Language And Hybridization: Pidgin Tales from the China Coast

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LANGUAGE AND HYBRIDIZATION
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English in China

linguistics and
race

Orientalism

sociolinguistics

the history of
linguistics

This essay looks at the history of pidgin and creole studies in the context of linguistic theory with particular reference to the study of 'Chinese pidgin English'. It argues that, although linguistics makes the claim to be an objective and systematic science, an examination of the past reveals that its own discourses have been shaped by a range of powerful forces from outside the disciplinary study of language. In the case of pidgin and creole linguistics (or 'creolistics'), one obvious influence is from European 'race theory' of the late nineteenth century, seen most clearly in the adoption of a vocabulary which includes terms such as monogenesis, polygenesis *and* hybridization. *In the case of Chinese pidgin English, early accounts of the use of 'broken English' are found in the memoirs of sailors and merchants on the South China coast, and these were later supplemented by missionary and colonial accounts from Canton, Hong Kong and the treaty ports of China. The most influential account was that of Leland (1876), whose 'comic' account of* Pidgin-English Sing-song *contributed to the formation of a cultural imaginary of Chinese people at a time of growing anti-Chinese racism in the United States and Britain. Although many pidgin and creole scholars have denied a direct link between racial mixing and language mixing, it appears evident that the fear (and attraction) of racial miscegenation was at the heart of many western responses to pidgin English in China.*

In the context of postcolonial studies, notions of 'hybridity' provide the space for contrapuntal readings of theory and text, and much else. In linguistics from the late nineteenth century onwards, the study of pidgin and creole languages has been situated within the discourse of a scientific enquiry into the nature and development of human languages, and here the term 'hybridization' is typically seen as an objective and neutral descriptor of processes of 'language contact' or 'mixed languages'. The term 'pidgin' or 'pigeon' did not emerge until around 1860, although commentaries on language contact phenomena from a variety of other viewpoints began much earlier. The theorization of 'broken' languages or 'jargons' began in the late nineteenth century, but was preceded by a hundred years of debate and argumentation about the history and kinship of the world's languages.

Linguistic theory, pidgins and creoles

In the century that followed Sir William Jones' postulation of a shared 'common source' (Jones 1992: 35) for Indian and European languages, linguistics came to be dominated by the 'comparative' method associated with such German linguists as Bopp, Grimm and Schleicher. These linguists used methods that privileged the careful analysis of linguistic data with particular reference to the sound patterns, or 'sound laws', of languages in the Indo-European language family. They also sought to establish genetic relationships between languages, and to establish the links between living languages and extinct parent or 'proto-' languages, which might then be reconstructed on the basis of linguistic evidence. By the latter decades of the nineteenth century, comparative linguists became increasingly confident that they would be able to provide a classification of the world's languages and to construct genealogical trees of all the world's language families. Tree diagrams of the kind drawn by August Schleicher (1821–1868) provided iconic representations of the genetic and kinship relationships that existed between languages, contributing to his *Stammbaum* theory of languages.

August Schleicher at one point even published a short monograph on his reading of *The Origin of the Species*, entitled 'Darwinism tested by the science of language', in which he asserts that:

Languages are organisms of nature; they have never been directed by the will of man; they rose, and developed themselves according to definite laws; they grew old, and died out. They, too, are subject to that series of phenomena which we embrace under the name of 'life'. The science of language is consequently a natural science; its method is generally altogether the same as that of any other natural science. (Schleicher 1983: 20–1)

Schleicher goes on to state that '*[t]he rules now which Darwin lays down with regard to the species of animals and plants, are equally applicable to the organisms of languages*' (p. 30), and that '[t]he kinship of the different languages may consequently serve, so to speak, as a paradigmatic illustration of the origin of species, for those fields of inquiry which lack, for the present at least, any similar opportunities of observation' (p. 45).

The early nineteenth century witnessed missionary work on Caribbean creoles, Indo-Portuguese in Sri Lanka, and a range of other mixed languages and jargons, but it was not until the 1880s that such varieties attracted the notice of 'serious' linguists schooled in the German tradition. The foremost of these was the German-born, Austrian-domiciled Hugo Schuchardt (1842–1927), who never ventured to the tropics but instead developed his intense interest in language mixing through a massive correspondence with missionaries, colonial administrators, and others living in societies where pidgins and creoles were spoken. Schuchardt published over forty articles on pidgins and creoles between 1880 and 1914, and is regarded by some as 'the father of creole studies' (Holm 1988: 29). Schuchardt studied under August Schleicher for a time, but took issue with a number of his ideas, opposing the comparativists' assertion of the regularity of sound change, as well as Schleicher's view of linguistics as a natural science:

