-and-return' seems to add more significant potency to the discourse of diaspora.

Related to this point is Paul Gilroy's "dystopic/utopic tension of diaspora"—or the inevitable experience of uprooting and loss, entangled with the valorized idea of mobility and dynamic community (Clifford 1994: 317)—as something intimately tied to this teleological narrative structure and its sedentarist biases. In her essay "National Geographic", Liisa Malkki (1997) argues that, even in this age when territoriality appears nothing but obsolete, there is still a strong attachment to things like soil, roots and places. Under this bias, 'rooted' is considered to be the natural/normal state, and 'uprooted', a pathological state. The "arboreal metaphors" representing the people or the nation abounds, suggesting indisputable kinship between people, culture and place. According to such "sedentarist metaphysics", refugees and diasporas are considered to be liminal, and thus "abomination", to the established "National Order of things" (ibid.: 64), often resulting in their 'invisibility' in history, which is "always written from a sedentary point of view" (ibid. 61).

However, one must also remember that while history may be written from sedentarist perspective, epics and legends often take the form of a journey as I have been discussing. Homer's *Odyssey*, China's folk story, *Journey to the West*, Matsuo Basho's *Passage to Oku*, and

numerous myths and stories in the Bible suggest that travels make ‘good stories’ to tell, in spite of, or because of, the abnormality of a condition of uprootedness. This seems to imply that uprootedness also has its own discursive regime. Thus in a sense, the seemingly paradoxical “dystopic and utopic” co-requisites of diaspora lie at the crossroad of these two discourses: the liminality in sedentarist metaphysics and the teleological metanarrative of a journey.

Tu Wei-ming’s narrative of Chineseness, however, includes slightly radical elements. Firstly, as Tu Wei-ming’s metaphor of ‘Living Tree’ goes, diaspora is incorporated into this arboreal metaphor, which Malkki associates with the sedentarist norm. As the saying goes, *luo-ye-gui-gen* (fallen-leaf-return-to roots) or *luo-ye-sheng-di* (fallen-leaf-grows-on land), the attempts were made to mould the Chinese diaspora into the sedentarist metaphysics. And secondly, Tu’s rhetoric of ‘Cultural China’ entails that rather than coming to a full return, he proposes to expand the homeland. Cultural China, not only encompasses countries in which people of Chinese descent reside (China, Singapore, diaspora communities etc.), but the Sinologists (both Chinese and non-Chinese alike) that produce the representations of Chinese. Thus, in Tu’s universe, it makes sense for the new wave of diaspora to, rather than “returning to their ancestral homeland...[go] far away from China with the explicit intention of preserving their cultural identity”, (ibid.:21).

Holocaust: Victimization and Diaspora

Having explored the issue of the narrative form of a journey, now I want to ask, how is the metanarrative of Jewish diaspora transforming the historical consciousness of the Chinese diaspora? The Jewish diaspora is not only one of the oldest, but also imaginatively evocative and rich in representations. So how could these narratives affect the overseas Chinese’s relationship to the past?

In *Rewriting the Soul*, Ian Hacking (1995) discusses the relationship between the discourse and the experience of reality. Speaking in terms of multiple personality syndrome, Hacking contends that when past experiences acquire new descriptions, the old experiences become imbued with new emotional experiences; in memory, the action is re-experienced according to this new description and its peculiar logic (ibid.:241-249). What, then, are the ramifications of superimposing the vocabulary of Jewish diaspora onto the emerging Chinese diaspora? In particular, how could the Jewish Holocaust enter into the discourse of Chinese diaspora and turned into its foundational narrative?

Interestingly the emergence of the use of the term Chinese diaspora and the renewed interests in the past atrocities, such as the Nanking massacre (1937) and Indonesian racial riots in the

1960's seem to coincide. Not to devalue such endeavours to witness and remember the past atrocities (as a Japanese, this is always a dangerous move), nor to introduce cynicism, but I want to suggest that the usage of 'diaspora' as its group name may have had implications for the historical consciousness of overseas Chinese.

In 1996 Iris Chang, the acclaimed author of *Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*, wrote that "only in the last decade...have [American-Chinese] begun to ask questions about World War II" (*Internet Resource* 1). Indeed, the atrocities committed by the Japanese soldiers during the Second World War were little known to the public not only in Japan and China, but also in the West until recent decades. But since the Tiananmen Square Incident in 1989, the situation began to change. The pro-democratic movements initiated in protest to the People's Republic of China "left behind an intricate web of Internet relationships" (Chang 1997:9). And this grassroots infrastructure was also channelled into the movement to raise the consciousness about the Nanking massacre (and Indonesian riots) (*ibid.*).

One of such internet based organizations that promotes Chinese diaspora community is *huaren.org*. Established in 1998, *huaren.org* aspires to "promote kinship and understanding among all overseas Chinese" (*IR:2*) With the intention to elevate the welfare of the overseas Chinese communities, as well as to help them gain their due recognition and individuals' self-respect as a result of it, *huaren.org* bases the claim for solidarity on the past mistreatment that Chinese overseas 'collectively' endured. Observe the following passage from their home page.

Chinese Diaspora had existed for many centuries and spread far and wide. Early mistreatments had caused many descendents to feel confused, indifferent, or ambivalent towards their heritage. With modern communication technology, this is the right time to bring us together and to promote the sense of kinship (*IR 2*).

Throughout the whole web page (and its links) the victimization in the last century and the glory of the past beyond it are emphasized. "We care, We share, We bear", as their slogan goes, the obligation to bear witness and to endure, seem to be the central force that motivates their sense of shared identity. Tu Wei-ming also stresses the victimization and the inability of the People's Republic of China to deal with the maltreatment of its people as a justification for decentring the location of authority to define the Chineseness. Tu begins his article thus:

For China, Chinese people and Chinese culture, the image of twentieth century as an atrocious collective experience of destructiveness and violence emerges with fulgent salience...(Tu 1991:1).

The memory of victimization in the diasporic imaginary is the central undercurrent of this article, which reappears halfway through the article when he states:

Among the most tragic events in the second half of the twentieth century were the atrocities committed against the Chinese population in Indonesia in 1965..... This Indonesian “holocaust” received little attention...[because] the Chinese diaspora, was too fragmented and isolated to even take notice (ibid.:20).

The failure to bear witness is imbued with the sense of moral failure, and through this castigation, Tu also suggests that the present disunity of the diasporic group was at least partly responsible for their inability to put collective pressure on the Indonesian or Japanese governments to stop the atrocities or make amends for their genocidal acts. Thus the victimhood bestows the diasporic group with urgency for its solidarity. As Ang argues, “the motivation for diasporic solidarity is implicitly and explicitly justified by a stance of moral high ground: it is past and present ‘mistreatments’ (read: anti-Chinese racism) which urges ‘us’ to stick together” (Ang 2001:80). In these rhetorics, the prevalence of the word ‘holocaust’ and the frequent comparison of their sufferings with those of Jews suggest the imprint of Jewish diaspora in the historical consciousness of the Chinese diaspora. But what are the ramifications of the demand for solidarity on the basis of this moral high ground accorded to victims? Could it possibly demand concessions by the others and their members who do not hold the same political aspirations? How does the discourse of diaspora affect individual members of this imagined community of Chinese diaspora?

Toward Diaspora and Self

The memory of a homeland and the imagination of shared Chineseness are central to the Chinese diaspora. In the last section, I discussed the importance of victimization in the imagination of the community. But how are such victimizations actually remembered by the individual members of the community?

The word ‘diaspora’ has yet to become part of the vocabulary of ordinary Chinese overseas; it remains a dream, a project of the community elites. Yet, individual members of the community are affected by the rhetoric of the diaspora and draw from the same narratives that affect the diaspora discourse. Then, how do individuals integrate the narrative of diaspora into their own lives?

Even if the terms like ‘holocaust’ or the visionary narrative of quest such as the one Tu Weiming puts forward are absent from their narratives, several autobiographical accounts of overseas Chinese mention the (direct or vicarious) experiences of the Japanese invasion during World War II as something significant for their identity. Kingston (1998:98), for instance, says that the only time she uses the term ‘Chinese’ specifically is to differentiate herself from Japanese. “Raised with

vivid stories about Japanese killing ten million Chinese, including [her] relatives, and ... terrified [as a child] of the Japanese, especially AJA's [Americans of Japanese Ancestry]", pan-Asian identification was impossible for Kingston (ibid.:100). But what are the possible ramifications of defining Chineseness vis-à-vis the victimization by the Japanese?

In speaking about the *huaqiao*'s mistreatment of female workers in the factories in mainland China, Aihwa Ong (1999) reflects on the ironic turn 'Chineseness' is taking in the age of 'Pacific Asia'. Asked about the relationship between abusive practices of their Taiwanese boss and the pre-Communist Chinese values, Ong's informants' response is intriguing.

They insisted that Taiwanese managers had learned their management techniques and bad attitudes toward women from the Japanese... This interpretation is highly interesting because it linked Japanese colonialism with predatory capitalism and because it disavowed the possibility of any bad values associated with Chinese culture... while overseas Chinese are sharp entrepreneurs who gamble with the fate of mainlanders, they are building the *bridges* necessary for the *modernization* of China. (my italic, ibid.:47-48)

This willingness to overlook the *huaqiao* entrepreneurs' inclination to exploit the mainlanders is related to the specific 'moral economy' in relation to the growing rhetorics such as 'Confucian Capitalism', 'Asian Modernity', and 'Pacific Century'. Following James Scott, Ong uses the term 'moral economy' to refer to the moral order through which "subordinated groups [come to] perceive the unequal exchanges as collaborative and morally legitimate"(ibid.:70).

This moral economical system, however, is not the universal reality. Ong contends that the dominant parties "must continually produce the cultural values to engender and sustain moral-economy ideology" (ibid.). The subtle mixture of obligation/loyalty and constraints/freedom that a moral economy creates is not only the mechanism of liberal states, but may also give insights into the way diasporic community influence its members. "Unlike nation-states", Ong says, "diasporas do not in general have the institutional resources to impose their disciplinary power on their members" (2001:83). But the discourses of diaspora may persuade the individuals to condone the exploitations and oppression within the families or communities (Ong 1999:76). In her second book *Chinamen*, Kingston (1986) portrays the exploitations of fellow villagers from China in the United States that her parents tolerate because of this kinship and the expectations of loyalty between the villagers. Then how do individuals experience this normalizing and sometimes oppressive community, and its character: the 'Chineseness'?

Diaspora discourse attempts to bring the past and the imagination of a *homeland* to the foreground of the overseas Chinese consciousness. And through this imaginary passage to the homeland, self and the community join in their common destiny; and the continuity between the past and the present is established—for the individuals—in this community. Diaspora not only

connects different places through personal connections, but also bridges the past and the present in the imagination.

In this sense, Wang's fear that the idea of 'Chinese diaspora' may become somewhat synonymous with the word 'huaqiao' that was used prior to 1950's, is understandable (Ang 2001:81). The word 'huaqiao' – being especially emotive and evocative of an unbroken tie with the 'homeland' – emphasized overseas Chinese' strong loyalty to China. As many nationalists had invoked this power of the word 'huaqiao' at the turn of the century to enlist support for their homeland and to restore 'Chineseness' among overseas populations, 'Chinese diaspora' is both appealing and deceptive identity. Perhaps diaspora was "fuelled precisely by... emotive desire not just to belong, but to belong to a respectable imagined community" (Ang 2001:78); but it also elicits the suspicions—both of host societies that mistrust the loyalty of Chinese diaspora, and of its members who may find their communities confining (ibid.:82). Not only does it often invoke the sufferings of the past, it also results in the overrepresentation of certain experiences. Perhaps taking on the legacy of the nationalists at the beginning of the twentieth century, heroic narratives of successful merchants and businesspersons, construct the ideal typical Chinese that excludes many different experiences. In Part Two of this thesis I will discuss such narratives that are suppressed, or excluded from the dominant narratives of Chinese diaspora. These idiosyncratic narratives (especially Kingston's autobiography that I discuss in Part II) that emerge in spite of their seemingly antagonistic relationships to the diasporic community, nonetheless illustrates different kinds of experiences of the imagined community of Chinese diaspora.

So how do imaginations, narratives, and elite discourses participate in the subjectification of individual Chinese diaspora? The ambiguous understanding of Chineseness; the fleeting image of the 'homeland'; and the 'traditions' that seem to slip away in a foreign land; as well as the individual life that seems to constantly slip into realm of collective representations; such heterogeneous and uncertain experiences of Chineseness are explored in the following section.

In Part Two of this thesis, I bring in my concern with self and self-narration to this discussion of the imagined community of Chinese diaspora. How do individual overseas Chinese experience his or her Chineseness? And how are self and community related? I will attempt to tackle these questions through the autobiographies of Janet Lim and Maxine Hong Kingston.

Narrating the Self & Community in Diaspora:

The ‘Unreliable Narrations’ of Maxine Hong Kingston

As I move on to a study of autobiography and selfhood in relation to the Chinese diaspora, I must emphasize that the autobiographical practices of marginalized subjects are somewhat different from those of mainstream subjects.¹ Marginalized subjects have different motives, implications, audiences and reading habits, and, above all, different ‘positionality’. Franz Fanon (1967/52) cogently illustrated the conundrum marginalized subjects faced nearly half a century ago when he found himself standing in the midst of the overwhelming sense of ‘objecthood’ imposed by a racist society: A single cry, “Look, A Negro!” immobilized him.

