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MAY FOURTH LINGUISTIC ORTHODOXY AND RHETORIC:
SOME INFORMAL COMPARATIVE NOTES

In this article, I will start out with some questions of definition and method. I will then make a survey of the historical development of a range of national languages, always keeping the same question in mind: how does the Chinese case compare with these other instances? It turns out that viewed in the context of comparative sociolinguistics the Chinese case has many close and instructive parallels with striking similarities.

In order to find some significant contrasts between the Chinese and the Italian cases I will make some forays into the vast field of comparative philology and comparative rhetoric. I will point out distinct differences between ancient Chinese and ancient Graeco-Latin rhetoric, and I will show that in some crucial rhetorical ways the May Fourth movement might appear to have been the Hellenization of Chinese literary discourse. At a more profound level this again places the Chinese case into the very same category as that of familiar European languages like Russian: their rhetorical formation was through the Graeco-Latin model, and characteristically this Hellenization went through an intermediary tradition that had been Hellenized earlier: French. The more I have studied the Chinese case in its historical and comparative context, the less unique it has come to appear to me. What creates the impression of uniqueness is the deplorable degree of isolation of Chinese philology from other comparable philologies. For example, when it comes to what I will call constraints in the rhetoric of classical Chinese as compared to Latin or Greek, a proper comparative study reveals that the special case is not that of Chinese; rather the exceptional case is that of Latin and Greek. In a sense, what needs an explanation is not the constraints in Chinese but the systematic breaking of these constraints in Latin and Greek literature that is historically almost unique.

1. TERMINOLOGICAL PRELIMINARIES: WHAT IS SPOKEN CHINESE?

‘What Chinese is it that you want to learn sir?’ asked the first sinologue of established reputation that I consulted: ‘there is the language of the

ancient classics, and the language of more modern books, and the language of official documents, and the epistolary language, and the spoken language, of which there are many dialects: now which Chinese is it that you wish to begin with?

In 1867, Sir Thomas Wade begins the preface to his *Progressive Course Designed to Assist the Student of Colloquial Chinese* with this reminiscence.¹

Since then, the Chinese language has been modernized, Westernized, and standardized in many ways, and the main impetus for this came from what came to be known as the May Fourth movement.

In all the grammars of Modern Chinese we have, there is a description of a language which differs in very clear and systematic ways, even from the language used in Chinese publications like newspapers, and also from the language spoken by supposed speakers of *putonghua* 普通話. There is much more variety in the written and spoken varieties of *putonghua* than current grammars would like to have us believe or indeed allow. Sir Thomas Wade's reminiscence remains painfully relevant to modern Chinese linguistics.

Chao Yuen Ren at least takes the trouble to pose the crucial question: "What is spoken Chinese?". He goes on to reply: "By spoken Chinese, as used in the title of this book, I mean the dialect of Peiping in the middle of the twentieth century, spoken in an informal, sometimes known as casual style."² His attitude corresponds in some ways to that of Wang Li 王力: "Things like Jia Zheng's 賈政 dialogue with guests ... cannot be counted as real spoken language."³ (Why are formal conversations less 'spoken Chinese' than informal conversations? The very least we can say is that the term 'spoken' must be a misnomer when applied to forms of language or stylistic levels of Chinese.) I think I have good reason to suspect that there never was a native speaker of 'spoken Chinese' whose speech did not routinely and systematically include elements that were excluded from Chao's gram-

¹ Thomas Francis Wade and Walter Caine Hillier. 1886 [1867]. *A Progressive Course Designed to Assist the Student of Colloquial Chinese as Spoken in the Capital and the Metropolitan Department*. 3 vols. Shanghai: Statistical Department of the Inspectorate General of Customs.

² Chao Yuen Ren. 1968 [1948]. *Mandarin Primer*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

³ Wang Li 王力. 1959 [1954]. *Zhongguo xiandai yufa* 中國現代語法 (Contemporary Chinese grammar). 2 vols. Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, vol. 1, p. 1.

mar. (And by all accounts Chao's speech—formal and informal—was structurally much richer than that described in his grammar.)

A similar (and contrasting) situation prevails in modern Arabic. Grammars of Modern Standard Arabic (like that by A. F. L. Beeston⁴) describe a language which practically no one speaks on any occasion except in a classroom when paid to teach it, or in some very special formal circles dedicated to the cultivation of that form of speech. The varieties of Arabic that are actually spoken, for example in Egypt, all tend to involve strong elements of code switching and various forms of compromise between grammatically sharply distinct dialect forms of Arabic and the officially promulgated literary form of Arabic *putonghua*.⁵

English seems quite different at first sight. *A Grammar of Contemporary English*⁶ describes a fairly unified standard of English which enjoys a surprising degree of acceptance across a multiplicity of political and social systems, and this grammar notes the differences between local varieties of English. On the other hand, we still have no overall description of the range of standards followed by and indeed very largely shared by speakers and writers of Modern Standard Chinese. Partly, this may be a lingering effect of May Fourth linguistic ideology, the tendency to regard the pervasive *wenyan* 文言 elements in everyday speech and writing as intrusions of a Latin-like different language rather than as an integrated historical register within most modern written styles and many spoken styles. It is instructive to see the tremendous amount of solid empirical and theoretical work that has been done on comparable phenomena concerning literary and spoken Arabic. The subtle syntactic and semantic interactions between classical and modern Chinese have still received very little detailed formal linguistic attention. Grammars have tended to describe either 'modern Chinese' or 'classical Chinese', but not the spoken and linguistic practices in which the two subtly interact.

⁴ Alfred F. L. Beeston. 1970. *The Arabic Language Today*. London: Hutchinson.

⁵ The importance and relevance of the Arabic case was brought to my attention by my colleague Gunvor Mejdell. See Gunvor Mejdell. 1980. *Arabisk Diglossi*. M.A. thesis, Department of Semitic Studies, University of Oslo; Werner Diem. 1974. *Hochsprache und Dialekt im Arabischen. Untersuchungen zur heutigen arabischen Zweisprachigkeit*. Wiesbaden: Steiner; and also Maurice Boulos Salib. 1979. *Spoken Literary Arabic: Oral Approximation of Literary Arabic in Egyptian Formal Discourse*. Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley.

⁶ Randolph Quirk et al. 1972. *A Grammar of Contemporary English*. London: Longman.

It is customary to refer to the variety of the dialect of Beijing, which as result of the May Fourth movement was promoted as the language for all purposes throughout China, as Modern Standard Chinese or simply as ‘modern Chinese’. Ivanov and Polivanov could still maintain that “a commonly Chinese colloquial language not linked to a certain dialect of a class (i.e. a *koinê* [or common language—this is the Greek source of the modern term *putonghua*, C. H.] of mass social significance) does not exist”.⁷

Perhaps the situation has changed in China today. But on the question of a name for the modern Chinese language the terminological confusion in Chinese is certainly no less than in English today. We have, among other things:

- (1) *Guanhua* 官話 ‘Mandarin’ (obsolete except as the designation of a dialect area);
- (2) *Baihua* 白話 ‘vernacular’ (as opposed to *wenyan* 文言);
- (3) *Guoyu* 國語 ‘national language’ (pre-1950s and Taiwan);
- (4) *Han minzu gongtongyu* 漢民族共同語 ‘common language of the Han nationality’ (commonly used in formal political contexts for some years after 1949);
- (5) *Putonghua* 普通話 ‘the common language’;⁸
- (6) *Biaozhunhua* 標準話 ‘correct speech’ or ‘correct language’;
- (7) *Hanyu* 漢語 ‘language of the Han’ (should include all dialects, but is often used otherwise);
- (8) *Zhongguohua* 中國話 ‘language of China’ (includes all dialects);
- (9) *Zhongwen* 中文 ‘Chinese [typically written] language’ (often includes speech: *hui shuo Zhongwen* 會說中文);
- (10) *Huayu* 華語 ‘Chinese talk’ (used mainly in Singapore, Hong Kong etc.);
- (11) *Baihuawen* 白話文 ‘vernacular writing’;
- (12) (*Xiandai*) *Hanyu* (現代) 漢語 ‘(modern) Chinese’;
- (13) *Beifanghua* 北方話 ‘northern language’;
- (14) *Jingqiang* 京腔 ‘Beijing accent’;
- (15) *Jingyun* 京韻 ‘Beijing accent’;
- (16) *Jingpian zi* 京片字 ‘very good native Pekinese Chinese’ (used in Hong Kong, Taiwan);

⁷ A. I. Ivanov and E. D. Polivanov. 1930. *Grammatika sovremennogo kitajskogo yazyka* (A grammar of the contemporary Chinese language). Moscow: Izdanie Instituta Vostokovedeniya pri CIK SSSR, p. 28.

⁸ See Li Chi. 1957. “‘The Communist Term’, ‘The Common Language’, and Related Terms”, *Studies in Chinese Communist Terminology*, Series 4, pt. 1. Berkeley: Center for Chinese Studies, University of California, on the notion *putonghua*.