> The doctrine of the exceptionless sound laws, imposed entirely in the spirit of A. Schleicher if not actually proposed by him, enters the modern period as a remnant of the past. Nowadays we see linguistics as human science, belonging to the humanities, and we no longer see language as a natural organism, but as social product. (Schuchardt 1885: 33–5, cited in Seuren 1998: 97)

Schuchardt and his contemporary, Johannes Schmidt, developed the notion of a 'wave theory' (*Wellentheorie*) as an alternative to Schleicher's tree model of language families. Languages like pidgins and creoles presented a number of problems for comparative linguists. Not least among these was the challenge that such contact languages posed to the family tree of language; thus the question was raised: 'Where is there a place in the conventional tree for languages originating from two very different parts of the world which somehow combine to form a "mixed language?"' (Sebba 1997: 34). A second issue related to the speed of language change; pidgins and creoles could appear and evolve very rapidly, thus providing evidence against the principle of gradual change derived from the 'uniformitarianism' of Hutton and Lyell in nineteenth-century geology.

In the last thirty years or so, the study of pidgins and creole languages has grown into a distinct branch of linguistics, but many of the ideas debated within this field have their provenance in much earlier discussions of language

variation. One basic distinction made in the field is that between *pidgins* and *creoles*. Thus, a typical linguistic definition is that '[a] *pidgin* is a simple, spoken language which evolves to permit communication between people who do not share a mother tongue', in contrast to *creoles*, which are 'the mother tongues of groups of speakers'. A second distinction is that 'a pidgin tends to be learnt in conjunction with one or more mother tongues', and 'a creole tends to be the sole mother tongue of its speakers' (Todd and Hancock 1986: 351–2). At the level of theory, much discussion in the 1960s and 1970s centred on the dichotomy between *monogenesis* versus *polygenesis*. The monogenetic explanation was simply that 'many of the world's pidgins and creoles could be traced to a common origin, the Portuguese pidgin that arose in the fifteenth century in Africa . . . that was eventually relexified (or translated word for word) into the pidgins of other European lexical bases that gave rise to the modern creoles' (Holm 1988: 46). The polygenetic view is that 'pidgins and creoles arose independently . . . but developed in parallel ways because they used common linguistic material (e.g. from Indo-European and West African languages in particular) and were formed in similar physical and social conditions' (Romaine 1988: 92).

Another biologically related term in wide use in the discussion of pidgin, creoles and mixed languages is the term *hybridization*. For example, Whinnom (1971: 91) argues that 'not only is there no other wholly satisfactory term for the phenomenon of language-mixing, but, *mutatis mutandis*, the biological and linguistic processes of hybridization are closely comparable if not mechanically identical.' Whinnom, however, qualifies his position with a rejection of the notion of inter-linguistic reproduction thus:

> That in terms of the respective hierarchies, biological-linguistic correspondences are valid at only two levels: at that of species-language (and race-dialect) and at that of the minimal genetic-linguistic unit. Consequently, the analogy of two languages 'mating' to produce a hybrid offspring (a pidgin or creole) is quite false, since this is to equate a language with a biotype which (a) is on a different hierarchical level, and (b) has in fact no linguistic equivalent (since the theoretical 'idiolect' is non-comparable). (Whinnom 1971: 91)

He further distinguishes between 'primary hybridization' and 'secondary hybridization', and 'tertiary hybridization'. For biologists, Whinnom argues, primary hybridization equates with 'fragmentation', 'i.e. the breaking up of a species-language into races (incipient species)/dialects', through processes of innovation. Secondary hybridization is 'the inter-breeding of distinct species', which in linguistics is matched by such processes as 'naïve' foreign-language learning and bilingualism, but 'tertiary hybridization', referring to the use of a pidgin lingua franca by speakers who do not share a common first language is language-specific and has no biological analogue (Whinnom

1971: 91–2). Very recently, in the context of world Englishes, MacArthur, in *The English Languages*, uses the term 'hybridization' to refer to a wide range of language contact phenomena, including the processes of code switching and code mixing, as well as the use of 'Anglo-hybrids' such as Frenglish, Russlish and Chinglish (MacArthur 1998: 14, 45).

Early accounts of the Canton 'jargon' 1747–1800

The earliest accounts of Chinese pidgin English were written in the context of the China trade that developed between British and other western merchants in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The basis of this trade was the growing European taste for Chinese teas, silk and porcelain in the eighteenth century, paid for at the beginning of the century largely with silver coin, and by the century's end with imports of opium from British India. By the 1720s the British East India Company merchants or 'supercargoes' had begun to organize themselves collectively and to act together as a council in their dealings with the 'Co-Hong' of Canton (Guangzhou), a local trading monopoly of Chinese merchants who alone enjoyed the right to deal with the 'red-haired barbarians' of Europe. From 1720 onwards the Co-Hong supervised the trade of the British and other European merchants (or 'factors') in Canton, and this system was to last until the 1830s until the period before the 'First Opium War' or 'First Anglo-Chinese War' of 1840–42. The Co-Hong provided interpreters or 'linguists' for the European traders, who translated chiefly through the 'jargons' of 'broken Portuguese' and 'broken English'.

