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Chapter Six

Make It Till You Fake It

The Four-Claw Dragons in The Labyrinthine Garden

Aubrey Tang

This chapter argues for a holistic and postnational local consciousness that goes beyond the prescription of the racial, the ethnic, or the national. It uses the novel *The Labyrinthine Garden* (*Miyuan* 迷園) as a case study to contemplate how one can imagine a local but nonstatic sovereignty of Taiwan.

Li Ang's novel is about Hanyuan (菡園), a Chinese garden in Lucheng (鹿城), an imaginary town in Taiwan. It tells the story about how Hanyuan's owner, the Zhu family, came to Taiwan and became a rich landlord family in the eighteenth century. It also contrasts this history with that of the modern period under Japanese and Guomindang's rules. Published in 1990, *The Labyrinthine Garden* is a product of 1980s politics in Taiwan. Its preparation time covers the important moments of various democracy/social movements, the 1987 lifting of the martial law, and the post–1980s localist discourse, a decade that prompts many debates on identity, nationalism, and sovereignty. In this chapter, I choose two prevalent ideas of identity formation from the 1980s, namely being Chinese and being local, to discuss how the novel situates and contests them. I also suggest an alternative formulation of seeing Taiwan as a postnational biogeography, which one can use to imagine a sovereignty that is nonprescriptive, organic, and circumstantial.

Historically speaking, the idea of being Chinese, or the so-called Chineseness, denotes many things, including the ethnic setup of Taiwan's population, as well as the decades-long sinicization/culturalization propagated by the Guomindang government after World War II. It is also a focus of ongoing polemics in diasporic situations in general. Seeing Chineseness as a form of essentialism, I avoid taking it for granted in the text of *The Labyrinthine Garden* and instead question the seemingly "Chinese" heritage in the story's

Taiwan setting. With an example about Hanyuan's "*chuan yun long qiang*" (穿雲龍牆), or roughly translated, "the wall with dragons dancing on clouds," I explain why the presumably genuine Chineseness is indeed fake (114–15). Rather than an inferior, I consider the fake a subversive imperative overthrowing the so-called real (Chineseness), as well as a symptom revealing social, cultural, and political imbalance. I then explain how femininity operates in a similar mode of signification like Chineseness, as seen in the characterization of the female protagonist Zhu Yinghong (朱影紅). This sums up my discussion about how *The Labyrinthine Garden* contests both national and gender constructions in Taiwan's history. Lastly, referencing some existing scholarship on the novel, I suggest how one can perceive a postnational order that pertains to the genealogy of Taiwan or "Taiwanese" identity.

As for localization, Mark Harrison notes that it "can be covered by a number of different words in Chinese with different but overlapping meanings" (145). The discourse of *bentuhua* (本土化) is sometimes translated by scholars as localism, localization, Taiwanization (*Taiwanhua*) 台灣化, indigenization, nativization, domestication, etc., according to the context (Makeham 11). The current hot topic of localization as both resistance and complicity of globalization should also be carefully distinguished from *bentuhua* in Taiwan's context, which is related but does not exactly refer to the same meaning. In this chapter, by "localization," I refer only to the act of producing a local version of an object or practice, such as the process of converting a type of Chinese botanical gardening into a Taiwanese form.

A DISSIMILITUDE OF CHINESENESS

The first formulation I suggest *The Labyrinthine Garden* makes possible is a dissimilitude of Chineseness. Ien Ang argued that Chineseness "operates as an open and indeterminate signifier whose meanings are constantly renegotiated and rearticulated in different sections of the Chinese diaspora" (225). Chineseness—literally speaking, being Chinese—suggests many things. Neither Chineseness nor its entailed denotations—China, Chinese, etc.—is a stable signifier. Being Chinese can be a lingual, national, ethnic, racial, territorial, ritual, or even botanical marker. Such ambiguities are particularly obvious in diasporic situations when different—often contrary—components of identity formations collide. These notions' references fluctuate in the modern period because of the complex aftereffects of wars, colonizations, and migrations. In the early 1990s, the study of Chineseness—aligning with diaspora studies of "the Chinese nation" and other related scopes of study—focused on the notion's relation to identity politics (Ho, "China" 5). More recent scholarship investigates how Chineseness is constructed in different