- (17) *Zhinayu* 支那語 ‘China speech’ (used exclusively by Japanese speakers of Chinese);
 (18) *Dazhongyu* 大眾語 ‘mass language’ is obsolete but was popular earlier in the century⁹;
 (19) *Gongyongyu* 公用語 ‘common use language’, recently proposed as a better term than all those above.

Moreover, any reader of traditional Chinese sources will quickly notice that before the twentieth century there was nothing like a strict dichotomy between classical and colloquial Chinese. The term *baihua* is as modern as the term *wenyan*. The dichotomy between the two is not traditional. What is traditional is the blending of colloquial and literary forms into various mixes appropriate to various occasions for literary communication. Within one and the same text writers may move from literary to colloquial forms as the occasion requires or as their whim desires. The question whether the *Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義 (Romance of the Three States) is written in colloquial or in literary Chinese is inappropriate: these concepts express a rigid choice or a dichotomy which did not present itself to writers in traditional China. Even Confucius’ *Analects* could not present themselves as self-consciously and explicitly colloquial because at the time there was no notion of the colloquial. What did evolve, in the course of pre-modern Chinese history, was the sense of *ya* 雅 ‘decorous, elegant’ versus *su* 俗 ‘plain, popular, vulgar’.

Yayan 雅言 ‘elegant/decorous pronunciation’ (*Analects* 7.17) was limited by Confucius to the reading of the *Book of Documents* and the *Book of Songs* as well as ritual occasions. Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200) thought that ‘elegance’ was really a matter of *zheng* 正 ‘correctness’. And although the distinguished modern scholar Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 takes *yayan* to refer to the *putonghua* of Confucius’s time, the context makes it much more likely that what is at stake is pronunciation, not diction or vocabulary. Thus, as far as Chinese speech is concerned, *yayan* is not a strong candidate as an ancestor of *putonghua*. *Guanhua*, on the other hand, is an old term, and already Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) noted its common use for administrative purposes.¹⁰

⁹ Jerry Norman. 1988. *Chinese*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 136.

¹⁰ Federico Masini. 1993. *The Formation of Modern Chinese Lexicon and Its Evolution Toward a National Language: The Period from 1840 to 1898*. Berkeley: Journal of Chinese Linguistics (Monograph Series, no. 6), p. 6.

A basic bibliography of the works on the modernization and standardization of the writing system would be long indeed. Ni Haishu gives the detailed chronology of the language reform movement in two volumes.¹¹ Liu Fu and Li Jinxi provide lively contemporary discussion and documentation of the early phase of the *guoyu* movement.¹²

Early Western works on vernacular Chinese include Abel-Rémusat, Bazin, Wade and Morgan among many others.¹³ As a study in phonetic description, Karlgren's *A Mandarin Phonetic Reader in the Pekinese Dialect with an Introductory Essay on the Pronunciation* remains unsurpassed for its period. Karlgren writes:

It may appear superfluous to publish phonetic texts in a dialect about which so much has been written. In my opinion, however, earlier researches on the Beijing pronunciation have been carried out in a way which is far from satisfactory and current transcriptions only give an extremely primitive idea of the sounds they pretend to represent.¹⁴

Incidentally, Karlgren's observations retain much of their relevance today in that such salient features of stress among tonal syllables on Modern Standard Chinese continue to be neglected in all standard Western dictionaries as well as in our standard teaching materials. Astonishingly, even the best Chinese and Western grammars of Modern Standard Chinese disregard stress. Karlgren's work thus remains of pedagogical usefulness even today — also for Chinese linguists.

DeFrancis provided the first detailed Western account of the politics of the language movement¹⁵, and his subject was to be pursued by a long series of others in French, English, and in German which

¹¹ Ni Haishu 倪海曙 . 1979. *Ladinghua xin wenzi yundong biannian jishi* 拉丁化新文字運動編年記事 (Year-by-year chronicle of the Latinized new writing movement). 2 vols. Beijing, Kexue chubanshe.

¹² Liu Fu 劉復 . 1925. *Les mouvements de la langue nationale en Chine*. Paris: Maisonneuve; Li Jinxi 李錦熙 . 1933. *Guoyu yundong* 國語運動 (The national language movement). Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan.

¹³ Jean Pierre Abel-Rémusat. 1822. *Elemens de la grammaire chinoise*. Paris: Imprimerie Royale; Antoine Pierre Louis Bazin. 1856. *Grammaire mandarine*. Paris: Imprimerie Imperiale; Wade and Hillier 1886; Evan Morgan. 1916. *The Chinese Speaker: Readings in Modern Mandarin*. Shanghai: Christian Literature Society and Kelly & Walsh.

¹⁴ Bernhard Karlgren. 1918. *A Mandarin Phonetic Reader in the Pekinese Dialect with an Introductory Essay on the Pronunciation*. Stockholm: Kungl. Boktryckeriet P.A. Norstedt & Sønner, p. 4.

¹⁵ John DeFrancis. 1950. *Nationalism and Language Reform in China*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

charted later developments.¹⁶ Syntactic and lexical developments are surveyed in *Wusi yilai Hanyu shumian yuyan de bianqian he fazhan* 五四以來漢語書面語言的變遷和發展 (The transformation and development of the Chinese written language since the May Fourth movement)¹⁷, which has still not been superseded, but can be supplemented by Li Chi¹⁸. Kratochvil, quite correctly, still speaks of an emerging linguistic standard which he characterizes in outline.¹⁹ When it comes to the profound changes in the grammar and literacy rhetoric of the modern Chinese language we now have Edward Gunn's masterful study.²⁰

The history of Chinese rhetorical standards and sensibilities is recounted in a number of compilations: Zheng Dian 鄭奠 and Tan Quanji's 譚全基 *Gu Hanyu xiucixue ziliao huibian* 古漢語修辭學資料彙編 (A compendium of reference materials for ancient Chinese rhetoric)²¹, Yi Pu 易蒲 and Li Jinling's 李今苓 *Hanyu xiucixue shigang* 漢語修辭學史綱 (An outline history of Chinese rhetoric)²² and Zhou Zhenfu's 周振甫 *Zhongguo xiucixue shi* 中國修辭學史 (A history of Chinese rhetoric)²³. Yuan Hui 袁暉 and Zong Tinghu 宗廷虎, covering both the traditional and the modern period, provide an extensive

¹⁶ See Paul Serruys. 1962. *Survey of the Chinese Language Reform and the Anti-Illiteracy Movement in Communist China*. Berkeley: University of California Press; Peter J. Seybolt (ed.). 1979. *Language Reform in China: Documents and Commentary*. White Plains, New York: M. E. Sharpe; John T. S. Chen. 1980. *Les réformes de l'écriture chinoise*. Paris: Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises (Mémoires de l'Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises 12); Helmut Martin. 1982. *Chinesische Sprachplanung*. Bochum: Brockmeyer; John DeFrancis. 1984. *The Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

¹⁷ Beifang shifan xueyuan Zhongwenxi Hanyu jiaoyu yanzu 北方師範學院中文系漢語教育研組. 1959. *Wusi yilai Hanyu shumian yuyan de bianqian he fazhan* 五四以來漢語書面語言的變遷和發展 (The transformation and development of the Chinese written language since the May Fourth movement). Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan.

¹⁸ Li Chi. 1962. *New Features in Chinese Grammatical Usage*. Berkeley: Center for Chinese Studies, University of California.

¹⁹ Paul Kratochvil. 1968. *The Chinese Language Today: Features of an Emerging Standard*. London: Hutchinson.

²⁰ Edward Gunn. 1991. *Rewriting Chinese: Style and Innovation in Twentieth-Century Chinese Prose*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

²¹ Zheng Dian 鄭奠 and Tan Quanji 譚全基. 1980. *Gu Hanyu xiucixue ziliao huibian* 古漢語修辭學資料彙編 (A compendium of reference materials for ancient Chinese rhetoric). Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan.

²² Yi Pu 易蒲 and Li Jinling 李金苓. 1989. *Hanyu xiucixue shigang* 漢語修辭學史綱 (An outline history of Chinese rhetoric). Jilin: Jilin jiaoyu chubanshe.

²³ Zhou Zhenfu 周振甫. 1991. *Zhongguo xiucixue shi* 中國修辭學史 (A history of Chinese rhetoric). Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan.

bibliography of books on Chinese rhetoric.²⁴ The usefulness of many of these works lies mainly in the fact that they line up quotations on matters of rhetoric from a wide range of relevant Chinese literature.²⁵ The ‘criticism’ (*ping* 評) tradition of commentaries on Chinese prose works as well as the ‘remarks on poems’ (*shihua* 詩話), which have a long tradition of rhetorical analysis in China. And for Chinese poetry such analyses have always abounded throughout the ages.

A range of Westernizing treatments of Chinese rhetoric in the tradition of Chen Wangdao 陳望道 hunt down exemplifications for rhetorical categories mainly given in the Western tradition from Cicero and Quintilian.²⁶ Journals like *Xiuci xuexi* 修辭學習 (Rhetoric), however, routinely carry columns like *zuopin shangxi* 作品賞析 ‘analytic appreciations of individual works’, which often provide stimulating examples of literary appreciation uninhibited by Western models. Zong Tinghu provides a singularly lucid account of twentieth-century Chinese rhetorical doctrines and their relation to traditional Chinese rhetoric. In his bibliography, I count 295 Chinese monographs on rhetoric published between May 1905 and June 1988.²⁷ In addition, 22 translated Western works, many of them Russian, are listed for the same period. Rhetoric has been a major focus of scholarly attention during the twentieth century. However, the dynamic evolution of rhetorical forms and techniques has not received a great deal of attention.