“All I wanted was to be a man among other men” (Ibid.: 112), Fanon confides; his yearning is simple: to be considered a human. His initial impulse is to choose anonymity, to become invisible to the external gaze that overdetermines him. But assailed by “a thousand details, anecdotes [and] stories” that the white man has written about him, he finds his sense of self dissolves and fragments into pieces (Ibid.: 111). Questions are forestalled amidst prejudices; individuality is lost in silence. Sense of denied humanity perplexes him; throughout his mental journey in this scattered form between numerous discourses, he momentarily comes to a conviction:

Since the other hesitated to recognise me, there was only one solution: to *make myself known* (Ibid.: 115, emphasis added).

But the tide recedes, and his confidence wavers once again.... Having determined to *speak himself*, would Fanon succeed in claiming his uniqueness, his individual humanity in the face of the white world? Or would he merely add his unique experiences to the archival knowledge of ‘Negroes’ he represents?

No doubt our lot has improved markedly since the time of Fanon. Overt racism has largely withdrawn from public discourse, and decades of post-colonialist critiques have at least outwardly destabilized the ‘historicity’ that so tormented Fanon half a century ago. Yet this inking sense of lost selfhood—the confusion as to where it has gone, how to recover it, or whether we even possessed it before we lost it—and the urge to blurt out a demand for recognition persists in our encounters with the Western world. In the study of selfhood and self-representation, therefore, I want to keep in mind the issue of this positionality: that we begin our

¹ But who is mainstream? The infamous ‘white middleclass males’? But they are such a puny minority in number, and often fragmented and pitted against one another along various orientations and identifications. Although I do not wish to diffuse the particular positionality of ‘marginalized’ subjects...

quest for selfhood with its negation (Cf. Bhabha 1994). But how can self-narrations be called upon to rediscover this *lost* 'self'? And what does this endeavour entail?

In part, this section is about the endeavour to 'reclaim' the self in narration. How can narratives be invoked to construct a certain kind of selfhood in a given context? And what are the ramifications of this narration on the self that is external to the story? The wholeness of self is certainly one of the central issues here. The narrative construction of wholeness must be our starting point. At the same time, as Rosenfeld's (2001) discussion reminds us, any naïve celebration of self-disclosure as a sign of empowerment is misleading. Utterances not only engender the "I" of the utterers, but fix the individual in speech (Ricoeur 1992: 44). And texts—autobiographies are texts after all—entangle us in a web of other texts and discourses, immobilizing us further in a world inaccessible to our control (Reece 1999). Then, what are the implications of writing one's life in the form of autobiography? Can the autobiographers avoid betraying themselves and others in the process of displaying their lives in narration?

Rosenfeld suggests that implicit to all self-disclosures is a "dialectical tension" between aspirations for *identification* and *individuation* (2001: 5). The entanglement of one's life with others' is not only inevitable but desirable; individuals draw comfort from experience shared with others, and this relationship allows them to "exist in the world" (ibid.:4). At the same time, we also need to maintain a certain distance from others if we are to safeguard our uniqueness.

In the case of marginalized subjects, the opposing tendency manifest particularly in the form of "the tension between the racial self and the racial community" (Gilroy 1993b:177). Increased tolerance and understanding of the Others notwithstanding, the propensity of the dominant society to reduce the individual to one *incident* of the collective still persists; unique experiences are chronically usurped and assimilated into the representation of the collective character (Bow 2001, Fanon 1967, Bannerji 1995). However, this intractability of collective identity and self, it appears, is not only due to Western representations of us, the Others, but also in relation to the community and the self of the collective character. Any attempt to cast off this vestige seems to signal our betrayals. In our wish to dissociate ourselves from this collective, do we unwittingly risk getting trapped in some sort of "self-loathing"?² Can we *speak against our identities* without sacrificing ourselves? In part two of this thesis, I want to explore this transaction between the individuals and the community in the context of diaspora.

² In the afterward to her novel *Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison (1970/93) discusses her encounter with an African-American girl who confided to her that she wanted a set of blue eyes. "Implicit to her desire was racial self-loathing. And twenty years later I was still wondering about how one learns that... The novel pecks away at the gaze that condemned her.... The damaging internalization of assumptions of immutable inferiority originating in an outside gaze..."(210). But how do we discuss about such amorphous psychic phenomena in anthropology?

This essay is made up of two criss-crossing strands of inquiry. One is about our compulsion to speak about ourselves, its risks particular to the marginalized subjects and how it may be possible to disentangle oneself from the unflattering representations. This inquiry is connected to the idea of ‘*inscrutability*’ often associated with Asian-Americans. There is a degree of apathy involved in condemning the others inscrutable, because inscrutability not only refers to the lack of knowledge, but also connotes lack of interest: there is certain arrogance on the part of the observer, who already knows that ‘they’ are inscrutable, is implicit in this term. Self-disclosure may be a gesture to expel this inscrutability through representation, but a conundrum resides in the fact that while silence and anonymity may lead us to our annihilation from the world, the transparency achieved through self-disclosure may only result in objectification.

The other thread carries over from the previous section, which now compels me to speak about the ‘content’ of diasporic Chinese identity (I will continue to use the ambiguous referent, ‘Chineseness’, for this). In particular, I ask: How is Chineseness experienced by the individual members of the community? Especially in the context of diaspora, there may be a conspicuous discrepancy between the externally imposed racial or ethnic identity and individual experiences. What are the particular experiences of diasporic identity, which is supposedly coloured and shadowed by the memory of the long lost past in a distant land? And what does the experience of displacement do to the relationships between the self and the community? Sandwiched between the conflicting demands of host society and the diasporic community, can individual authors articulate their life story in such a way as to evoke and provoke individualities?

In order to engage with these questions, I draw on two autobiographical writings by members of the Chinese diaspora. The first text, Janet Lim’s *Sold for Silver* (1958), is an autobiography by a Singaporean-Chinese nurse. The main part of the narrative is devoted to her experience during the war with Japan. But as is foreshadowed by the title, her childhood experiences lay the groundwork for the experiences to follow. The abrupt interruption of her innocent childhood with the death of her father; the hopeless wandering the mother and daughter endured together after their expulsion from their land; and finally, the abandonment by her mother and her sale as a slave to Singapore—traversing the multicultural context of Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia, Lim narrates her turbulent wartime experiences into a coherent and adventurous life. We are told, in the forward, that the part on her early childhood was inserted later at the suggestion of an English (presumably) doctor. But this childhood experience is also presented as an integral part of her odyssey.

The second text, to which I will devote most of this essay, is written by a Chinese-American writer. In *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts*, Maxine Hong Kingston

(1979) describes the secrecies, uncertainties and silences that shrouded her childhood as a Chinese-American in California. Born in the United States, Kingston had no direct experiences of her so-called 'homeland'; her experience of being a Chinese was solely based on her daily experiences of Chinese-American communities, interactions with non-Chinese, and above all, the numerous stories her parents told her. Grappling with an ambiguous understanding of Chinese culture and her identity as a Chinese American, Kingston weaves together seemingly independent episodes of her life into a single narrative of self-understanding.

Since the publication of *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston has published one more autobiography, *China men* (1986), and a novel *Tripstermaster Monkey* (1989). Compared to Janet Lim, as a writer, Kingston may not seem much like a traditional anthropological subject. I fretted over this, thinking that it may be better to put more emphasis on Lim's autobiography. However, in the end I decided to focus on Kingston's text for the following reasons. Firstly, because of her particular interest, the experience with Chineseness is much more explicit in Kingston's text. Furthermore, as a well-known author, Kingston's text has been under close scrutiny in both the dominant and ethnic literary communities. Accesses to such responses, I think, allowed me to look at the interactions between the ethnic community and an individual member who attempted to speak more freely about her unique experiences. Finally, Kingston's text offered much more fertile ground on which to discuss the techniques of constructing a non-static, complex figure in narration than Lim's realist narrative could. Unlike many autobiographical accounts, Kingston often fictionalizes some of her narratives without necessarily leaving the trace of this modification process. And as Ricoeur (1991) suggests that the purpose of art is to create a new reality by exploiting the unreal in languages, Kingston's narrative seems to highlight distortions, paradoxes and dilemmas through the quirky expressions and allusive writings. Moreover, while it is categorized as an autobiography, her text does not seem to reflect her sense of self in a direct manner.

At first glance, the wedge driven between the autobiographer and her narrative through fictionalization and cryptic writing may seem to reverse the ground she has gained through self-disclosure. Yet some argue that the disengagement of the author, narrator and protagonist in the autobiographical genre is especially important for marginalized women. Lies (Smith 1999), secrets (Rashkin 1992), silences (Smith 1999, Benstock 1999, Cheung 1993) or a reflexive recounting of the writing process (Reece 1999) destabilize the relationship between the author and the text, thereby giving voice to the author without freezing her in her own speech. In this essay, I want to pay attention to the silence and secrecy of these two autobiographies. Traditionally taken as a simple absence of speech in North America, some scholars argue now

that the creative and subversive potential of silence and secrecy have been long neglected (eg. Cheung 1993). Especially in discussions of suffering, attention to the presence of silence and secrecy within the narrative might provide alternative understandings to the modes of suffering (Cf. Das 1997, Morris 1997).

Kingston's autobiography is permeated with secrets and silences. But if indeed we seek to recover the lost self in narrative, what are the implications of these silences and secrets for self? Despite its claim to presence, silence still seems to connote anonymity, just as speech seems to suggest identification. Then, in this dialectic of anonymity and identification, can we recover the self we seek?

Cast In Wholeness

If Fanon's impulse to 'make himself known'—to negate an imposed identity through speech, so to speak—sprang out of his acute sense of objecthood under the gaze of the 'white world' and the subsequent disintegration of the 'wholeness' of his self, it seems only natural to begin our discussion with the recovery of this wholeness through reassembling the self in narrative. One might argue that the shattered self must be mended together, because, as is often suggested in North American psychoanalytical discourse, an ordinary, healthy individual has a cohesive and bounded self (cf. Sharples 2002: 9). And what better way is there to do this than through narrative, whose ability to 'craft' a sense of wholeness is reputable (Ricoeur 1991, Fernandez 1986)?

But, I must tread cautiously here. The self missed in its disintegration does not predicate a prior integrated and wholesome self—if it indeed entails the existence of 'Self' at all. Michel Foucault, for instance, refuses to give the self any sort of objective substance, and argues that it is an abstract construct formed through policing technologies (Hutton 1988: 135). For the time being, I want to set such an apathetic view aside; but even so, the notion of a cohesive and bounded self rarely passes without criticism. In cultural anthropology, for instance, this notion of a coherent and unitary self has long been a bone of contention.

In the past, the discipline's traditional attentiveness to cultural relativity has led some scholars to assign this bounded and unitary self to Western subjects, and a relational and context-bound self to non-Western subjects (Shweder and Bourne 1991). While such polarization has been criticized for its tendency to reify cultural differences (Sharples 2001: 9), more contemporary scholars continue to seek different ways of conceptualizing selfhood. Some scholars, such as

Martin Sökefeld (1999), still cling to the idea of a universal unitary Self, or draw attention to the continuous and bounded self who *manages* conflicting identities. Others, like Katherine Ewing (1991) contend that the presence of inconsistent and multiple selves is a normal (in a sense that it is not pathological) condition of human beings, who reckon with their ‘rapidly shifting’ immediate contexts that are, at times, inconsistent or incompatible with one another.³ If an individual feels that coherence of self-representation is maintained, Ewing says, it is only because a momentary construction of coherent narratives allows inconsistencies of experiences to be subdued and an ‘illusion’ of unitary self to be construed (Ibid. 270). Ewing’s title, “Illusion of wholeness”, succinctly summarises her conceptualization of self in which underlying multiple selves are concealed from consciousness through coherent narratives assembled out of inconsistent experiences, expectations and obligations.

Sökefeld’s universal ‘manager self’ has the advantage of highlighting the subject’s agency (especially of non-Western subjects, from whom it was often denied), in that the self is always understood to be the subject of his or her actions and consciousness. Furthermore, drawing on Derrida’s notion of ‘*différance*’, Sökefeld argues that the deferred presence of seemingly contradictory selves “creates a considerable ambiguity for the actor”, and blurs the boundaries of those plural identities (1999:423). Once recognized, open conflicts between identities can be mended in a way that maintains the integrity of the self (ibid.:426). Such a “reflexive subject” is thus “superordinate” to the fragmentalizing tendencies of the modern identities. However, this ‘manager self’, as the surrogate of an “actual self” or “empirical agent”, as he calls them, seems to remain impervious to the likes of Fanon’s experience of confusion and fragmentation originating in the others’ gaze. As I want to maintain this as the starting point of this essay, Sökefeld’s notion of the self must be discarded.

As for Ewing’s multiple selves, two related objections immediately spring to mind: 1) she seems to essentialise the notion of ‘inconsistency’, and 2) by simply juxtaposing frozen instances of temporally dispersed self-representations, she rejects the possibility of a character’s “uninterrupted continuity” through time, as Ricoeur might call it (1992: 117). Despite her admission that a lost sense of wholeness can be restored through the construction of a “more adequate representation [through the metaphorical processes of] synthesis and integration” (Ewing 1991:270-271), in relegating this recovered wholeness to an “illusion”, she nonetheless gives primacy to the original experience of conflict, or the ‘objective’ fact of inconsistency, over this newly *crafted* consistency. But why are they inconsistent, if they have been reconciled? If these ruptures can be mended in narratives, does it not suggest that ‘inconsistency’ is more a

³ But what if the subjects are themselves perturbed by this seeming contradictions?

discursive construct than an 'objective' one? And if so, should we not be more mindful of the narrativity of the individual's self-representation?