discourses by expanding their consideration of other issues, such as economy and language (Chow, "Foreword" ix). In any case, it seems to be commonly recognized by critics that Chineseness is a cultural construction worth being unpacked, reevaluated, and disputed (Chow, "Introduction" 24; Chun). In order to do so, I suggest looking at the following example in *The Labyrinthine Garden*, which employs a strategy of dissimilitude.

The "labyrinthine garden" is Hanyuan in Lucheng (15). In Chapter Two, Part One, the narrator tells the story of a traditional Chinese decorative wall in Hanyuan with two dragons on it called "the wall with dragons dancing on clouds." Since the novel is written in a clearly identifiable narrative structure—with the first part of each chapter written as "a personale Erzählsituation, a narrative conducted 'in the third person' according to the point of view of a character" (Genette 187)—I will assume this narrator's point of view belongs to Zhu Yinghong, the female protagonist. Hypothetically, according to Zhu Yinghong, the wall's form appears to be the same as other cloud walls often found in ancient Chinese architecture—with one subtle difference. Her father Zhu Yanzu (朱彥祖), an educated and rich Han Hoklo man, explains: "Look, this dragon is formed with fish scale, prawn eye, cow nose, deer horn and crow claw. It appears as identical to the traditional dragons at first glance. But Ayako (綾子), look carefully.[1] Common dragons have five claws. These two dragons in Hanyuan only have four" (114–15). He tells his daughter that although the dragon is regarded as the embodiment of the emperor in ancient China, their ancestors have dared to build the dragon wall because they have been the richest people in Taiwan at the time. Still, Zhu's ancestors have been cautious about offending the Chinese emperor. Thus, they have depicted the dragons with only four claws instead of five, the usual number of dragon claws.[2] This way, if they really upset the emperor, they can have an excuse.

The traditional architectural style of Hanyuan, to some critics, is reminiscent of Chinese culture. For instance, Angelina Yee associates Hanyuan with the Red Chamber—"the famous garden in the 18th-century Chinese classic *Honglou meng* (*Dream of Red Chamber*)"—and argues that "the writer's . . . laborious depiction of the garden [conveys] a nostalgic attachment to a cultural Chinese past" (97–98). Seeing Hanyuan as a reminder, David Wang also remembers Taiwan under the influence of Mainland China's refined culture (28). However, looking at the above example of the dragon wall, I doubt if Hanyuan is supposed to serve only as a symbol of a lost Chinese tradition in the novel. I argue that instead of a reminiscence of "traditional Chinese culture," it is actually a site of counterfeits (of traditional Chinese artifacts, such as the traditional Chinese dragons). According to Zhu Yanzu, these four-claw dragons look almost the same as traditional Chinese dragons. Only when one looks closely can one see the difference: they are fake. They are

almost Chinese but not quite, because of one intentional flaw—the four claws.

This intentional flaw is subversive because it does away with the expected fulfillment of imitating Chineseness: the dragons only appear to be similar to Chinese dragons but they are not the same. If they were identical to other Chinese dragons, they would be just as clichéd as other countless artifacts proliferating Chineseness, such as those during Guomindang's sinicization/culturalization of Taiwan after World War II. Instead, their intentional "flaw" offsets the burden of consummating Chineseness and the risk of upsetting the imperial power in Mainland China. This minor difference—the missing claw—is not an involuntary defect or a failed pretense of Chineseness, such as in the case of Zhu's ancestors not having the money or expertise to build a Chinese garden like other owners could in Mainland China. It is not a case where the Zhu's ancestors are attempting to look as Chinese and as wealthy as other owners in Mainland China. It is not a case of an inferior entity imitating something that is better than itself (as in "fake it till you make it"). Zhu's ancestors are not pretending to be something they are not in order to acquire a specific (imperial Chinese) identity, to try hard, or to fit in. As a matter of fact, they are already the wealthiest family in Taiwan of their time, the most privileged, the aristocrats, essentially the royalty. They do not build Hanyuan because they feel inadequate compared to the emperor in Mainland China. Instead, it is a case of "make it till you fake it," an already self-confident entity proclaiming its potency through an intentionally unsuccessful imitation of an existing hegemony—the imperial China. This intentionally unsuccessful imitation is different from mocking because it does not make fun of the hegemony, although it also does not submit itself to the hegemony as an inferior being either. To proclaim the fake's potency, paradoxically, this intentionally unsuccessful imitation shows the fake's true difference, not by looking unlike, but *alike*. I refer to this specific type of difference as "intrinsic difference." In Zhu's ancestors' project of creating the four-claw dragons, the intrinsic difference in the Chinese mythological figure's appearance is executed in a premeditated, self-sufficient, and bold manner that clearly shows a counter-hegemonic type of agency.