May Fourth *baihua* style attacked and sought to replace what it saw as predominant traditionalist *wenyanwen* obscurity with what turned out to be at first—and was to remain for a long time—a new-fangled Westernizing obscurity. In spite of popularizing intentions,

²⁴ Yuan Hui 袁暉 and Zong Tinghu 宗廷虎 . 1990. *Hanyu xiucixue shi* 漢語修辭學史 (A history of Chinese rhetoric). Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe.

²⁵ For the importance of lexicography as a source for cultural history, see Jean Chesneaux. 1973. “Lexicology as a Primary Source Material for the History of Modern China”, in: Donald D. Leslie, Colin Mackerras and Wang Gungwu (eds.). *Essays on the Sources for Chinese History*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, pp. 278–86.

²⁶ Chen Wangdao 陳望道 . 1954. *Xiucixue fajan* 修辭學發凡 (Survey of rhetoric). Shanghai: Xin wenyi chubanshe. See also Karl S. Y. Kao. 1986. “Rhetoric”, in: William H. Nienhauser (ed.). *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 121–37; Ulrich Unger. 1988. *Grammatik des Klassischen Chinesisch*. Vol. 4: *Rhetorik*. Münster (privately published in 50 copies) has carried this approach to its logical conclusion for the pre-Han period.

²⁷ Zong Tinghu 宗廷虎 . 1990. *Zhongguo xiandai xiucixue shi* 中國現代修辭學史 (A history of modern Chinese rhetoric). n.p.: Zhejiang jiaoyu chubanshe, pp. 443–56.

incomprehensible traditional terminology tended to be replaced by equally incomprehensible Westernizing terminology which was of restricted Westernized-city-appeal. Comprehensibility mattered less than the signal effect of using non-traditional Westernized terminology. The politico-cultural effect was the crucial underlying 'text'.

It might be interesting to study the history of grammars of vernacular Chinese before the language acquired this particular political value. Prémare's grammar published in 1831 (submitted more than one hundred years earlier, in 1729)²⁸ and Abel-Rémusat's *Elemens de la grammaire chinoise* of 1822 are not detailed or systematic enough to yield much interesting material, but Bazin as well as Edkins need to be compared with the linguistic standard for *putonghua* that emerged in the twentieth century.²⁹ (Edkins earlier surveyed the Shanghai dialect at a time when other systematic evidence was hard to come by.³⁰) It would be interesting to see exactly what the difference was, linguistically and rhetorically, between varied pre-May Fourth colloquial current affairs material, a small anthology of which is conveniently assembled and interpreted for the Western student by Morgan³¹, on the eve of the May Fourth movement and the emerging standard.

Baihua was the product of an internationally-minded and often multi-lingual elite inspired on the one hand by earlier Japanese Westernization and concretely by Wycliffe in England, Luther in Germany and on the other hand by ensuing nationalist language developments in Europe as well as elsewhere.³²

2. THE NOTION OF A NATURAL LANGUAGE

Studies of modern linguistic nationalism and language planning have drawn our attention to the fact that the notion of a 'natural language' is in some ways fundamentally misleading if applied to languages like

²⁸ Joseph Henri de Prémare. 1831. *Notitia Linguae Sinicae*. Malacca: Cura-Academia Anglo-Sinensis.

²⁹ Cf. Bazin 1856; Joseph Edkins. 1864. *Grammar of the Chinese Colloquial Language, Commonly Called the Mandarin Dialect*. Shanghai: London Mission Press.

³⁰ Joseph Edkins. 1853. *A Grammar of Colloquial Chinese as Exhibited in the Shanghai Dialect*. Shanghai: London Mission Press.

³¹ Morgan 1916.

³² See Cornelius C. Kubler. 1985. *A Study of Europeanized Grammar in Modern Written Chinese*. Taipei: Student Book Co.

Turkish, Russian or Norwegian.³³ We need to realize that to a significant—though varying—extent languages are planned and made up, typically for political purposes. There are indeed some languages that simply develop naturally, but such apparently truly natural languages are—by now—a minority. Most languages are to varying degrees planned, invented and politically imposed: linguistic engineering is a crucial factor in the evolution of most languages. Indeed, one may surmise that written languages like ancient Egyptian or early Zhou Chinese probably appear to be natural only because their political invention and imposition falls into a historical period on which we are not sufficiently well-informed to know things of this order.

Samuel Johnson thought that legislating for a spoken language was impossible: "... sounds are too volatile and subtle for legal restraints; to enchain syllables, and to lash the wind, are equally the undertakings of pride ..."³⁴. Johnson might have said the same thing about the genetic constitution of plants. But we have genetic engineering today, and we have had linguistic engineering for quite some time. Languages, like socio-political systems, are things that need not be traditional. Modern man can and does create such social institutions for himself. Most languages are in some ways products of linguistic engineering. This is not only true for Esperanto, but also for modern Hebrew, and to widely differing degrees it applies to all languages. Having been to some extent engineered, languages take on a momentum of their own, no matter how artificial they originally have been.

The Chinese case may usefully be seen in the context of the general and historical sociology of language. It turns out that *baihua* has enjoyed a long and lively career as a free, unpretentious and in some cases sub-cultural medium of written literature without becoming the object of official planning to any great extent. Thus, *baihua* could truly flourish freely in the shade of *wenyan* until it was domesticated and adopted as an obligatory national language. Only then did vernacular Chinese become a language that was taught in schools on any wide scale (Mandarin had been taught to foreigners, e.g. Koreans, with the use of textbooks many centuries before that.)

³³ See e.g. Peter Burke and Roy Porter (eds.). 1987. *The Social History of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Joshua A. Fishman and Juan Cobarrribias. 1982. *Progress in Language Planning: International Perspectives*. Berlin: Mouton.

³⁴ Samuel Johnson. 1755. *A Dictionary of the English Language*. London: J. Knapton and C. Hitch, p. v.

3. LANGUAGE PLANNING: SOME CASES FOR COMPARISON

1. *The case of Russian: the concept of a national language*

Alexander Issatschenko provides an interesting survey of the doxography on the evolution of Russian and on the facts of the case of Russian.³⁵ We can learn something from this for the Chinese case.

Issatschenko defines the notion of *literaturnyi jazyk* (an expression which—contrary to expectations—translates as ‘standard language’) by the following criteria:

(i) it must be polyvalent, i.e. used in all contexts, both in writing and speaking;

(ii) its use must be standardized, i.e. there must be an accepted norm of correctness;

(iii) it must be obligatory for all members of a nation;

(iv) it must have extensive room for stylistic differentiation.

Old Church Slavonic (or Old Bulgarian) may be said without much exaggeration to have been Greek in Slavonic morphemic dress. In East Asia, the situation may be compared to that of classical Tibetan, which is Sanskrit in Tibetan morphemic dress. Issatschenko considers that none of the languages used by East Slavonic peoples down to the seventeenth century satisfies these basic criteria. The situation was one of the concurrent use of East Slavonic and Church Slavonic certainly down to 1453, and according to Issatschenko right down to the time of the enthusiastic Westernizing Czar, Peter the Great. The forms were specialized in particular ways. This specialization is something that is also found in China, where certain forms of literature (like ‘recorded sayings’ *yulu* 語錄) invited extensive use of *baihua* whereas other genres definitely excluded any hint of *baihua*.

East Slavonic was a popular idiom which was used as a language of administrative, legal, diplomatic purposes. Church Slavonic was a literary invention by missionaries, was never spoken by anyone, and became the language of theology, history and learning in the *Slavia orthodoxa*. Quite naturally, a wide range of literature came to be written in mixed forms of the two languages. The proportion of Church Slavonic elements being partly determined by the degree of religious

³⁵ Alexander Issatschenko. 1975. *Mythen und Tatsachen über die Entstehung der russischen Literatursprache*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.

education and interest of the author of a work, according to some scholars, the formation of the Russian language took the form of the standardization and codification of the introduction of Church Slavonic elements into the emerging standard Russian.³⁶ And there is no doubt that this standardization was in direct emulation, especially of the French literary language and Western European tendencies to write vernaculars as literary languages. The language situation in the states of Kiew and Moscow may perhaps be said to have been one of diglossia, to use an old term made fashionable by Ferguson.³⁷ The point is that both Church Slavonic and East Slavonic, the language of the Moscovite chancelleries, were written languages of limited specific application. They were not semantically universal in ambition. This, I think, is a normal case for written languages. It is also common for spoken languages of many varieties.

