

Third Culture Kids: A Bakhtinian Analysis of Language and Multiculturalism in *Swallowtail Butterfly*

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Introduction

Within the last decade, Japanese cinema has experienced a proliferation of popular films characterised by their foregrounding of ethnic diversity within the Japanese social sphere. Films such as the award-winning *Go*, centred on a resident North Korean family; *Kamikaze Taxi*, which takes as its protagonist a Brazilian-Japanese taxi driver; *Sleepless Town*, about a Japanese-Taiwanese gangster; and others have been lauded by both fans and critics for contributing to a broader awareness of the cultural and ethnic heterogeneity of contemporary Japan. Particularly in their foregrounding of Japanese-speaking non-Japanese characters, such films, it is argued, have contributed to the gradual destabilisation of ideas of Japanese identity as static and homogenous. Yet, such films have also been criticised for the façade of hollow multiculturalism they present to viewers, in which difference is used less for generating an understanding of these "others" than in the construction of a somewhat more self-serving "feeling" (*kibun*) of ethnic exoticism among, notably, *Shibuya-kei*, or trendy young Japanese (Taniuchi, 1996). Such films, as Koichi Iwabuchi observes in the context of a broader cultural turn towards the "other", "might equally be read as a process of domestication and hegemonic incorporation of 'non-Japaneseness' into the existing structure of 'Japaneseness' through exaggerating discursively constructed entities such as 'foreigners'." (Iwabuchi, 1994: 16)

Within the context of this debate, perhaps no film has generated as much interest as director Iwai Shunji's epic fantasy *Swallowtail Butterfly* (*Suwarouteiru*, 1996). *Swallowtail* is the story of a ragtag band of misfits -- derisively labelled "Yentowns" by the film's Japanese characters -- scrounging for a living in Yentown, a desolate community on the literal margins of mainstream Japanese society. The group, consisting of Asian, Western, and Middle Eastern immigrants, survives by merrily scamming Japanese, who are depicted as prejudiced against and ignorant of the "others" in their midst. The film begins with the orphaning of young Ageha (Ito Ayumi), the Japan-born daughter of a Chinese prostitute, whose fate is placed in the hands of Glico (Chara), another Chinese prostitute who has been in Japan since childhood. Glico introduces Ageha to Fei-hong (Mikami Hiroshi), a scheming Chinese immigrant whose dreams of making it big in Japan are realised when he discovers a magnetic counterfeiting tape on the corpse of a Japanese gangster, with which he generates millions of yen. Fei-hong uses the money to buy a nightclub where he makes Glico a singing sensation, unaware that Ryu Ryanki (Eguchi Yosuke), the murderous head of the Chinese mafia in Japan, is in search of the tape. Ultimately, Fei-hong is betrayed by Glico's Japanese managers and dies at the hands of brutal police; Glico leaves the sullied Japanese music industry and rejoins Ageha in the utopian innocence of Yentown.

Iwai's film was a commercial success, grossing over 1.6 billion yen during its theatrical run and capitalising on the burgeoning popularity of Asian films (Chinese, in particular) in Japan (Kuwabara, 1997). The film is characterised by an eclectic visual style reminiscent of works of other Asian auteurs, most notably Wong Kar-wai (Anon, 1998a; Havis, 1997: 4; Spencer, 1998: 16). Similarly, *Swallowtail* invokes "Asia" in its production design: sets and locations for the film, which was shot entirely on location in Japan, were first scouted in cities throughout Asia (including Hong Kong and Bangkok) by art director Taneda Yohei, who then turned his photographs and drawings of these locales into the imagined world of Yentown (Taneda, 1998: 20-44). Performers were also chosen with an eye to both their Japanese and broader East Asian appeal: Mikami Hiroshi was familiar to international audiences through his work in the earlier Japanese-Hong Kong co-production, *The Peacock King* (*Kujaku-o*, 1988), while both Eguchi Yosuke and Yamaguchi Tomoko were equally familiar to such audiences through their work in Japanese television dramas. The inclusion of Hong Kong singer Andy Hui, as one of Ryu Ranki's henchmen, as well as foreign television performer Kent Frick, further contributed to an overall sense of *Swallowtail's* multicultural appeal.

