
Book Review

Hsiao-Hung Chang - *Fake Globalization*. Taipei: Unitas Publishing, Taipei, 2007, ISBN: 978-957-522-724-1.

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The globalization thesis today is often accompanied by a wide range of debates about global transformations. Other relevant issues, such as the structure of multinational/transnational corporations, world politics and the international economic crisis are all central to these debates. Books about globalization are more likely to be written by mainstream political-economy analysts and social scientists. Fewer writings and references come from academics with a profound knowledge of theories of literature and philosophy. Combining both literary language and philosophical interpretations, Chang Hsiao-Hung's book *Fake Globalization* critically examines the globalization discourse in terms of its complex historical process and hybridity.

As a cultural observer, Chang has captured the global/glocal/local process and cultural negotiations by tracing the historical trajectories of cultural representations in movies, fashion and languages. With her elegant reasoning, she reviews how cultural commodities and images flow, mix and remix to create deterritorial experiences in East Asia, particularly in Taiwan. Shouldering the postcolonial and post-structural theoretical burdens, the author gives readers an insightful understanding of Taiwanese internal cultural implications, cultural formation and cultural identity. However, when reading Chang's writing, one may find very difficult to understand her abstract vocabulary and sentences.

Fake Globalization is a collection of four conference papers presented by Chang in the period 2002–6. The five chapters¹ in the book seek to analyse globalization in

¹ The five chapters in this book are: Chapter 1: In the Name of Fake Globalization; Chapter 2: Light-Flying Globalization; Chapter 3: Fake Logos, Fake Theory, Fake Globalization; Chapter 4: The Empire's New Clothes; Chapter 5: We Are All Taiwanese Alike.

four key dimensions – the global visual-image media, the flow of global commodities, the global empire's control, and global popular culture. With her profound knowledge of feminist theories of literature and culture, Chang, who is Professor of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at National Taiwan University, innovatively chose a linguistic approach, using the Chinese character 'Jia'² (which means fake) as an analytical tool to deconstruct the implications of the overwhelming term 'globalization'. In the first chapter, Chang theorizes the idea of fake, juggles with the diversity between the English/Chinese texts, and plays with their associated multiple meanings. In her opinion, 'fake' can provide us with 'a new escaping route of thoughts' as we read about the dual nature (the global/local, unity/plurality, homogeneity/heterogeneity, etc.) of globalization. She has called this method of theoretical construction 'imaginary articulation' (p. 28). However, Chang's metaphorical style of writing is very much influenced by the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, as part of her theory is grounded on Deleuze's interpretations in 'the powers of the false'³ (pp. 19–21). What makes the book special is not her excessive criticism, but rather her appealing writing, which opens up a new path for creative thoughts to interconnect history, culture, body politics, memories and emotions in the following chapters.

Furthermore, in Chapter 2, giving the examples of martial arts films (e.g. *The Matrix*, *House of Flying Daggers*, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*) and Japanese videogames (e.g. Super Mario, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and Street Fighter), Chang clearly defines globalization as 'providing a possibility for cultural adaptations/receptions in space' (p. 70). I found one section particularly inspiring. As Chang explores the global distribution and the global popularity of the Chinese film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, she defines the global strategy as 'Let Jane Austen meet Wu Xia'⁴ (p. 68). This is a very interesting definition which explains how transcultural articulations can be created by cooperative cultural projects to widen the possibility for global reception.

Another interesting aspect in Chapter 3 refers to Chang's concern with the fascinating 'logomania' phenomenon influencing Taiwan, Hong Kong and Mainland China. Examining the complications of the superlogo industry and the cultural logic of the real/fake Louis Vuitton (LV) in South-East Asia, she calls the circulation of these big brands a 'double cultural reproduction' – by which she

² Jia, means 'fake', or 'by a particular means'. In this book, Chang thinks the word 'fake' is more appropriate than 'pseudo', 'false', 'counterfeit', 'sham', 'feigned', 'spurious', etc.

³ In the first chapter, Chang revisits the idea of 'the powers of the false', which is taken from Deleuze's simulation theory. She also connects her theories to Deleuze's book *Difference and Repetition*.