Some discussions on narrative suggest that narrative constructions are no mere "illusions". If Ochs and Capp (1996:26) suggest that "narrative is an essential resource in the struggle to bring experiences to conscious awareness", for Ricoeur (1991), the living reality is already suffused with the suggestion of narrative. Some actions are 'legible' in that people already know how to perform them and what they mean; and the human experience of time is said to be already structurally similar to narratives (ibid.: 141-143). Some studies on 'experiences' have also argued that experiences and articulations are related in the manner of a "hermeneutic circle", mutually constructing each other (Bruner 1986). So, just as to some degree reality is already 'prefigured' by representations, new representations in turn reconfigure that reality, imbuing it with new senses that were previously nonexistent (Ricoeur 1991).

For Ricoeur, this is especially the case with the use of metaphors and poetic language (Ibid.: 150). Some scholars consider metaphorical processes to be mere invocations of cultural conventions. To them, metaphors only re-establish the relations between the elements of different 'domains' through some pre-existent "unity of feeling" (Fernandez 1986: 160, Quinn 1999). Ricoeur, on the other hand, emphasises the metaphors that create new realities and new 'consistencies' (1991: 75-82). Just as innovative distortion of reality is the proper task of artistic imagery, metaphors do not always reiterate already known relations; they dwell in fissures in the conventional semantics and create new relations of likeness (Ibid.: 76-82). As Ricoeur puts it, "the power of metaphor would be to break through previous categorisation and to establish new logical boundaries on the ruins of the preceding ones" (Ibid: 81).

Such metaphors abound in Kingston's text and often perform the tasks vital to the themes of her narrative. For instance, the issue of 'inscrutability' finds its central metaphor in ghosts; the 'homeland', in a white bat; silences in black paintings; and the question of re-tellings and fictions in complicated knots. The ghosts she repeatedly uses to refer to both white people and the monsters from Chinese stories, not only invoke the ambiguous, uncertain and scary world she inhabited as a child; through this dual referents, she channels the Chinese mistrust for white people into the Euro-American rhetorics of 'inscrutable Asians' and vice versa, thereby bringing these two groups together in shared inscrutability, which, we see by the end of the narrative, engulfs her as well.

In a somewhat more convoluted way, by superimposing the bizarre image of "a thousand-year-old...[albino bat...] flying heavy-headed out of the Chinese cavern" upon the 'Scent of China' "far back in the brain" (*WW*:57), the absurdity of nostalgia for a 'homeland' one has never

smelled is recast in a fantastic light. Without allowing its solidity nor denying its existence, the 'homeland' is turned into a somewhat antiquated, exotic and amorphous land for the American-born Chinese diaspora.

Likewise, the 'black paintings' that so troubled Maxine's elementary school teacher are rearticulated as something "full of possibilities" (*WW*:165). 'Black curtains' conceal what lies beneath, thereby opening up a whole new world of possibilities for interpretations; thus the prejudice towards silence as indicative of a lack of thoughts is given reconsideration in the light of blackened paintings. At the same time, we are given hints to Kingston's attitude toward imaginations. Because an absence of telling does not mean an absence of tales, she seems to say, augmenting the black paintings with imagination does not involve falsifications or lies. Like taking a simple thread and turning it into a complex and fantastic "knots" that could be shaped like a frog or button, stories can be retold in a creative manner (*WW*:163). But did she anticipate in her story of the Chinese emperor that outlawed the complicated knot (which blinded knot-makers), her eventual castigation by her Chinese-American critics who charged her with the falsification of Chinese traditions? Of course we do not know the answer to this. Yet the metaphors open up the possibilities of new interpretations.

While metaphors introduce newness to the world through a sentence, "emplotment" is the key process through which newness is created in narrative (1992). Coining a hybrid word like "discordance-concordance", Ricoeur explains that in narratives, seemingly out-of-place experiences—"reversals of fortune", chance occurrence, surprises, apocalyptic events, etc—are turned into the pivots of orderly transformations (*Ibid.* :141). Unexpected or devastating experiences can be turned into the crucial events that 'get the story rolling'. And seemingly inconsistent events acquire the 'second order coherence' that might be characterised as 'growth' or 'destiny'.

The emplotment is manifested particularly noticeably in Janet Lim's *Sold for Silver*. While the narrative unfolds more or less chronologically, the protagonist's tumultuous experiences are woven together in such a way that the happy moments are read as something earned, and the tragic instances are turned into tests of strength. As in the archetypal narrative of diaspora, Lim's story unfolds in the aforementioned 'spiral movement' of the quest: the passage from an innocent past in China to becoming a self-confident nurse is interrupted by the tragic experience of her family's demise and the eventual predicament of being sold as a slave girl; coming through incredible adversity in Sumatra during the war with the Japanese, a timid and jittery freshman nurse is transformed into a self-assertive and capable veteran nurse. At various points in the narrative, Lim reassures us that she has survived; imminent death and sexual violations were

averted, and were followed by recoveries of freedom, first from bondage to a Chinese family in Singapore and then from incarceration and harassment by the Japanese. By forging a coherent narrative, the autobiographer achieves a reaffirmation of seemingly incongruous experiences in her life as valuable ingredients of her life journey.

In relation to the earlier discussion on Ewing, this temporal configuration suggests that, at least in narratives, disparate self-representations arising from momentary recollection can be emplotted to construct a coherent narrative. The *life* thus crafted in narrative no longer appears inconsistent or fragmented, but suggests a continuous growth of the Self. This “reconstruction” of coherence is sometimes said to be desired by the individuals with chronic illnesses. In his discussion of illness narratives, Byron Good (1994: 163) argues that for patients suffering chronic pain, “‘thereness’ in the body must be rendered ‘thereness’ in the life”. Through narrations, the momentary awareness of his or her present condition is placed in relation to the whole *life*.

This argument seems to be consistent with Ricoeur’s (1992: Part V) discussion on personal identity and narrative identity. Because individuals change all the time, re-identification must take into consideration the assumption of an uninterrupted quality of ‘character’. This ‘character’, consisting of a “set of lasting dispositions” and the history of their acquisition, joins the *idem* identity (the lasting inscriptions) and *ipse* identity (in continual change) of the individual. The narratives can unravel the history this character has “contracted”, thereby allowing the individual to re-connect seemingly distinct selves at discontinuous times.

Thus in *Woman Warrior*, we can repeatedly identify ‘Maxine (the child-protagonist)’⁴ the mute in the girl who bullies another mute girl, and again in the girl that bursts out with two hundred secrets that she has stored away for more than ten years. Transformation becomes comprehensible in narrative, as seemingly incompatible representations of self are placed in the context of the whole life.

The narration of life, as we have seen thus far, seems to allow us to surmount the fragmentalising vocabularies and discourse of society, seal the schism opened by suffering and time, and craft a wholeness of *life*—this ‘wholesome’...Self? But then there is this unsettling claim:

Each consciousness of self is in quest of absoluteness. It wants to be recognized as a primal value *without reference to life*, as a transformation of subjective certainty into objective truth...I go beyond life. (Fanon 1967: 218. my emphasis)

⁴ Following some of the critics’ uses, in some occasions I will use this name to refer to the Kingston’s childhood self, especially because Kingston’s use of double-voice seems to be quite important (eg. Cheung 1993).

In its incessant, bull-headed march toward a final, singular whole, the narration of life seems to create a cast; prematurely inviting death to the author (Xin 2001)—for a truly whole life only comes at death—the narrative reifies the author in her speech. One may reason this by invoking Ricoeur once again: insofar as emplotment gives meaning to the events in a narrative (with a beginning, middle and an end), another day added to the life of the author might require an entire re-plotment of the autobiography. Tomorrow, therefore, does not come by so easily for the author of a life story.

In constructing a wholeness of life, the narrative not only delimits the ways pasts can be remembered, but seems to foreclose on the exigency of the future. Self in the absence of an open-ended tomorrow does not seem to be what we want. But then, if wholeness is not desirable, what are the roles of narration in construing the self? Even if wholeness, *per se*, is not exactly what we aim for, fragmented and incoherent narratives may pose some problems in our encounters with other people. For we may be implicated in other's speech, or, as others may rely on our stabilities, our responsibilities toward them may be implicit in any inception of speech acts (Lambek 1996). Furthermore, insofar as this author-audience relationship is choreographed by the particular genre in which this element of self is expressed to the others, genres may also influence the ways in which the self is engendered.

As Morris (1997) claims, every discourse requires a genre, and the autobiographical genre has its own historically constructed reading habits. These reading habits are no mere 'habits'; as Hayden White (1987) claims, for example, that History and Historical writings are mutually formative, any genres and their referents are intimately related. Then if genres of self-disclosure are understood to be motivated by the will to recapture the self (Smith 1999), how are the autobiographical genre and the self related?

This question of self and narration may belong to the realm of what Michel Foucault (1988) has called "the technologies of the self". Technologies of self are like the corpus of historically derived practices and knowledge about the self that, rather than defining the self, naturalizes the way we cultivate ourselves. In his discussion of Western history, Foucault argues that there has been a continual increase in the relationship between 'truth' and the self: the acquisition and assimilation of the truth, the importance placed on self-appraisal and reflexivity, the Christian commitment to confess the truth in Church, and so on, became the obsession of self-making in the West. It is not surprising, then, that autobiographical writings are also related to this idea of the 'truth'. Our "autobiographical contract" is purportedly to tell the truth about the self (Smith 1999: 37): the more one reveals his or her secrets, the more real and the truer the narrative becomes. In

this view, truth is not considered the simple negative of 'lie', but is turned into a virtue on its own.

The marginalized women's autobiographical contract in the West differs slightly from that of mainstream subjects. Beside her requirement to tell the truth about herself, the marginalized woman has the "burden of representing a people through a singular life" (Bow 2001: 172); she must tell the truth about the common experiences of the community *as her own*. This entanglement of the self with the community poses a certain dilemma for the multiply marginalized subject who also aspires to uniqueness and singularity of experience. Does she 'misrepresent' the society in order to be truthful to her own idiosyncratic experiences? Or does she opt for generalizing her narration in order to accommodate the propensities of the society? These questions will be discussed in further detail in the following section.

Additionally, as Hesford (2001:16) argues, "realist strategies authenticate survivor's representations", and any accounts exposing the injustices or subjugations within a community demand particular relation to the truth in order to be regarded as legitimate. According to Smith (2001: 48), another difficulty added to the marginalized women's autobiographical genre is that women's truths are often rejected in the patriarchal regime of truth, in which women are considered to be "already likely to lie".

Of course, the definitions of genres are often diverse and not always shared by everybody in a society. In speaking about Kingston's text, Lee Quinby (1998) objects that Kingston's narrative is not an autobiography but a memoir—distinction of which we must be aware, for memoirs and autobiographies are motivated by different goals. In memoirs, the "assumed interiority" of the self-disclosure is replaced by reflections and comments on the world through an "I" which is constituted as fragmented and discontinuous. The selfhood premised in such narratives is not of a confessional self, but of a relational one. Benstock argues that some people have no investment in telling the whole truth about a coherent self (2001: 8). And Smith advocates the use of lies as a way of "disrupting the superficial placidity of autobiographical acts" (2001: 48). Uses of metaphors, fantasy, or decentred protagonists seem to indicate author's efforts to destabilize the established biases about marginalized people's narratives. With these precautions in mind, in the following section, I want to ask: How do interpersonal elements of narration enter into the ways in which the self is conceived and articulated? And how is this related to the intractability of the collective identity that individual may experience?

...with Others: "The 'Experiences' of Chineseness"

Those of us in the first American generations have had to figure out how the invisible world the emigrants built around our childhoods fits in solid America... (WW:5)

In speaking about one's past experiences, the question that becomes immediately necessary is about memory. Here, I want to outline briefly one version of the anthropological interpretation of memory, in order to set the stage for the discussions to follow.

In "Past Imperfect", Michael Lambek (1996) advances an interpersonal understanding of memory. On his model, unlike what is popularly believed, memory is not a 'raw' or 'original' experience that can be lost or regained. Because memories are often elicited (not only narrated) through active reminiscence and forgetting that direct our inquisitive gaze into the past, memory is without any "unmediated essence, either as subjective experience or as objective fact, but is always in the act of being made" (Lambek 1996:242). This emergence of memory, however, does not proceed in a vacuum. Memory is resolutely relational; whether it is actually articulated or not, the mutual affirmation of past interactions with other people is implicit in any act of remembrance (ibid.:248). Reality-claims made may be supported or rejected; we perpetually reckon with invisible interlocutors, who inhabit the space in which the act of narration is construed (ibid.: 246).⁵ Memory is "a culturally mediated expression of the temporal dimension of experience, in particular social commitments and identification" (ibid.). Then, insofar as the memory is foundational to one's sense of self, this historically conditioned narrative space also engenders the interpersonal 'dialogic self'. This process may be one of the ways in which collective identity is inscribed on the self; cultural assumptions, values and knowledge are deposited into the personal space and construct a particular subjectivity. At the same time, discourses external to the self can stow the self away in the realm inaccessible to one's own control. But how can we access this dialogic self in autobiographical texts?