Until 1842, when the British took Hong Kong, trade with western merchants was confined to Canton, and even there they were restricted as to where and how they could live. The Co-Hong merchants rented out 'factories', i.e. large warehouses with offices and accommodation attached, to the westerners, who were permitted to live in Canton for the duration of the trading season each year, from September to May. At the end of the season, the westerners would either return to Europe or the United States or move to Macau at the mouth of the Pearl River. Early references to broken English in South China are found in the memoir of Commodore George Anson, a British naval captain who visited Canton in 1742 and 1743 (Walter and Robins 1974). Another mercantile account is in Noble's *A Voyage to the East Indies in 1747 and 1748*, which comments on both the sexual and linguistic contacts between British sailors and the Canton Chinese. Noble describes the adventures of two ship's officers in the company of a local pimp, who importunes: '*Carei grandi hola, pickenini hola?*' ('Would you like a older whore, or a younger one?') (Noble 1762: 240). Later, Noble further explains that this broken dialect is 'a mixture of European languages . . . mostly, as we formerly

hinted, of English and Portuguese, together with some words of their own' (pp. 262–3).

In 1793, after approximately a century of trade on the South China coast, the 'Macartney embassy', the first official diplomatic mission, was sent from Britain to China. The aim of the embassy was to open 'modern diplomatic relations' between the newly industralized Britain and the 'Middle Kingdom' of China; related to this were the objectives of securing the right to extend trade (out of the confines of Macau and Canton) into many other locations, and the right to establish a diplomatic mission in Peking. In the event, the embassy was an almost total disaster; Lord Macartney was granted only a very brief audience with the Emperor at the Summer Palace, and then quickly dismissed. None of the requests presented at the Imperial Court were granted and the embassy returned to Britain with a sense of failure: 'The Embassy had been very well treated, but it cannot be said to have done any good: the only impression it made on the Chinese, it was said, that England was a tributary state' (Couling 1917: 320).

Perhaps the most amusing of the many accounts of the embassy was that provided by Anderson, Maccartney's manservant, who apparently sold his story to a London publisher, who helped to ghost-write the memoir. In an appendix to the book, Anderson provides a glossary of Chinese (transcribed into a form of 'romanization' or alphabetic writing) and English. Many of the seventy-odd items he cites are still decipherable as Cantonese or Mandarin words, but he also presents the following as examples of 'Chinese':

Chinchin	To supplicate *or* pray
Chop-chop	To make haste
Chow-chow	Victuals *or* meat
Ickoochop	Very best
Josh	God *or* Deity
Lobb, Lobb	Joining *or* coition

(Anderson 1795: *Glossary*)

What is significant here is that most of these items are later listed by pidgin and creole scholars as examples of 'Chinese pidgin English', including those words like *Josh* (or 'Joss'), derived from Portuguese *Deos*, or the three items *Chinchin*, *Chop-chop* and *Chow-chow* arguably from Chinese, as well as the word *Ickoochop* of hybrid Sino-Indian origin (equivalent to the later Anglicized equivalent 'first chop'). By this time *hab*, from English 'have', was a pidgin item, and *lobb*, by analogy, is probably derived from 'love', selected, one presumes, in preference to more vulgar alternatives. It is possible that Anderson came across this item of his 'Chinese' at 'Lob-Lob Creek', an inlet on the river estuary between Whampoa and Canton, which was described by another traveller, William Hickey, who visited Canton in 1769:

> When we were off Lob Lob Creek one of the boatmen, opening the cabin door, peeped in and said, 'Master, Caree Lob Lob?' to which Bob directly answered 'Yes,' holding up two of his fingers. In five minutes a little open boat came paddling towards us, and two very pretty girls jumped in at our window. Bob retired with one to the after cabin, leaving me with the other. We had been a very short time together when the same man opened up the door again, quickly crying out, 'Chop Chop Lob Lob, mandarin dee come.' Regardless of him or his words which I did not understand, I continued the business I was engaged upon; which when finished I called to Bob, who desired me to come in, and I found him and his companion sitting very quietly together. Having dismissed our Lob Lob ladies, we continued our voyage to Whampoa. (Hickey 1975: 131)

