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What is This?
The discourse of colonial withdrawal: a case study in the creation of mythic discourse

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ABSTRACT. Based on a large corpus of speeches, interviews, public meetings, writings, and other pronouncements, this paper critically examines the discourse of the last British Hong Kong governor, Chris Patten, in the five years leading up to the change of sovereignty over Hong Kong from Britain to China, in 1997. The thesis of the paper is that in its focus on four issues—the free market economy, the freedom of the individual, the rule of law, and democracy—each of which was designed to highlight an aspect of what Patten promoted as Britain’s legacy to Hong Kong, Patten’s discourse can be characterized in terms of a myth concerned with ensuring that Britain could withdraw from its last major colony with honour. The paper analyses four discursive strategies used by Patten in the promotion of his myth: the transformation of old political genres and the introduction of new ones, presupposition, involvement (the use of indexicals), and lexical structuring and reiteration. As such, the paper is presented as a case study in the creation of mythic discourse in the field of politics.

KEY WORDS: critical discourse analysis, genre, Hong Kong, indexicals, involvement, lexis, myth, political discourse, presupposition

1. INTRODUCTION

Hong Kong was the last of Britain’s significant colonies to be relinquished. Unlike Britain’s other overseas possessions, it was never offered the possibility of independence. China always maintained that Hong Kong was seized by Britain by force and that the treaties which the British claimed gave them the right to rule over Hong Kong were unequal and therefore invalid. In spite of attempts by the British to maintain control over Hong Kong, in 1984, under the Prime Ministership of Margaret Thatcher, Britain and China signed a ‘Joint Declaration’, setting out the terms for the return of Hong Kong to China. According to the terms of this agreement, on 30 June 1997 sovereignty over Hong Kong would revert to China. However, as a ‘Special Administrative Region’ of that country, the territory was promised the maintenance of its way of life and capitalist system for at least
50 years, a high degree of autonomy in the running of its affairs, and the gradual development of limited democracy.

This paper is a product of a research project which studies how Chris Patten, the last Hong Kong governor, and the chief animator of Britain’s policy over Hong Kong, used language to achieve his goals in guiding the transition of sovereignty from Britain to China and Britain’s withdrawal from its last major colony. The period covered is April 1992, when Patten was invited by the British Prime Minister, John Major, to be governor, up to 30 June 1997, when sovereignty was to revert to China and Patten would leave Hong Kong. Data collected over the full period of Patten’s governorship, as follows, forms the corpus on which the research is based:

- Patten’s annual addresses to the Legislative Council
- other formal speeches, in Hong Kong and on overseas visits
- recordings of press conferences given by Patten
- television interviews with Patten
- monthly question-and-answer sessions in the Legislative Council
- statements made by Patten to the press (‘sound-bites’)
- video recordings of ‘Question Time with the Governor’, public meetings held following the governor’s annual addresses to the Legislative Council
- personal interviews with Patten, his personal adviser and his chief spokesperson

The particular focus of this paper is to demonstrate, through a critical analysis of Patten’s discourse, that (whether or not it served the best interests of the 6.3 million people of Hong Kong), one of his main concerns, if not the main concern, was that Britain’s withdrawal from its last major colony—effectively the ending of its Empire—should go down in history as an honourable one and that, in order to achieve this goal, Patten attempted to create a myth about the legacy which would remain after the British withdrawal. As the following analysis shows, Patten claimed that Britain’s and Hong Kong’s values and interests coincided. His myth—which was constantly reiterated both overtly and covertly—was based on a conception of Hong Kong as embodying a set of essentially western liberal values. In this way Patten promoted his goal of withdrawal with honour, while at the same time claiming to be acting with the best interests of the Hong Kong people at heart. In analysing the creation of his myth, the paper identifies a number of discursive strategies used by Patten and, as such, is a case study of the way mythic discourse is created in the political domain.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Work in discourse analysis has demonstrated how fields of professional activity are characterized by special languages, access to which is usually restricted to members of the given profession (e.g. Lakoff, 1990; Tannen, 1990). Political leaders are able to use the special language of politics to exert power over the general public and develop support for their policies.
(Kress, 1985). The project out of which this paper springs aims to present a detailed analysis of how the last British Hong Kong governor exerted language power over the people of Hong Kong during the period of transition of sovereignty from Britain to China (Flowerdew, 1996, 1997a, 1997b).

A number of sources in interactional sociolinguistics provide models for analysing the special languages which characterize the discourse of different professional groups such as politicians and how power relations are instantiated in discourse (e.g. Brown and Levinson, 1987; Goffman, 1981; Lakoff, 1990; Tannen, 1990). Models are also available for the specific analysis of political language (e.g. Atkinson, 1984; Chilton, 1985; Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 1995; Gastil, 1992; Wilson, 1990). Of particular value for the present project is Fairclough’s analysis of the discourse of Margaret Thatcher (Fairclough, 1989). The changes Patten tried to bring about in the political perceptions of the people of Hong Kong are of a similar magnitude and in other ways parallel the changes which Margaret Thatcher brought about in the political perceptions of British society in the 1970s and 1980s. Fairclough demonstrates in his analysis of the discourse of Margaret Thatcher how she was able to bring about a shift in the set of assumptions and presuppositions which had characterized political discourse in Britain preceding her coming to power (in the creation of her own myth, in fact, although Fairclough does not use the term).

An important methodological model for the present project is to be found in critical discourse analysis, with its concern for issues such as the exercise and distribution of power through discourse, the constitution of social reality through discourse, the dissemination of ideology through discourse, and the relations between discourse and social change (Fowler, 1991; Fowler et al., 1979; Hodge and Kress, 1993; Fairclough, 1989, 1992; Kress, 1989; Van Dijk, 1993). Critical discourse analysis emphasizes the interconnectedness of discourse and social reality and critically examines specific situations where relations of power, dominance and inequality are instantiated in discourse. As with critical theory in general (Abercrombie et al., 1994), critical discourse analysis aims to uncover hidden assumptions (in language use) and to debunk their claims to authority. These concerns of critical discourse analysis are central to the present research project, which focuses on the ideological struggle over Hong Kong, as its colonial master, Britain, withdraws, and sovereignty passes to the People’s Republic of China (PRC), where a very different social system and ideology to the one Hong Kong has been used to pertains.

3. MYTHIC DISCOURSE

Myth is construed, in this paper, as a set of beliefs and values deriving from a shared past which, to varying degrees, may or may not be true. The notion of myth carries with it a number of salient features, as follows (Barthes, 1972; Edelman, 1971, 1977, 1988; Fiske, 1982; Gastil, 1992; Geis, 1987; Lewis, 1987):
1. By appealing to common features of a culture or group myth provides a sense of individual and communal identity.