What differentiates this type of "difference" (the missing claw) from what the word difference typically means, according to Gilles Deleuze, is that this type is judged by dissimilarity when compared with the original, while other differences are judged by resemblance (*The Logic* 256–257). The four-claw dragons are different because they possess a dissimilarity—the missing claw—to their originals. This means, conceptually, they show an intrinsic difference, a distortion or a collapse of their originals (Deleuze, *Difference* 30). If, for example, they were not dragons but Formosan blue magpies, then they would only show an extrinsic difference, which would fail to contest the dominant because it would have a different original. In this case, the dominant in *The Labyrinthine Garden* would be the five-claw dragons, the primordial Chinese architectural tradition, an authentic Chineseness. Deleuze's distinction of these two types of differences is useful in disputing the authority of Chineseness because only the former type, the intrinsic difference, can more directly reveal the fallacy of Chineseness or of any other types of essentialist national referentialities. Only it can better disclose a deformity of, an incompletion of, and a failure to reproduce Chineseness.

This intrinsic difference also better shows how the fabrication of cultural essence—such as Chineseness—is entirely subject to the circumstantial conditions where it is situated, but not to any imagined national character. A surprising moment comes immediately after the above example: "still a child at heart, Zhu Yinghong raises her long and slender finger and counts: 'one, two, three, four! There are really only four claws'" (115). Because she has grown long and slender fingers while "still a child at heart," this means she is already old enough to identify the missing claw even without using a finger to point at each of the claws. However, she performs the identification by pointing. In other words, the object of perception—the wall, the dragon, all reifications of Chineseness—is a performance; and even the perception—the operation of identification—itself, is also a performance. Nothing, except these performances themselves—which can be extended to all manifestations of identity formation in cultural politics—is genuine. Hanyuan's Chinese/Taiwanese/Taiwan-Chinese character is also only a construct. The only things that are true here, paradoxically, are the fake dragons (i.e., the "real imitation").

"Genuine imitation is also subtle subversion allowing authentic local ideas and imperatives to be included and empowered in ways not designed for, intended for or even to the taste of audiences elsewhere" (Sardar 89). In other words, audiences from other contexts may not comprehend the local subversive imperatives the genuine imitations sometimes accidentally achieve. These imperatives to subvert Chineseness and to empower the authentic local ideas are meant not to discover the "new," the local, the "different," the "Taiwanese," as in the discourse of localization, but to recognize its (un)imitational/performative nature. The dissimilitude embodied in a fake Chinese dragon is ironic. It invites contemplation on the fallacy of Chineseness, not by showing something new and true (such as emblems of Taiwan, not dragons) but by questioning something old and false (the so-called Chinese tradition). The fabrication of Chineseness, at this point, is confronted and brought into question.