Yet, as Mori Naoto observes, the film was labelled "a nonsensical fake, trendy fluff, and a tepid failure" by many Japanese critics, precisely because of what they perceived to be its contrived multiculturalism (Mori 1999: 30). It is in this sense that *Swallowtail* stands as a paradigmatic example of the tensions within the Japanese debate on film multiculturalism. On the one hand, critics such as Higuchi Naofumi praise the film for the ways in which it imagines the kind of nationless and cultureless diversity so appealing to young Japanese "not as a 'dream' but as an 'environment'," as something more captured than created (Higuchi, 1996: 49). On the other hand, the tone of much censure of the film is exemplified in the observation of Yomota Inuhiko that,

in *Swallowtail*... Chinese illegal labourers and prostitutes build a utopian community, but this is depicted by the film's Japanese performers as a game... there is no sense of the film's intention of approaching the 'other' in a fresh way, because everything takes place within the predetermined parameters of a theme park. (Yomota, 1999: 467)

Thus, as critic Onitsuka Daisuke notes, while its proponents approve the "irresistibly charming" style and manner of storytelling in *Swallowtail*, its detractors find the film "very stylish and that's all -- they think [Iwai's films] have no content." (Onitsuka quoted in Havis, 1997: 4)

This critical divide is epitomised in critical discussions centring on the film's use of language. *Swallowtail* prominently makes use of an array of languages, spoken with varying degrees of fluency by the film's largely Japanese cast. As described by one critic,

while this is a Japanese film, Japanese is hardly used at all. Subtitles keep appearing from beginning to end. The languages of this film are English, Chinese, and something called 'Ryanki-go', which seems to be a mishmash of bits of Japanese and other languages. (Anon, 1996b)

Thus one viewer, describing the film's fabricated "Ryanki-go" observes, "it's fun to see Japanese subtitles attached to such mystery languages." (Yasuda, 1997) In contrast, Aaron Gerow notes, "even if Iwai's decision to have his Japanese cast speak foreign languages may

have presented the image of a multicultural Japan, in the end, the 'otherness' that the actors assume is more posture than reality." (Gerow, 1998: 9)

In fact, such commentary foregrounds two specific issues pertaining to the broader consideration of how language might function in Japanese "multicultural" cinema. The first concerns the relationship between visual and aural elements of cinema; specifically, much discussion of the film implicitly conflates the visual representation of Japan's "others" with the foreign languages they speak. This, in turn, begs the question of the discreteness of categories such as "style" and "substance", or "form" and "content". Indeed, as Curtis Tsui observes in the context of Hong Kong director Wong Kar-wai, this concept

is incredibly archaic and pointless...that is, it is impossible to separate the visual style of film and the work's story or thematic issues; they both comprise a total entity -- their underlying abstract concepts included -- and each aspect directly influences the other. Thus, form is content, and content is form. (Tsui, 1995: 94)

Given this argument, originally advanced by such film theorists as Eisenstein and Vsevolod Pudovkin, it is somewhat surprising that scholarly work on language and cinema has tended strongly towards considerations of visual form as language, to the nearly complete neglect of language *in* cinema.

Robert Stam astutely suggests one possible explanation for this in his observation that "the Western masculinist imagination is strongly 'visualist', positing cultural facts as things observed or seen rather than heard, transcribed, or invented in dialogue." (Stam, 1989: 19) Yet, it might be argued that even this explanation does not go far enough, insofar as it maintains a fairly clear separation of aural and visual elements. The danger here is not so much that the well-intentioned film theorist might turn to an exclusive study of the aural as the only site of meaning-making; rather, the concern becomes, first, that language might be defined solely in terms of its aural or pictorial characteristics, and, second, that the necessarily interdependent nature of the visual and the aural in sound film might be ignored. Perhaps, then, the study of language and cinema should be pursued from a broader semiotic perspective. In understanding how language functions within cinema, we may first need to consider what constitutes "language" -- defined here as the bearer of symbolic meaning -- in the cinematic context.

Critical commentary on the use of language in *Swallowtail* also gives rise to a second issue; namely, that of the playful elusiveness of language and, by extension, the relation of such language to its audiences. That is, the presence of not only "mystery" languages, but also multi-lingual dialogue and even the incongruity of (national) languages and visual cues, begins to suggest the extent to which language invariably elides attempts to fix it at the point of representation. Indeed, it is at the level of interpretation that language is both experienced and enjoyed as transgressive: the above viewer cites the "fun" of the film's use of subtitles, while Higuchi parenthetically observes, "although I burst out laughing at that Ryanki-go, its humorous tension is perhaps the key to the Yentown environment." (Higuchi, 1996: 49) Critic Todoru Yukio also highlights the inherent unruliness of *Swallowtail's* language: "The film's utter unreality is great. I don't know if it's because it captures the absurdity of *manga* [comic books] using live actors, but [the actors'] manipulation of Chinese and Ryanki-go dialogue is like the lines of *manga* come to life (perhaps because it's subtitled?)." (Todoru, 1996: 53) Seen from this perspective, what characterises the commentary of the film's

proponents is the ways in which *Swallowtail* subverts both spoken and film language. Such observations implicitly highlight the role of viewers as contributors to meaning in the film; in this sense, we can begin to consider meaning in film language as something at least as contingent on context as on concretised symbolic associations.