In this section, I explore the question about how individual members of the Chinese diaspora experience their Chineseness. Of course, experiences and their expressions differ. There is no reason to believe that autobiographers would want to expose their 'raw' experiences to the readers, and even if they wished to do so, there is no assurance that this could ever be

⁵ Both Lambek and Bandlamudi invoke Bakhtin's notion of 'chronotope' to discuss this. In Lambek's words, chronotope refers to "the particular space-time continuum in which the action of any narrative (whether inscribed in writing, embodied in ceremonies, or voiced and under continuous reconstruction) is construed" (Lambek 1996:246). It may be a pivotal idea for my discussion. However, having never read Bakhtin's text, I do not understand the full extent of the idea...

accomplished (Bruner 1986). Clifford Geertz put it: “whatever sense we have of how things stand with someone else’s inner life, we gain it through their expressions, not through some magical intrusion into their consciousness” (1986:373). Furthermore, insofar as the experiences are said to be in dialectical relationship with the narration (Bruner 1986), we might still ask how the external forces prefiguring the expressions of experiences (both in content and in form) can affect selfhood. Because “performances are what make the text transformative and enable us to reexperience our culture’s heritage”(ibid.:7), attentive care to the performative potential of expressed experiences might lead us to observe in the text the struggle for the interpretation of the now-objectified experiences of reality, in which the writer and readers alike engage. The tension of individuation and identification emerges precisely because the ‘experience’—which is supposed be idiosyncratic and subjective to the core—becomes objectified and made public immediately as it is uttered.

So, how do we engender ourselves, among others, through others and against others? And how can we access this interpersonal self in autobiographical texts? In this section, I want to pay particular attention to issues of ‘intertextuality’ (the state of existing among a web of alternative and implied texts (Reece 1999)) in discussing the question of self and collective identity in Kingston and Lim’s autobiography. The question about the experience of Chineseness is the starting point. But what should I mean by “experience of Chineseness”?

Juxtaposing Kingston’s and Lim’s narratives, what is conspicuous is the difference in their attitudes or the distance accorded to Chinese identity. While Kingston often speaks of Chineseness as an objectified collective identity that she ‘contends’ with in her daily life, Lim’s experience of Chineseness is much more immediate and therefore, perhaps, much less visible in the narrative. Though it is an almost-mythic presence in her narrative, Lim actually had a lived-memory of China. And having been in Southeast Asia during World War II, when Chinese nationalism surged throughout the region, she experienced directly the solidarity felt amongst the Chinese in Southeast Asia. The assistance she received from other Chinese and numerous encounters with non-Chinese that reminded her of her Chinese origin gave her ample opportunity to reaffirm her Chinese identity.⁶ However, in general, there are few explicit accounts of her conscious dialogue with her Chinese identity, Chinese traditions, and her relationship to China. Instead, the recognition of her Chineseness and the experiences that result from it appear in passages like this:

⁶ “On another occasion I overheard a foreign missionary scolding a nurse: ‘you dirty stupid Chinese, you are so unlike the Japanese who are very nice people, so my father tells me. You Chinese are stupid, now get out’” (SS:97).

Word spread among the Chinese of Tembilahan that I, a fellow Chinese, had been brought in seriously ill. They came each day to visit me, bringing clothing, money and food which they had collected. Such kindness opened my heart to them and later when I was a prisoner I used to pray that they would be spared the ravages of the Japanese (SS:136).

Or on other occasions, in a revulsion against those Chinese who did not (in her mind) fulfil the moral obligations to support other Chinese is implied, as when she yells at two wealthy Chinese who castigate her for running away from Japanese victimization,

“You could have helped me but you prefer to see me, a Chinese, become a prostitute”(SS:204).

On still other occasions, her identification as Chinese comes with the puzzling realization of the heterogeneity of Chinese:

...I knew that many of the kind and generous Chinese had walked miles to bestow their warmth and gifts on me..... The Chinese were very willing to help us, but the language made it difficult. I was the only Chinese in our group but I was not proficient in the dialect spoken there. (SS:138)

But such comments about Chinese identity are not taken up for further examination. If anything, Lim emphasizes her cosmopolitan worldview, and highlights the multicultural settings in which she lived out her adventures. Thus, ironically, while Lim is submerged in the Chinese diaspora (both as its victim and beneficiary) she does not actively discuss the experience of being Chinese.⁷ Rather, her experiences of Chineseness manifest her expectations and experiences of ethnic solidarity as a result of the sense of shared characters,⁸ experiences and predicaments.

In Kingston's narrative, on the other hand, her experiences of Chineseness—how she struggled to understand it and make it hers—form one of the central plots of her life story. Pivotal to this discussion are the “talk-stories”: the communal oral narratives that include both folkloric stories and family histories (Huntley 2001:66). Numerous talk-stories from China that her mother tells her are scattered through the text, entangled with, and giving significance to, her daily

⁷ Lim's experience seems to be a bit different. In part because of uniquely multicultural setting of Singapore where there were more diversity among the Chinese population, and also because many of the movements forced her to cross various boundaries, the idea of village does not seem to enter into Lim's consciousness. Her uncle from Singapore... fatal thrust his betrayal had brought to the family ... Part of this may derive from the social context of Southeast Asia. Compared to North America, Chinese population in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia was much larger. This may have allowed her to go relatively oblivious to Chineseness. At the same time, as an orphan, she did not have anybody that insisted the Chinese tradition upon her.

⁸ In rare occasions she steps back a little and say something like, “I am grateful for having been brought up in this way; the Chinese have always attached great importance to personal relationships and this religious teaching fits in with our way of thinking” (SS:99).

experiences in the United States. Within her narrative, the talk-stories mingle freely with dreams and reality; where the stories leave off, dreams take up again, spilling into her waking hours in a bricolage of connotations and interpretations. In some cases, such stories, tucked away in the junk-box of memories, are brought back to her consciousness at a later point in life and turned into “a story to grow up on”(WW:5).

After I grew up, I heard the chant of Fa Mu Lan, the girl who took her father’s place in battle. Instantly I remembered that as a child I had followed my mother about the house, the two of us singing about how Fa Mu Lan fought gloriously and returned alive from war to settle in the village. I had forgotten this chant that was once mine, given me by my mother... (WW:20)

“The beginning is hers [Kingston’s mother’s], the ending, mine”, as she says, throughout the memoir, Kingston repeatedly invokes her mother’s “talk-story” in opening the stories to her life (WW:206). As soon as that narration begins, she goes about expanding her imaginations of it, remaking the tales so the protagonists’ lives “branched into” hers, so that she can identify with the story, and draw “ancestral help” from them (WW:8). Thus, her ‘No Name aunt’ is rescued out of her oblivion in Kingston’s version of the story. Imagining herself as Fa Mu Lan, Maxine, the child-protagonist, turns herself into a ‘woman warrior’; with the tattoo of the ideographs ‘revenge’ on her back, the female avenger—whose cryptic mission is to ‘revenge-report’ in her rereading—becomes Maxine.

But these stories, tailor-made by her imagination, sometimes enhanced the incongruity with her present life.

“My American life has been such a disappointment” (WW:45).

Kingston’s mother’s stories were typically followed by accounts of prejudices toward girls in Maxine’s Chinese-American communities. “Maggots!”, “No girls!” her great-uncles would yell at them; “feeding girls is feeding cowbirds” (WW:46), other emigrants, including her parents, would say. The preferential treatment boys received infuriated her. The anticipation of servitude in wedlock, and above all, the threats, (probably told in jest),⁹ of being sold into slavery in China, seem to have perpetually plagued her childhood.

As required by the tenet of diaspora, ‘homeland’ for Kingston was certainly something that recurred in her awareness. The numerous talk-stories she heard as a child took place in China; she was constantly reminded by her parents that they will one day go ‘back’ to China, where she had never been; and there are the letters from the relatives in China, who demands money, make her parents cry, and themselves had “to talk-story too” (WW:50). Homeland, as a faraway land she

⁹ Couldn’t have been just a jest if Janet Lim says she was sold to slavery, one might say. But at the same time we are told later on that her parents were the kind of people that just said that kind of things.

had never been to, brought confusing news in “the language of impossible stories” (*WW*:87), spoke about the hardship of the relatives and mentally kidnapped Maxine’s parents, who “suspended America” whenever they said ‘home’ (*WW*:99-100).

But at moments, China seemed much closer to her than mere stories. Even in the United States, “the family had settled among immigrants who had also been their neighbours in the ancestral land” (*WW*:15-16). As such, Maxine knew that the reputations at ‘home’ were carried over to the present (*WW*:52), and she worried that wrong memories could still “incite the kinspeople even” in America (16). Occasionally, there were some ‘villagers’ who would try to teach Maxine Chinese-beauty, reproaching her “pressed-duck voice” (192), and rumoured about her habit of picking her nose (*WW*:194). And if, for the emigrants, Chinatowns were perceived as “a home away from home” (Takaki 1998: 253), for the American-born children, China was a “Chinatown bigger than the ones” in the US (*WW*:109).

If the Chinese neighbours taught her their version of Chineseness, she was also aware of the white society’s vision of the Chinese. They *embarrassed* her by saying stuff like “No tickee, no washee, mama-san?” (*WW*:105). And she *resented* the fact that “[some whites] thought [Chinese] were beggars without a home who lived in back of the laundry [... and] felt sorry” (*WW*:171). The impact of the opinions of others was insidious. Throughout the memoir, Kingston confides that the concept of ‘American-feminine’ preoccupied her mind as a child. She associated whispering with American-feminine, as opposed to the vociferous Chinese women (*WW*:11, 172); she sees in American faces, disgust at hearing the loud-mouthed Chinese (“chingchong ugly, to American ears” (171)); the way she walked, the way she looked straight into others’ eyes all made her American-feminine. At various points in the narrative, she highlights her American sensibility, offended by her mother’s (and her aunt’s and cousin’s) lack of American ways. And she says that she would rather eat plastics and t.v. dinners than the squid eyes and blood pudding her mother served her (204).

But why would she bother to tell us about all these desires to be accepted by American society? To whom is this story directed? The question, “Is this story worth listening to?” translates to “Is this story worth telling?” and, perhaps, even “Is this life worthy?” In other words, considerations of to whom my life story is directed, to whom my life is worthy, or to whom I am a full-fledged human are connected in no small degree.

Has she contracted the disease, then, to which us non-Western folks are often susceptible whenever we encounter the Western world? This contagious disease that Fanon came across half a century ago in Martinique—the self-denigrating desire to become human in the eyes of white world (1967: 98), to “emphasize the rupture” from our own kind, through which we measure our

closeness to humanity (Ibid.: 36)—might have caught hold of her self-*becoming*? Did she really write with “white acceptance in mind”, as some critics have charged? (cf. Wong 1998). And has self-loathing overtaken her in this process?

Heralded by the stories of girls’ doomed predicament in Chinese culture, Kingston seems to represent Chinese tradition as something oppressive, something with which she struggles throughout her life. On the other hand, ostensibly at least, her persistent references to American opinions do seem to indicate her wholesale acceptance of American culture. But what are the ramifications of depicting such negative pictures of Chinese-American community?

Some (often male) scholars within the Chinese-American community accused Kingston of misrepresenting the community. Some suggested that Kingston may be exaggerating Chinese-American sexism (cf. Wong 1998:151). Others charged her with purposeful mistranslations (such as ‘ghost’ for *kuei*, which is more often translated as ‘devil’, or ‘heavenly chicken’, translated for frog), which were catered to white audiences who relish such exotic images of Asians (Chan 1998, cf. Wong 1998). They lamented the tendency of Asian American writers to write about their own community in ‘anthropological languages’, as if they were the ‘native informants’ (Robert Ku, cited in Ling 1998:168). And, above all, some even ventured to remind Kingston of the responsibility of ethnic writers (ibid.: 152-153). “What if the single individual’s life happens to confirm or even endorse white perceptions instead of challenging them?” they argued (ibid.:154). If society is already biased towards equating individuals with the community, shouldn’t one avoid narcissistic exposés of idiosyncratic experiences? (cf. Wong 1998:153). Or if this is too much to ask, shouldn’t they at least remember the fact that there are already so many unflattering representations of Asians in the West, and attempt to draw a positive image of the community? (ibid.:153).¹⁰ Orientalist discourses that feminize Asians must be countered by asserting masculinity (cf. Cheung 1998:109); internal quibbles should be kept among themselves within the community so as not to compromise their united front. “According to this logic,” says Cynthia Wong, “the ethnic woman autobiographer victimized by sexism must be ready to suppress potentially damaging (to the men, that is) material; to do less is to jeopardize the united front and prostitute one’s integrity for the sake of white approval”(Wong 1998:153).

Indeed the initial responses of white audiences to Kingston’s memoir largely reflected the fear of these critics. In her essay, “Cultural Misreadings by American Reviewers”, Kingston (1998) replies to several mainstream reviews published especially in celebration of her book. Perturbed

¹⁰ Lynn Pan(1990), whose historiography I introduced extensively in the first part made the similar argument in de-emphasizing the hardship of factory workers and laundry workers among the Chinese diaspora. Because there are so many of these representations already, she opted for devoting more space on successful members of Chinese diaspora.

and irritated by the stereotypical image of the Orient ('exotic', 'inscrutable', 'mysterious'...), which many of the mainstream reviewers identified in *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston writes that this was not what she had in mind at all. Read by culturally insensitive American readers, parodies were mistaken for authentic stories, and subtleties and ambiguities were overlooked for inscrutabilities. "How dare they call their ignorance our inscrutability!" she rages (ibid.:96). Regardless of her intention, her text and her life can be turned into an icon of Orientalist images for a Western audience making a traitor for some Chinese-American scholars.

But within the Chinese-American community, there were other voices as well. Some charged the male critics with poorly-concealed sexism and homophobia (Cheung 1998:110). Others found that their criticism demonstrated a lack of sophistication, or a misunderstanding of women's positionality (Ling 1998). Furthermore, many seemed to agree that although the normalizing tendencies of the ethnic community may be motivated by a necessity to counter the Orientalizing tendency of the dominant society, it was inclined to manifest itself in the form of suppressing differences within the community. What is required is not the censorship of complex individual lives, but to challenge overdetermination by 'descent' (Wong 1998:158). "Instead of asking, 'Is this work typical of Chinese Americans?' why not ask, 'Is this work typical of human being?'" Kingston suggests (1998:101).