Heinrich Wilhelm Ludolf, who wrote a grammar of Russian in 1696, advocated the slogan that has hence become proverbial: *scribendum est slavonice, loquendum est Russice* "one should write Church Slavonic and speak Russian".³⁸ He goes on to explain:

The Russians need a knowledge of Church Slavonic (*linguae Slavonicae*) since not only the Holy Bible and the other printed books that are used in church are written in Church Slavonic (*Slavonico idiomate*), but also because one cannot write or talk about questions of culture or science without using Church Slavonic. The more learned a person wishes to appear, the more Church Slavonic elements he will mix into *his speech* and his writings.³⁹

Ludolf is convinced that it would be useful if the Russians *more aliarum gentium* (in the manner of other peoples) cultivated their own language and published good books in that language. As far as Ludolf was aware there was no such language in his time. The Russian language was created first by a political and cultural act of will, and then—more importantly—by the collective act of literary creativity of a long series of distinguished writers like Karamzin and Pushkin who, in a process we can observe in China as well, created the language

³⁶ Aleksej A. Sachmatov and George Y. Shevelov. 1960. *Die kirchenslawischen Elemente in der modernen russischen Literatursprache*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

³⁷ Charles A. Ferguson. 1959. "Diglossia", *Word* 15, pp. 325–40.

³⁸ Heinrich Wilhelm Ludolf. 1959 [1696]. *Grammatica russica*. Edited by Boris O. Unbegaun. Oxford: Clarendon Press. Quoted in: Issatschenko 1975.

³⁹ Quoted according to Issatschenko 1975, p. 48 (emphasis my own, C. H.).

they were using as they used it. Thus standard Russian may be said to have come into existence through examples and written grammars around 1800–1850.

Church Slavonic, like classical Chinese, was a language of intellectual domination by the group of people who had the resources to acquire a command of the medium which would give access first to high culture and thereby to power. But Church Slavonic was never a functionally polyvalent *koinê* language, a *putonghua*.

It is important to realize that Russian *putonghua* did not replace Church Slavonic *wenyanwen*: it was a new invention, the introduction of a common language which had not existed before. The contrast with Chinese is most instructive: *gudian baihua* 古典白話 ‘classical vernacular’ had a rich and varied literary heritage of many hundred years, although it always remains crucial to remember that this variety of Chinese never excluded classical Chinese elements: there is no such thing as ‘pure’ *gudian baihua*. Part of the fascination of this phenomenon lies in the fact that this rich colloquial or semi-colloquial literature was almost subcultural, unregulated for such a long time.

The invention of the Russian *putonghua*, like that of Chinese *putonghua*, was explicitly inspired by two names, those of Wycliffe and Martin Luther, or at least they pretended to be influenced by these men. In fact they were more directly influenced by the movement towards vernacular literary languages that was powerfully influenced by these two men. The common language *putonghua* was designed as a medium of popularization of social and political cultures just as the language of Martin Luther was designed as a medium of the popularization of religion. The mechanism is common, as the case of the use of vernacular languages by the Buddhists in China amply demonstrates.

Vuk Stefanovic Karadzic (1787–1864) opposed the use of Old Church Slavonic and on the basis of the dialect of his own village he created a grammar and a dictionary which came to define what came to be known as the Serb (*Srpski*) language because both language groups were made to adopt the new artificially universalized language produced by Karadzic.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Vuk Stefanovic Karadzic. 1814. *Pismenica serbskoga izejikka po govoru prosta naroda*. Vienna: Pec. I. Snirera; id. 1818. *Srpski rjecnik, istolkovan njemackim i latinskim rijecma*. Becu: Armeniern.

2. The case of Norwegian: dialects and norms

Einar Haugen's influential book *Language conflict and language planning. The case of modern Norwegian*, raises many general issues that are of interest for the student of Chinese.⁴¹

(1) *Fællessproget* (*putonghua*) was a common term for the written language in use in Norway, the standardized language also called 'Dano-Norwegian'.

(2) Latin remained an obsolescent academic written *wenyanwen*.

(3) Pure Danish (*jinghua* 京話), also known as *embeddsproget* (*guanhua* 官話), was largely limited to migrants for Denmark and those who had been trained for a very long time in Denmark.

(4) Local literary standard (*putonghua*), Norwegian pronunciation variants of Danish, were current in educated circles and elevated contexts in the cities.

(5) Local colloquial standards, local literary standard enriched with standard Norwegian localisms (*difanghua* 地方話) were the current recognized linguistic forms in the cities.

(6) Local urban sub-standards, local colloquial standards with dominant elements of local Norwegian colloquialisms (*tuhua* 土話), were limited to lower class urban populations.

(7) Local rural dialects (*fangyan* 方言), local languages largely uninfluenced by Danish, were felt to be the only forms that were truly 'Norwegian' by many.

Danish-Norwegian *guanhua* and rural dialect are sometimes mutually incomprehensible. The other varieties show extensive interaction and mutual adaptation.

There were two reactions to this situation:

(i) Knud Knudsen (1812–1895), Norway's answer to Li Jinxi 黎錦熙 (1890–1978), worked for a nation-wide standard Norwegian orthography and pronunciation, Dano-Norwegian, which later came to be called less offensively *rigsmaal*, *rigsmål*, *riksmål*, literally *guoyu* 國語, by the nationalist romantic Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson (1832–1910).

(ii) Ivar Aasen (1813–1896), Norway's answer to Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白, worked for a Norwegian language based on the Western rural dialects, and he sought to define *det norske Folkesprog*, literally Norwegian *dazhongyu* 大眾語, in his grammar of 1848 and his dictionary of

⁴¹ Einar Haugen. 1966. *Language Conflict and Language Planning: The Case of Modern Norwegian*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

1850.⁴² In his definitive version of the grammar and the dictionary this came to be known as *landsmål*, ‘language of the land’ (*tuyu* 土語).⁴³

Writers of Ivar Aasen’s *Folkesprog* remained marginal even as late as the 1880s. The famous writers all wrote in Dano-Norwegian *putonghua*. But the case for a Norwegian *dazhongyu* became associated with the nationalistic and democratic movement in Norway. The language issue became strongly politicized and Ivar Aasen’s *Folkesprog* became associated with the political left.

In 1885, a resolution was passed by the Norwegian Parliament: “The government is requested to take the necessary steps toward placing the Norwegian *Folkesprog* [*dazhongyu*] on an equal footing, as a school and official language, with the usual language of books and writing [i.e. with Dano-Norwegian *putonghua*].”

As long as Norway was not an independent state, the standard language in Norway had to be the Local Literary Standard, and, as in China, the common spelling left adequate room for the local literary standard pronunciation. Then came independence in two stages: the constitution in 1814 and formal constitutional independence in 1905. The famous Cambridge anthropologist Edmund R. Leach writes in his *Political System of Highland Burma*:

For a man to speak one language rather than another is a ritual act, it is a statement about one’s personal status: to speak the same language as one’s neighbours expresses solidarity with those neighbours, to speak a different language from one’s neighbours expresses social distance or even hostility.⁴⁴

As for speaking, so for writing. Norway needed to mark its distance from Denmark, linguistically. At that point, and only at that point, there was a real need to find a new ‘Norwegian’ written standard to express a new national and popular identity.

Norway, with a population smaller than that of the city of Shenyang, chose two national standards: a state of ‘schizoglossia’. China, with, for example, a Cantonese population of fifty million people, has imposed one single national standard. The war between Norwegian

⁴² Ivar Aasen. 1848. *Det norske folkesprogs grammatik*. Kristiania: Werner; id. 1850. *Ordbog over det norske folkesprog*. Kristiania: Werner.

⁴³ Ivar Aasen. 1864. *Norsk grammatik*. Kristiania: Mallings; id. 1873. *Norsk ordbog: met dansk forklaring*. Kristiania: Mallings.

⁴⁴ Edmund R. Leach. 1954. *Political Systems of Highland Burma*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, p. 49.

guoyu and Norwegian *tuyu* is still very much on in Norway, a perpetual and violent linguistic thunderstorm in a tea-cup, to the delight of the sociolinguist. However, in the course of this sometimes violent conflict, the two Norwegian variants have tended to become (and have been planned to become) more and more similar in the heat of the linguistic battle, just as Liang Qichao's 梁啟超 (1873–1929) and Sun Yat-sen's plain *wenyan* or *gongwenti* 公文體 'official style' came to be close indeed in many lexical ways to *baihua* and very different from the traditionalist variety of pre-modern *wenyanwen* that was attacked by adherents of *baihua*. In fact, plain *gongwenti* was not an entirely modern phenomenon either: it had firm roots in the stylistic ideals of *guwen* 古文 'ancient style prose'.⁴⁵

3. The case of Danish: vernacular movements and explicit grammars

In order to be able to prescribe the use of the Danish vernacular language the Danes felt they needed a description of their vernacular language. Thus we have grammar books like the following, the earliest of which, naturally enough, were written in Latin:

- (1) Rasmus Bartholin. 1657. *De studio lingvæ Danicæ*, 35 pages.
- (2) Lavrids Kock. 1660. *Introductio ad lingvam Danicam*, 40 pages.
- (3) Peder Syv. 1663. *Om det Cimbriske Sprog* (On the Cimbrian language), 194 pages.
- (4) Erik Pontoppidan. 1668. *Grammatica Danica*, 426 pages.
- (5) Henrich Gerner. 1678/79. *Orthographica Danica*, 136 pages.
- (6) Jens Høysgaard. 1752. *Methodisk Forsøg til en Fuldstændig Dansk Syntax* (A methodical essay towards a complete syntax of the Danish language), 507 pages.⁴⁶

In 1920, Chinese activists in favour of the use of *baihua* could still complain that no grammatical description of the language was available. The first grammar of classical Chinese was explicitly inspired by Latin grammar, it was by Ma Jianzhong 馬建忠 who had learned Latin well under the Italian missionary Zottoli.⁴⁷ Thus there was no such thing as an explicitly defined standard of correctness even for the offi-

⁴⁵ See Irina T. Zograf. 1990. *Ofitsialnyj ven'yan'* (Official *wen'yan'*). Moscow: Nauka, for a detailed study of the *gongwenti* style in the works of Sun Yat-sen.