Thus do two theoretical considerations in the understanding of the linguistics of cinematic multiculturalism emerge: the nature of film language and the ways in which meaning is made within the film context. Here, I am less concerned with those specific elements of film form -- shot distance or angle, editing, and so forth -- that generally characterise discussions of the semiotics of cinema, than in the ways in which a given film might itself be considered a linguistic statement within a broader cultural conversation on multiculturalism. It is in this sense that theorists of the Bakhtinian school offer what is arguably the most comprehensive and generative means of addressing these issues. Specifically, the Bakhtinian notion of language as "utterance," encompassing such sites of representation as the novel, poetry, and speech, is particularly useful in attempting to encompass the wide variety of symbol-bearing elements of cinema, as well as the ways in which these elements enter into dialogic communication with culture.

Film-as-Utterance: The Contexts of Multicultural Film

Providing a working definition of the communicative properties of utterances, Mikhail Bakhtin argues:

Language is realised in the form of individual concrete utterances (oral and written) by participants in the various areas of human activity. These utterances reflect the specific conditions and goals of each such area not only through their content (thematic) and linguistic style... but above all through their compositional structure. All three of these aspects -- thematic content, style, and compositional structure -- are inseparably linked to the *whole* of the utterance and are equally determined by the specific nature of the particular sphere of communication. (Bakhtin quoted in Morris, 1994: 81)

Within the context of film as dialogic utterance, language might first be understood as not discretely aural and visual, but instead discursive, with elements of content, style, and structure -- so frequently isolated for individual consideration by film theorists -- brought into intersemiotic play within the utterance. Bakhtin further notes

Any concrete utterance is a link in the chain of speech communication of a particular sphere... Utterances are not indifferent to one another, and are not self-sufficient; they are aware of and mutually reflect one another... Every utterance must be regarded primarily as a *response* to preceding utterances of the given sphere... it is impossible to determine its position without correlating it with other positions. (Bakhtin quoted in Morris, 1994: 85)

In the context of film, this suggests that any effort to chart the sites of multicultural meaning-making in cinematic language must attend to not only the ways that spoken language is invoked within the narrative of a film, but also its dialogic relationship with broader cultural texts. That is, in attempting to understand the ways in which cinema functions as a bearer of cultural meaning, we would do well to examine the role of film-as-utterance in broader dialogues circulating within culture.

In theorising the elements and functions of utterances, Bakhtin is careful first to observe that the utterance itself is always grounded in genre:

To learn to speak is to learn to construct utterances... we learn to cast our speech in generic forms and, when hearing others' speech, we guess its genre from the very first words; we predict a certain length... and a certain compositional structure; we foresee the end; that is, from the very beginning we have a sense of the speech whole. (Bakhtin quoted in Morris, 1994: 84)

The determination of this speech genre, and the "linguistic means" through which it is expressed, he observes, "is determined primarily by the referentially semantic assignments (plan) of the speech subject (or author)". Furthermore, he continues, the "composition and style" of the utterance is further constrained by its "expressive aspect, that is, the speaker's emotional evaluation of the referentially semantic content of his utterance...[which] is generally recognised in the area of stylistics." (Morris, 1994: 84-5)

Here, Bakhtin is speaking primarily of literature; however, his ideas concerning the constitution of the utterance resonate to a significant degree with Eisenstein's analysis of film structure, which, Eisenstein argues, can be thought of in terms of its "organic-ness":

What do we mean by the organic-ness of building the work? I should say that we have two kinds of organic-ness. The first is characteristic of any work that possesses wholeness and inner laws. In this case organic-ness can be defined by the fact that the work as a whole is governed by a certain law of structure and that all its parts are subordinated to this canon... The second kind of organic-ness is present together with not only the *very principle of organic-ness*, but also the *canon itself*, according to which natural phenomena are built... There is in this case, not only a truthful realistic subject, but also, in its forms of compositional embodiment, a truthful and full reflection of a canon peculiar to actuality. (Eisenstein, 1949: 160-1)

In contrasting Bakhtin's utterance with Eisenstein's "organic" film, two specific aspects of the film-as-utterance are foregrounded: it's "grammar", on the one hand, and its conjoined twin, context, on the other (Morris, 1994: 84). As Bakhtin suggests, practices of reading or interpretation of the utterance are invariably constrained by the generic contexts of its audiences. Moreover, we may argue that such genres, in the case of cinema, are not simply visual or aural, but instead encompass a broad range of texts -- star, advertising, industrial, and so forth -- that combine to constitute generic "repertoire." As such, any theory of film-as-utterance needs to encompass the whole of filmic/speech genre, with attention to not only those elements of film embedded in the cinematic product, but also its "transtextual" aspects (Stam, 2000: 65-6).