2. A myth may take the form of a narrative or it may be associative (that is made up of related, but non-sequential themes) in structure (in the present context it is the latter).

3. Whether narrative or associative, the elements of a myth fit together to form a coherent whole.

4. Because myth appeals to communal beliefs and values, it is not necessarily supported by rational argument, but may be considered to be axiomatic.

5. As such, myth may operate at the level of the non-conscious mind.

6. At the same time, myth exists in a state of 'naturalness', that is to say its meaning is accepted as inevitable, timeless, and universal, even if determined socially, historically, economically and culturally.

7. Communities may continue to believe in a myth and reject information contesting it, if it justifies their roles and past actions and assuages their future hopes and fears.

When the notion of myth is applied to the political context, two further important considerations come into play:

8. Political leaders may invoke, project or create a myth as a means of motivation and direction of the masses for political support or action and as a way of deflecting criticism of their policies.

9. In order to invoke, project, or create a myth, political leaders must bring it to a state of 'naturalness' (acceptance as true); they may seek to achieve this through discourse by means of a range of discourse strategies, including constant reiteration.

In accordance with these salient features, the notion of myth may be seen to be closely related to a number of other concepts in discourse studies:

10. Insofar as its elements together create a coherent whole which expresses the underlying values and beliefs of a group or community, myth can be construed of as a manifestation, or instantiation, of ideology.

11. When articulated, a myth constitutes a discourse, in the sense of that term as a domain of language use which is unified by a set of common assumptions (Foucault, 1971).

12. In its relationship to communal identity, the notion of myth may be associated with hegemony; and the promotion of a myth by, for example, political leaders, can be related to the process of hegemonic struggle (Gramsci, 1971).

There are many well known examples of myths which have been promoted by political leaders. Adolph Hitler, for example, promoted a myth about the superiority of the Aryan race. Winston Churchill, on the other hand, encouraged a myth of the British as an 'island' people capable of withstanding any aggression. In citing these two examples, it is to be noted
that myth-making may be motivated by more or less respectable political goals. As another example of political myth-making, in more recent times, Ronald Reagan has been shown to have consistently appealed to a mythology concerned with the origins of America and the rise of freedom and economic progress in that country (Lewis, 1987). According to Lewis (1987: 282), Reagan's use of myth provided 'a sense of importance and direction' and 'a communal focus for individual identity', and, for Gastil (1992: 490), Reagan's use of myth 'unified his listeners and led them to accept the empirical assumptions and values embedded within them'. In addition, for Gastil, again, Reagan's use of myth not only won over his listeners, but also reduced or deflected criticism of his policies. In all of the three examples of myth-making cited, it should be emphasized that the exploitation of myth for political goals carries with it a significant element of manipulation.

The situation of Chris Patten, an outsider charged with ensuring that Britain's exit from Hong Kong should be perceived to be an honourable one, presents an interesting case study in political myth-making. It is the contention of this paper that Patten, the last governor of Hong Kong, like those political leaders cited, created a myth in order to build support for his policies and to ensure that the history of British rule in Hong Kong and, indeed, the history of the British Empire (given that Hong Kong was the last of Britain's significant colonies) is recorded in a favourable light. The following sections analyse how he went about creating his myth.

4. PATTEN'S DISCursive FORMATION

As a professional party politician, Patten's discourse directed at the people of Hong Kong was radically different from that of his predecessors, who had been diplomatic service officials, and it was directed at the international media, as well as (perhaps more so than) the people of Hong Kong. In examining the corpus, a number of themes continually recur throughout Patten's speeches, interviews, broadcasts, public meetings, Legislative Council Question Time sessions and writings. The major themes are woven together into a coherent discursive formation, made up essentially of western liberal values, emphasising laissez-faire economics, the freedom of the individual (although not at the expense of the welfare of the less privileged), the rule of law, and democracy.

Although these values are essentially those of western liberalism, they were not presented as being imposed on the people of Hong Kong (whose values have their basis in Confucianism as much as, if not more than in any western ideology: [Bond, 1986, 1991, 1996; Lau and Kuan, 1988]), but as universals which have always been a part of Hong Kong's way of life. Patten was in fact creating an identity for the Hong Kong people in terms of the values he himself subscribed to. He did not make the connection that these values are essentially the same as those promoted by the more left-of-centre tendency within the British Conservative party to which he belongs. Kress (1989: 7) refers to how discourses can 'colonise the social world
imperialistically'. This is what Patten sought to do in Hong Kong, by creating a myth about the British legacy. It is ironic, however, that he should have undertaken the discursive colonization of Hong Kong, while at the same time ostensibly managing the process of political decolonization.

The main planks of Patten’s platform and the four components of his myth were stated in his first annual policy speech, in October 1992, as follows:

- The policies of the Government I lead will be based on four key principles:
  - first, we must continue to generate the economic success that had made Hong Kong one of the wonders of the world: our approach to business will remain one of minimum interference and maximum support.
  - second, we must leave individuals and families free to run their own lives, while providing proper help for those who—often through no fault of their own—are in genuine need;
  - third, we must guarantee the rule of law, with an independent judiciary enforcing laws democratically enacted, and with crime and corruption under unremitting attack.
  - fourth, we must make possible the widest democratic participation by the people of Hong Kong in the running of their affairs, while reinforcing certainty about Hong Kong’s future. (1992 policy speech)

These four areas—the market economy, the freedom of the individual, the rule of law, and democratic participation—were the major themes of Patten’s governorship. Together they constituted the myth Patten was concerned to develop about Britain’s legacy to Hong Kong. In line with the theory of naturalization, as regards myth, these four concepts were constantly reiterated throughout the 5 years of Patten’s period of office and appeared in one form or another in just about every public pronouncement Patten made.2

5. DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES

This section will demonstrate how Patten used a range of discursive strategies in the projection of his myth. These strategies operate at both a macro- and micro-level. At the macro-level, the principal discourse strategies used by Patten concerned the transformation of old political genres and the introduction of new ones. At the micro-level, this generic manipulation was supported most notably by the use of presupposition, involvement (Tannen, 1989) (here, the use of indexicals), and lexical structuring and reiteration.