On arrival at Whampoa, Hickey learns, to his dismay, that there were 'no more than six women [at Lob Lob creek] to satisfy the lusts of a fleet of five-and-and-twenty ships, the consequence of which had already shown itself, a number of their junior officers being diseased' (Hickey 1975: 131). Similarly, Noble's 1762 account of love on the river also cautions against indulgence in such dangerous pleasures, citing not only the hazards of 'the venereal distemper' but also the prospect of complicity in infanticide, as '[t]here is no crime more ignominious, than for a Chinese woman to be instrumental in bringing in a new breed among them', thus, '[w]hen they become pregnant therefore, to an European lover, they imbue their hands in the innocent's blood, to prevent discovery' (Noble 1762: 283–4).

The missionary response to Canton English 1800–40

The British and American Protestant missionaries who came to Southern China at the beginning of the nineteenth century sought to replace the profane *lob* of the lonely sailor by the sacred mission of evangelicizing China, although, once in China, their spiritual ambitions were later blurred by those of secular achievement, in the service of trade, government service and academic works, particularly those related to the study of Chinese language and linguistics. Such orientalist missionary scholars provided the basis of nineteenth-century missionary sinology.

Between 1807 and the early 1830s, British and American Protestant missionaries reached Canton and Macau. These included Robert Morrison (1782–1834), sent east by the London Missionary Society, who first arrived in Canton in 1807; the Americans Elijah Coleman Bridgman (1801–61) and Samuel Wells Williams (1812–84), who both worked on *The Chinese Repository*, which, between 1832 and 1851, published hundreds of articles on various aspects of life in China, including its geography, government and politics, people, history, natural history, arts and science, as well as its literature

and language. The labours of Morrison, Bridgman and Williams, later Professor of Chinese at Yale University, also produced an impressive body of linguistic and sinological work. In 1836 and 1838, Williams published two articles on the Chinese pidgin English in the *Chinese Repository*.

The first of these carries the title 'Jargon spoken at Canton', and contains an explanation of the origins of the jargon, and examples of its usage. For Williams and other missionaries, the use of such language was a consequence of the restrictions imposed by government officials on the intercommunication of 'natives' and 'foreigners'. Williams suggests that the absence of westerners skilled in Chinese is a major cause of 'much of the indifference and suspicion of the Chinese exhibited towards foreigners', and, in this context, notes a number of the difficulties attached to learning the Chinese language, including the dearth of elementary books, grammars and vocabularies; the task of memorizing the characters; together with the effects of the law 'denouncing as traitors all those natives who dare to teach the language of the "central flowery nation" to outside barbarians' (1836: 430). In addition, there is the easy accessibility of the mixed 'dialect':

[T]he foreigner on landing hears a dialect spoken, which with an entire disregard of all rules of orthography and syntax, he can soon 'pick up,' which is sufficiently extensive for commercial intercourse with the Chinese. With this jargon he soon becomes well acquainted, and in a short time looks upon the acquisition of the language as a useless as well almost impracticable undertaking. Indeed, of so long standing is the gibberish spoken here, that few ever think of paying any attention to the Chinese. (Williams 1836: 430)

Williams also presents a number of dialogues in Canton English to illustrate 'the manner in which the king's English is murdered in this flowery land'. These dialogues include the following exchange between a Chinese shopkeeper and his western customer:

'Chin-chin,' said a man behind the counter, as I entered, 'how you do; long time my no hab see you.'
'I can secure hab long time,' said I; 'before time my no have come this shop.'
'Hi-ya, so, eh!' said he. 'What thing wantchee?'
'Oh, some litty chowchow thing,' answered I. 'You have got some ginger sweetmeat?'
'Just now no got,' he replied; 'I think Canton hab got very few that sutemeet.'
(Williams 1836: 433)

The second article by Williams (1838) similarly discusses two 'manuscript vocabularies' (or 'chapbooks'), which contain English phrases transcribed in Chinese characters that indicate the approximate English pronunciation of

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the same phrases. Williams was particularly incensed at one of these, entitled *Hungmaou mae mae tung yung kwei hwa* which he translates as 'those words of the devilish language of red-bristled people commonly used in buying and selling'. For Williams, the title is 'another instance of the studied contempt this people endeavor to throw upon everything foreign; and cannot be too strongly reprobated' (Williams 1838: 278). Williams urges the westerner in China to learn Chinese, as:

> The man . . . who learns the language, even to this limited extent, will truly save himself from many impositions; and, not unfrequently, will command respect, and secure influence, far beyond what he could do without such knowledge. In this case, as in all others, he would find that knowledge is power. (Williams 1838: 279)