But then, how do we interpret statements like these?:

...the land was peopled—the Han people, the People of One Hundred Surnames, marching with one heart, our tatters flying. The depth and width of Joy were exactly known to me: the Chinese population (*WW*:42);

or

when the Communists issued their papers on techniques for combating ghosts, I looked for "Sit Dom Kuei" (*WW*:88);

or, in speaking about the 'ape-man' her mother had encountered in China,

Perhaps it had not been an ape-man at all, but one of the Tigermen, a savage northern race (*WW*:85).

And what about the descriptions of ghosts, exotic foods, anus-less babies and other stories that gave her nightmares? Do they not involve exoticising languages that reinforce the prejudices of mainstream audiences? What were the performative expectations of such representations of experiences, and what were the effects?

Taken in isolation, these texts seem nothing more than a reiteration of the stereotypical images of 'exotic', 'mysterious' and 'superstitious' Chinese. Yet if we pay attention to the intertextuality

of Kingston's text, the complexity of Kingston's hybrid subjectivity comes to the fore. She must contend with multiple images and prejudices against or along which she must narrate, while she crosses back and forth over multiple languages and cultures in writing her memoir. For example, 'ape-man' (*yuán-rén*), written in the Chinese idiom, could connote the famous Peking Man in northern China. Communist 'rationalism' for "combating the ghost" is reminiscent of her mother, Brave Orchid ("a practical woman, [who] could not invent stories and told only true ones" (*WW*:66), and could also exorcise ghosts). And as we sense, by the end of the narrative, Kingston's doubts about the unity of the Chinese, who speak mutually incomprehensible dialects, the irony of the "Han people...marching with one heart" becomes a parody of the myth of this homogeneity—which is perhaps aimed at the 'ghosts' who cannot tell one Chinese apart from another, as well as at hegemonic overseas Chinese leaders who attempt to homogenize their representations (*WW*:104, 129).

Kingston's intertextuality, then, is the implicit references her text makes to assumed public discourses and stereotypes. Even when it may sound like she is simply recounting her story, therefore, Kingston is in dialogue with invisible audiences and in texts. And this confronting and conceding to invisible interlocutors not only ruptures the wholeness of the life by denying the solitude of her individual narrative; it also renders the meaning of the narrative ambiguous, which in turn leaves her own interpretation of her life fluid and open-ended. Thus, while the prejudices and the voices of others enter into an individual narrative through the dialogic construction of self narrations, (or as Amy Ling argues, through polyphonic narratives) Kingston can ultimately withhold her judgement on the reality around her, so that her "attempt at a self-definition...is never definitive in the sense of complete, conclusive, static" (1998:172). Indeed, Kingston's narrative is a collage of contradictory narratives. Take, for example, the issue of Chinese silences. In Ronald Takaki's words, something that may be explained as simply as this—

In the outside world, among whites, the Chinese felt they had to be reserved and silent. But among themselves in Chinatown they could untie their tongues, for they like to "talk, and talk loudly, (1989/98:253)

—is turned into a juxtaposition of contradictory comments in Kingston's writing. At one moment she would say "the other Chinese girl did not talk either, so I knew the silence had to do with being a Chinese girl" (*WW*:166); on another occasion, "normal Chinese women's voices are strong and bossy. We American-Chinese girls had to whisper to make ourselves American-feminine" (*WW*:172). The previous statement is not meant to be replaced by the new one, but simply coexists as the contradictory and uncertain reality in which Kingston grew up. Thus, her mother telling her that "we [Chinese] like to say the opposite" (*WW*:203), or her mother's apt

reminder that she has had higher education, and Maxine's insistence on equating that education with 'un-Chinese', have the effect of slowly dissolving the polarization between American and Chinese traditions.

Such a dissolution of the reified boundaries between 'cultures' is further enhanced by the unreliable narration or the 'double-voice discourse' of the child-speaker and the adult-writer, and by the double vision of the Chinese-American child who has internalized the otherness of both Chinese and American cultures (Ling 1998). A child's narration is often suspect, because adults assume that children cannot fully understand what they hear and see. In this context, mistranslation, which I mentioned earlier, not only demonstrates how translated cultures will necessarily be changed, but is also shown to be a *product* of overlapping misunderstandings and mistranslations. Furthermore, uncertain memories (ages of the people around, etc.) also have the effect of displacing the author from the text. We do not know when these rereadings or reinvention of old stories took place; the palimpsest of memories and imaginations does not show the trace of their temporal sequences. Who decided that "unless I see her life branching into mine I cannot draw on their ancestral help"(8)? Who goes about imagining her aunt "comb[ing] individuality into her bob"(9)? Was it Maxine-the-child-protagonist, or Kingston-the-author? When did she hear the chant of Fa Mulan and decide to imagine herself as this heroine? And who saw her other aunt, Moon Orchid, 'whimper' and fall silent before her estranged husband's savage look and inquiry about what she was doing there? And when did she imagine Moon Orchid's husband silencing two old ladies with a slight movement of his finger? Occasionally, Kingston hints to us that what we expect is probably wrong, but there is no way of knowing this for sure.

Kingston's ostensibly unreliable narrations not only allow the author's survival, though; they may also be an expression of Kingston's experience of Chineseness. The talk-stories are repeated in many different versions, homeland is full of hungry ghosts and weeping ghosts, and many Chinese traditions are inexplicable to Maxine. Kingston's experience of Chineseness might be succinctly summarised thus:

When you try to understand what things in you are Chinese, how do you separate what is peculiar to childhood, to poverty, insanities, one family, your mother who marked your growing with stories, from what is Chinese? What is Chinese tradition and what is the movies? (WW:5)

The confusion may be further enhanced by the assumed secrecy of Chinese-American communities.

Keepers of Secrets

Sometimes I hated the ghosts for not letting us talk; sometimes I hated the secrecy of the Chinese. "Don't tell," said my parents, though we couldn't tell if we wanted to because we didn't know. Are there really secret trials with our own judges and penalties? Are there really flags in Chinatown signalling what stowaways have arrived in San Francisco Bay, their names, and which ships they came on? "Mother, I heard some kids say there are flags like that. Are there? What colours are they? Which buildings do they fly from?" "No. No, there aren't any flags like that. They're just talking-story. You are always believing talk-story" (*WW*:183)

Kingston's childhood is shrouded in secrecies. Secrets kept from the white majority, secrets kept from the American-born children: the child Maxine would inquire about traditions or secrets of Chinese-American communities, but her parents would either dismiss them or deny their existence. She no longer knows in what to believe. Suspecting that she was excluded from such secrets shared by 'true' Chinese, she says, "they would not tell us children because we had been born among ghosts, were taught by ghosts, and were ourselves ghost-like"(ibid.). Maxine's sense of alienation from the Chinese-American community heightens. But was her mother really withholding secrets from her?

In his historiography of Asian-Americans, Ronald Takaki (1998/89) relates that tourism in Chinatowns often exploited the mainstream societies' hunger for exotic Asia. For example, playing along with the racist images portrayed in mainstream media, Fu Manchu stories or Charlie Chan movies, the guided tours displayed a sensationalized version of Chinatowns:

The tourists were told about dark, underground tunnels filled with opium dens, gambling joints, and brothels where the slave girls were imprisoned. They were taken to fake opium dens...shown "false lepers"..." (1989/1998:249).

The secrecy, according to this account, was more a contrived image, purposefully cultivated by the needs of the tourism industry, than a quality intrinsic to Chinese-Americans. Then, was Kingston's experience of Chinese secrecies based on American stereotypes about 'inscrutable Chinese'? Has she internalized this suspicion of the others? Or was she once again referring to this stereotype in self-mockery, in her double-voiced narrative?

"Don't tell," "Lie to Americans", her parents would tell them. "Don't report crimes....Ghosts have poor memory anyway and poor eyesight"(184-185). Reflected off the gaze of white Americans who saw the Chinese as an undifferentiated mass,¹¹ and Chinese also wrapping themselves in the protective fold of secrets, perhaps, the us/them binary is further enhanced. But secrets withheld from non-Chinese spilled over to their American-born children as well. Her parents often refused to explain their traditions and rituals. "The adults get mad, evasive and shut

¹¹ In her mother's view, that is...

you up if you ask" (*WW*:185). Perhaps, they did not know how to explain either. The emergence of habitus into the zone of conscious choices, as Appadurai (1996) put it, may be specific to their diasporic existence; something that would, in a 'proper' society, be understood without explanation, becomes a practice that requires rationalization. So Kingston says, "they must try to confuse their offspring as well, who...threaten them in similar ways—always trying to get things straight, always trying to name the unspeakable" (*WW*:5). Is this a testament to the liminal nature of diasporic culture? The invisible world the emigrants tried to build in America that was continually dissolving like a sandcastle in the waves? Perhaps it was Kingston's way of redrawing the boundary of identities—'us', the ones who missed out on the secrets, and 'them', the ones who kept the secrets. Slighted by their parents, have American-borns renounced their Chineseness? Or could it be something related to Kingston's way of telling the unspeakable?

*

"You must not tell anyone."

As the book opens with this intimate disclosure of a secret, Kingston's gesture is utterly ambivalent: suspense is evoked immediately, satisfying the readers' voyeuristic taste (we are 'in' on something we are not supposed to be); but at the same time, this "public exposure of private confidence" insists on remaining a secret (Morrison 1993/70:212): an insubstantial story that cannot be validated. The rhetorical efficacy of such a gesture may rest on the intimacy it establishes right away between the narrator and the audience; in order to crack open the veil of inscrutability that surrounds the ethnic community, "the conspiracy is both held and withheld, exposed and sustained" (*ibid.*). But what are the ramifications of such a paradoxical disclosure of secrets for the actors themselves? As Toni Morrison says of her own novel *Bluest Eyes*, Kingston's opening chapter "was [also] the disclosure of secrets, secrets '[they]' shared and those *withheld from [them] by [them]selves* and by the world outside the community" (my italics, 1993/70:212). The Communal amnesia the secrets elicit; the 'effeminising' Orientalist discourses that ostensibly justifies this censorship; and the way these contradictory demands to 'remember to forget' (Anderson 1991) may present an insurmountable conflict for the individuals, whose identities are overdetermined by the image of the collective. The intricate transaction between the diasporic self and the diasporic community must now be examined in conjunction with secrets and representations.

In this section, I want to look at Kingston's two anti-heroines, 'No Name Woman' (with whom she starts her memoir) and Moon Orchid (whose madness leads Maxine to her maturity), in order to discuss the problematic entanglement of self and community that may be particular to women of diaspora. What were the social forces that contributed to such situations? How did the

entanglement of self and community cause such violence as to compel one to kill one's own child?

Kingston's first chapter, entitled 'No Name Woman', begins with the above prohibiting demand 'not to tell', and recounts the annihilation of Kingston's 'No Name' aunt from the family genealogy. This family secret, which her mother tells as a warning to a girl who is just entering puberty, teaches Maxine the cruel predicament of women who dishonour the society's norms of fidelity. Followed by a rare mention of the date—1924—when the men left the village to emigrate to America, her mother's talk-story revolves around the aunt's illicit pregnancy. Her husband—whom she married just before he left for America (in order to secure his remittances and ensure his eventual return to the family)—had not been back in China for years. But as the signs of pregnancy become conspicuous, the villagers plot a raid on the family. On the night of the child's birth, the villagers raid the family house. Unleashing the rein of destruction, procession of the villagers in ghost's costumes takes revenge against the family that houses a woman who breaks the community's 'roundness', or harmony. After the villagers leave that night, Maxine's aunt gives birth in the pigsty. And in the morning the family members find the bodies of aunt and baby in the well.

The year 1924 was a significant date for the Chinese connected with emigration to America (Li 1998:199). It was the year the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was amended to preclude Chinese women from entering the country (ibid.). At the beginning of the century, despite the Exclusion Act, Chinese Americans were experiencing a momentary growth of the community. Unlike in the nineteenth century, when only one out of every twenty Chinese immigrants was female, the beginning of the twentieth century had seen a gradual increase in the immigration of women. In such optimistic times, the amendment of the Act was perceived to be a purposeful sabotage of the Chinese community. White America's desire to prevent the establishment of "additional Oriental families" in the United States was explicit in public discourses (Takaki 1998:235), and as such, especially for those who had rejoiced to see how they were repopulating the community, the 1924 amendment came as a blow. "So they passed this law to make us die out all together", some said (ibid.).

The idea of an absence of women as a loss of community, therefore, was particularly resonant in the year 1924. The implicit equation of women with community, though, goes further back in the nineteenth century, when host states understood the immigration of Chinese women to be a crucial element of the establishment of Chinese communities. The ephemeral existence of life without women often led to pathological communities of male sojourners who wasted away their lives pouring their time and money into gambling, opium, whoring, and self-pity (Takaki 1998).

In Hawaii in the nineteenth century, for example, the planters actively lobbied to encourage the emigration of women for this reason (ibid.).

In 1930, the regulation regarding the wives of citizens was repealed in the United States. Kingston's mother, Brave Orchid emigrated to the United States under this new amendment (albeit a decade later) in the wake of World War II. Many families, however, remained separated. Brave Orchid's younger sister, Moon Orchid, offers one such example. Her husband in America diligently sends remittances, and her life in Hong Kong is relatively carefree. But the expectation of reunion is continually held in abeyance; even when legally it became much easier for her to join her husband in the United States, he opted to abandon Moon Orchid in darkness, concealing the fact of his marriage in the United States from her.