5.1. The transformation of old political genres and the introduction of new ones

During a century and a half of colonial rule Britain never introduced democracy to Hong Kong. Following the 1984 signing of the Joint Declaration, which stated that the executive government of post handover Hong Kong should be accountable to the legislature, Britain and China
agreed to a gradual introduction of a limited number of elected seats to the Legislative Council. The first direct elections were held in 1991 and the second in 1995. The main focus of Patten’s governorship was his (failed) attempts to persuade China to agree to electoral arrangements in 1995 which would allow for a somewhat broader franchise than the previously limited franchise agreed between the two governments.3

Prior to Patten’s appointment, the British approach to dealing with China had been one of conciliation and compromise, with an emphasis on the part of the British Hong Kong government and its governor, David Wilson, on the need for a ‘smooth transition’ of sovereignty, even if this meant giving in to Chinese demands. Negotiations were conducted secretly with China, and the Hong Kong public were presented with a fait accompli when agreements were reached. When Patten took over there was a complete change of attitude. Patten’s aim was to introduce as much democracy into Hong Kong before the handover as the previous agreements with China allowed. In order to promote this democratic agenda, Patten projected himself as a man of the people. His style was totally different to that of his predecessor. Whereas Wilson was somewhat aloof, Patten adopted a very high public profile, taking every opportunity to be photographed by the press and be seen meeting ordinary Hong Kong people on so-called ‘walkabouts’. Symbolic of this ‘democratization’ of public discourse (Fairclough, 1992), at his inauguration, Patten shunned the traditional white tropical suit, plumed hat and ceremonial sword of previous governors, in favour of a low-key lounge suit. In addition, where Wilson had engaged in quiet negotiations with the Chinese government, Patten, in preferring virulent ‘megaphone diplomacy’ with China, positioned himself as a champion of democracy, in the face of the intransigent Chinese Communist government. Most Hong Kong people are either refugees or the children of refugees from China. They had been shocked by the events of Tiananmen Square and were wary of their rights being limited after the handover. The most popular political party by far is the Democratic Party whose agenda is against the PRC government and in favour of more democracy in Hong Kong. In positioning himself against China, Patten won the support of those people who wanted greater democracy in Hong Kong.

As part of this discursive positioning as a champion of democracy, Patten sought to create new opportunities for demonstrating ‘open’ government. In order to do this, he, on the one hand, transformed already existing genres to make them more ‘democratic’ and, on the other hand, introduced new ones which were, again, ‘democratic’ in nature. While the inauguration and the meet-the-people ‘walkabouts’ had occurred under the previous governor, Patten transformed the purpose and nature of these genres. The inauguration became an opportunity for drawing closer to the people of Hong Kong, with Patten dressed in a lounge suit, rather than the traditional colonial outfit, mixing and shaking hands with the crowd, giving the thumbs up sign and introducing his family; this in contrast to the previous inaugurations, which had been more of a demonstration of colonial authority. By
making the ‘walkabouts’ with much greater frequency, with greater informality and show of care for the ordinary man and woman than had been the case with the previous Governor, this genre again became much more of a means of demonstrating ‘democratic’ government and an affinity with the people than a tour of inspection. Similarly, while the Chinese government and its press had always attacked the British Hong Kong government, often virulently, Patten transformed this genre by answering back, where previous governors had maintained a diplomatic silence. In this way, Patten demonstrated how Britain was ‘doing its best’ for Hong Kong on behalf of the people of Hong Kong, in standing up to the Chinese Communist government.

In line with his emphasis on democracy and informality, Patten also introduced new genres. In the past, in a show of benign paternalism, the governor had presided over proceedings of the Legislative Council from a raised throne-like chair. Patten changed this and withdrew himself from these proceedings, allowing the legislators to debate unhindered. In addition, he established monthly question time sessions where he appeared before the Legislature to make himself accountable. Other new genres he introduced were public meetings where he answered questions from the floor, a monthly radio broadcast, the opening up of Government House for public entertainment, and even the hosting of a radio record show. All of these new genres contributed to the democratic picture Patten wanted to paint of his governorship. He described them as part of Hong Kong’s way of life, even though they had only been introduced at this very late stage in British rule, when Britain was handing Hong Kong over to China. These new, more democratic, genres played a part in allowing Patten to claim that Britain’s legacy to Hong Kong was an honourable and democratic one, while in actual fact, until his arrival, this had demonstrably not been the case. In this, his transformation of old genres and introduction of new ones can be seen as the discursive equivalent of what the historians Hobsbawn and Ranger (1983) refer to as the ‘invention’ of traditions, that is to say, the introduction of ‘a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past’ (Hobsbawm, 1983: 1). In this way, Patten was able to create an impression of the British legacy to Hong Kong as democratic, while, in fact these ‘invented’ traditions were ‘responses to novel situations which … establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition’ (Hobsbawm, 1983: 2). One striking example of how Patten attempted to claim historical continuity for the ‘democracy’ that he was ‘inventing’ occurred during his first public meeting, the first time a governor had ever made himself accountable to the Hong Kong public. In this meeting, Patten described the greatest objective of his governorship as being ‘to secure your way of life for the future’, a way of life which, he preposterously claimed, was that ‘we have free and open meetings like this’.4
5.2. Presupposition

Within the political genres which Patten either transformed or introduced he used a range of discursive strategies in promoting his myth about the British legacy to Hong Kong. The first of these was in the systematic use of presupposition. Fairclough (1989: 152) states that ‘having power may mean being able to determine the presuppositions’. In creating new opportunities and genres for putting over his message, Patten can be seen to have been exerting and increasing his power as Governor as a means of applying this control of the presuppositions that Fairclough refers to.

Presupposition was an important strategy used by Patten to insinuate his myth into the consciousness of the people of Hong Kong and the international press. The four dimensions of Patten’s myth concerning the British legacy to Hong Kong—a free market economy, the freedom of the individual, the rule of law, and democracy—were presented as axiomatic. Patten frequently referred to them as ‘bedrock principles’ and as ‘self-evident and universal truths’—that is to say there was no requirement to justify them, provide evidence in their support, or question them in any way. This, in spite of the fact that they had long and complex philosophical histories on the one hand, and that their applicability within the context of British colonial rule in Hong Kong could be doubted, on the other hand.