The missionary response to the jargon at Canton was to see it as a barrier set up by the mandarin officials against the evangelicization and enlightenment of China. In 1833, in the Introduction to the second volume of *The Chinese Repository*, an anonymous contributor (possibly John Robert Morrison) notes the role of language in two important areas. First, there is the desirability of spreading a knowledge of the English language, because, as in India, 'by acquiring a knowledge of the English tongue, the native youth will be introduced into a new world. He will live and move in a new atmosphere. He will be acted upon by new influences. He will see and feel a thousand new relations.' Second, there is the need for western missionaries to learn Chinese, as

> such knowledge will give the foreigner power and influence with the Chinese, and over them too – a power which will be both harmless and beneficial to all. It is of little use to come in contact with the Chinese unless we can communicate freely with them – interrogate them, and be interrogated; hear them argue for, and defend their high superiority; and in turn, let them hear the opposite statements. . . . It is impossible that forms, and usages, and claims founded in error and falsehood, can stand against the *force of truth*. (Anon 1833: 4–5)

Treaty port days 1843–1949

After the Treaty of Nanking at the close of the first Anglo-Chinese war of 1839–42, the five 'treaty ports' of Canton (Guangzhou), Amoy (Xiamen), Foochow (Fuzhou), Ningpo (Ningbo) and Shanghai (Shanghai) were opened to Britain and other western powers. Canton-English spread north, as noted in a number of sources, including one article in *Household Words* which reports that 'the mongrel dialect . . . has been extended to other ports on the coast of China since they were opened by the treaty of eighteen hundred and

forty-two' (Anon 1857: 451–2). By the 1870s, it was reported that the 'uncouth and ridiculous jargon' was 'the almost exclusive medium of communication between natives and foreigners at the open ports' (Nevius 1872: 204), while another even suggested that 'the Chinese themselves are, to an extent, adopting this language . . . owing to the fact that men of different provinces cannot understand each other's dialect' (Simpson 1873: 45).

In spite of the spread of its use to the northern ports, particularly Shanghai, Canton-English also continued to attract disapproval and condemnation, particularly from those from outside China. Yule and Burnell (1969: 709) describe it as a 'vile jargon', whereas for Gill (1880) it is 'a grotesque gibberish', and to Bird (1883) it is 'revolting . . . baby talk' (cited by Reinecke 1937: 785). Nevertheless, its use had a certain utility in the foreign community, as Shaw observes:

> Pidgin is spoken not only by the English residents in communicating with their servants and employees, but also by the merchants and visitors to China of all other nations. The Dutch captains who voyage to Hong Kong from Batavia with little knowledge of our pure vernacular, are often excellent hands at Pidgin. The French and Germans make use of it with few exceptions, and learn it on arrival quite as a distinct study. (Shaw 1897: 553–4)

By the early decades of the twentieth century, however, there was greatly increased access to educated varieties of English through mission schools and other sources, and a distaste towards pidgin developed among some Chinese speakers of English. In the 1930s, Cannon describes the situation in Hong Kong thus:

> 'Pidgin' has ceased to be used in intercourse with educated Chinese – it is, in fact, highly insulting to employ it. On the other hand, 'pidgin' seems to have filtered down to the working class. . . . At Hong Kong chair-coolies and ricksha pullers are beginning to learn a few odd words. As regards the future, it appears likely that 'pidgin,' as a business language, will soon be extinct. Its place is being rapidly taken by English which, though often incorrect, is still definitely English. (Cannon 1936: 138)

Other foreign residents in China perceived the demise of pidgin English with a sense of nostalgia in the face of changing times. Green, for example, claims that pidgin English 'speaks so essentially of the kind and happy past . . . when, in fact, the two communities lived very happily side by side, not mingling much, perhaps, but, where they came in contact, able to do so with mutual respect and friendliness' (Green 1934: 340).

Pidgin English also served another function, that of representing the Chinese character to the west, particularly in Britain and the United States,

through the periodical and popular press. Dawson (1967: 113), for example, discusses a comic verse in *Punch* 1858, entitled 'A Chanson for Canton', which describes 'John Chinaman' as a 'rogue born', with 'pig-eyes' and 'pig-tails', and a diet of 'rats, dogs, slugs, and snails'. Similar verses utilizing pidgin, though not always so offensive, began to appear in comic supplements to treaty-port newspapers from the 1860s onwards, and a collection of verses in the same vein formed the core of what was to be the most famous nineteenth-century source book on pidgin English, *Pidgin-English Sing-song*, authored by Charles Godfrey Leland (1876).