In a historical sense, the time at which this specific "genuine imitation" (the four-claw dragons) comes into play makes the construction of Hanyuan a symptomatic event of Chineseness. Li did not specify Hanyuan's time of construction, but instead hinted in the opening of the novel that it was built two hundred years before Taiwan's first reported case of the AIDS epidemic,

which happened in 1986 (15). In other words, the garden was built around the 1786 Lin Shuangwen 林爽文 rebellion, the biggest anti-Qing movement in Taiwan's history (Roy 22). This was the time when the rebels successfully captured almost the entirety of Taiwan (except Taiwanfu 臺灣府 and Tamsui 淡水); "it took nine months of hard fighting" before Taiwan was repossessed by the Qing troops (Manthorpe 122). Why would Zhu's ancestors, the richest people, choose such a specific chaotic moment—the peak of the local anti-government sentiment in a history of ongoing turmoil, a state of constant rebellion lasting two hundred years since Shi Lang's 施琅 conquest of Taiwan (Manthorpe 113)—to build a lavish Chinese garden? Possibly, it was because they thought Lin Shuangwen would be able to take over Taiwan from imperial China for good. Their decision of building Hanyuan could be for flaunting their wealth and maintaining their privileged nobility status in Taiwan, regardless of which side would win in the uprising. They were probably loyal to neither Lin Shuangwen nor the Qing Empire, but trying to maintain their social standing. The construction could be mainly motivated by a socio-economic concern out of the existing power unbalance in Taiwan's society. The unbalance was not only between the upper class (such as the Zhu's ancestors, the affluent landlords) and the peasants (such as Lin Shuangwen's camp). It was also between Taiwan's upper class and Mainland China's upper class (such as the imperial class). To paraphrase Ackbar Abbas, the production of the fake is usually a response to social, cultural, and economic imbalance (251). These fake Chinese dragons in Hanyuan seem to be a testimony of the unequal political relation and the problematic of Chinese imperialism to which Taiwan was subjected. They show that Hanyuan's past is a "quasi-Chinese" one to begin with.

In the opening of the novel, Li juxtaposes this imbalance against that of 1986 to reflect a similar inequality in Taiwan in the global age (15). Although imperialism no longer exists in Taiwan (in the classical sense), society is just as chaotic, immoral, and decadent. The novel opens in a Taipei bar called Redwood. Five or six men try to solicit donations from the customers to help their homosexual co-worker, Charlie, who has contracted AIDS. Nobody in the bar takes them seriously. Some give a little cash, but they do it just for fun. Others simply brush them off or say mean things about people living with AIDS. Only a man, whom Li describes as "small potatoes working in a foreign company," is willing to give the man one hundred New Taiwan dollars (9–11). Xiaochen—one of these five or six men—speaks Beijing dialect with a foreign accent when there are foreigners around, and with a Taiwanese accent when he is alone with his friends (11–12). He appears thankful and humble when a white man ostentatiously gives him only five NT dollars, then curses the man after he has left the bar (13–14).

This opening foreshadows the theme of humanity's decadence that characterizes the emerging cosmopolitan city Taipei after "The Taiwan Miracle"

(Li, "Zuojia" 197; Gold). It alludes to ideas about appearance, such as pretense, illusion, deception, etc.—notions of falsity one can find in a state of moral decay. Although the economy seems good, people are jaded, indifferent, and bigoted toward those living with the epidemic. The "small potatoes" character represents the influence of multinational capitalism and neoimperialism in economic terms in Taiwan's context. Later, the readers find out that these men stop in front of an appliance store's display window and see thirty-six TVs all showing the evening news story about Zhu Yinghong's donation of Hanyuan to a foundation. They look at the images of her, showing a rich and attractive middle-aged woman, and the phantasmagoric scenery of the garden on TV. They respond by blurting out a profane Taiwanese expression. This is a self-referential gesture of the novel: it is virtually telling the readers that when they continue to know more about Zhu Yinghong and Hanyuan in the chapters that follow, everything—including what the critics commonly find, a reconstruction of Taiwan's history—is an ideologically mediated image.[3] It alludes to a fictive reality instead of a realistic fiction about Taiwan. These men curse because Hanyuan and the upper class figures are remote, inaccessible, and incomprehensible to them. They are only marginalized and economically disadvantaged gay men, desperately trying to help their sick friend. This theme of the novel—the decline in humanity, social inequality, gaps between rich and poor, the privileged and deprived, the hyped and the underrepresented, etc.—is clearly delivered in the opening.