This necessity is illustrated to particular advantage in the critical commentary surrounding *Swallowtail Butterfly*. As noted above, two camps have evolved with regard to the film's depictions of Japanese multiculturalism, the first criticising Iwai's lack of ingenuity and authenticity in representing this world, and the second revelling in its chaotic play of people and languages of all kinds. While we can explain such differences away with nods to personal taste, the consideration of *Swallowtail* as utterance perhaps provides a more systematic means of understanding these interpretative differences. That is, working from the theory of film-as-utterance, we may be able to consider these critical readings of *Swallowtail* as themselves

embedded in speech genre, understanding genre here as constituted first in society, but inflected by those aspects of the text that support and reinforce generic expectations.

Specifically, criticism of the film's multiculturalism seems to conflate it with discourses of a more problematic and specifically Japanese genre of *kokusaika* [internationalisation], the purpose of which, Iwabuchi argues, "has been... to promote national interests" (Iwabuchi, 1994: 10). This is enacted through the vaguely positive nature of *kokusaika* as it is conceived through social discourse:

[*Kokusaika*] does not have an exact meaning, but sounds attractive, because it implies the rise of Japan's economic status, affluence and cosmopolitanism. In addition to this, there is another sort of ambiguity concerning *kokusaika*... when asked what *kokusaika* meant to them, most people could not point to its purpose, although they associated it with various means of achieving *kokusaika*, such as 'learning English,' 'learning about foreign countries,' or 'stop behaving like an economic animal'. (Iwabuchi, 1994: 10)

Critics of this discourse are sensitive to the ways in which difference is at once isolated and put on display for consumption by concomitantly homogenous "Japanese," thus foreclosing the possibility of an already heterogeneous Japan. In the context of its popular culture manifestations, *kokusaika* is often associated with the presence of foreign (generally Western, although this has been changing in recent years) languages, visibly "foreign" faces, and an emphasis on the "native" (read "different") customs of other peoples, often contrasted with the reified "givens" of Japanese culture.

In this sense, it is significant that much of the criticism surrounding the release of *Swallowtail* focused specifically on just these aspects of the film, with articles emphasising Japanese actors' uses of English and Mandarin in the film, as well as the substantial presence of non-Japanese cast members (Anon, 1996a: 42; Anon, 1998b: 7). Iwai's own observation that "I wanted to show [the characters] getting rich, and then having their happiness warped by turning Japanese" further illustrates the film's reliance on the "economic animal" strain of the *kokusaika* discourse (Kubo, 1996: 44). Indeed, the way that this original "happiness" is portrayed -- through utopian images of "poor-but-free" immigrants gathered around a campfire and sharing songs from a vaguely ethnic homeland -- is itself one troublesome strain of *kokusaika*, inasmuch as it posits these people as childlike in their innocence. As depicted in the film, such characters are narratively corruptible by a jaded Japanese society, but implicitly governable for the same reason (which notion itself invokes the metatext of historical Japanese imperialism). Thus, as read through the generic lens of *kokusaika*, *Swallowtail* seems to reinforce, rather than deconstruct or criticise, ideas of Japanese homogeneity and superiority.

Yet, it is this same generic lens that helps to explain the ways in which its proponents might yet consider *Swallowtail* subversive of the Japanese status quo. If its adherence to the generic repertoire of *kokusaika* can be understood as working against Iwai's project of multiculturalism, then perhaps it is the case that those elements of *Swallowtail* which undermine the generic expectations of *kokusaika* might constitute one explanation for critical enthusiasm for the film. That is, even as *Swallowtail* contributes to problematic ideas of *kokusaika* within popular culture, it might also, through this discourse, equally help to "demystify... 'Japaneseness'... [by] find[ing] ways of recognizing [its] irreducible diversity

and heterogenous experiences... transcending 'natural boundaries' and resisting their incorporation into the categories of (self)-Orientalist discourse." (Iwabuchi, 1994: 16)

Language and the Critique of Multiculturalism in *Swallowtail*

The generic repertoire of *kokusaika*, within the context of *Swallowtail Butterfly*, highlights the extent to which the film reinforces institutionalised discourses on the discreteness of "Japanese" identity in relation to the identities of recognisably foreign "others". In so doing, it precludes the possibility of an inherently heterogenous Japan in its blind insistence on difference as that which ultimately sustains boundaries between Japan and the rest of the world. Considered from the perspective of the Bakhtinian notion of heteroglossia, one way to understand this insistence is in the context of "posited" linguistic unity:

Unitary language constitutes the theoretical expression of the historical processes of linguistic unification and centralization, an expression of the centripetal forces of language. A unitary language is not something given [*dan*] but is always in essence posited [*zadan*] -- and at every moment of its linguistic life it is opposed to the realities of heteroglossia. (Morris, 1994: 74)