⁴⁶ See Henrik Bertelsen (ed.). 1979. *Danske Grammatikere, fra Midten af det syttende til Midten af det attende Aarhundrede* (Danish grammarians from the middle of the sixteenth to the middle of the eighteenth century). 5 vols. København: Reitzel.

⁴⁷ Ma Jianzhong 馬建忠. 1983 [1898]. *Mashi wentong* 馬氏文通 (Mr. Ma's grammar). Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan. Cf. the article by Alain Peyraube in this volume.

cial classical style. There was a remarkably well-defined culture of writing. There were conventions of elegant writing, and there were traditional methods of inculcating into children the art of writing elegantly: the memorization of representative examples.

There was certainly nothing like an explicit standard for pre-modern *baihua*, and neither were there conventions for teaching the skill of writing *baihua*. Explicit standardization began in the twentieth century. Even here, explicit rules were less operative than representative examples. It was then that competing forms of language became the object of deliberation and planning. The contrast is striking. In Norway the first grammar of ‘Norwegian *dazhongyu*’ was written decades before anyone (except, of course, Norway’s Qu Qiubai, Ivar Aasen, himself) began to seriously use the language. In China the crucial publications were works with titles like ‘How to write vernacular’ (*Baihuawen zuofa* 白話文作法), ‘How to compose with the National Language’ (*Guoyu de zuzhifa* 國語的組織法), ‘Models of vernacular writings’ (*Baihuawen fan* 白話文範), ‘Classified anthology of writings in the National Language’ (*Guoyu wen leixuan* 國語文類選), and the splendid compilation which I have used in preparation for this paper by Lü Yunbiao 呂雲彪 and Zhu Lingong 朱麟公, the introduction of which mentions the above titles.⁴⁸ These works present and discuss models for literary emulation. And they discuss the rhetorical ideals of the *baihua* movement. Grammars of the vernacular language like Li Jinxi 黎錦熙 and its successors were works of linguistic analysis rather than works of prescriptive linguistics.⁴⁹

Later, the main schoolmasters of correct *putonghua* turned out to be Lü Shuxiang 呂叔湘 and Zhu Dexi 朱德熙, whose schoolmasterly approach aroused a fair amount of ill will among the literate.⁵⁰ A representative collection of prescriptive stylistic and grammatical criticism has as its authors the most important actors in this field: Ye Shengtao 葉聖陶, Lü Shuxiang, Zhu Dexi, Zhang Zhigong 張志公, Zhou Zhenfu 周振甫 and Xu Zhonghua 徐仲華.⁵¹ But the point is that

⁴⁸ Lü Yunbiao 呂雲彪 and Zhu Lingong 朱麟公 . 1924 [1920]. *Baihuawen guifan* 白話文規範 (Standards of written vernacular). Shanghai: Dadong shuju.

⁴⁹ Li Jinxi 李錦熙 . 1957 [1924]. *Xinzhū guoyu wenfa* 新著國語文法 (New grammar of Chinese). Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan.

⁵⁰ Lü Shuxiang 呂叔湘 and Zhu Dexi 朱德熙 . 1979 [1951]. *Yufa xiuci jianghua* 語法修辭講話 (Lectures on grammar and rhetoric). Shanghai: Kaiming shudian.

⁵¹ Ye Shengtao 葉聖陶 et al. 1979. *Wenzhang pinggai* 文章評改 (Criticisms and corrections of literary compositions). Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe.

from the early twentieth century onward, large segments of language became the object of planning action.⁵² Before this there were many books about how to write good poetry, but there was very little written about how to write good prose—certainly not *baihua* prose.

The definition of the syntactic Modern Standard Chinese orthodoxy was predominantly by example, not by grammatical rule and description. This, in spite of what some linguists like to believe and like to make us believe, is surely the most typical case anywhere. I must quote the Norwegian writer Alexander Kielland:

Is it not comforting to observe time and again that professors of language cannot write? They watch over the language like eunuchs over a harem, who cannot make use of the treasure and spend their lives in impotent fury at those who can.⁵³

4. *The case of German: the range of linguistic mixture*

The introduction of vernacular as the official medium in Denmark—like the use of vernacular *baihua* in China—was inspired by earlier and comparable developments in Germany.⁵⁴ The case of Martin Luther is instructive for our comparison with Chinese because we happen to have a pretty good idea of his German speaking habits as well as of his German writing habits. Here is a representative piece from Luther's *Table Talk* which shows an extraordinary mixture of Latin *wenyanwen* and intensely colloquial German *baihua*:

Et es sol niemandt mit dem Teuffel kempfen, er bette denn vor Vater unser. Est magna res. Er ist uns feind. So wissen wir nit des 100. teyl, das er weys. Ipse tentavit Abraham, David etc. et scit, quomodo vicerit. Judas ist in vita sua nit angefochten; ideo da das Stundlin kam, gieng er securus dahin, wuste nit, wo aus. Sed nos, die wir mit yhm zu har ligen, scimus ei ex gratia Dei resistere. Summa eius ars est, das er kan ex euangelio legem machen. Hanc ditinctionem si possem retinere, wolt ich im all Stund sagen, er solt mich hinden lecken; etiamsi pecassem, dicerem: wie denn, sol man drum euangelion verleugnen? Noch nit!

⁵² Minor examples of imperial *Sprachregelung* are well known at least from the time of the First Emperor of China, as when he introduced *limin* 黎民 as the politically correct term for 'the people'.

⁵³ Quoted in: Gerhard Gran. 1922. *Alexander Kielland og has samtid*. Stavanger: Dreyer, p. 326. See Haugen 1966, p. 296. I believe that early twentieth-century writers would have sympathized with this sentiment, and I know that many contemporary writers still feel that way about descriptive as well as prescriptive Chinese linguistics.

⁵⁴ See Eric A. Blackall. 1959. *The Emergence of German as a Literary Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sed cum disputo, *was ich gelassen und gethan hab, so bin ich dahin.* Sed quanto respondeo ex euangelio: Remissio peccatorum *geht ober hin, tunc vici.* *Wenn er aber einem auff das thun, lassen bringt, so hat er gewonnen, nisi adsit Deus, qui dicat: Quid? Si non fecissem so must ich dennoch per remissionem peccatorum selig werden, sum enim baptisatus, communicatus etc.* Sed *wenn ich nit erlang, alls Doctor Kraus zu Hall, qui dixit: Ach, Christus accusat me, da war das facere: si affuisset ibi, qui dixisset: Si fecisti. So ists gethan.* (Ergo *so bist mein, dicit Diabolus.*) *Noch nit! Quia ober das facere ist noch das credere. Set ee einer dazu kompt, so ist einer dahin. So seidt nit zu keck! Distinction de lege et euangelio, di thuts, quia Diabolus schlegt eim verbum auff den kopff; wenn man da by dem lege bleibt, so ist man dahin.*⁵⁵

I am afraid that this is not the time to expound the subtle underlying rules which motivate the use of Latin versus German in this piece. Suffice it to say that Luther's friends, who noted down their conversations with the Master, agree in presenting him as speaking this characteristic mixture of Latin and German.⁵⁶

Similar examples can be found from reported conversations by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200 AD). One wonders how colloquial or vernacular educated spoken Chinese was in Song and even in early Republican times. For many a scholar, writing colloquial or vernacular Chinese would mean actually *not* writing as he would speak to his peers, in spite of what propagandists of *baihua* kept repeating to the contrary. The notion of 'sayable Chinese' is deeply misleading insofar as it suggests to the unwary that there is a clear borderline between the written

⁵⁵ Martin Luther. 1930. *Luthers Werke*. Edited by Otto Clemen. Berlin: de Gruyter, vol. 8, p. 76. A detailed interpretation of this example would lead us too far, but it would most certainly demonstrate that the use of German versus Latin in this passage is very far from arbitrary. See specifically Erwin Arndt. 1962. *Luthers deutsches Sprachschaffen*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag; Birgit Stolt. 1964. *Die Sprachmischung in Luthers Tischreden: Studien zum Problem der Zweisprachigkeit*. Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell. One should remember, incidentally, that Montaigne had Latin as his first spoken language. And I would not be surprised if his French speech with its probably strong admixtures of Latin was not entirely out of context in his circles.