Under the heading ‘The Bedrock Principles’, two aspects of Patten’s myth, as cited earlier from his 1992 policy speech, were returned to in 1995:

1. The programme I launched in 1992 was built on two bedrock principles.
2. These principles are so ingrained in Hong Kong’s systems, so much a part of our consensus, that they are usually taken as self-evident and universal truths.
3. The first concerns the economy. Hong Kong knows better than most communities that we must first create the wealth before spending a share of it on improving our public services. We must never lose sight of this fundamental economic reality, and we must accept its implications. There are no shortcuts, no soft options. Social progress is linked directly to economic progress. If we want better services, we must fund them by creating new wealth.
4. The second bedrock principle concerns our rights and freedoms under the law.
5. There is a consensus that our civil institutions must develop in step with the development of our economy. . . .
6. In short, Hong Kong recognizes that economic and social development must take place within the framework of what is perhaps this community’s most prized possession, the Rule of Law. This is not some abstract concept far removed from the daily lives of the people of Hong Kong. It is the Rule of Law which provides a safe and secure environment for the individual, for families and for businesses to flourish. This is the best safeguard against arbitrary and overbearing government. It is the very essence of our way of life. (1995 policy speech)

In this extract, the presupposition and assertion of the axiomatic nature and certitude of the components of the myth are reinforced by a number of features, as follows: 

- The use of the term ‘bedrock principles’ (to refer to the economy and
rule of law) (lines 1 and 12), with the accompanying presupposition that because they were so securely in place they did not require any justification and were not open to doubt or dispute.

- Similarly, the description of the ‘bedrock principles’ as ‘... the very essence of our way of life ...’, with its presupposition again that there is no need to question them.

- The use of the overt statement of the presupposition that the principles in question need not be justified or questioned: ‘These principles are so ingrained in Hong Kong’s systems, so much a part of our consensus, that they are usually taken as self-evident and universal truths’ (lines 2–4).

- The use of ‘Hong Kong knows better than most ...’, ‘There is a consensus ...’, and ‘Hong Kong recognizes ...’ to insinuate the presupposition that the people of Hong Kong are united in their agreement with the beliefs and values that Patten is asserting.

- The use of the so-called present simple tense used in its function of expressing ‘universal truths’: are (lines 2, 8) is (lines 13, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21), concerns (lines 5, 12) provides (line 19).

- The use of the modal must (lines 6, 7, 8, 10, 13, 15), expressing high obligation and therefore certitude.

- The use of emasifiers and superlatives to express certitude: so ingrained (line 2), so much a part (lines 2–3), better than most (line 5), most prized (lines 16–17), the best (line 20), the very essence (line 21).

- The use of emphatic negation to create the presupposition of an alternative view that must be emphatically contradicted: never (line 7), no shortcuts, no soft options (line 9), not some abstract concept (line 17).

- The use of the axiomatic structure ‘if we want ... we must’ (line 10).

- The use of the metaphors, possession (line 17) and safeguard (line 20), with their accompanying presupposition that what is possessed or safeguarded must already exist.

Manipulative presupposition such as Patten used here has been described by Fairclough as a type of intertextuality. ‘Manipulative presuppositions’, Fairclough says, ‘... postulate interpreting subjects with particular prior textual experiences and assumptions, and in so doing they contribute to the ideological constitution of subjects’ (1992: 121). Interpreted in these terms, Patten’s use of presupposition was a way of projecting his myth concerning the British legacy onto the people of Hong Kong. He was interpreting his subjects, the Hong Kong people, as having prior experience of the four elements of his myth, when, in fact, it can easily be argued, this was to a considerable degree demonstrably not the case.6

5.3. Involvement strategies: the use of indexicals

For a myth to be accepted it must be seen to be imbued with shared values and beliefs. Both the person or group promoting a myth and the person or group onto which the myth is being projected, must be perceived as sharing these beliefs and values which constitute the myth. As a British colonial governor, Patten had a difficult task in this respect: he was British and a colonialist, but the community he was seeking to influence was composed of Asian colonial subjects. One important way he sought to overcome this
problem was to position himself discursively on the side of the majority pro-democracy camp, and against China, as already noted. Another way was to use a whole range of discursive involvement strategies (Tannen, 1989) to ingratiate himself with Hong Kong society.

A fairly detailed study has already been published of Patten’s involvement strategies (Flowerdew, 1996). Here, just one strategy, the use of the indexical, we/our, is highlighted, to show how it contributed to the projection of Patten’s myth.7

As indexicals, the items we/our only take on meaning in relation to context, either within the text or outside it. As such, they can be ambiguous and open to multiple interpretations, on the one hand, and manipulation, on the other hand. In Patten’s discourse these items are often used with considerable ambivalence. In the extract from the 1992 policy speech cited earlier, we in the four-part reiteration, we must, according to one possible reading, refers back to ‘the government I lead’ which had come earlier in the text. At the same time, however, these uses of we could also be interpreted more widely, outside the text, or exophorically, as Patten and his audience, the people of Hong Kong. In this way, Patten uses the indexicals to integrate himself into Hong Kong society. Patten’s reference to ‘our way of life’ and the claim that ‘we have meetings like this’, in his first public meeting referred to earlier, is another example of his use of the indexical we/our as a way of integrating himself into Hong Kong society.

This use of we/our, in fact, runs right through Pattens discourse and is used when referring to the various dimensions of his myth concerning the purported British legacy. In this way he projected his values onto the people of Hong Kong. In the following extract, for example, from a speech given in Singapore, the use of we/our suggests that Patten is a part of the ‘community’ whom he is referring to, even though logic indicates that he is not a part of that community, and would certainly not be after 1997, when he would leave:

If the Joint Declaration is as faithfully followed after 1997 as we are following it today, then all will be well. The Joint Declaration describes how we live, We are a community not a Lego set. We can’t be dismantled and then assembled again by an act of political will, an act which may also take away some of the bits and put them back in the box. We are a living, thriving organism, with the sap and vitality coursing through our whole system. (Speech to Fortune Global Forum, Singapore, 9 March 1995; emphasis added)

The same strategy of ascribing the values and beliefs Patten is promoting to those of the community as a whole by the use of the indexical we is apparent in the following extract on liberty and the law:

The liberty that the law constrains, it also protects, and in Hong Kong we believe that liberty should be as broadly drawn as possible. A society where men and women are more free is one where we believe they will also be more responsible, more successful and more happy. The old American adage that the average man and woman are better than the average strikes a chord with us. We trust them to make most of the decisions
about their own lives and life-styles. **We** also think that the strength of government is enhanced not weakened by the freedoms of the people it serves. (Speech to Fortune Global Forum, Singapore, 9 March 1995)

And the strategy is present again in the following extract on rights:

There’s a view, expressed frequently in the last few years, that this is a very western view, that these rights are not as important as **we** in Hong Kong believe, that they are certainly not universal. My only contribution to that debate is to say that it’s certainly not an argument between West and East. The argument is addressed by Asians within Asia. (Speech to Fortune Global Forum, Singapore, 9 March 1995)

In this extract, a careful reading of the text suggests even that, in claiming the debate on rights to be an argument by Asians within Asia and at the same time entering into the debate himself, Patten seems to be including himself as an ‘Asian’, something which he demonstrably was not.