In *Swallowtail*, such ideas of unitary language are illustrated in two specific examples of Japanese language use: the first occurs during a scene in which Ageha and other members of the Yentown community are scrounging through piles of discarded waste in search of objects to sell. As they rummage through the trash, an apparently Middle Eastern immigrant explains his philosophy, in English, to the young girl:

See, this is how it goes: we'll do anything if it leads to the yen... you never know when you might stumble across a chance to get rich. God gives everyone that same chance. It depends on if the person decides to grab it or not. '*Ten wa hito no ue ni hito o tsukurazu, hito no shita ni hito o tsukurazu*'... Fukuzawa, the Yentown god, said that.

The generic repertoire of *kokusaika* is invoked here at several levels. While the image of an identifiably non-Japanese man uttering this phrase might seem heteroglossic, inasmuch as it ostensibly suggests the extent to which Japanese language is not confined to use by one race, the conditions of its utterance conspire against such a reading. Specifically, this particularly archaic quotation, representative of institutionalised *kokugo* [national language], is haltingly uttered, and the incongruity of not only the physical appearance of the speaker and these famous words, but also the imperfect accent with which they are uttered, reinforces the strangeness of Japanese as appropriated by non-Japanese. The intertextual aspect of this quotation further reinforces its complicity in discourses of *kokusaika*, insofar as it blatantly references Fukuzawa Yukichi, a nineteenth century scholar and proponent of Japanese modernisation, whose portrait adorns the 10,000 yen note. That is, this utterance references that still-discrete, economically inflected Japanese-ness that is criticised by Iwai as problematic. Clearly, this scene is intended to be ironic, contrasting the image of poor immigrants scouring the garbage of the Japanese against an oral invocation of Japanese economic success. Yet, to the extent that it maintains the discreteness of Japanese language/culture, it participates -- however unintentionally -- in centripetal processes of language unification.

Similarly, the film's depiction of its Japanese characters as linguistically isolated within the broader "multicultural" sphere, through their ignorance of any language other than Japanese (including a poor brand of halting English), further illustrates the extent to which *Swallowtail* is complicit in problematic discourses of *kokusaika*. Two scenes highlight this tendency, each notable for the ways in which this ignorance is depicted as having humiliatingly, even dangerously, material consequences. The first occurs early in the film: Fei-hong and a companion are shown in an isolated field, shooting the tyre of a car driven by a stereotypical Japanese salaryman wearing glasses and a company jacket. Realising his tyre is flat, the man drives to the closest place -- Fei-hong's rundown Yentown establishment -- and addresses the Middle Eastern immigrant in Japanese: "*Ano...ano kuruma ga ne*" (um... um, my car). Unable to make himself understood, the Japanese man switches to *katakana-eigo*, a barely-intelligible phonetic English: "*Mai ka izu panku...ka panku*" (my car is punc(tured)); performing a strange little curtsey, he continues, "*Purizu herupu mi*" (please help me). The immigrant, shaking his head in amusement, calls for Fei-hong, whose English is comparatively fluent: "Ah, this tube is shot. You're gonna need a new one." Upon hearing this, the Japanese man points to his watch and asks, "*Eh? Purizu, no taimu, fasuto, fasuto?*" (Please, no time, fast, fast). Fei-hong replies, "Oh, oh, five minutes. Get yourself a drink... over there," and promptly proceeds to fix the tyre while he siphons gas from the car. While the overall effect of the scene is humorous, providing a laugh at the expense of the hapless Japanese man, it also reinforces the institutionalised discourse of *kokusaika*, characterised by Japanese ignorance of other cultures and languages.

Such discourse has murderous implications in a subsequent scene involving negotiations over the purchase of a nightclub by Fei-hong and Glico, in which a similarly bespectacled -- and equally hapless -- Japanese man, Asakawa, arrives as the nominal owner of the new nightclub. Fast on his heels is a conniving Chinese realtor, who explains Asakawa's role in the transaction in Mandarin: "Here's the paperwork, all under Asakawa's name... just a formality. If the whole thing goes under, his life is insured up to one million yen... so if the venture folds... just in case he dies, you collect on the insurance." An incredulous Fei-hong asks, "Where did you get this guy?" to which the realtor replies, "Too many bad debts -- he had to sell himself." Turning to the oblivious Asakawa, the realtor smiles insincerely and says, "*Kimi no hanashi*" (we're talking about you). Asakawa smiles as the realtor turns back to the Chinese pair and continues, "We'll take care of any killing, so don't you worry about it." Turning again to Asakawa, he repeats, "*Kimi no hanashi*."