Among the Chinese diaspora, the practice of having different families in each country of residence was not uncommon (Ong 1999).¹² Contrary to the romanticized image of Chinese families and extensive *guanxi* networks that aided their transnational trade (which the elites of Chinese diaspora emphasized) (ibid.:117, Hoy 1998:52), the reality of many Chinese families was entrenched in conflicts and tragedies. In her interview with Jody Hoy, Kingston also confides that she was trying to debunk this myth in her memoir (ibid.). In what Ong calls this a "collective complicity over domination and exploitation" of women and the poor (1999:117), the 'family governmentality' effected by the discourses of diaspora did not affect the members of the family equally. While the fathers were relatively free to go across oceans to escape the present family, the women were usually expected to remain at home (Hoy 1998:52). In such cases, the task of maintaining already fragile communities and traditions fell solely on the women's shoulders.

As large-scale migrations were altering the face of villages in Southern China, meanwhile the May Fourth movement of 1919, which spread out from the North, was advocating a radical transformation of society and tradition. Criticizing the Confucian tradition for stultifying modernization, this intellectual movement also railed against the maltreatment of women, including widow burials and foot-bindings. Although some historical accounts suggest that the influence of this movement did not reach quite as far south as Guangdong province, where Kingston's family was from, perhaps the anticipations of change was still in the air (Wang 1991).

In such a context,

they expected her [the No Name aunt] alone to keep the traditional ways, which her brothers, now among the barbarians, could fumble without detection. The heavy, deep-rooted women were to maintain the past against the flood, safe for returning. But the rare

¹² A Vietnamese-Chinese autobiographer Tri Lam (2001) also writes that his grandfather also had wives in China and in Vietnam.

urge west had fixed upon our family, and so my aunt crossed the boundaries not delineated in space (*WW*:8).

The roundness—the equilibrium produced through time and land—was already shaky because of the separation between the members of the community effected by emigration. Now, as the villagers found the source of this crack in her aunt's infidelity—the break in the continuity of the descent—the villagers had to ensure that “this roundness...be made coin-sized so that she would see its circumference: punish her at the birth of her baby” (*WW*:13). What they made her realise was that individual acts could embody the cosmic crisis of the whole community. “The villagers punished her for acting as if she could have a private life, secret and apart from them”(ibid.).

In reading this story, I was constantly reminded of Toni Morrison's works: the complex entanglement of community, memory, violence and self that she invokes in her novels. In particular, Margaret Garner's murder of her own child, on which Morrison based her novel *Beloved*, has some elements that are insightful in trying to understand the predicament of No Name Woman. Situated in antebellum America, *Beloved* is a story about the remembrance of the excruciating suffering inflicted by the institutionalized violence of slavery. Sethe, a runaway slave and the fictionalized counterpart of Garner, is perpetually haunted by the memory of her deed: the murder of her own child when threatened by re-enslavement. In commenting on this predicament, Toni Morrison says, “when you are the community, when you are your children, when that is your individuality, there is no division... It was for me this classic example of a person determined to be responsible” (Gilroy 1993b:177).

When tradition and communities are dissolving, or were mere illusions to begin with, there is a certain violence intrinsic to the expectation that anyone be the ‘keeper of the traditions’—especially when such traditions work against you. The action of No Name aunt must be understood in this particular context, I think. In order to spare the child from the ‘social death’ (borrowing Das's words) fated by illicit sex, in order to sustain illusion of the community, and in order to prevent the damage from spreading any further, she killed her child and committed suicide; and this might have been the responsible act. What would a child without any legitimate descent do in a community that holds enmity against his or her very existence?, Kingston reasons. The sad predicament of the newborn must be cut short. Just as she kills herself without uttering the name of her inseminator, thereby sparing him from communal sanction, No Name Aunt's act was an act of tremendous sacrifice, to protect the child from a futureless existence and to protect the community from collapsing. But is this it? The erasure of self for the sanity of the community?

In her chapter on subaltern history, Gayatri Spivak (1999) discusses the suicide of a young Indian woman. The tragedy of Bhubaneswari Bhaduri's suicide resides not only in the fact that it was mistaken for a case of illegitimate pregnancy; it is also because, despite all the unspoken signs she deliberately left behind to dispel this misunderstanding, her attempts to speak through her body were repeatedly ignored and dismissed by her own family. 'To speak', in Spivak's sense, does not refer to a monologue in solitary, but a dialogic interaction premising a listener. It was in her anguish over how Bhaduri's speech could be heard only through her "distanced decipherment", that Spivak lamented, that "subalterns cannot speak" (1999:308).

Generally, 'subaltern' refers to multiply subjugated subjects.¹³ Especially used in colonial and post-colonial settings, where the traditional societies are compromised by the influence of the Western impact and global economy, the subalterns are distinguished from both the foreign and indigenous elites in two ways; 1) it is the zone which is "cut-off from the mobility" accrued by these transformations, and 2) unlike the indigenous elites who are afforded representative status, subaltern voices often go unheard (Spivak 1996).

If we are to apply this subaltern paradigm to overseas Chinese, clearly we cannot take the whole diaspora as subalterns; as discussed earlier, many overseas Chinese are upwardly mobile entrepreneurs, and despite their fragile political existence in Southeast Asia, they are growing into a vociferous group. Rather, I take 'subaltern' to refer to the subjects within the overseas communities, who are given the impossible task of maintaining the traditional norms and community when they are radically destabilized by the experience of migrations. In other words, subaltern refers to the individuals like No Name Woman and Moon Orchid, who are expected to mould their lives into the patterns of the traditional cosmology. And as in the self-immolation of widows, which Spivak speaks of, these subjects occasionally come under a pressure to demonstrate their "conformity to older norms at a time when these norms had become shaky within" through self-destructive practices (Nandi, cited in Spivak 1999:289).

But does such transformation of private acts into public symbols not do violence to the experiences of subalterns? Has Kingston manufactured the story of "perfect filiality" and repatriated the No Name aunt to the normative discourse of the community out of something much more radically subversive?

¹³ The word seems to have different definitions according to the degree of particularity of the discussion. I will use the term 'subaltern position' in particular to refer to the subject position in which silence is required for the survival of the community which is threatened by the dominant representation of the community that is denigrating to the community; and 'subaltern' to refer to individuals like No Name Woman, Moon Orchid and 'crazy women' in Kingston's text.

As usual, Kingston's attitude remains ambivalent. Among the multiple rereadings (and re-listenings) of her mother's talk-story, Kingston reads into this aunt a strong, independently-minded, and at the same time somewhat coquettish woman who "combed individuality into her bob" (*WW*:9), yet a woman who gave birth in the pigsty to "fight better" like the women of old (*WW*:14). She is a woman who pursued her own private happiness—perhaps, not an object of pity. Thus Kingston's narration is not a plea for empathy on behalf of her aunt. Rather, she is "*telling on her*, [because] she was a spite suicide, drowning herself in drinking water" (my italics, *WW*:16). A 'well', in Chinese, connotes order;¹⁴ it is a source of family life, and Maxine's aunt has poisoned it. Maybe the aunt was trying to remind them how screwed up the community was by defiling the source of the community's life. But Kingston is unsure of siding with her, either. Partly because in the immigrant society of Stockton—where the neighbours were also the neighbours from home, "a wrong word would incite the kinspeople", and the 'weeping ghost' is always hungry for "a substitute" (ibid.) (Kingston herself)—so all she could do, as she confesses here, is to participate in her punishment by forgetting her.

Perhaps such ambivalent identification is necessary for subaltern subjects to emerge through the voice of others. Indeed, Spivak's and Foucault's attitudes toward emergence of these subaltern narratives resolutely emphasize heterogeneity. As much as subalterns are celebrated as 'historical individuals' or 'native informants,' they are in danger of objectification as soon as their narratives come into circulation (Spivak 1999:199). As Kingston's mother turned No Name Aunt's story into a dogmatic tale designed to teach about chastity, any live experiences can be transformed into something else. The constant temptation to reduce subaltern narratives into a component of larger discourses (Spivak 1996: 212); the "risk of re-codification [and] re-colonization", by the dominants (Foucault 1980: 86)—any attempt at giving unity and logic to subaltern narratives risks the danger of imbuing it with meaning quite different from what the original actor intended. In her mother's talk-story, for instance, Kingston's aunt's intentions are completely absent. Only her act becomes an icon of traditional predicaments.

So while the subaltern is required to be representative of the community, he or she is still not granted the voice to re-present him- or herself. As I mentioned earlier, the pressure within the Chinese-American intellectual circle to silence Kingston reflects the will of sexist ethnic scholars to dominate representation. Cultural demands on the women of diaspora stem not only from the ethnic community which requires their sacrifice, however; the Orientalist discourse that perpetually tries to feminize the East also imposes certain silences on Chinese women in diaspora (Woo 1999:43). But it may be more than that. Fanon's "racial epidermal schema", the 'curse' of

¹⁴ Jing means well. Jing-rang, for example means 'orderly'.

Chineseness Ien Ang experienced, the indelible marks left by the collective identity may be interiorised, burying the seed of indomitable contradiction deep within the self. Suspicion that the self is equated with community which rejects it may be much more immediate to the subalterns' everyday life than the distant realm of representation might indicate.

"Women may reject the culture that rejects them, but such brave and rare disassociations are not without serious cost", writes Diane Johnson in her review of *The Woman Warrior* (Johnson 1998:82); the madness, suicide, anorexia and hysteria that recur in women's writing appear in Kingston's text as well. As Buss suggests, an "exaggerated behaviour stance to the world during their adolescent years [may be] the result of the incongruities of the divided selves?"; the contradictory predicament of marginalized girls may have some role to play in the madness which befell on many of the women in Kingston's narrative (Buss 1999: 104). Communal amnesia may be important for the construction of a community, but at the same time, it can present tremendous difficulties for the individuals who participate in it. But then, isn't a loss of community, so that such a rejection of tradition might occur, also an important factor?

Community may be stifling or outright oppressive; but at the same time, for many immigrant women, it is an important support group that allows them to reaffirm their sense of self within a world they have migrated. Perhaps we need to pay attention to the loneliness caused by the loss of community as well. As *Brave Orchid* illustrates, the impossibility of maintaining a community in the US is one of the central themes expressed in Kingston's narrative. It may be that in trying to maintain the illusion of community some immigrant women end up going mad. The case of *Brave Orchid*'s sister, Moon Orchid, may indicate one such victim of the contemporary effects of diaspora.

For Moon Orchid, the presence of family (as a community) had been indefinitely deferred to the unknown future. And when *Brave Orchid* tried to restore this family by bringing her to the United States and forcing her to confront her husband, and when this effort failed to bring about the desired effect, something fragile broke in her sister. Moon Orchid lived with her own daughter, who lived in the United States, for awhile, but became permanently paranoid; fixated on the imagined conspiracy of 'Mexicans', she became suspicious about any movements in and out the household. *Brave Orchid* told Maxine that "the difference between mad people and sane people...is that sane people have variety when they talk story. Mad people have only one story that they talk over and over" (*WW*:159). In Kingston's account, until she entered the mental asylum, Moon Orchid only had one story.

"There were many crazy girls and women" in Kingston's neighbourhood (*WW*:186). The woman next door, whose husband had bought her in China; Crazy Mary, who was left behind in

China as a toddler and sent for later to the United States when she was twenty;¹⁵ and the ‘witch’ the children named ‘Pee-A-Na’ who was the village crazy woman: in one way or another, these women seem to have had tragic experiences associated with migration. And eventually they are all locked up in the ‘crazy house’, and forgotten.

The presence of these lost or forgotten stories is pervasive throughout Kingston’s narrative. It begins the story with the forgotten aunt, followed by the woman warrior whose mission is to ‘revenge-report’ such stories. Moon Orchid’s story that succeeds this story is in fact not much of a ‘report’, but hearsay. And as the narrative comes near the end, speech becomes increasingly problematic, as the craziness of the women around her seeps into her mind. Growing up, Kingston was pestered by the idea that she may be the crazy one for her family. She walks around donning dishevelled clothes; she talks to “people that aren’t real inside [her] mind”(190); and when she began to tell her secrets to her mother, her mother yells at her,

“Senseless gabblings, every night. I wish you would stop. Go away and work. Whispering, whispering, making no sense. Madness. I don’t feel like hearing your craziness” (*WW*:200).

The things she thought so important that she had to keep them secret, now having been shared, condemn her to madness. Could it be that crazy people become crazy because other people had simply no ear for other stories? The speech in itself, only seem to exacerbate Kingston’s loneliness.

For many years, scholars that study trauma and suffering have been concerned with the conundrum of representation and silence that face the victims of violence and “social death” (as Das puts it). While some conveniently advocate the unequivocal value of narration to alleviate the pain of suffering (Ortiz 1985, Becker et. al. 2000), others express a great ambivalence toward narration and suffering (Das 1997, Morris 1997). Narratives can restore coherence shattered by violence, but at the same time, once objectified, suffering can take on a life of its own. Especially when society is impervious to, hostile to, or too eager toward the sufferings of the victims, we must be doubly careful in advocating representation.

In “Language and Body”, Veena Das(1997) discusses the haunting presence of suffering experienced by the victims of sexual violation during India’s Partition period. Such unspeakable experiences of violence are continually pushed to oblivion in the face of a society that refuses to acknowledge women’s pain. But for the victims, the experience of loss haunts the present: not only through the objectification of their body, but also through the lingering threat of the

¹⁵ Meanwhile the parents were replaced by the remittances, and when she was brought to America, Kingston says, it was done with the expectation that she would be young enough to learn enough English to translate for her parents.