In all of the preceding three extracts, whether the issue is the Hong Kong social system, liberty and the law, or rights, in each case Patten’s use of **we/our** integrates him into the Hong Kong community and ascribes to the Hong Kong people shared experience and beliefs which, logic would dictate, are not in fact shared by them with the colonial governor at all, but which nevertheless conveniently fit within the framework of the myth he was building about Britain’s legacy.

Finally, concerning the remaining dimension of Patten’s myth not mentioned in the preceding examples, the economy, a similar strategy is found again in the next extract, although here it is rather different:

Whatever indicators **we** look at, Hong Kong’s performance in the past decade has been impressive. By the standards of most of the developed world, it has been spectacular. Let **us** start with the economy. Since 1984: living standards for the whole community have improved dramatically. Total GDP has grown by 79 percent in real terms, and in terms of GDP per person, **we** now rank 17th in the world instead of 28th, as **we** were in 1984; the value of **our** foreign trade has increased by about 350 percent in real terms. In 1984, Hong Kong was the 13th largest trading economy in the world; **we** are now eighth and rising; **we** have made the transition from a manufacturing base to an international business centre, with labour productivity rising 54 percent in the process. (1994 policy speech; emphasis added)

In this extract, by his use of **we/our**, Patten claims the success of the Hong Kong people to be part of his success also, in spite of the fact that the aspects of this success to which he refers had all been accomplished long before his arrival in 1992. The use of **we/our** in this extract is thus somewhat different to earlier examples insofar as whereas in the previous extracts, in ascribing his values and beliefs to those of the community, Patten was imposing something of his on the people of Hong Kong, here he can be interpreted as taking something away from Hong Kong, a share in their economic success, that is not in fact his. In all of the examples, however, **we/our** contributes to the projection of the myth of the British legacy, built on purported or insinuated, common beliefs, values and experiences.
5.4. Lexical reiteration

Perhaps the most systematic way in which Patten sought to naturalize his myth about the British legacy to Hong Kong was in his use of lexical reiteration and patterning. Lexical choice is the most obvious way in which the particular field, or ideational meanings, of a discourse or register are signalled (Halliday, 1994; Halliday and Hasan, 1976, 1985/89). In accordance with this theory, we find that the four principal themes of Patten’s discourse, as elaborated earlier, are instantiated by the frequent and consistent reiteration throughout the corpus of lexis belonging to the four semantic fields of the market economy, the freedom of the individual, the rule of law, and democratic participation. Computer-generated word frequency lists indicate the wide range and regularity with which words belonging to these semantic fields occur in the corpus and indicate their use to be a consistent discursive strategy in Patten’s promotion of his myth.8

To take an example of one of these themes, high-frequency items belonging to the semantic field of economy, in addition to the term economy itself, are market, business, trade, commerce, competition, industry, enterprise, initiative, investment, wealth, reward, and talent. If we look at the contexts in which these key words are used, by using a concordancer, we see that they are overwhelmingly positive. Table 1 shows some examples of the positive environments of the words relating to the economy, as represented in a range of noun phrases containing the word economy or economic. As the Table shows, economy is related to choice, freedom, fairness, cheerfulness, growth, good health, virtues, benefits, positive change, success, talent, and initiative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1. Positive environments of noun phrases containing the word economy or economic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• economic choice, freedom under the law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• fair economic choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the background of some still pretty cheerful predictions for economic growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the eighth largest trading economy in the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• our flourishing economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• all the virtues and benefits of a free economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a dramatic contribution to China’s economic revolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the enduring economic success of Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a market economy that liberates talent and rewards initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the great mass of men and women who make our economy the outstanding success that it is</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If we look at how words relating to economy function within the clause, as opposed to the noun phrase, we further see the positive and dynamic attributes of these items. The key words listed in Table 1 as belonging to the semantic field of the economy were all nouns. To see how these nouns function within the clause we need to consider the verbs with which they collocate. Typical verbs collocating with nouns relating to the economy include
create, generate, sustain, and support. These verbs are of the material process, or 'processes of doing' type (Halliday, 1994), that is, they conceptualize actions being performed and thereby contribute further to the positive impression of the economy, by introducing the semantic component of dynamic action.

The nouns collocating with these material process verbs may fulfil the role within the clause of 'recipient' (Halliday, 1994), either as object, in active, transitive clauses—'to protect free trade', 'to increase economic growth'—or as subject, in passive clauses—'wealth is generated', 'trade is facilitated'. They may also be conceptualized as entities which are capable of acting on their own behalf, that is, as an integral part of the dynamic process itself, if the verb is used ergatively (Halliday, 1994; Lock, 1996; Sinclair, 1990)—'trade has boomed', 'economic growth has increased'. In some cases nouns relating to economic activity may perform the role of actor, as the doer of the material process—'a market economy liberates talent and rewards initiative' (market economy = actor, liberates = material process); 'the free and open competition of goods, of services and ideas promotes the advance of knowledge, of technology, of efficiency' (the free and open competition of goods, of services and ideas = actor, promotes = material process); 'it (free and open competition) encourages initiative and stimulates the creation of wealth' (free and open competition = actor, encourages = material process). In these examples, the economy becomes personalized, insofar as the actors associated with material process verbs are more usually human.9

Further emphasizing this positive, dynamic nature of economic activity, if we turn now to adjectival forms, taking the adjective economic as an example, we find a preponderance of collocations of this item with deverbal nouns, that is, nouns derived from verbs, which therefore have a 'process' component in their semantic structure. These deverbal nouns are either derived from ergative verbs, which are capable of spontaneous action by themselves (e.g. economic revolution, economic growth), or process verbs, where a human agent, or actor, would typically be involved (e.g. economic choice, economic success).10

To further highlight the positive environment in which words relating to the economy are incorporated, we find that pre- and post-modifications of nouns belonging to this semantic field are again overwhelmingly positive and dynamic: 'our flourishing economy', 'the eighth largest trading economy in the world', 'the men and women who make our economy the outstanding success that it is' (positive attributes underlined).