⁵⁶ The Dano-Norwegian scholar and poet Ludvig Holberg (1684–1754), in his writings, mixes Danish and Latin in wonderful ways, throwing in French and German as well. This ought to be compared with Luther's spoken practice. The splendid and massive five volume *Holberg-Dictionary* supplies superb material for this study: the emergence of a vernacular form through a process first of blending and then of assimilation. The common existence of such linguistic blends in many languages all over the world is paralleled in modern China by historical blends with massive loan translation. Cf. Aage Hansen. 1981–1988. *Holberg-Ordbog: Ordbog over Ludvig Holbergs Sprog*. 5 vols. København: Reitzel.

and the spoken which does not in fact exist. The whole point of bookish gentry in a society is that its members have a disconcertingly natural tendency to use elements of the written language in their speech, to try to ‘speak written Chinese’. When talking about sayable Chinese one has to ask: ‘sayable by whom?’, ‘sayable on what occasion?’, ‘sayable to what kind of intended audience?’. It is astonishing how much bookishness even modern bookworms can manage in their speech. For all I know, the *Zhuzi yulu* 朱子語錄 (Recorded sayings of Zhu Xi) may well represent a style that might plausibly have been the transcript of speech. It corresponds, in any case, rather naturally and beautifully to the speech that is attributed to Martin Luther by his friends and acquaintances in his *Table Talk*.

DIGRESSION: THE ‘FOUR CHARACTER PATTERN’

Modern Chinese retains a variety of significant segments of freely productive *wenyan* forms, particularly in the *sizi geshi* 四字格式 or ‘four character pattern’.

One such form is ‘to X but not to Y’, for example:

勞而不疲 ‘work without getting tired’,
 飲而不醉 ‘drink without getting drunk’,
 食而不飽 ‘eat without getting quite satisfied’; ‘eat, but not too much’,
 樂而不淫 ‘enjoy without being too excessive’,
 管而不嚴 ‘look after someone without being too strict’,
 校而不準 ‘proof-read imperfectly’; ‘align the aiming mechanism of a gun’,
 隱而不現 ‘hide and fail to show up’,
 爭而不吵 ‘debate without quarelling’,
 學而不厭 ‘never tire of studying’.

It is well known that Confucius:

誨人不倦 ‘taught others and never got tired of it’.

But nothing stops me in modern Chinese from saying to someone familiar with this phrase that he is:

誨而不倦 ‘never tired of teaching’.

It is true enough that the following is a *chengyu* 成語 :

述而不作 ‘transmit and not create something’ (Confucius).

But I am free to create a variation on this theme criticizing anti-traditionalists for:

作而不述 ‘creating and refusing to transmit’ (C. H.).

Moreover, I may go on to criticize Confucius by saying that he:

述而不明 ‘transmitted without being clear’.

And when told that he is very clear, I may sally forth with the accusation that he may:

明而不確 ‘be clear but not exact’,
 確而不雅 ‘exact but not elegant’,
 雅而不信 ‘elegant but not faithful to the original’,
 信而不達 ‘faithful to the original without putting the meaning across’,
 達而不恭 ‘putting the meaning across without being respectful’,
 恭而不謙 ‘respectful but not humble’,
 謙而不誠 ‘humble but not sincere’,
 誠而不謹 ‘sincere but not careful’,
 謹而不實 ‘careful but not substantial’.

Further developments of this we may

存而不論 ‘keep in mind but not discuss’ (*Zhuangzi* 莊子)

as we have now returned to the world of the real traditional *chengyu*.

One can go on *ad infinitum*. The point is that the mechanism is quite freely productive in contemporary Chinese, though more freely so in written than in spoken Chinese in most communicating groups. Quite a few segments of classical Chinese are *productive* in modern spoken Chinese. In a way the classical elements have gained an independent life of their own and have become an autonomous layer within Modern Standard Chinese.

Thus the language retains greater stylistics and historical registers within the range of its productive constructions than we are used to in European languages. To the extent that May Fourth policies suppressed these registers this meant a deliberate and politically motivated deviation in the written norm from educated speech in order to accommodate readers with smaller historical registers. E. Rosner illustrates the limited success of this movement in the PRC and the extent of what he calls ‘diglossia’ in contemporary China.⁵⁷ K. McMahon’s *Expository Writing in Chinese*⁵⁸ nicely presents the learner with some

⁵⁷ Erhard Rosner. 1992. *Schriftsprache: Studien zur Diglossie des modernen Chinesisch*. Bochum: Brockmeyer.

⁵⁸ Keith McMahon and Wallace Johnson. 1988. *Expository Writing in Chinese*. Lawrence: Center for East Asian Studies, The University of Kansas (*International Studies, East Asian Language Texts* 5).

of the extensive range of special forms and conventions which continue to govern letter-writing as well as other forms of expository prose throughout China. I have, myself, been interested in investigating the presence of non-lexicalized free *wenyan* forms in mass consumption films, and I have found that even if—implausibly—one took the content of the vast *Xiandai chengyu judian* 現代成語巨典 to be in some sense lexicalized⁵⁹, there are plenty of non-lexicalized syntactically free classical phrases in many films: a considerable range of classical phrases that are current in these films are absent in all current dictionaries of *chengyu* and the like, including the gigantic work mentioned above. The most extreme example I have studied in some detail are the twenty-four sequences of the film ‘Eight Immortals Cross the Ocean’ (*Baxian guohai* 八仙過海), co-produced around 1980 by the *Guangzhou guangbo diantai* and a Hong Kong company. Clearly designed for mass consumption, and very typical of a huge range of similar intensely popular productions, this series presupposes a considerable ability to understand what one might call ‘oral *wenyan*’. To a limited extent, such phenomena are common in languages like English and German within the context of historical drama. In Chinese the phenomenon of oral *wenyan* goes systematically beyond this historicizing sphere. Jia Zheng is not a linguistic anachronism in *The Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Hongloumeng* 紅樓夢). He just happens to use somewhat old-fashioned stiff and formal speech on what he perceives as certain ritual occasions requiring such formalism. This option was—and to some extent remains—a striking feature of the spoken language.

Sha Yexin 沙葉新 authored a popular play which displays a linguistic register that would be hard to reproduce in a purely English translation though—*mutatis mutandis*—it might have been reproduced by a profusion of Latin fifty or a hundred years ago.⁶⁰ The play features—among others—Confucius and John Lennon (of The Beatles), and the linguistic difference between the two is not just stylistically but also grammatically as striking as any sinologist might imagine. May Fourth linguistic orthodoxy, on the other hand, had aimed to reduce radically this stylistic and historical range of registers in Chinese writing, but the

⁵⁹ *Xiandai chengyu judian* 現代成語巨典 (A comprehensive dictionary of contemporary idioms). 1993. Dalian: Dalian chubanshe.

⁶⁰ Sha Yexin 沙葉新. 1988. “Yesu, Kongzi, Pitoushi Lienong” 耶穌孔子披頭士列儂 (Jesus, Confucius and the Beatles’ John Lennon), *Shiyue* 2, pp. 41–68.

tenacity of the richness of the Chinese linguistic heritage has been considerable on the mainland and even greater, of course, in Taiwan. In terms of possibilities for historical resonance, modern Chinese is an exceedingly rich medium compared to any European language. Traditional novels and plays have exploited this stylistic richness to sublime effect. So do many modern speakers and writers.

It would be interesting to investigate the history of the use of oral *wenyan* in modern Chinese drama. And I do not mean the use of fixed *chengyu* and the like, although the syntactic symbiosis of these with vernacular elements is a subject that deserves attention.⁶¹ I mean the often almost inadvertent, playful, free and productive use of *wenyan* forms in the spoken language as reproduced in dramatized dialogue.⁶²

5. A note on the case of Turkish: the question of Westernization

The Latinization of Turkish writing in the early twentieth century was a symbol of the intended Westernization of Turkish culture. The proposed Latinization of Chinese writing in China was intended as a signal of a radical cultural reorientation away from the Asian tradition and towards the West. In Turkey, this could be carried through because it was accompanied with a return to what was perceived as Turkish linguistic and cultural roots as opposed to intervening Muslim elements. In China, Latinization could not succeed partly because Westernization could not in this way be combined with a perceived return to Chinese roots.⁶³ Westernization was extensive in vocabulary and very significant in syntax.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Pao Erh-Li and Cheng Ying. 1982. *Wörterbuch der chinesischen Redensarten: Chinesisch-Deutsch*. Berlin: de Gruyter.

⁶² Christoph Harbsmeier. 1992. *Modern Chinese Analytic Syntax*. 2 vols. Oslo: Department of East European and Oriental Studies. Vol. 2 tries to integrate this feature into the description of modern Chinese syntax.

⁶³ See Uriel Heyd. 1954. *Language Reform in Modern Turkey*. Jerusalem: Israel Oriental Society, for the case of Turkish; and Helmut Martin 1982, for some interesting comparisons with Asian languages.

⁶⁴ Wang Li 王力 1959, pp. 299–383, was the pioneer account. Xie Yaoji 瀉耀基. 1990. *Xiandai Hanyu Ouhua yufa gailun* 現代漢語歐化語法概論 (A general discussion on Europeanized grammar in contemporary Chinese). Hong Kong: Wah Fung, is a book-length study of Europeanized syntax with a wide range of careful documentation. Kubler 1985 remains the only Western monograph on the subject of Westernization of syntax which deserves much more detailed attention.