“poisonous knowledge” which may one day rekindle the violence that has engendered this suffering. Tagore’s male character, Sandip, does exactly this; he drinks this poison of victimization and turns it into a collective desire for nationhood. Das, therefore, does not see the articulation of suffering as unproblematically good. But does this mean that the alternative path is only to endure the suffering in silence and in solitude?

The articulation of secrets as secrets may be the strategic way in which individuals in a doubly marginalized position can voice unspeakable stories about the community. After all, was Kingston not charged as having betrayed the community? Kingston’s double-voiced discourse conceals this subversive quality of her narration, and the danger of representing the individual that is so easily slip into the representation of the community. In the gesture of betraying secrets, perhaps, Kingston not only establishes herself as an individual but seems to follow in the footsteps of other women, who attempted to ‘translate’ across a polarizing patriarchal society.¹⁶ But what of silences?

Invoking Enigma

I was miming the route of unknowing, a progressive différance, an “experience” of how I could not know her. (Spivak 1999:241)

In *Articulate Silences*, King-Kok Cheung discusses various Asian American literatures through their silences. Confronting the oft-reiterated judgement of Asian American silences as indicative of their docility or inscrutability, these Asian American writers have been trying to demonstrate how silences are not only the consequences of prohibition, but can also play active functions in communication (1993: 2):

Language can liberate, but it can also coerce, distort, as is widely recognised today....I am not tempted to romanticize or exoticise [silence]...silence has many ugly faces...speechlessness induced by shame and guilt, the oppressive or protective withholding of words.....Then there are the enabling silences, such as the listening in Kingston, the elliptical telling in Yamamoto, and above all, the breathtaking rendition of soundless but “accurate and alert knowing” in Kogawa. These silences, demanding utmost vigilance from writers and readers alike, are the very antithesis of passivity (Ibid.: 20).

The “unreliable narration” of protagonists, “muted plots” that are not narrated but still clearly communicated through the text, or “double-voiced discourses” that require attentiveness to the multicultural background of the writer: these techniques and styles recast silence in positive light,

¹⁶ Perhaps she images herself as the figure La Malinche—having been raped by the Spanish, having betrayed her people by translating...

while undermining the cultural bias towards North America about Asian American silences (Ibid.: 15).¹⁷

In this section, therefore, the silence that I want to invoke is not the victimizer's 'silencing' effort, nor just the victim's passive 'silenced-ness'; rather, I want to give attention to this movement between the silencing and the silence as an active strategy that might serve to communicate rather than negate it. By bestowing silence and secrets with some dignity, we may add complexity to the characters and promote multidimensional readings of the narratives. Esther Rashkin's (1992) study of 'phantoms' in literature may also be an effort to such ends. Applying psychoanalytical methods to literature, Rashkin attempts to show that the missing or untold story can be detected through "missing complements, whose traces are embedded in the text" (Ibid.: 5). Ghostly figures, secrets or obsessions that cannot be explained through the character's visible experiences in text, allude to encrypted stories hidden behind the text (Ibid.: 9). Coming from slightly different angles, both Cheung and Rashkin pay attention to the "forces that make a character create her- or himself as an enigma that obstructs" objectification (Rashkin 1992: 11).¹⁸ While inscrutables are mysteries in the absence of attention, enigmas are figures of intense interest; to identify something as an enigma suggests curiosity, while inscrutability is a result of effortless judgement. But what are the autobiographical consequences of enigmas and the strategic uses of silences and secrets?

The elements of enigma in the protagonist's narrative may have the potential to allow a closure to the story without inviting in the fixity of narrative wholeness and the danger of appropriation. I think there may be two consequences. Firstly, it may have implications for the issue of mourning. If we wish to give a sense of closure to suffering without turning that suffering into an obsession, ambivalent communication achieved by silence may be an important avenue by which to mourn loss in the absence of the condition that allows speech.

Secondly, the enigma of character may be an intrinsic quality necessary for self becoming. In spite of overwhelming expectations of truth and transparency in self-disclosure, an excessive exposé of self only diminishes the self. One might say, the more you speak, the less there is left

¹⁷ Cheung argues that some of these literatures are driven by the plots that are marked by unspoken gestures, not only by the characters but also by the narrator. Having the disadvantage of being unfamiliar with the literature Cheung discusses, I did not quite follow what he (?) meant. But I think this deserves further investigations.

¹⁸ Rashkin's study, which follows Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, is focussed on repressed secrets of other family members that propel the plot or the character's actions without his or her own awareness. For example, Abraham's addition of sixth act to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* tells us that Prince Hamlet's hesitation about killing his uncle was caused by his father's secret about his murder of King Fortinbras, without his awareness. Although these radically innovative interpretations of secrets seem to have no particular basis (I suppose they are just making them up as examples, or I simply do not understand), attention to the existence of unspeakable stories within text seems to be useful.

within you; as Sandip in Tagore becomes suspicious that his constant self 'narrativisation' is only to "hide the fact that there is no inner life inside"(Das 1997: 74), legibility renders an individual more one-dimensional, for life is always larger than any representations. Some experiences cannot be captured in the available narrative vocabulary (Bruner 1986). Sometimes individuals may rely on metaphors to express their reality, but at other times even that would present a reduction of one's experiences. For example, in speaking about Freud's study of *Wolf man*, Nicolas Rand suggests that, entrenched in contradictory demands to tell the truth in spite of the impossibility of doing so, one might end up constructing a 'psychic tomb' or a crypt which allows one to "live without having to say yes or no to the reality or fiction while referring to both" (1986:lviii). This 'reality' would be relegated to non-existence without our attentive listening to such 'articulate silences'.

I began this essay by positing that our speech is a negating practice through which we attempt to free ourselves from the prejudices and historicities that define us in spite of ourselves. However, it appears now that certain enigmas and mysteriousnesses are just as important if we are to avoid re-inscribing ourselves through our own speech. The "secret keeps us, not the other way around"(245), as Spivak stresses in her celebration of Rigoberta Menchú. Yet this is not to say that we should retreat to our muted reticence. We must remember that at the beginning of Fanon's quest for the self there was a silence, which he recognized to be the absence of questions. The questions elicited in the audience through listening must remain so that the dialogues are kept open.

So in closing Part Two, I want to attempt a tentative exploration of Kingston's enigma. My gesture is not intended as an endeavour to decipher, but to invent and exploit the potentiality of the text within the confines of what is already demarcated in it. In *Woman Warrior*, hyperbole, understatements, tangled temporality and fictionalization are the obvious ways through which Kingston eludes the manacles of realist narratives, but here, the crime I propose to commit would be to reread Kingston's 'talk-story' about men.

In *Woman Warrior*, what are conspicuously missing are the voices of the men. In part we see Kingston's politics. She intends to give the women voice through her. But at the same time, the comments from or about the men in her family, with the exceptions of her brothers, are quite absurd. The "crazy-ever-since-the-little-Jap-bayoneted-him-in-the-head" grandfather's sexual perversion which is strangely emasculated (how did he get bayoneted by the Jap's before 1924?); her father's comment "the parents and teachers of the criminals were executed", in their meeting with her teacher (*WW*: 82); the Great-Uncles who are insanely anti-girls; and her father's abrupt

and uncalled for comments about how Confucius said that a husband may kill his wife (*WW*:193): the men in her family are weird indeed.

Nobody in the story seems to be particularly sane, so it is not all that surprising that the men are also insane. But then, does this insanity conceal something? Our own ignorance? The child-vision, since we see them as crazy through Maxine's child-vision?

There was one boy Kingston calls 'the hulk', who stalks Maxine in her teens. A 'retarded', 'ugly' and monstrous guy with an endless source of money; the hulk is the crystallization and bare existence of male sexuality, nothing else. As his secret box uncovers his only intelligence being filled with pornography, there is nothing else in him. It appears that, he does not even have a family or friends either. In contrast, her "crazy-ever-since-the-little-Jap-bayoneted-him-in-the-head" grandpa is excellent in work, and back in China, he goes to exchange a son for a neighbour's daughter, and dotes on the little girl more than he would a son for he empathised with her unfortunate predicament.

In this memoir, Maxine has two nemeses, against whom she fights her bitter battles. One is the mute girl, whom she bullied, and the other is this hulk she exorcises with the outburst of secrets. Several critics have interpreted the incident with the silent girl in terms of the internalization of dominant values about silences that she internalized (eg. Johnson 1998). In a sense, the girl is her surrogate self—the muteness, something to be purged out of herself. But having failed to do so, she contracts a mysterious disease; the only description of which she offers is the muteness it caused in her. Perhaps she had never got over the fear of speech. At the same time, we also know that her prediction about the mute girl's predicament was eventually proven wrong. Maxine had based her judgement upon the traditional Chinese attitude toward women, but she finds that this Chinese family did support its mute girl, leaving us with wavering certainty about the Chinese tradition. And besides, the mute girl's silence was so powerful, it made her cry.

I wonder how the hulk represents something about her too. This mentally retarded boy, she says, followed her around "probably believing that [they] were two of a kind" (194). She changes her actions, stopping the limp she used to feign in order to keep her imaginary suitors at bay. She does not tell anybody about him. And maybe the hulk turns into a secret suitor that kept on reminding her of her own social awkwardness. At the same time he becomes emblematic of Chinese traditions she fears (in her mind, the arranged marriage is the quintessential element of Chinese tradition that she objects to). So when she bursts out with her secrets, as she exorcise this monster, the speech that comes out of her mouth is all about how she no longer wants the Chinese tradition.

But the exorcism is such a violent act, especially when it is directed to a 'retarded' boy, who is already stigmatized, and in need of protection. The boy disappears like Morrison's *Beloved*, and gets promptly forgotten, because "it was not a story to pass on"... (Morrison 1989:).

So did she make him up? Is he the surrogate of the Chinese tradition, which is, like the boy, emasculated yet perversely sexualised in Western discourses? Like her grandfather who contained this ambiguity in talk-stories and lies, Chinese tradition frustrates her because she cannot tell the difference between what is true and what is not. But as she goes down the list of secret things, a certain remorse, loneliness, spread like a spider web in her mind as the secrets multiply ("No listener but myself"(204)).

In a sense this was the manifesto of her individual self. The secrets rejected echoes in her self, and this heightened awareness of loneliness may have been the farewell she said to her child-vision, filled with ghosts, bats and talk-stories. And, eventually, as her mother declares her 'Ho Chi Kuei', *Just Like Ghosts* (perhaps not for the first time), Maxine awakens from her dream, "packed full with homemade underwears" (or her mother's talk-stories) and begins her passage toward 'American' life. When she left home, she learnt simplicity, which she says she liked, but obviously means the opposite.

But has she really dispelled this child-vision? It seems to me that the child-vision lives on. The ambiguity of the reality, and the perpetual curiosity that the unknown elicits remain. She says that soon, she wants to go to China to find out who is lying: what talk-stories were true ones, and which ones were made up. But at the same time, we are quite assured that she would not go there to dig up the past in order to find the truth.

Conclusion: Past and Diaspora

In her interview with Paul Gilroy (1993b), Toni Morrison speaks about the necessity to “re-inhabit” the people of the past that was entrenched in violence and suffering. Slavery, for the African-Americans often acted as a ‘prohibitive past’ that blocked them from connecting their lives to those of their ancestors. There are many such prohibitive pasts: Nanking Massacre is certainly one of them; Holocaust and other genocidal acts, suicide of No Name Woman and Bhubaneswari Bhaduri, Garner’s murder of her baby, and many other violent pasts that still maintain the heat, the spirit, and the sorrow of those moments are also examples of such pasts that linger in the present. But how do we live with such pasts?

In this thesis, I examined the presence of the ‘homeland’ in the discourses and narratives of Chinese diaspora. Homeland—as the tenet of diaspora goes—is the source of identity. The idea of dispersion from the common origin elicits a sense of camaraderie. And these imagined horizontal ties between disparate overseas communities were something for which the leaders of diaspora community strived. But personally experienced imagined links with the homeland as an axis of one’s sense of self also seem to have tragic implications. “It’s my present that is foreign”, as Rushdie says, or as Kingston’s parents purportedly “suspended America” whenever they mentioned ‘home’, imagining home away from home entails a certain sense of displacement—or evacuation of present from now-here to no-where; in other words, the sojourners sacrifice the present for the promised glory of the eventual return. Meanwhile, time spent away from home seems to be accelerated (“Here we have to hurry, feed the hungry children before we’re too old to work” (*WW*:105)), and the time among ‘folks’ back home appears eternal (“One year lasted as long as my total life here”, as Kingston’s mother says (*Ibid.*:106)).

But what is especially important for me, is that this sense of loss and nostalgia for homeland is not only an individualistic endeavour but also a collective one. The distance accrued by the migration sometimes allowed the individual nationalist leaders of early twentieth century China to imagine the nation as a single entity. But once such individual nostalgias come into circulation, they begin cross-contaminating; different diasporas exchange their vocabularies, images and sentiments in expressing their experiences, which in turn, also enter into the narratives of individual members. Home is experienced communally in conjunction with the sense of solidarity among the diasporic groups. For Chinese diaspora, this sentimental attachment for home may be further enhanced by the memory of the past victimizations and sufferings. And observable, I think, in some of these narratives is the narrative of quest that lays them on the trajectory of the ‘collective destiny’. The idea of ‘homeland’ seems to provide the node in which internalization of

such narratives and the normalization of experiences become 'legitimized' in the national character called 'Chineseness'.