Leland never visited the Far East or China, but wrote *Pidgin-English Sing-song* while he was in London, although he acknowledges the help of two celebrated sinologists, Robert Kennaway Douglas and Herbert Allen Giles, in the Introduction. The book comprises some twenty-two 'Ballads', and twelve 'Stories' written in Leland's version of pidgin, and in addition contains two appendices, one a list of 'Pidgin-English vocabulary', the other a list of 'Pidgin-English names', with personal and street names, chiefly from Hong Kong. A number of other pidgin English phrase-books were also published in the treaty ports, notably Airey's *Pidgin English Tails* (1906) and Hill's *Broken English* (1920), but none of them achieved the popularity of *Pidgin-English Sing-song*, which was published in both London and Philadelphia and reprinted in numerous editions (the tenth edition is dated 1924). A reading of Leland's verses reveals a crass racism not too distant from the *Punch* verses of 1858, as an excerpt from the ditty 'Ping-wing' illustrates:

> PING-WING he pie-man son,
> He velly worst chilo allo Can-ton,
> He steal he mother picklum mice,
> An thlowee cat in bilin' rice.
> Hab chow-chow up, an' 'Now,' talk he,
> 'My wonda' where he meeow cat be?'
> . . .
> Ping-Wing see gentleum wailo – go
> He scleamee, 'Hai yah – fan-kwei lo!'
> All-same you savvy in Chinese,
> 'One foleign devil lookee see!'
> But gentleum t'hat pidgin know,
> He catchee Ping and floggum so,
> T'hat allo-way flom that day, maskee
> He velly good littee Chinee.
> (Leland 1876: 29–30)

Ping-wing's degenerate eating habits match those of John Chinaman in the 1858 *Punch* cartoon, and the reference to the 'littee Chinee' flogged by the

foreign devil resonates with the 'heathen Chinee' of Bret Harte's 1870 poem. Leland's 'rhymes and stories' were penned not only during an era of unequalled western expansion into China through the treaty-port system, but also during a period of mounting Sinophobia in the United States. By the 1870s, the US government was already taking initiatives to exclude Chinese immigrants from settling in the country, and the 1882 Exclusion Act was to exclude Chinese from the USA until 1943 (Lee 1996: 183). Leland's book contributed to an anti-Chinese discourse that was spread across all classes of society in both the United States and Britain from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. By the turn of the century in Britain, cheap Chinese labour was seen as a threat to the British working class, at a time when a few Chinese immigrants were attempting to establish themselves as laundry-owners or laundry-workers. Lee reports that in 1906 at least one Liverpool newspaper carried a report on the Chinese consumption of cats and reflects that even in the British cultural imaginary of the 1990s, 'the trope of the cat-eating Oriental is as popular as ever' (Lee 1996: 232). Nevertheless, in spite of Leland's shaky pedigree and flawed scholarship, creolists today acknowledge that 'Leland probably did more than anyone else to draw attention to the existence of CPE [Chinese Pidgin English]' (Tryon *et al*. 1996: 486).

Linguistics and hybridization

In recent years, scholars in literary and cultural studies have been attracted by the notions of hybridization and hybridity discussed in the writing of Mikhail Bakhtin and Homi Bhabha. In Bakhtin, the notion of 'double voicedness' associated with hybridization, 'a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consiousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation, or by some other factor' (Bakhtin 1981: 358), has been frequently invoked in the discussion of cadences and creolization of new literatures in English. In Bhabha, hybridity appears as multi-definitional, crossing and falling between the borders of colonial-postcolonial, discourses, races and cultures. In the colonial context, '[h]ybridity is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other "denied" knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority – its rules of recognition' (Bhabha 1994: 114, cited in Young 1995: 22–3).

Scholars in cultural and literary studies may make the assumption that the term 'hybrid' has a long-established pedigree within the discipline of linguistics science; and, given the general currency of the term, some linguists might also do the same. This, I believe, would be a false assumption. In

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linguistics, the term hybrid may have a specific meaning with reference to lexical (or 'vocabulary') borrowing, but the notion of hybridization seems not to extend to any wider, precisely articulated theory of language contact. Nor does it seem that the term hybridization is now considered an important item of metalanguage for those working in the field of pidgin and creole studies. Apart from Whinnom (1971), whose views surfaced earlier in this paper, there appear to be few, if any, references to the term by linguists working in the field of pidgin and creole studies, other than in a very general sense. Many other 'technical' linguistic terms are used within current frameworks, however, including such expressions as *bioprogram*, *creoloid*, *creole continuum, lect*, etc., all of which contribute to the systematicity and professionalism of a scholarly approach to this subject. But a number of supposedly neutral terms in pidgin and creole study have their own histories pointing back to much earlier discourses, and to the occluded debates of another era.