To illustrate still further the positive, dynamic behaviour attaching to the meaning of words relating to the economy, Table 2 provides a list of phrases containing the word wealth. Notice here the material process verbs, create and generate, the ergative verb, rise, and the deverbal noun, creation, all collocating with wealth in these phrases. As with the examples with the word economy, these collocates are thus overwhelmingly positive and dynamic.
TABLE 2. Phrases containing the word wealth

- creating new wealth
- those who create our wealth
- the need to generate wealth
- we must first create the wealth
- a dynamo for further wealth creation
- rising wealth enables more to be spent by Government, encourages initiative and stimulates the creation of wealth
- generating the wealth required to provide the standards of public services
- to use a proper share of the wealth we generate
- the wealth we generate as a community

When we look at key words attaching to the economy, as analysed in Table 2, in context, we notice a phenomenon which Fowler et al. (1979) call overlexicalization, that is, how a large concentration of inter-related terms occurs together as an expression of a fundamental preoccupation of the given discourse. This applies not only to the theme, or semantic field, of the economy, but also to the other three principal themes, or semantic fields, of Patten’s discursive formation. To illustrate further how this phenomenon functions in Patten’s discursive formation in these other fields, let us this time take the example of the semantic field relating to the freedom of the individual. Table 3 lists a range of complex noun phrases in which the word individual occurs. Examining this table, we find that the term individual collocates positively—as with economy, these items are again overwhelmingly positive—with a wide range of nouns—rights, decency, fairness, enterprise, respect, right, privacy, protection, families, freedom, opportunities—while it is contrasted negatively with the terms state, collective and interference.¹¹

TABLE 3. Complex noun phrases in which the word Individual occurs

- the individual against the state
- the individual against the collective
- the rights of the individual
- decency and fairness, individuality and enterprise
- respect for individual rights
- the individual’s right to privacy
- individuals and their right to seek the protection of the courts
- the freedom of individuals to manage their affairs without fear of arbitrary interference
- individuals and families free to run their own lives
- opportunities for . . . individuals to shape their own lives
- the privacy of individuals

Turning now to the semantic field relating to the rule of law, Table 4 shows examples of this key term in context:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. this way of life, Hong Kong’s capitalist system, its freedoms, its</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rule of law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. the rule of law, on which our success depends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hong Kong’s rule of law essential to preserving Hong Kong’s prosperity and its way of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. the rule of law that guarantees stability and fundamental freedoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. the rule of law, the guardian angel of Hong Kong’s decency and the engine of Hong Kong’s success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. the innate strength of the values that make Hong Kong special and the rule of law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. the importance of the rule of law and its role in creating Hong Kong’s prosperity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. the rule of law that has for many years provided the framework for Hong Kong’s achievements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. the rule of law… the glue by which millions of people of different ambitions abilities and temperaments can be joined together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. the rule of law that champions the rights of the individual against the collective, the rights of the weak against the mighty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. the rule of law: a safe and secure environment for the individual, for families and for businesses to flourish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. the rule of law which protects the vulnerable against the powerful, the individual against the state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. the vitality and the industry of its people, living, working and prospering within a framework of sound administration and the rule of law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. ‘Freedom under the rule of law… not just a slogan in Hong Kong… a policy… a strategy… our history, our life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. the rule of law, with an independent judiciary enforcing laws democratically enacted, and with crime and corruption under unremitting attack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. the bedrock of your way of life… the rule of law that guarantees fair and equitable treatment for everyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. a free, prosperous, decent society, living with the rule of law—under a Chinese flag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. the rule of law… hand in hand with clean and competent Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. a Government both dedicated to, and subject to the rule of law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. a decent, open, plural society living in freedom under the rule of law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. this community’s most prized possession, the rule of law</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The rule of law collocates, in the examples in Table 4 with the following lexical items: nouns: life, vitality, freedom(s), success, prosperity, stability, decency, strength, importance, achievement(s), ambitions, abilities, values, rights, individual, success, glue (metaphor), guardian angel (metaphor), engine (metaphor); verbs: preserve, guarantee, create, provide, champion, flourish, protect, live, work, prosper, enforce; and adjectives: fundamental, open, independent, fair, equitable, decent, essential, clean, competent, dedicated, plural, prized, prosperous, secure, special, bedrock (metaphor).

This wide range of collocates indicates again the phenomenon referred to by Fowler as overlexicalization, while at the same time showing how the term rule of law occurs in linguistic environments which are overwhelmingly positive. Especially worthy of note here, also, is the phenomenon
(noted earlier for the word economy) of the item rule of law fulfilling the syntactic function of actor. As noted in the discussion of the item economy, this function of actor is typically fulfilled by humans (e.g. 'The students studied the text', 'Susan hit the ball', 'They ate their lunch'). In fulfilling a role which is more typically reserved for humans, rule of law is personified, taking on a human dimension and becoming capable of dynamic action. In Table 4 this occurs in examples 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, and 16.12

Considering, finally, the semantic field relating to democratic participation, because he was constrained in how much he could do in terms of introducing democracy in the form of universal suffrage, Patten chose to emphasize other features of democracy relating to government openness and accountability. (These ideas were based on the British Conservative Party’s reforms in Britain concerning open government and the so-called ‘Citizen’s Charter’). Table 5 shows examples of the key word accountability in context. Accountability collocates in the examples in Table 5 with the following related concepts: service, performance, commitment, openness, decency, competency, determination, creative dialogue, professionalism, responsiveness, representation, openness, democratic assembly, responsibility, performance, elections, legislature, community, decisions, actions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 5. Examples of accountability in context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• a relationship based on service, accountability and performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• This will also be a speech about accountability and commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• greater openness and accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• decent, competent, accountable government in Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• our determination to make the Government more accountable to the people of Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What accountability means in practice is creative dialogue between the Administration and you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the need to provide a more professional, more accountable, more responsive Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the process by which the Government is accountable to the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• to strengthen the representation and accountability of the Municipal Councils and District Boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the Government becoming more open and more accountable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• an evolving system of accountability to an increasingly democratic assembly in Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The discharge of its responsibility for which it is accountable to this Legislative Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• accountability must begin with the Government’s own performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• this Hong Kong system, with an executive-led administration accountable to an increasingly elected legislature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• our arrangements for ensuring that the Government is held accountable to the community for its decisions and actions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The examples in Table 5 demonstrate again the phenomenon of overlexicalization, together with the positive associations which, as we have now seen, go with all four of the key components of Patten’s discursive formation and therefore contribute to Patten’s myth of colonial withdrawal with honour.
5.5. Integration of the four dimensions of Patten’s discursive formation

The previous section looked separately at examples of lexis relating to one of the four principal themes of Patten’s myth. Part of Patten’s political stance, however, was to show how these four areas of a market economy, rule of law, freedom of the individual, and democratic participation are inter-related, how it is not possible to have one without the other. This is an important aspect of Patten’s discursive formation, because other East Asian politicians have argued that it is possible to have strong economic growth without some of the other attributes of the developed western democracies, such as party politics and high levels of social welfare provision, some arguing that this ‘Asian’ model is more appropriate for Hong Kong and thus undermining Patten’s political and social reform programme.