The idea of Chineseness changed throughout the history. I have discussed different visions of Chineseness advanced by different factions of Chinese nationalists at the beginning of the twentieth century; different ideas of the destiny of the nation motivated different versions of Chineseness.

Likewise, individual experiences of Chineseness are also diverse. At least in the text, Janet Lim, who was immersed in the height of the solidarity among the overseas Chinese, had little to say about Chineseness. As if the immediacy of Chineseness obstructed her in constructing objectified images of Chineseness, Lim's narrative is conspicuously devoid of reflexive accounts of her Chineseness. On the other hand, for others, Chineseness becomes something more object-like. Yang and Ang called Chineseness a 'curse'; Kingston's Chineseness is full of stories and fearful anticipations of traditions and homeland. Furthermore, this Chineseness—which acquired such salience in its objecthood—evaporates under closer examination. As I quoted her earlier, Kingston expresses the impossibility of disentangling and isolating Chineseness from idiosyncratic experiences, childhoods, or something peculiar to her family.

The collective identity and personal identity is inextricably intertwined. But how is it then that some people find the collective more oppressive than others? Communities and collective identities are important for us; but as Fanon's insight reveals, there is also the tyrannical face of the community which is tied to dehumanizing effects of self overwhelmed by the collective representation. Following this lead, I repeatedly revisited the issue of *inscrutability* which I understand as, "objectified 'unknown'".

One of the central questions I explored in this thesis was how to rescue the self that is overdetermined by the inscrutability of collective identity. Individuals construe their narratives within the web of pre-existing images, discourses, and relations. In such a context, I asked how we can express ourselves without objectifying ourselves in the same move. The attentiveness toward enigmas, secrets and silences seemed to be something important for this endeavour. The efforts to recognize the subtlety of the cultural others, and communicate in that capacity without ever assuming its completeness is important for any cultural encounters.

But I am not entirely comfortable with the turn toward silences and enigmas, especially if what we are concerned with is related to past victimizations. Could the emphasis on silences merely be a convenient excuse of the victimizers to liquidate the responsibility of their acts? Morrison's attempt to reinhabit the people of the past, to reanimate them with imaginations so

that none can become emblematic may be one passage through which we can remember the past without allowing that past to take over the present.

Carrying such spirit of the search for incompleteness, the title of this thesis “Slippery Bridge” is in a sense, the acknowledgement of misunderstandings that I commit in this thesis. ‘Slippery Bridge’ is my alchemy, my unreliable reading of the word *huaqiao*, which, read by someone unfamiliar to the culture (that is, myself) through the aid of a translation device called ‘dictionary’, might turn into a strange admixture (*hua*/slippery-*qiao*/bridge) as this. At the same time, it is meant to express the slippery arguments that I tread throughout the thesis. Diaspora held by the imagination of homeland slips into uncertain past, which, in turn, poises to slip away from the reality into some fictional reality at any moment. Slippery understanding of ‘Chineseness’, perhaps, is not only Kingston’s idiosyncratic experience but something much more pervasive. Slippery uses of the pronouns (‘I’ turn to ‘you’; ‘we’ turn to ‘them’; and ‘Other’ to ‘other’) reflect not only the ambivalence of identities Kingston invokes, but my utter confusion about this ‘subject-ful’ English language. The slippery uses of the word ‘community’, which persistently troubled me, is also related to how the apparent distinction of imagined community like nations and diasporas, and more immediate community of villages and families, seemed to slip away in some occasions. Meanwhile, *huaqiaos* act as virtual bridges, straddling the tradition retrieved from the past and the Asian modernity and Confucian capitalism. There were earlier connotations of *huaqiao* as the bridge these Chinese diasporas cast between different places and cultural assumptions. Slippery bridges connecting the past and the present, here of adopted home and there of ancestral homeland, fiction and reality, self and community, and the dangers of passing over such bridges are something I tried to elicit in this thesis.

About half a year ago, a student from Law Faculty came to give us a talk about the health service system in Cambodia in our STANDD speakers’ series.¹⁹ If I remember correctly, her contention was that due to the appalling violence during the genocide, the community all but disappeared in Cambodia. And because there is no longer community, she contended, external intervention is indispensable for the establishment of a healthcare system.

Of course, such conclusion was not appreciated so well in a room full of anthropologists, and she did suffer some merciless criticisms from our professors. What do you mean there is no community? There are always communities. If there is no community, then, we might as well just give up. At the time, I also felt slightly annoyed with this speaker. But having come near the end of my thesis, I wonder if there was not some truth in her despair about the loss of community under the destruction of violence. Of course community can always be found. But to sustain that

¹⁹ Biweekly seminar held at STANDD (Centre for Science, Technology and Development).

discovery may be a delicate matter. 'Imagined-ness' of the community may not be limited to large scale communities like nations and diasporas; community, in a strong sense of the term, may have already become a phantom, a mirage for which one may strive but can never attain in this modern world. In her interview with Jody Hoy, Kingston laments the loss of communities in North America. But what is the sense of community? And, what roles do speech, silences, secrets and enigmas play in the construction of micro-level communities? Perhaps, this sense of loss, entanglement of self with community when the community threatens to disappear and the individuals' resilient quest for community, is where we want to focus our gaze.

Glossary

- Han: This name is used as a name for the ethnic group that constitutes China's majority. It derives from the name of Han dynasty(BC 206-AD 220). The word became more widespread during the periods following the fall of Han dynasty. Along with later Tang period, Han period is looked upon with pride and nostalgia by later people for its prosperity and might. At various points in history this word might have been used to elicit ethnic consciousness vis-à-vis northern invaders. Even now, Chinese language is called *han-yu*, its ideographs *han-zi*, and the people, *han-ren*.
- Hua Xia: An mythical dynasty (BC 22 C.~ 17 C.) often thought to be the forerunner of Chinese nation. Hua literally means something like 'magnificent, prosperous, or extravagant', and this has been often used to refer to Chinese civilization or culture.
- huaren: 'Hua people'. This word is much less ethnically charged than the word Han, and unlike the word Zhongguoren, it has less of a nationalist connotation. Nevertheless, huaren still suggests enduring commitment to "preservation of Chinese civilization" in a foreign environment(Wu 1991: 163).
- huaqiao: Chinese sojourners. This term was used more or less ubiquitously to refer to the overseas Chinese until 1950's. One of the earliest use of this word goes back to the time of Nan-Song dynasty when the aristocracy of Song royal court had to move their capital from the North to Hanzhou in the south due to invasion by the northern nomads. Thus even when it was reintroduced at the end of nineteenth century to refer to the overseas Chinese, the word kept the sentimentality of the exile and ephemerality of temporary residence(Wang 1976/92). Nationalist revolutionaries like Kang Yuwei and Sun Yat-sen began to use this word to entice support from the overseas Chinese and elicit anti-Manchu sentiment(7). Huaqiao became a marker of patriotism.
- huayi : Descendant of Hua people. This term conveys weaker link to the tradition and more tolerant to mingling with the host nation and stronger commitment to that environment. Wang suggests that this is related to their political participation.
- Chinese: This English name is said to derive from Qin [Chi'n] dynasty (BC 221-206) which is said to be the first Chinese dynasty to 'unite' China. Despite its short reign, Qin dynasty was powerful; its sphere of influence spanned a great expanse of land, and its renown spread through India and even to Europe. Recent studies show that this word Qin was also used by the people of Han dynasty (BC 206-AD 220) to distinguish them from foreigners from western reach (Hori 2000: 56)
- Zhongguo (Middle Kingdom): This is used as a Chinese name for China in the modern time. During the Zhou period(BC 1100's~ 256), this word referred to the area around Shaanxi province which was under Zhou kingdom's direct rule. Hori suggests that this kind of use can be found in the literature until Qing (1616~1911), and until later period of Qing dynasty it was not used to refer to the whole country.
- Zhongguo ren: This means 'people of Zhongguo'. Often the English word 'Chinese' is used as a direct translation of this word. However, Wu argues that this word has a connotation of nationalism in which fate of the individual Chinese is connected to the fate of China as a nation(1991: 160).
- Zhonghua minzu (Middle-Hua-nation): translated as 'Chinese nation'. During the Republican era after 1911, following the Han ethnic nationalist stage of Revolutionary era, it came to include Tibetans, Mongolians, Manchurians, and Xinjiangese beside the Hans (Liu 608-609). Now if you ask any Chinese persons, they would tell you that Zhonghua minzu refers to 'Han and fifty six minority groups'. David Yen-ho Wu argues that the word

minzu was imported at the turn of century from Japanese use that began during the Meiji period(1991: 161).

luoye-guigen : Fallen-Leaf-Return-(to)-Roots. This word expressed Chinese traditional expectation that even if the Chinese spent their lives overseas, they should return to home (village) and bury their bones there.

luodi-shenggen : Fallen-(to)-Earth-Grow-Roots. Contemporary motto that people should grow their roots where they live.

Chronology

Qin Shi-huang sends Xu Fu to Japan to find an elixir of eternal youth.

Age of Three Kingdom: Wu tries to establish ties with Southern neighbours. Vietnam

Tang(618~907)

Song(960-1279)

Yuan(1206~1368)

Ming(1368~1644)

1400's Cheng Ho and the Age of Seafaring for Chinese.

~1548 Imperial ban on emigration and unlicensed overseas trade (Hori: 324)

1567 Imperial ban lifted (Hori: 324)

1571 Spain founded Manila on Luzon(Pan 24). Flourishing Chinese junk trade follows.

1603 an emissary of Chinese court arrives in Manila, sending a wave of paranoia which ended in a war between Chinese population there and the Spanish.

In the following decades, cruel treatment of Chinese by Spanish had produced several riots and massacres.

Qing(1616~1911)

Koxinga leads a group of decadents (Ming Royalists) on the coastline and continued to resist against the Manchu rule(Pan 7)

1661 Qing government bans overseas trade, creates a buffer zones on the coast to cut the tie between Koxinga and the coastal supporters.

1641 Dutch East India Company (VOC) captures Malacca from the Portuguese

~1680's Qing government permits licensed trade & opens four trade ports.

1690 Dutch brings in restrictive regulations to hinder Chinese immigration. Also, selection of new immigrants begins(Pan: 35).

1740 Batavian fury.

1757 restrict foreign trade to Canton.

18th Century: All Chinese that left the country without the acknowledgement of the Qing government were to expect to be executed on their return.

1786 British expansion in Southeast Asia begins seriously.

<Industrial revolution begins in Britain. Abolishment of trade monopoly of East India Company>

1819 Establishment of Singapore. Chinese follows immediately

1840 Opium War

1842 Treaty of Nanking

1843-1844 Qing government opens Treaty ports to European powers (Pan 44)

1844 British colonials in Strait Settlement declare Chinese born in their territory to be under their protection (Wang 1976/92: 5)

1845 Coolie trade begins in earnest (Pan 45).

***use of the name *hua-min* to refer to the overseas Chinese became a common practice

hua-shang, *hua-gong*, etc became official words used to refer to Chinese traders and workers overseas respectively, which *de facto* liquidated the ban on Chinese to leave the country (Wang 76/92: 4)

1851-1864 Taiping Rebellion

1855-1867 War between Hakkas and Cantonese.

1870's~ exclusively racial and rigid identity categories became widely used in censuses across colonies of Southeast Asia(Anderson 166)

occupation categories like *sangleys*, or 'traders' used previously were replaced by racial category, *chino*(Anderson 168).

1882 Chinese Exclusion act

1890's The term *huaqiao* emerges in official documents

1894 Sino-Japanese War

1894 Sun Yat-sen tours Hawaii to raise funds. In the same trip, under his leadership Hsing Zhong Hui is established.

1895 Sun returns to China. Together with Yang and other members of Chinese Patriotic Mutual Improvement Association, Sun Yat-sen establishes Hsing Zhong Hui in China.

1895 The attempted rebellion fails. Sun, Yang and other Hsing Zhong Hui members go into exile.

1898 The reforms led by Kuanghsu emperor under the guidance of Kang You-wei ends with the coup. Kang goes into exile.

1900 Boxers Rebellion. Taking advantage of this rebellion, Qing government secretly calls for general uprising against the foreigners. Three southern provinces ignore this call(Hsüeh: 116). The rebellion was quenched by the coalition of eight imperial powers(89).

1900 Waichow revolt(Hsüeh: 119)

1902 New Policy Reform

* alliance between the reformers and revolutionists

1905 Tong Meng Hui established under dual leadership of Sun and Huang (Hsüeh 90)

1908 Guangxu Emperor dies.

1908 Tatsu maru incident. Baohuanghui led a successful boycott against Japanese goods (Duara 48;)

1909 Nationality Law (Wang 1998: 17).

1911 Republican Revolution

Wuchang Revolt succeeds. Yuan declares his support for the Republic. Sun Yat-sen becomes the provisional president of Republic of China. Subsequently Sun give up the presidency to Yuan. Kuo

1913 Yuan begins to fight the revolutionary forces.

1914 Sun Yat-sen reorganize the revolution against Yuan.

1916 Yuan dies

1916 Huang dies

1919 May Fourth Movement. An intellectual-led movement advocating radical transformation of Chinese culture. It was a movement primarily based in the north and central China, so the its effect did not reach Nanyang for several years. (Wang 1992: 50).

1928 Chiang Kai-shek reunites the Republic.

* Nationalist educations in Southeast Asia begins to take effect. Increased literacy and distribution of books from China increases the contact between China and Nanyang(Wang 1992: 51).

1932 establishment of Manchukoku

1937 Sino-Japanese War begins

Nanking Massacre.

1948 People's Republic of China

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