This type of parallel between Taiwan's past and present continues to manifest in the storyline. Despite Zhu Yinghong's social status, as the story progresses, she is subjected to Guomindang's authoritarianism and global capitalism, and has limited agency. This again echoes Zhu's ancestors' situation when they build Hanyuan: although they are wealthy, they endure the threat of Chinese imperialist intervention. This idea of ambivalence is particularly obvious in Zhu Yinghong's character, offering many feminist implications. Her character consistently shows a deviance from, or a dissimilitude of, an idealized modern Chinese femininity. Its only coherence is this ambivalence itself. For example, Zhu Yinghong is supposed to be beautiful, confident, and educated—wife material, by society's standard. Lin Xigeng (林西庚)—the real estate tycoon she meets and marries in Taipei—feels she is like a woman from the end of the past century, meaning the Qing Dynasty, before Japan's colonization of Taiwan. They converse multiple times about what this idea of a "last-century woman" means to Lin Xigeng: capability, nobility, chastity, submissiveness, home education, tact, grandeur (27, 49, 75). Many of these are characteristics commonly propagated to women in different Chinese/Sinophone contexts about how to behave like a proper modern Chinese/Taiwanese lady. For example, beauty, virtue (*meide* 美德) and upbringing (*jiaoyang* 教養) are all celebrated assets characterizing modern Chinese/Taiwanese femininity in both the nationalist pedagogy and the popular

discourses. However, the reader then gets to know some dissimilitudes (from the ideal of Chinese/Taiwanese femininity) as the story continues. Zhu is beautiful because she has a pair of big eyes and thick soft curly hair, two features she gets from her non-Han heritage (138). She is calm and confident because she keeps her anxiety under control through regular discreet loveless sex with a married businessman, Terry, with whom she will never have a serious relationship. This is not typically recognized as a traditional feminine virtue. Her fluency in English and her meek appearance help Lin Xigeng look powerful and mysterious in front of the Americans when they buy property in Los Angeles (225–226). She, however, pursues her education in Japan and the United States, two non-Chinese cultural establishments.

All these paradoxes present an ambivalence of an idealized modern Chinese/Taiwanese female image—but not a direct negation—to challenge the tyrannical ideology dictating Sinophone women's life in almost all aspects (e.g., looks, sexuality, personal fulfillment). This indeterminacy of femininity casts doubts on the consistency of the notions of Chinese/Taiwanese. In Zhu Yinghong's character, femininity consists of arbitrary elements, such as miscegenation, an affair, and overseas education. Besides, she inherits her home education, tact, and delicate manner mostly from her extremely Japanized mother. Her mother teaches her not to tell others about her maid's lie when she is a child to save face for others (151). Years later, she then knows not to call Lin Xigeng out even though she can clearly tell he does not know the time of the First Sino-Japanese War while pretending he does (27). He is attracted to her partially because of this as well as many feminine traits she learns from her mother (e.g., wearing lace and silk chemises) (146–148). If she appears as a modern Taiwanese lady from high society—to Lin Xigeng and probably to the public in Taiwan as well—her femininity is an amalgam of at least Chinese, Taiwanese, Japanese, and American femininities, if not more. The Chinese/Taiwanese femininity in a modern Chinese/Taiwanese girl—as an image but not as an actual human being—collapses unto herself. It falls apart, not because the girl transforms—from being appropriately beautiful, confident, and educated—to being inappropriate (e.g., a publicly recognized non-feminine rebel). Instead, it falls apart within the quasi-perfect woman herself when the contrarieties/contrasting components in her—of race, sexuality, etc.—surface.