In the case of the terms 'hybridity' and 'hybridization', the provenance of such terms was mid- and late nineteenth-century European race theory. As Young (1995) explains, the concept of hybridity was a key issue for debate in anthropological and cultural discussion from the 1840s onwards. The central issue was that of sameness and difference in the classification of human beings into racial 'species' or 'types'; whether mankind constituted one species, 'mongenesis', or many species, 'polygenesis' (Young 1995: 9). Race mixture was a form of unnatural contamination, particularly when it occurred between races of 'distant' genealogy, outside the western European or Aryan racial family. Robert Knox, an Edinburgh anatomist, argued that the hybrid human was 'a degradation of humanity' and 'rejected by nature' (Knox 1862: 497, cited in Young 1995: 15–16). Simultaneously, it was posited that the results of interracial breeding were either the infertility of mixed-race offspring, or the production of a 'degenerate' and 'degraded' mongrel group that threatened the integrity and energies of the pure races of mankind. Such debates on race theory also turned on responses of sexual repulsion and attraction, so that '[t]heories of race were thus also covert theories of desire' (Young 1995: 9).

Within the discipline of linguistics, a reading of contemporary accounts of pidgins and creoles reveals a relatively low level of agreement on theoretical and discursive frameworks. Biogenetic, geological and horticultural metaphors appear in uneasy juxtaposition, and ideologies veer from the celebratory to the militantly ecological. Todd (1995), for instance, asserts that '[t]hese languages have progressed from being described as "bastardised jargons" and dismissed as "inferiority made half articulate" into being regarded as keys to language learning, language change and even to the origins of language itself', adding that pidgins and creoles may even present 'a solution to the problems raised by Babel' (Todd 1995: 40). Another

eminent creolist, Mühlhäusler, argues that, from the perspective of 'linguistic ecology', such mixed languages are more appropriately regarded as 'weeds': 'thus we can regard pidgins as languages that spread rapidly and outcompete others in a disturbed language ecology' and that these 'developed in response to introduced new languages and the disturbance by acts of Western linguistic imperialism' (Mühlhäusler 1996: 75–6). At the level of description, other issues include the mechanisms of *depidginization* and *decreolization*, the processes by which mixed languages are influenced by, and approximate towards, 'standard languages' in speech communities where both varieties are present. A number of controversies in the field still focus on the contesting theories of 'monogenetic' versus 'polygenetic' explanations, seemingly unaware of the power such terms had in late nineteenth-century debates on the racial classification of human beings and the part that related concept terms played in the development of race theory.

Many descriptive linguists might well deny that such connections today are no more than lightly significant for what they see as their main task, i.e. the systematic, if not scientific, description of language. After all, 'lay' opinions (i.e. views uniformed by linguistics as a discipline) are typically seen as biased and inaccurate. Kale (1990), for example, asserts that 'pidgins and creoles are, linguistically speaking, languages with equal status to other languages and not merely broken forms or second-rate varieties of some other language', and that 'it would appear to be the layperson's knowledge about the supposed limitations of pidgins which has perpetuated the unfortunate and inaccurate belief that these languages are simple and unsystematic forms of some other language' (Kale 1990: 107–10). One major irony here, in the context of 'Chinese pidgin English', is the fact that creolists rely almost exclusively on the jottings and memoirs of laypersons such as sailors, merchants, missionaries, diplomats and journalists to provide them with their primary data, i.e. representations of pidgin speech between the mid-eighteenth and early twentieth centuries.

China coast tales

One set of texts containing a number of accounts of treaty-port pidgin, not to my knowledge previously referred to in the literature, is the series of stories and novellas entitled *China Coast Tales* written by Elise Williamina Edersheim (1860–1921), a China resident, who wrote under the name of Lise Boehm. The ten tales, short stories and novellas were published in the treaty ports of Hong Kong and Shanghai between 1892 and 1906, and are peopled by merchants, missionaries and consular officials. Interracial romance and coupling figures in a number of the tales, and usually all ends very badly.

In one tale, 'Two Women' (Boehm 1903a), Stephen Walford, a British customs officer in Shanghai, fails in winning the hand of Marion, a marriageable lass from Britain, when she realizes that he has fathered two Eurasian children by his Chinese housekeeper. Marion is horrified by the thought of Walford's children, 'foul-tongued repulsive-looking Eurasians, marked out for vice, truly the scum of humanity' (p. 16). Eventually, Walford loses his post at the Customs Office, succumbs to drink, and dies an outcast. In 'A-Kuei' (Boehm 1903b), a tricky young Chinese lad is employed as a houseboy in the Consul's residence, and then later taken to Britain by a woman missionary. After receiving a medical education, A-Kuei returns to China as Dr A. K. Wray, in the company of Lizzie, his English wife, by whom he has a daughter. Wray (A-Kuei) later attempts to kill them both, fails, and himself meets a premature death. At the end of the tale Lizzie hears of A-Kuei's death, and drowns herself and her child.