At times, Patten overtly stated this purported relationship. In the following extract, for example, three of the four dimensions of the myth concepts are integrated, starting with the rule of law, moving on to the freedom of the individual, and concluding with the free market economy:

> The rule of law is essential for Hong Kong’s future. It begins with individuals and their right to seek the protection of the Courts, in which justice is administered by impartial judges. It protects the freedom of individuals to manage their affairs without fear of arbitrary interference by the Government or the improper influence of the rich and powerful. Its starting point is the individual but it encompasses the whole of society. For the business community in particular, the rule of law is crucial. Without it, there is no protection against corruption, nepotism or expropriation. (1994 policy speech)

In the next example we have democracy (not mentioned in the previous extract) integrated with the market economy and the rule of law, respectively:

> Democracy is more than just a philosophical ideal. It is, for instance, an essential element in the pursuit of economic progress. Let me give an example of what I mean. Without the rule of law buttressed by democratic institutions, investors are left unprotected. Without an independent Judiciary enforcing laws democratically enacted, businesses will be vulnerable to arbitrary political decisions taken on a whim—a sure recipe for a collapse in confidence and a powerful deterrent to investors from overseas. So democracy brings benefits as well as representing values. It helps to create the sort of society, as well as the business opportunities that first attract talent and capital. (1992 policy speech)\textsuperscript{13}

As well as being overtly stated, the inter-relationship of these key concepts is reinforced in a less explicit way, through the application of particular lexical items to more than one field. A particularly good example of this is the lexical item \textit{freedom} and its related forms, which collocate with items from all four of the semantic fields. Examples are as follows:

\textbf{the free market economy}

free trade
free markets
free enterprise
free and fair commerce

**freedom of the individual**
a free and plural society a society where men and women are more free individuals and families free to run their own lives

**freedom under the rule of law**
freedom under the rule of law
freedom of expression is a universal right

**freedom and democratic participation**
political freedom
freedom to say what you want
freedom of expression

Similarly, to take another example, the word **rights** also cuts across the four fields:

**economic rights**
righst of property
economic rights
the rights of the consumer

**individual rights**
the rights of the individual
the rights of the child
human rights

**legal rights**
legal rights
rights and freedoms under the law
legislative framework for defending rights

**democratic rights**
civil and political rights
electoral rights

**freedom and the free market economy and political freedom**
economic and political freedom

This phenomenon of words collocating in different semantic contexts or fields has also been noted by Fairclough (1995: 113), who calls the strategy ‘ambivalence potential’. It is perhaps significant that Fairclough notes this strategy in the discourse of another British Conservative politician, Lord Young of Graffham.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper has tried to demonstrate how, as Britain’s imperial adventure to all intents and purposes drew to an end with the relinquishment of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty, the main architect and animator of British policy, the Hong Kong governor, Chris Patten, by means primarily of a powerful rhetoric, created a myth which was presented to the people of Hong Kong and, more importantly for the British, to the world at large and the history books, as Britain’s lasting legacy. The myth which was promot-
ed as this legacy was constructed upon four key concepts—a free market economy, the freedom of the individual, the rule of law, and democracy.

According to Barthes (1972: 129), a function of myth is to ‘[transform] history into nature’. Citing an example from French imperialism/colonialism, Barthes demonstrates, in perhaps his best-known analysis of contemporary myth, how a photograph of a black soldier saluting the French flag might be interpreted as either a symbol of imperialism, on the one hand, or as what he refers to as an ‘alibi of coloniality’, on the other hand. In both cases, if one of these interpretations occurs, however, there would be no myth. It is when the viewer feels that the picture seems quite ‘natural’ and no particular symbolic interpretation is suggested that the myth comes into being, and, as Barthes puts it, that ‘French imperialism achieves its natural state’ (1973: 130), or as other writers such as Fairclough (1989, 1992) have conceptualized this process, the discourse (if we accept visual information as part of discourse) becomes ‘naturalized’: the ideological element in the relation between the French flag and the black soldier is no longer apparent. This paper has shown how Chris Patten, the last colonial governor of Hong Kong, set out to naturalize his myth of Britain’s legacy to Hong Kong in the way Barthes described, by focusing on his transformation of old political genres and introduction of new ones, and his use of presupposition, involvement (indexicals), and lexical structuring and reiteration.

Gastil (1992) makes some telling points about the function of myth in discourse. Mythic discourse, he states, can forge consensus and bring the members of a community together, making them aware of their shared values, views and histories. This was clearly Patten’s purpose, to establish a unified constituency of support among the people of Hong Kong, based upon his so-called ‘bedrock principles’. At the same time, however, for Gastil, such rhetorical strategies can ‘intoxicate’ or ‘mystify’ the community, over-simplifying political situations and obscuring important differences. This would also seem to be the case with Patten. Because Patten was creating a myth, which is by definition simplistic, there was a lot left out of the picture he depicted of the British legacy to Hong Kong. Although space precludes any sort of detailed analysis, suffice it to say that Hong Kong is not the model of free market economics that Patten made it out to be. The internal market, in fact, is riddled with monopolistic practices, many of them controlled by British-backed conglomerates. The record of the British on individual freedom is patchy, to say the least. During the colonial period, Hong Kong was subject to draconian laws restricting the freedom of the individual. One of the most glaring iniquities, in fact, was the racial discrimination which was built into the system. Regarding the rule of law, although Hong Kong does have an independent judiciary, as already mentioned, there are a range of draconian laws on the statute books which restrict personal freedom. In addition, although corruption has been reduced in recent years, certainly during the 1970s, official corruption reached such a level that when the then governor made an attempt to control it, he was forced to offer an amnesty to those in the police force who were involved. Finally, concerning democracy, it is only since the signing of
the Joint Declaration that Britain made any attempt at introducing representative democracy. There must be more than a suspicion that Britain only decided to act at all at this late stage because it knew that it was washing its hands of the colony.¹⁴

To what extent Patten was successful in naturalizing his myth there is no direct way of knowing. The relative popularity of Patten in opinion polls would perhaps suggest he was at least partly successful with the people of Hong Kong (Chung, 1993, 1994) and positive accounts in the international press and media of his governorship would also provide support for such an interpretation. The following assessment, made in 1995, would suggest such a view:

By the time the Union Flag is lowered, Mr. Patten will probably say, with pride, that 155 years of British rule has turned Hong Kong from a barren rock into a world-class financial centre, with a governmental system that is as democratic as can be, an efficient infrastructure marked by a modern airport and port facilities and an affluent population that enjoys free education and heavily subsidised medical and housing benefits. 'The Brits go with pride', the Western press will probably say. (Lau, 1995)

In his 1996 policy speech, his last, Patten presented what was generally interpreted to be an evaluation of a century and a half of British rule. Extracts from the speech were broadcast internationally, including on the American CNN and NBC networks. According to the (invented) colonial 'tradition', the policy speech was followed each year by a motion of thanks by the Legislative Council. In 1996, however, an amendment was introduced by a member of the Democratic Party, which sought to put on 'historical record' that Britain's failing had been that it had not introduced democracy into Hong Kong and that as a result the fruit of the economic success of the territory was shared by only the wealthy few. 'It is fair to tell the world that we are disappointed', the proposer of the amendment later stated. The amendment, however, was rejected by one vote.¹⁵

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NOTES

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1. In interviews with Patten and his personal adviser, both men emphasized how they were conscious of the historic nature of Patten’s governorship and both said that they believed that the history of the British Empire would be viewed ‘through the prism of Hong Kong’. Interview with Patten, 16 September 1996, with his personal adviser, Edward Llewelyn, 25 January 1996.

2. There is some empirical support available for this idea of naturalization in the social psychology literature. Krugman (1972), for example, argues that subjects pass through three stages for an advertisement to have its desired effect. These are a ‘What is it?’ stage, a ‘What of it?’ stage and a ‘Reminder’ stage, with the ‘Reminder’ stage marking the beginning of disengagement, or acceptance (see Severin and Tankard, 1992, for review).

3. Secret negotiations took place between the two governments as a result of the Tiananmen Square incident in China in 1989. The events of Tiananmen had created a loss of confidence in the Joint Declaration on the part of the Hong Kong public. Britain, therefore, argued for greater democracy, to restore confidence, while China, worried by support for the Tiananmen demonstrators in Hong Kong, became less accommodating (see Flowerdew, 1997b).

4. Public meeting, ‘Question Time with the Governor’, 8 October 1992, City Hall, Hong Kong. See Flowerdew (1996, 1997a) for detailed analysis of this meeting.

5. Most of the features identified here are also present in the 1992 speech, as cited earlier. Space precludes an analysis of both extracts. The purpose of citing both the 1992 and the 1995 speeches is to show the recurrence of the myth throughout Patten’s discourse, an important aspect as far as naturalization is concerned.

6. As demonstrated by a brief account in the conclusion.


8. An important technique in the data analysis in this paper is the use of word frequency lists and key word in context (kwic) concordances (Sinclair, 1987, 1991). As Morrison and Love (1996) note, computer-assisted text analysis does not seem to have been incorporated in any major way into methodologies of critical discourse analysis. This is most surprising, as word frequency lists and concordancing allow a researcher to conduct a systematic analysis of key linguistic and semantic concepts within a corpus. Such techniques are particularly valuable where large corpora are concerned, as in the present study, as they allow the researcher to quickly discover to what extent a given feature occurs across the whole or a large part of the corpus. In the present study, for example, a reading of Patten’s first major policy speech showed it to be organized around the key concepts of the free market economy, individualism, the rule of law and democracy. The concordance was quickly able to show that these key concepts occurred consistently right through Patten’s governorship, and not just in his first major policy speech. Another application of the frequency list and concordances is in discovering the major semantic fields of the corpus and the items clustering within these fields. In the present study, for example, economy was identified as a very high frequency item. The frequency list and key word in context output allowed the identification of other words, e.g. choice, freedom, virtue, benefit, etc., clustering in this semantic field.

In addition to this broad survey-type approach, the concordances also allow the researcher to examine in detail the linguistic environment within which given items occur. It was Firth (1957) who stated that we know the meaning of a word ‘by the company it keeps’. By looking at large numbers of instances of given words or phrases in context the researcher is able to establish the typical
patterns they are used in and hence their typical pragmatic, as well as semantic, meanings. In the present study, for example, the concordances allowed the researcher to discover that the word 'economy' was invariably used in a positive and dynamic context and that the verbs which typically collocated with it also carried a dynamic semantic component in their meaning.

9. Downing and Locke (1992: 114) define the term 'agent', or actor, as 'any entity that is capable of operating on itself or others, usually to bring about some change in the location or properties of itself or others. Typical agents are human'.

10. Thibault (1991: 284) characterizes deverbal nouns as 'a reified nominalised process which takes on the semantic qualities of a participant'.

11. Notice how these contrastive items create an implied negative image of China.

12. In example 5, the human element is introduced by means of the metaphor 'guardian angel'. In example 7, it is the attribute of rule of law, 'role', which introduces the personal element. In example 9, as in 5, the human element is introduced via the metaphor 'glue', which joins people together.

13. In this extract and the previous one, the use of presupposition, expressing the axiomatic nature of Patten's claims, as discussed in the earlier section of the paper, is notable. The authority of Patten's statements is conveyed through the use of high probability modality (is and will) and the so-called present simple tense used in its function of expressing 'universal truths'.

14. In Patten's discourse, there was little evidence of any sort of critical evaluation of his 'bedrock principles' of this sort. It was up to the Chinese to develop an alternative view. Certainly, the Chinese position on Hong Kong is radically different from that of Patten. For the Chinese, Hong Kong was seized by Britain following Chinese defeat in the so-called Opium War. The Opium War occurred following Chinese confiscation of opium brought into China by British merchants. An outcome of this Chinese defeat was the 'unequal' Treaty of Nanking of 1842 which ceded Hong Kong island to Britain. Subsequently, in two more unequal treaties, following Chinese defeats in war, Britain seized the Kowloon Peninsula in 1860, and in 1898 leased the New Territories for 99 years. Viewed from this perspective, Britain's occupation of Hong Kong is a source of national shame.

Just as Britain should take no pride in its occupation of Hong Kong, according to this Chinese view, neither is it justified in claiming credit for Hong Kong's economic success. In contrast to Patten's view, which attributes Hong Kong's success to British administration combined with the Chinese work ethic and entrepreneurial skill, for the Chinese, Hong Kong's success is not due to any British contribution, but solely to the efforts of the great majority of Chinese people who make up the population.

15. Interview, ATV World, Newsline, 27 October 1996.

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