POSTNATIONAL BIOGEOGRAPHY VERSUS TERRITORIAL LOCALIZATION

Lucheng, the setting of *The Labyrinthine Garden*, is a temptation for readers to appropriate the novel in the ongoing narrative of localization. Lucheng, as imaginary as it can be, is suggestive of one of Taiwan's oldest trade ports, Lugang (鹿港). As a matter of fact, Wang writes "Lugang" instead of "Lucheng" when he cites the novel (24). Harrison thinks that "Lugang has a particular place in the iconography of the local in Taiwan, notably for its long history of settlement and its preservation of traditional architecture." It is a subject matter commonly employed in the genre of "local culture" (*bentu wenhua*) in photographs, coffee-table books, and other nostalgic cultural productions (149).

In addition to the story's setting, critics also find an example of localized gardening that makes the novel a work of localization. The most cited example supporting this claim seems to be the one about Zhu Yanzu's gardening project. In the 1950s, Zhu Yanzu removes the Chinese parasol (*wutong* 梧桐), pine (*song* 松), and beech (*ju* 櫸) trees—frequently found in traditional Chinese gardens—because they are not suitable for Taiwan's climate. They do not flourish in Hanyuan. Instead, he plants some new star fruit (*yangtao* 楊桃) and flame trees (*fenghuang mu* 鳳凰木)—commonly found in Taiwan—which grow beautifully (97–102). Peng Xiaoyan interprets this—in addition to the heroine Zhu Yinghong's mixed-racial heritage, a result of Dutch colonization as well as the Han population's intermarriage with the aborigines—as a metaphor of Taiwan's hybridity (*Rentong* 169–170). In Peng's preface and chapter, it is unclear whether this metaphor is the reason why she perceives "an obvious political allegory of Taiwan's independence" in *The Labyrinthine Garden*. However, she makes it clear that she thinks the novel is about Taiwan's independence and decolonization (*Rentong* 8, 157). In another essay, she explains that the novel includes thoughts of Taiwanese nationalist discourse, such as Thomas Liao Wenyi's "mixed blood" thesis (Ngeow 156). For instance, according to Zhu Yanzu's description, the character of the Zhu family's ancestor, Chen 陳氏, possesses the aborigines', the Dutch's, and the Hokkien people's blood (*Lishi* 168). Another critic, Lin Fangmei, is more specific on the first example Peng cites. Lin reads it (Zhu Yanzu's localized gardening) as an evidence of "Taiwan's political independent spirit of the novel," in the sense that it contrasts the Central-Plains culture with Taiwan's local culture (286). Jin Hengjie also perceives the novel as having a clear political cause: Taiwan's independence (131).

All these interpretations suggest ideas of subject positioning, such as a new Taiwan identity, a new local collective consciousness, Taiwanization, Taiwan's distinctive culture, Taiwan's political independence, etc. As one knows, *The Labyrinthine Garden* came out in 1990. Li says that it took her seven years to finish researching and writing it, which means she started producing the book in 1983. That was a moment soon after the end of the Nativist Literature discourse—another literary movement heavily invested with local concern, for example, the natives' struggle against capitalist-style economic modernization; use of Taiwanese and Hokkien languages; regional specificities (Chang, "The Nativist" 149–153; Ye and Lin 140–150). The

author was also actively engaged in democracy/social movements during those years (Chiu, *Butong* 103–104). Naturally, her writing shows local consciousness. With that being said, how exactly does localization in literature negotiate identities? Does it effectively undermine or contradictorily reinforce the authority of the dominant Central-Plain culture it contests? Does Li offer another alternative to conceive a specific type of consciousness beside localization?

Both Peng and Lin argue that in the aforementioned example, a localized practice of established traditions, such as Zhu Yanzu's localized gardening, alludes to an oppositional local position. If this is all the novel offers in terms of articulating a position, then after all, it may not be that radical. The so-called new identity, materialized in the star fruit and flame trees, is inevitably subjected to the "old identity," materialized in the initial model of—not a Taiwan garden, not a Lucheng garden, not a Japanese garden, not an American garden, but—a Chinese garden. The star fruit and flame trees only serve as an alternative of the pine and beech trees. They, as in "the Taiwanese trees," are merely a local variant of "the Chinese trees" (their archetype). The symbolic meaning of constructing a new identity by localized gardening is indeed not that oppositional because the authority of the Chineseness (of a Chinese garden) in it is presumed, stable, uncontested, and undestroyed. Even though in the novel the localized gardening was not specifically named as "Taiwan-Chinese," because it exists for the purpose of actualizing a Chinese garden, it essentially subscribes to one of the pluralized "Chineseness-es" (Chow, "Introduction" 24).