Boehm uses pidgin English for a variety of effects. In 'A-Kuei', the speech of the protagonist visibly depidginizes in pace with his educational progress. In other instances, its use seems to emphasize the impossibility of interracial marriage. In 'Of the Noble Army' (1892), Sweetapple, an idealistic Baptist missionary, takes a Chinese wife in the hope that, *inter alia*, she will prove to be 'what Sinologues call a "sleeping dictionary"' (Boehm 1892: 121). He later pays for such presumption, dying while trying to save some French nuns ('fellow foreigners', 'saintly, misguided women') at the hands of the mob he himself had roused through anti-Papist propaganda in the Chinese character. In the final scene, Mrs Sweetapple attempts to stop him going to rescue the nuns with some blunt advice in her newly acquired pidgin:

'You no go outside!' she said, shaking a warning finger at him. 'This soldier-man too muchey angry, every frenchman wanchee die. You go bed, you all right. You go outside, you quick die!'

'But, you stupid woman!' cried Antony impatiently, 'I can't stop here and let all these people be killed! I must go and help them!'

'What for go?' sneered his wife. 'You any time talkee, this belong very bad man. All right, bad man wanchee die!' (Boehm 1892: 130–1)

Interestingly enough, Elise Williamina Edersheim was married to the most celebrated sinologist and linguist of late nineteenth-century China, Herbert Allen Giles (1845–1935). Giles joined the China Consular Service in 1867, became Consul in Ningpo, and later succeeded Thomas Wade as Professor of Chinese at the University of Cambridge in 1897. He published more than forty books on China, including original works on art, culture, history, language and literature. He compiled a massive Chinese-English dictionary, translated numerous works of Chinese literature into English, and together with Wade devised the Wade-Giles system of romanized transcription for the

Chinese language. Lise, as a Consul's wife, would have been intimately associated with the social world of the treaty ports; for Boehm, a world steeped in interracial sexual tension. The double-voicedness of the *Tales* is that of racial and linguistic mixture. Reinecke (1937) states that ideas concerning the correspondence of racial and linguistic mixing were current in the late nineteenth century, but claims that Schuchardt saw no obvious connection between the two, '[w]here mixing of blood is connected with mixing of language, these do not rest on each other, but both rest on some third factor' (Schuchardt 1882, cited in Reinecke 1937: 43). Notwithstanding this, it appears obvious that the fear of racial mixing and miscegenation was located at the heart of the treaty-port response to pidgin.

Endword

When the Frenchman Abel Bonnard visited Asia in the 1920s, he made a Gallic assessment of the various qualities of the English in Hong Kong, with their 'haughtiness', 'dull, though healthy, simplicity', 'robust health', and acknowledged that 'the Anglo-Saxons have rendered a signal service to civilisation not only by maintaining the *prestige* of the white man all the world over, but by guarding the unmixed purity of their race, so far as is humanly possible'. Bonnard goes on to state that 'one can only contemplate the idea of a civilisation consisting of half-breeds, with disgust', and this he relates to the mixing of languages:

> Disgust also we must feel at the debasement of soul and confusion of mind which would underlie the bombastic jabber of half-known languages, hideously confused. Races ought to be well acquainted with one another, but they should not mix. (Bonnard 1926: 316–17)

In nineteenth-century linguistic theory, comparative linguistics conceptualized the world's languages in terms of language families and language trees, simultaneously seeking to make connections between linguistic science and the natural sciences, including the evolutionary science of Darwin. The appearance and development of pidgin and creole languages at around the same time represented a disturbing challenge to the purity of languages and their families, and to the integrity of the comparative approach. As pidgin and creole studies developed as a subbranch of linguistics, academic practitioners in the field, unknowingly or otherwise, inherited and utilized the vocabulary of race theory, and thus terms like 'hybridization', 'monogenesis' and 'polygenesis' have been re-created as items of a deracinated, technical linguistic terminology.

In twentieth-century China the pidgin English of the foreign settlements

disappears after the People's Republic of China becomes established in 1949. Only in Hong Kong, the last of the treaty ports, do relics of pidgin English survive to the present. In the final years of British colonialism, discussions of language mixing were reconceptualized in terms of the technical labels of 'code switching' and 'code mixing'. Since March 1997, in the reinvented post-colonial treaty-port space of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, it is now official government policy to encourage secondary schools to use Chinese as the medium of instruction, and 'to discourage the use of mixed code, i.e. a mixture of Chinese and English, in teaching and learning' (Hong Kong Government 1999).

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