To the extent that it problematises perceived Japanese inability to function in a world not of their own making, this scene perhaps can be read as critical of the Japanese status quo. Yet, the multiculturalism posited here is particularly unconstructive, inasmuch as it is contingent on the actions and utterances of its non-Japanese characters, rather than its Japanese characters. Any potential here -- as, it might be argued, with *kokusaika* in general -- for social change within the Japanese context is severely curtailed. If Japanese society is increasingly heterogenous, these scenes suggest, it is not because of the inherently constructed nature of any idea of unitary national identity or language, but because the unity of the past has been eroded by the inevitably increased diversity thrust upon Japan by those arriving on its shores. Indeed, insofar as these scenes posit Japanese diversity as polyglossic, involving the simultaneous existence of unified languages, rather than always already heteroglossic, what critique *Swallowtail* seems to offer skirts dangerously along a parallel discourse of paranoia. In this sense, with Japanese themselves removed from the equation of a heterogeneous Japan, the potential exists for a reactionary reading of the film as representative of the threatening undermining, from without, of linguistic and cultural unity.

Yet, even as it works through the generic repertoire of *kokusaika* to unwittingly bolster ideas of "Japanese-ness", *Swallowtail* also subverts this repertoire in such a way that the film can be seen to offer a critique of those very problems it reinforces. In understanding the nature of this critique, it is useful to return to Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia:

the centripetal forces of the life of language, embodied in a 'unitary language', operate in the midst of heteroglossia. At any given moment of its evolution, language is stratified not only into linguistic dialects in the strict sense of the word... but also -- and for us this is the essential point -- into languages that are socio-ideological: languages of social groups, 'professional' and 'generic' languages, languages of generations, and so forth. (Bakhtin quoted in Morris, 1994: 75)

That is, Bakhtin offers the possibility of considering a given language as itself inherently heteroglossic, in which its uses by people of varied ethnic, gendered, and social backgrounds reveal the ways in which the appearance of linguistic -- and, by extension, cultural -- unity is subverted from within.

It is in this sense that *Swallowtail* can perhaps yet be seen to offer a critique of Japanese notions of polyglossic multiculturalism, through its images of non-Japanese characters speaking Japanese. Iwabuchi observes, "foreigners who speak fluent Japanese, live their everyday lives with Japanese food and in 'Japanese' ways are, gradually but definitely, changing the meanings of the 'Japanese'." (Iwabuchi, 1994: 15) Indeed, in a nation where, as Lee Yeoun-suk notes, "nationality determines [whether Japanese] is '*Nihongo*' or '*kokugo*'", the incongruous juxtaposition of visually encoded foreigners and fluent spoken Japanese offers a potentially destabilising critique of ideas of national homogeneity (Lee, 1998: 25). Yet, even this juxtaposition must be contextualised; that is, while non-Asian foreigners are all but expected not to be able to speak Japanese, by reason of its difficulty, resident Koreans, Chinese, and other Asians historically have been expected to assimilate linguistically. Thus, it is not in the simple equation of audible language and visible ethnicity, but rather the ways in which such juxtapositions subvert audience expectations, through which the film's invocation of heteroglossia works, against the generic expectations of *kokusaika*, to enact the film's most potent critique.

The first example of this comes in the film's opening scenes at the makeshift shacks that house Chinese prostitutes and immigrant labourers, where Japanese words and phrases are scattered throughout conversations between members of this community. In particular, certain phrases here suggest Bakhtin's notion of "double-voiced discourse," which is directed "both toward the referential object of speech, as in ordinary discourse, and toward *another's discourse*, toward *someone else's speech*." (Morris, 1994: 104-5) This is exemplified in a scene in which Glico and another Chinese prostitute -- who has inadvertently come into possession of the orphaned Ageha -- are discussing a recent slump in business as Ageha sits quietly in a corner. Glico's visitor pauses in mid-conversation to inform her, "A, *so, so*. *Omiyage ga aru no yo*" (Oh, yes, I have a gift for you), to which Glico sleepily replies, "*Ara, okamainaku yo*" (You shouldn't have). Responding "*Dose moraimono na no yo*" (I received it myself, anyway), the woman darts out of the room, leaving the unwitting Glico with the hand-me-down "gift" of Ageha.