Considering the currency of American-style liberal multiculturalism, which normally endorses difference, nuance, specificity, heterogeneity, and multiplicity of/in human subjects and localities, my suspicion against pluralization may sound out of place. For instance, in postcolonial studies, the logical pursuit of plurality in the processes of subject constitution and spatial formulation is generally accepted as a feasible method.[4] My question is not so much about pluralization as specifically pluralization of Chineseness. For example, does the production of localized variants of Chineseness contribute to the further stabilizing or challenging of Chineseness? Traditionally speaking, a variant cannot exist without an archetype; an archetype is its precondition. The variant comes after the establishment of the archetype. It is in a secondary position if not lower. The archetype enslaves the variant and strips it of its own subjectivity. The variant's purpose is to (not extrinsically but functionally) imitate and eventually substitute the archetype as well as it can. As much as the star fruit and flame trees may sound and look "different" from the pine and beech trees, their role is to follow a predetermined model (trees which signify a type of "Chinese-garden-ness"). Because there is already a stable subject/standard/model of an imagined Chineseness—not necessarily about the geopolitical China, but the ideal of an "authentic Chinese

garden" with pine and beech trees—its variant is reduced to a subjugated otherness. The variant's autonomy, self-determination, and independence are inevitably bound to its aesthetic and spatial relations with the archetype, the organizing principle as well as the original empire of cultural practices.

Therefore, I doubt reading localization as a metaphor of subjectivity assertion fully articulates an autonomous identity in the gardening practice adapted to Taiwan's climate. In this example, the local (Taiwan's culture, the Other's culture) cannot identify itself until being contrasted with the subject (the Central-Plains culture, the "authentic" Chinese culture). This impossibility to "be" (an independent entity) without referencing a predominant subject seems disempowering. The "difference" involved in the localization process of acquiring a new identity may be oversimplified and inflated. Again, using Deleuze's distinction, it is an extrinsic type of difference—"difference between objects represented by the same concept," simple otherness (26). The localized practice is essentially a reiteration of *the same* hegemonic conventions (of cultural essentialism, nationalism, or other homogenizing ideologies) with variation on the Chineseness-Taiwaneseness nexus. The conventions themselves remain intact.

However, by no means do I think Li stopped short of articulating a more profound idea of local consciousness and position that lies beyond the relatively more simple logic of localization. Based on the same example about the star fruit and flame trees mentioned above, I will explain why one should consider *The Labyrinthine Garden* a work of postnational biogeography.

In terms of postnational biogeography, one can see it in the details about what happens to these star fruit and flame trees. In a letter, Zhu Yanzu writes to his daughter when she studies abroad. He says that the flame trees grow too much. They get too tall, break the roofs of the buildings around them, and take up too much space. He has to remove most of them (118). As for the star fruit trees, after his death in the 1980s, Hanyuan lacks maintenance and most of them die (239). A few years later, his daughter replants some new star fruit trees which grow beautifully without her noticing (99). This story shows constant geobiological interactions, continuous courses of life and death, unexpected growth, as well as opportunities of rebirth. Thinking changes, movements and the impermanence of matter in life—which the novel reiterates interchangeably through the narrator and the characters (17, 117, 226)—is conceptually more expansive and perhaps also more productive than imagining localization as a terminal process of local adaptation of an exterior and primordial practice. This story tells that the localized practice leads to other ever-changing developments of life as opposed to some simple adaptations with local species. They suggest the ideas of chance, possibility, and unpredictability of mobile practices and subjects, which are open-ended and nontotalizing. This way of thinking seems to emphasize a region's stratification of movements, productive happenings, and immanent presents, which

goes beyond localization as a last course of material and informational exports.