6. *The case of Italian: the literary heritage*⁶⁵

The case of Italian is of special interest for us. As is well-known, the most widely used languages in Italy were Oscan and Umbrian, and even Greek was more widely used than the language of the people living around the River Tiber who were tied to the city of Rome. It was for political, not linguistic, reasons that Latin ousted the rich array of Italic languages along with the growth of Roman power from the third century BC onwards. Until the thirteenth century, Latin remained so dominant that the vernacular languages of Italy had no literature of their own of any kind: what there was by way of vernacular writing was Provençal and Old French. Italy was under the remnants of the linguistic imperial sway and wrote Latin. Right down to the thirteenth century there was no Italian literature to speak of. Marco Polo's prison friend, Rustichello da Pisa still wrote the epic tale of *Il Milione* in French. French was the language of the epic, Provençal the dominant language of poetry, until everything started to change with Dante and his *De vulgari eloquentia* (On vulgar eloquence). At that stage, on the other hand, a wide range of Italian writers began to complain that if Cicero could write in his native language it would be only fair for his later admirers to do the same, to write in *their* native language. But what language? Which dialect? And why not keep to *patrius sermo* 'the language of the fathers'? Why should everyone, even the aristocratic élite, use *il volgare*? The choice fell early, and by almost unanimous general consent, on the northern Tuscan dialect, the language of Dante, Petrarca, Boccaccio. 'Vulgarized' humanism was the formula that won out in the long run.

In Italy, the result of this decision was a situation of diglossia which persisted right down to the seventeenth century. Latin retained a very strong position as the medium of legal, administrative and political discourse. From the sixteenth century onwards the use of the Latin language, though by no means banned or aggressively discrimi-

⁶⁵ The case of vernacular modern Greek is made much more complex by the Turkish elements in the language. Adamantios Koráís (1748–1833) established the norms of the *Katharevusa* '(Greek) Pure Language' from 1788 onwards, a deliberately archaizing form of language that came to compete with the later popular *Demotike* as a language of education. This act of linguistic creation had profound cultural effects into the twentieth century and down to our time.

nated against, became increasingly marginalized and restricted to certain conservative scholarly areas.⁶⁶

It is instructive to compare this with the Chinese case. Chinese writers had no vernacular French or other literature to fall back on, but when they were exposed to such outside vernacular influences during the period of intense Buddhist foreign influence, they began to write in something approaching their own dialects. There was indeed the tradition of *yulu* 'recorded sayings' in which even Confucians made room for colloquial transcriptions of the sayings of Zhu Xi. Colloquial Chinese Confucian books like Chen Chun's 陳淳 (1159–1223) *Beixi ziyi* 北溪字義 (Master Beixi's Explanation of [Neo-Confucian] Terms) remained the exception.⁶⁷ There was a lively tradition of *kouyi* 口義 '(transcribed) oral commentaries' to texts like the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, but there never was a *political* movement for the general use of anything like *baihua*, even though, in late Ming times, there was a fad among certain groups of intellectuals.

What is it that caused the Italians to insist on the use of vernacular? There is a certain element of cultural nationalism: the need for a manifest Italian versus a common European (and in a much wider sense 'Roman') identity. Within the Chinese empire there was no room for such a demonstrative separate linguistic identity. There may have been a perceived need, occasionally, at several stages of the long history of the empire: but there never was the sort of endemic and pervasive need that leads to a cultural movement. Thus the vernacular remained in one sense sub-cultural and in any case sub-political.

Except for the case of Buddhist works, where we do find the beginnings of vernacular Chinese prose in China, there was no need and no intention in China to convert the semi-literate. Literature was for the initiated, cultivating and then celebrating a higher awareness of the ethereal essence of Chinese culture. There was no competition for the doctrinal adherence of a large population—no adherence, but subordination. Hence the use of the authoritative *wenyanwen*.

In order to live up to his ideals of a vernacular humanism Petrarca had to write Latinizing Italian instead of the current barbarized/Italianized medieval Latin. The argument against was an emotion along

⁶⁶ Hans Wilhelm Klein 1957 [1928]. *Latein und Volgare in Italien. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der italienischen Nationalsprache*. München: M. Hueber.

⁶⁷ See Wing-Tsit Chan (tr. and ed.). 1986. *Neo-Confucian Terms explained*. By Ch'en Ch'un (1159–1223). New York: Columbia University Press.

the line of *odi profanum vulgus* and it was seemingly supported by Matthew 7.6: “Give not that which is holy under the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine.” Petrarca prefers to be unknown to the vulgar people rather than be like them.⁶⁸

Lorenzo Valla (died 1457) in his *De linguae latinae elegantia* explains the existence of vulgar dialects as a case of corruption from the purity of Latin. This theory was dominant during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and there are many parallels to such sentiments in China.

The Florentine Giovanne da Prato’s *Paradiso degli Alberti* (1389) refers to and cultivates his *il dolcissimo idioma materno*, ‘most sweet maternal idiom’. It would be nice to collect such demonstrative declarations of affection expressed by Chinese writers for their equally maternal *baihua* in traditional China. Italian writers pointed out that the number of latinate people is very small. The sensible choice made by many for many centuries is to use Italian for moral and popularizing work, and Latin for specialized scientific writings.

In 1525, the writers of Florence persuaded Duke Cosimo I to establish the Accademia della Crusca with the task of defining the Italian language, and in 1612, the Academy duly came up with its *Vocabulario*. The Cardinal Richelieu established the Académie Française in 1635, its statutes being: “to labour with all the care and diligence possible to give exact rules to our language and to render it capable of treating the arts and sciences.” Two tasks: normalization and elaboration. The academies produced dictionaries of ‘permitted words’.

4. THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF MAY FOURTH RHETORIC: COMPARISONS WITH PRE-BUDDHIST⁶⁹ CLASSICAL CHINESE

In what follows I shall try to place some well-known fundamental linguistic and rhetorical developments associated with the May Fourth

⁶⁸ Cf. *Sen.* 16: *vulgus cui malim semper ignotus esse quam similis*, ‘the vulgar crowd to whom I should rather be unknown than similar’.

⁶⁹ I speak of ‘pre-Buddhist Chinese’ (*xian Fo Hanyu* 先佛漢語) and ‘pre-Buddhist literature’ (*xian Fo wenxue* 先佛文學), and by these terms I shall refer not to the language and literature dating from before the time of the Buddha, but, from a Chinese perspective, to the time before Buddhism became a significant cultural factor in China.—In a similar vein I speak of ‘pre-Westernized’ Chinese language and literature (*xian Ou Hanyu* 先歐漢語 or *xian Ou wenxue* 先歐文學).

movement in a wider context of earlier classical Chinese developments on the one hand and comparative Greek and Latin evidence on the other.⁷⁰

The dramatic changes associated with the May Fourth movement in China may be seen partly as a direct continuation of long term developments within traditional Chinese literature itself. But it remains significant that many of these developments in traditional Chinese literature were first widely appreciated in China within the context of Westernization.

What is often viewed as ‘modernization’ or ‘Westernization’ may turn out to be—to some extent—the Hellenization of Chinese strategies of writing and of rhetoric in the sense that what was modern in May Fourth times is actually very ancient in Greece, was transmitted to Rome and has become traditional in Europe by the same type of cultural diffusion that has reached China at a later stage—during the May Fourth movement.

Consider for a moment the rhetorical and stylistic range of devices available to a twentieth-century French writer. For the year 1947 some of this range is brilliantly illustrated in Raymond Queneau’s *Exercices de style*: Queneau takes the same perfectly inconsequential story through 99 stylistic variations, thus illustrating more forcefully than any literary theorizing could have done the tremendous range of stylistic options open to a cultivated Western writer.⁷¹

My first observation is that this stylistic and rhetorical range was considerably smaller in pre-Buddhist China than it was in Rome during the same period, and that there has been a tremendous increase in the range of available stylistic and rhetoric devices in Europe since classical Roman times. The second observation is that the Chinese range of traditional rhetorical devices was considerably extended in the course of traditional Chinese literature in imperial times. The third observation is that this range was radically thrown open by May Fourth developments and the massive wave of translation from Western languages: anything that could be done in Europe was in principle attempted in China.

⁷⁰ For a detailed account see Christoph Harbsmeier, 1993. *Towards an Ethnography of Literary Communication in Pre-Buddhist China: A Comparative Approach*. Oslo: Department of East European and Oriental Studies.

⁷¹ Raymond Queneau, 1982 [1947]. *Exercices de style: Nouvelle édition*. Paris: Gallimard.

In connection with all this, the main question which I think it would be useful to discuss in detail is this: to what extent were these May Fourth developments purely a matter simply of the Coca-colonization of the Chinese literary mind, and to what extent did they constitute to a significant degree the strengthening of certain literary, rhetorical and linguistic tendencies that were present in the Chinese tradition beforehand?