Here, it is the use of nearly canonical forms of polite address that contributes to the double-voicedness of this conversation; rather than signalling the women's linguistic assimilation

into Japanese society, the exchange offers a parody of institutionalised *keigo* [polite language] in its implicit reference to the niceties of Japanese culture. It is situated in the middle of a particularly ribald discussion of business practices, and its participants are visually depicted as existing outside of polite society by the *mise en scene*: pictured in a darkened, shabby room, one sits at the edge of a rickety bed while Glico slouches in a chair against the wall, scantily dressed and lazily smoking a cigarette as she speaks. This setting, combined with the ironic nature of the gift itself, displaces the conventional content of this particular "ritual" of gift-giving (Aoki and Shigeko, 1988: 1), even as its linguistic and cultural form is preserved, thus suggesting Bakhtin's parodic double-voice in its "introduc[tion]...a semantic intention that is directly opposed to the original one... forc[ing it] to serve directly opposing aims." (Morris, 1994: 106) In this sense, the structural form of this exchange notwithstanding, the scene subverts the linguistic unity of Japanese in its implication that the grammatical rules yet allow for its appropriation to specific, albeit oppositional ends. Moreover, this appropriation is highly random and personal. While the gift-giving ritual is conducted entirely in Japanese, the preceding conversation is an intriguing mish-mash of Mandarin and Japanese, exhibiting little regard for the linguistic unity of either language and demonstrating, in its chaos, the inherent unruliness of living language.

This theme is continued in a later scene, in which Fei-hong is auditioning performers for his new nightclub. Here, viewers are introduced to a particularly exuberant Westerner, Dave, who regales Fei-hong, Glico, and Ageha with a fluent Japanese monologue on his background and identity politics:

I'm not a Yentown. Of course, both my parents are Americans, but I was born and raised here in Japan. On top of that, thanks to the crappy English-language education system here in Japan, I can't speak English at all... am I Japanese or American? Thanks to this face, I'm treated like a foreigner wherever I go. But, make no mistake about it, I was born and raised in this country...this is the only homeland I have. People like me and you second-generation Yentowns need a completely different label: 'Third Culture Kids'.

Within the context of the generic repertoire of *kokusaika*, this scene embodies somewhat contradictory implications. On the one hand, Aoki Haruo and Okamoto Shigeko have noted, with regard to Japanese language use in general, that

a person impervious to the rules is a rugged individual or a crazy old fool. Some [Japanese] people get vicarious pleasure out of such traits. Perhaps for this reason many fictional characters have been created along these lines to provide entertainment for readers of books and viewers of films. (Aoki and Shigeko, 1988: 250)

As portrayed by *gaijin* (foreigner) "talent" Kent Frick, Dave speaks in the seasoned accents of a *gaijin*-on-display, complete with wacky musical soundtrack. The hyperactive excessiveness of his performance, in spite of its fluency, suggests less a thoughtful critique of existing prejudices than an entertaining display of *kokusaika* in action, primarily for the benefit of Japanese moviegoers. This, in turn, is reinforced by the trendy appellation suggested by Dave, "Third Culture Kids." That is, at the same time that this new label seems to invoke serious discourses about the "thirds" of post-modern, global societies (third gender, third culture, and so on), it's *katakana-eigo* rendition, coupled with Frick's exuberance and

physical emphasis of each word with a name-in-lights gesture, serves to situate his utterance squarely within the self-congratulatory genre of *kokusaika*.

This scene is followed by an impromptu band rehearsal, put together by Dave and attended by Caucasian and African American musicians. Dave acts as television variety show host, coaxing the reluctant Glico to sing: "*Sa, nani utatte kureru n desho ka?*" (So, what will you be singing for us?). She responds that she cannot sing, to which Fei-hong (who, notably, cannot speak Japanese), responds in English, "Hey Glico, sing 'My Way'!" A young Caucasian band member looks uncomprehendingly at Fei-hong, who repeats his request; in disbelief, the musician replies "*Mai uei?*" in *katakana-eigo*. His tangible distaste for the song is picked up by another band member -- also Caucasian -- who retorts, "*Mai uei' nante boku no oji-chan ga utatte ita n ja nai ka? Furui yo, sukoshi*" (Isn't "My Way" something my grandfather would have sung? It's pretty old). This pronouncement is seconded by the Caucasian drummer, who playfully cries out, "*Boku-tachi no soru ja nai yo, sore wa!*" (That's not our style).

If visual, as well as aural, elements of film-as-utterance may be understood in the context of generic repertoire, then the ways in which these scenes might similarly embody Bakhtin's notion of double-voicedness are revealed. At the paratextual level, the fact of Frick's real-life Japanese fluency, combined with that of the Caucasian and African American band members he assembles, stands in stark contrast to that broken Japanese expected of non-Asian foreigners. Indeed, if Frick, as Dave, embodies the always-exceptional *hen na gaijin*, or "strange foreigner," of legend, the presence here of other Westerners of equal Japanese fluency suggests a centrifugal pull away from the unity of Japanese language as contained within specific physical contexts. The referential element of these utterances contrasts with discourses of visual appropriateness that themselves constitute the "other words" of Bakhtin's double-voicedness; that is, the "clash" of visual "otherness" and aural inclusiveness here constitutes not only Bakhtin's overt, but also his "hidden polemic," in which "discourse is directed toward an ordinary referential object, naming it, portraying, expressing, and only indirectly striking a blow at the other's discourse, clashing with it, as it were, within the object itself" (Morris, 1994: 107). Thus, while the words of Frick's monologue themselves illustrate the transparent nature of the overt polemic, it is the implicit incongruity of fluent Japanese and visual foreignness that here establishes the hidden polemic.