With the concept of translocality, Arjun Appadurai separates sovereignty and territoriality, which are historically dependent on each other (340). He thinks territoriality, usually referring to a nation-state's political and juridical control over a specific territory, is not the only way to imagine sovereignty (337). Along with the flow of information, capital, commodities, talent, labor, and consumers in contemporary world, sovereignties can also be mobile (340–342). To Appadurai, such horizontally cross-border developments constitute a postnational order. Although he uses cross-border allegiances in the transnational world as examples, which do not explicitly apply in the case of Hanyuan, the nonstatic sovereignties he suggests do. In Hanyuan, similarly, on a vertically scale, through geological time, a nonstatic sovereignty based on an intra-biogeography but not inter-territoriality emerges. This sovereignty is beyond the state's or the Zhu family's control. Rather, it is determined by the organic cyclic existence of a territory. It has its own logic and goes beyond a cut-and-dried understanding of localization. The trees overgrow beyond Zhu Yanzu's ideal, die when unmaintained, and resuscitate in another suitable growth condition. This way of imagining sovereignty based on changes and growth is an approach more holistic than other prescriptive ones that emphasize species, ethnos, and territorial occupation. If Hanyuan, as many critics interpret, is allegorical of Taiwan,[5] then those convoluted developments of organic lives in it can suggest a nonprescriptive, beyond-personal, and circumstantial type of Taiwan's sovereignty.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I express my skepticism about both Chineseness and localization as ways of constituting a local consciousness, a sense of belonging, sovereignties, cultural identities, and local experience. With the examples drawn from *The Labyrinthine Garden*, I show why I reject Chineseness as a type of essentialism and localization as a terminal process of exports. Instead, using the same example of localization about Hanyuan's botanical situation, I explore a way to imagine a postnational biogeography which shows an organic and nonprescriptive type of sovereignty.

The connection between these two concepts, being Chinese and being local, is that both formulations imply there may or may not be a local "difference" in Taiwan's history and society from the dominant (so-called Chinese) culture. However, the word difference does not mean the same thing in these two contexts. In the example of (faking) Chineseness, the difference is an intrinsic difference that when being revealed, can collapse its original/the dominant. In the context of localization, the difference is an extrinsic difference that does not conceptually contest the dominant. Such distinction is important for evaluating various modes of identity formation. Although I may come off favoring the intrinsic difference because of its theoretical significance, I do not mean to undermine localization as an important process of identity formation, in general. What this chapter focuses on is that the intrinsic difference in various renderings of Chinese traditions is often overlooked, while the extrinsic difference is sometimes over-emphasized.

The subtle intrinsic difference of Chineseness and femininity, as demonstrated in the examples from *The Labyrinthine Garden*, proves to be instrumental for reevaluating these cultural constructions. In the novel, the intrinsic difference highlights the ambivalence of an idealized Chinese/Taiwanese female image to help challenge the assumptions of being Chinese and feminine. Along the lines of these thoughts of deconstruction, I argue that Li's reiterations of life's changes, unpredictability and chance further consolidate a perspective of Taiwan's postsnational biogeography (17, 117, 226). In the story about the star fruit and flame trees, rather than human intentions, Li demonstrates how the coincidental outgrowing, death, and rebirth of lives become more determining factors of the locale's fate. Instead of planned cultural and social organization, these courses are often the result of accidents, coincidence, twists, and turns. Therefore, imaging local consciousness can be a holistic and nontotalizing undertaking instead of a prescriptive project.

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NOTES

1. Her father calls her by her Japanese name, Ayako, at home, as an act of rebellion against the Guomindang government which has imprisoned and injured him.
2. It is unknown whether there is only one ancestor or there are multiple ancestors who build the dragon wall because it is ambiguous in the original Chinese-language writing. I therefore indicate the possibility of plurality in parentheses.
3. For example, see Chiu, *Zhong Jie*, 217 and Chiu, "Li Ang," 92.
4. For example, see Spivak.
5. For example, see Liao 237.