

Translation: Unlocking the Mystique of Change
—a theoretical experiment on “translation” as “postcolonial identity”
in cultural globalization,
with a case study on Hong Kong postcoloniality
through the *Infernal Affairs* film series

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ABSTRACT

This is a project about “translation” and the “intermediate”. Translation has often been described as something occurring in the middle “black box”—as a highly sophisticated operation in the translator’s mind that turns a “source text” into a “target text”. In theoretical terms, this means a complex trans-lingual and cross-cultural process that involves linguistic interchange and cultural transfer, constituting an epistemological and ontological reorganization of meanings. This thesis attempts to probe into the mysterious “black box” by investigating the concept of “translation” as transition, mediation, negotiation and rewritings between linguistic, cultural, national boundaries and beyond. The idea of “translation” hence acquires autonomy in the theoretical perspective: as a third, active and independent agency that facilitates a dynamic dialogue and explicates vital phenomena in the hidden yet crucial space of the “in-between”.

Starting by an experiment using theories in translation studies to reflect on four central notions in cultural studies (“subjectivity”, “*différance*”, “hybridity” and “power”) based on the theme of “postcolonial identity”, the importance of the “translation” concept and its strength in academic interdisciplinarity is brought into the discussion of cultural crisis in globalization, especially in the reconciliation of the “global-local” conflict on identities. This wide pertinence of “translation” in the cultural sense also engages the concept as a meta-structure concerning the movement of ideas, drawing focus to the moment of occurrence and the substantiality of the experience. These new theoretical outcomes will be further applied and ruminated in the case study. The unique and unusual postcolonial character of Hong Kong, which envisages a distinctive and peculiar space of “cultural translation” vividly shown by the *Infernal Affairs* film series (the original source for the Oscar-winning *The Departed*), renders novel thoughts to the existing orientations that correlate translation, cultural identity, postcolonialism and globalization. The concept of “translation” can be a key to scrutinizing the longstanding mystique of change in the global age.

KEYWORDS: cultural identity, cultural studies, the cultural turn in translation studies, *différance*, Hong Kong postcolonialism, hybridity, in-between, *Infernal Affairs*, postcolonial translation, power, subjectivity, translation theory, the translation turn in cultural studies.

Completion of Thesis

Place: University of Warwick, U.K.

Year: 2010

Supervisors: Dr Joanne Collie and Dr Red Chan