⁴ Wu Xia is the name of a genre or a style based on kung-fu and martial arts in ancient Chinese novels and stories.

means to address that fake logos in Taiwan are not only ‘an imitation of Japan’,⁵ they are also ‘an imitation of Japanese imitation of Europe’ (pp. 130–1). Within the postcolonial context in the book, the structure of the world capitalism system remains as the centre of critique throughout her writings. By deconstructing the global networks of counterfeit production and consumption, she argues that ‘the logics of global capitalism are subject to the cultural imagination under (western) imperialist ideology’ (p. 148). This criticism of the existing dominant model/structure, however, is not new. What is new here is, as Chang illustrates, governments’ campaigns against the counterfeits and the (re)production of counterfeit products neither rejects nor resists the global trend. Through the transnational/transcultural imagination, they all seem to be ‘appropriating’ the ‘glogocentrism’ – a metaphysical term she invented to criticize the dominant ideology of the ‘logo-linked globe’ and the ‘brand new world’ (pp. 134–6).

In Chapter 4, Chang investigates the representations of fashion and clothes in India, China and Taiwan. Based on Hardt and Negri’s book *Empire*, the fourth chapter teaches us about the construction of different cultural forms and national identities. Using the Indian Khadi and Chinese Mao suit as cultural codes for historical analysis, she discusses how national clothes can simply be used as a national identification to present ‘homogenized heterogeneity’ (p. 189).

The last chapter, which attracted my attention due to my interest in Taiwanese popular culture, significantly exposes the ways in which cultural images and identities clash with the internal social structure behind the logic of the cultural industries in Taiwan. Through detailed analysis of Taiwanese Hip-Hop bands like L.A. Boyz and Machi (whose members are ABCs, American-born Chinese, or ABTs, American-born Taiwanese), Chang claims that the neo-national ideology and the new Taiwanese consciousness behind the ‘Tyke’⁶ phenomenon in fact repeats a 1990s discursive model, aiming to blur the sense of real/fake or inside/outside Taiwanese. This model is thus defined as ‘illusory, imagined, mimic and hybrid’ (p. 245).

However, the book fails to convince to some extent. It is puzzling to be provided with far too many pieces of innovative ideas and creative terms. Chang’s

⁵ ‘The imitation of Japan’ here refers to the historical context that Japan has been a key influence in the Taiwan fashion industry and its people’s fashion preferences from the 1980s. Because of the colonial history and cultural geography between Japan and Taiwan, Japanese fashion magazines become the primary resources to directly influence Taiwanese readers’ consciousness and understanding of fashion.

⁶ In the past ten years, tyke (T.K., pronounced as tai-ke) culture has become a lifestyle influencing popular culture, politics and fashion in Taiwan. The subculture is turning itself into a social movement. T.K. is commonly used today to describe a particular style of how people should dress, talk or think as a local Taiwanese. The main debate in the context surrounds the main issue of locality. The tyke phenomenon reflects a serious internal conflict between the inside/outside communities, and questions how Taiwanese people acknowledge their cultural identity and subjectivity.

complicated discursive interpretations and esoteric approach in her reading of cultural representations and cultural meanings did not seem to reflect the way Taiwanese people think and respond to irresistible global forces. If culture means everyday life, what globalization brings us may not be just the political/economical/social/cultural transformations which constantly change the structure of the world; as a contrast, it is a process of embodiment that essentially involves people's experiences and their lives. In this regard, it is a pity not to see more evidence associated with people's memories, experiences and emotions presented in this book. Ethnographically, such information would help to validate Chang's arguments regarding the politics of domestic identities in a more convincing way.

Many academics may not agree with Chang's concept of globalization and would find her linguistic method inappropriate. Although there were criticisms regarding her conservative views on the current post-capitalist, postcolonialist and Western imperialist ideology, her profound knowledge influences the ways she interprets the industrial histories, contextualizes the globalization discourse, and articulates different historical-cultural signs and deserves more attention from critical readers. The theoretical engagement in this book also shows us the perfect relationship between theories and the author. For academics searching for inspiring cultural elements, I would strongly recommend Chang's thorough analysis in *Fake Globalization*.