Perhaps the most powerful example of *Swallowtail's* use of language in criticising Japanese ideas of multiculturalism comes near the end of the film, when Fei-hong, caught counterfeiting 10,000 yen notes, is being interrogated by the Japanese police. The object of police interest is not the petty criminal but his supposed boss, Ryu Ryanki; to this end, Fei-hong, who is unable to either speak or understand Japanese, is beaten by his questioners, whose demands for information on the whereabouts of the ganglord are translated by a sympathetic Chinese police interpreter. Suffering the symbolic consequences of his failure to conform to racially dictated linguistic expectations of his assimilation within Japanese society, Fei-hong is brutally reminded of his otherness and repeatedly berated by his persecutors as a money-grubbing "Yentown." Eventually, Fei-hong, an exhausted heap lying on the floor, weakly protests this slur, insisting in Mandarin, "Stop saying 'Yentown, Yentown'. Yentown is your hometown, isn't it?" A pregnant pause follows, the interrogators momentarily halted in their actions as they await translation of the utterance. When the young interpreter finally does translate Fei-hong's protest, he does so in his own voice: "*Ientaun wa omae-tachi no furusato no namae daro?*"

This is a powerful moment, insofar as the interpreter is characterised as working well within dominant institutional and linguistic structures. His Japanese is deceptively natural; that is, while he clearly speaks through a language that marks his cultural assimilation, and, by extension, his implicit rejection of any separate ethnic identity, the vehemence of his translation reveals the duality of his situation, offering a paradigmatic example of the relationship between "reporting and reported speech" posited by Valentin Voloshinov, in which "language devises means for infiltrating reported speech with authorial retort and commentary in deft and subtle ways." (Voloshinov quoted in Morris, 1994: 65) Here, again, the pull of centripetal language, as marked by the interpreter's fluency and institutional position, is juxtaposed against the centrifugal material conditions of his utterance -- as at once translation and individual utterance -- offering a glimpse of the "multiplicity of social languages that make up the apparent unity of a national language." (Denith, 1995: 34) Moreover, the tensions inherent in the relationship between reporting and reported speech are made clear a moment later when, confronted by his suddenly threatening colleagues, the translator continues, "*Namae daro to itta*" (Or so he said), shifting here from a more subversive manipulation of reported speech to that "whose own internal individuality is minimized." (Morris, 1994: 65) Before our eyes, the Chinese man disappears in an instant of linguistic subjugation, further highlighting the stark difference between his use of Japanese in solidarity with Fei-hong and this retrogressive contextualisation of his protest. Perhaps more so than anywhere else in the film, this scene exemplifies *Swallowtail's* contribution to the ongoing process of re-imagining Japan as inherently heterogeneous; and it is in this sense, above all, that Iwai's film may yet be understood as contributing to a broader awareness of "the fragmented, multiple and mobile nature of all identities." (Iwabuchi, 1994: 17)

Conclusion

In considering *Swallowtail's* use of language, I have attempted to illustrate the relationship between such use and the film's broader situation within the specific contexts of its critical reception. While the generic repertoire of a problematic discourse of *kokusaika* embodies the film's reinforcement of clichéd constructions of both "Japaneseness" and "foreignness", the ways in which *Swallowtail* yet utilises this repertoire as point of reference in its critique of this discourse suggests its inherent duality as both an object and an agent of criticisms of film multiculturalism. Thus can divided critical interpretations of the film may be explained in terms of the inherent heteroglossia of *Swallowtail* itself.

In a broader sense, consideration of *Swallowtail* as dialogic utterance suggests the ways in which film both contributes to and is inflected by continually evolving social discourses, illustrating how such utterances themselves both reinforce and challenge their hegemonic force. It is in this second aspect of the film as utterance that the potential for further consideration of *Swallowtail Butterfly* arises. To the extent that the film was an early forerunner of subsequent transnational productions between the Japanese and other East Asian film industries (Hong Kong and Korea, in particular), notably in its distribution to, and relative popularity within, both domestic and overseas markets, questions of its manipulation of languages become especially interesting. Specifically, the ways in which practices of subtitling may contribute to the further re-imagination of local Japanese (and East Asian) identities as more regionally inflected suggests one especially productive avenue for the continued analysis of the ways in which language in/as cinema interacts dialogically with its social contexts.

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