I do not pretend to have an easy and clean answer to this question. Each of its dimensions must be discussed in its own terms against the background of the very wide range of styles and text-sorts in pre-modern traditional China. But my general impression is certainly that a range of those modernizing rhetorical features that would seem to have been the result of diffusion from the West were made culturally acceptable in China by the fact that they could build on autochthonous earlier post-Buddhist Chinese stylistic and rhetorical developments that were independent of the modern Western impact. These autochthonous developments have been noticed by a number of scholars, and their results have been summarized, for example, by Milena Dolezelova.⁷²

Moreover, the very term 'pre-Buddhist' perhaps draws undue attention to the factor of the Buddhist religion in the development of rhetoric in China. As it turns out, the period when Buddhism became important in Chinese culture was also the time when paper became widely available in China. It might be historically and sociologically less misleading to refer to pre-Buddhist China as China before the wide availability of paper, as pre-paper China, or as bamboo-and-silk China. Arguably, the Chinese invention and the wide-spread use of paper as a writing material had a much more profound and pervasive effect on the history of Chinese literary communication than the introduction from India of the Buddhist religion.

I will now turn to some salient and more or less familiar features in the history of Chinese rhetoric. After a general description of the situation in pre-Buddhist China I will raise questions regarding the origins of the May Fourth rhetoric.

⁷² Milena Dolezelova-Velingerova. 1994. "Chinese Theory and Criticism: 2. Pre-Modern Theories of Fiction and Drama", in: Michael Groden and Martin Kreiswirth (eds.). *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 149–55.

1. *The anthropology of writing and reading in China*

I begin with ten significant tendencies or developments related to the anthropology of writing and reading in China.

1.1 *From scribalism to authorship*

The issue of exactly whose ideas writing purports to express: for example, one may record someone else's words or ideas (one of the traditional roles of the *shi* 史 'archivist, recorder, scribe') or one may record one's own words as a writer/author and maintain a pervasive authorial presence in what one writes. The difference is vital, and between these extremes there is ample scope for variation.

The predominant mode in pre-Buddhist prose is the scribal mode without a sustained authorial presence in the text. The poetry of the Qu Yuan 屈原 tradition and their successors cultivated a dignified, generalized authorial presence. Later poetry perfected the articulation of the persona through poetry.

Demonstrative personal authorship was a central message of the May Fourth advocates of *baihua*. This personal style of writing was taken to be common to poetry and most kinds of prose. One may speak of a personalization of literature.

1.2 *From summary to mimesis*

The issue of precisely how the writing process expresses thoughts or words: for example, one may try to sum up the gist of what was said after the event, or one may aim mimetically or even stenographically to record with exactitude what is said; one may try to sum up one's thoughts after they have occurred, or one may try to give direct expression to the thoughts currently occurring in one's mind—one may aim to think, as it were, with the brush or pen.

In pre-Buddhist Chinese there was remarkably little 'thinking with the brush'.

Spontaneity of diction, the direct style of writing down of what one might have said became a central tenet of May Fourth literary thought.

1.3 *From reticence to frankness*

The issue of the degree of psychological communication in writing: for example, one's culture may allow one to write solely as if recording objective facts, or to write as if pouring out one's heart. (One may be either honest or one may strike a pose with respect to the pouring

out of the heart, or, of course, one may do both in the same text. These finer details will be discussed in due course.)

In pre-Buddhist Chinese there was a very strong tendency towards scribal reticence. There was a marked change in this respect in the third century AD, but right down to the twentieth century there remains a characteristic reticence, almost a bashfulness about the personal realm.

According to May Fourth ideals the characteristic psychological reticence of the classical Chinese tradition was to be overcome. It was to be replaced by a ritualized personal frankness and communicativeness in a wide new range of literature. Programmatic psychological exhibitionism became an option in Chinese literature.

1.4 From declaration to communication

The issue of the readership for which any text is intended: one may write in the declarative mode without addressing a specific reader or readership, or one may write in a communicative mode, explicitly addressing a reader or readership and thus entering into an explicit dialogue with the audience.

In pre-Buddhist Chinese prose there was a strong tendency towards the declarative style and a marked reluctance to enter into any explicit dialogue with the audience.

According to May Fourth ideals the 'directedness' of the written message to a readership was crucial, and the intended psychological effect of that message was the *raison d'être* of literary production. On this point the Ming and Qing novel provides an obviously powerful support for the May Fourth ideals.

1.5 From record to fiction

The issue of the factual versus the fictional mode of writing: one may write as if presenting facts; or one may write in a sustained fictional manner, explicitly declaring that what one says has no direct relation to reality, or indeed one may combine the two in the same text.

The explicitly fictional mode of writing was marginal in pre-Buddhist Chinese literature, the fictionalization of the self was absent.

According to May Fourth ideals fiction ceased to make any pretense whatsoever that it was really a record. No 'historian of the strange' was needed as a frame for fiction. Here again, there are—albeit sporadic—precedents in the Ming and Qing novels that point in the same direction.

1.6 *From naïve realism to explicit subjectivity*

The issue of the objective versus the subjective mode of writing: one may feel culturally obliged to record and explain incidents by, for example, including a speech in terms of what one perceives as public morality and public perceptions, or one may be predisposed to express an explicitly subjective attitude towards such incidents, representing the process as a matter of individual perception and personal sensitivity.⁷³ However, the decisive point in the present argument is that such subtle subjectivity is not explicit. And I am concerned with explicit subjectivity.

The explicitly subjective perspective of the author in his discourse was marginal in pre-Buddhist Chinese literature.

According to May Fourth ideals, the explicit description of how reality is experienced by a writer, how it 'seemed' to him, became an important part of the literary ideology.

1.7 *From deference to rebelliousness*

The issue of the kind of reader and the style of reading which are presupposed in writing: one may write a text (such as a Christian liturgical text) designed for devotional use by those initiated into the ritual, or for the deferential use of the as yet uninitiated as an authoritative, didactic text the truth of which is to be revered, or for the critical use of the advanced initiate involved in esoteric theoretical debate; or one may write defensively so as to guard against a hostile reading by a presumed rebellious audience.

The predominant mode of reading implicit in pre-Buddhist writing was the deferential. Commentaries tended to be more exegetic than critical. The presence of the *lecteur rebelle* was peripheral to pre-Buddhist texts. S/he was, in any case, not the intended reader in the texts we have.

According to May Fourth ideals, writing was to be deliberately controversial, addressed to a potentially unbelieving skeptical public.

1.8 *From esotericism to exotericism*

The issue of the esoteric versus the exoteric style of writing: one may aim to write esoteric prose or poetry for a specialized audience of the

⁷³ Of course, this matter is very complex. One can think of the speeches of Thucydides, presented as factual but being in fact examples of the historian's individual perception. A writer's individual subjective perception can express itself indirectly even through attributed direct speech.

initiated; or one may aim to write plain, as far as possible self-explanatory texts the purpose of which is not to address the initiated, but exactly to initiate.

A very large part of pre-Buddhist writing was predominantly esoteric in intent, directed at a circle of the initiated who would be the only ones with intended access to the physical manuscript, although there were notable and remarkable exceptions, like the self-consciously plain and public Wang Chong 王充. Moreover, even books like *Lüshi chunqiu* 吕氏春秋 (The Spring and Autumn Annals of Mr. Lü), *Shangjunshu* 商君書 (The Book of Lord Shang) or *Hanfeizi* 韓非子 seem to aim at a wider, public appeal than, say, the *Laozi* 老子.

According to May Fourth ideals, writing was to be demonstratively public, universally accessible, exoteric.

1.9 From courtliness to mass communication

The issue of the social range of the intended readership: for example, in writing court literature the intended audience may be ideally limited to a very small part of the highest social and political elite; or alternatively, writing may ideally address a very large citizenry.

Pre-Buddhist Chinese literature was intended for a very limited readership with close direct or indirect relations to the courts and the political centres of the time.

According to May Fourth ideals writing was to become an effort in mass communication.

1.10 From liturgical servility to political revolt

The issue of the sociopolitical purpose of writing: for example, one might write in order to serve a dominant social order or ideology, or one might write to radically change this political order.

Pre-Buddhist writing considerably broadened the range of what could be discussed and criticized up to Warring States times, but overwhelmingly, the writing tended to remain 'in aid of government' and did not question the basic patterns of social control.

According to May Fourth ideals, writing was to promote a sociopolitical political change.

2. Constraints on pre-modern rhetoric and their transformation

Next, I turn to some salient general rhetorical constraints on pre-modern rhetoric, and their transformation in modern times. Let me begin with an account of the death of the Roman emperor Augustus (c. 69–121 AD):

Supremo die identidem exquirens, an iam de se tumultus foris esset, petito speculo capillum sibi comi ac malas labantes corrigi praecepit et admissos amicos percontatus, eequid iis videretur mimum vitae com-mode transegisse, adiecit et clausulam:

*‘epeī de panu kalos pepaistai, dote krotōn,
kai pantes hemas meta charas propempsate.’*

Omnibus deinde dimissis, dum advenientes ab urbe de Drusi filia aegra interrogat, repente in osculis Liviae et in hac voce defecit: ‘Livia, nostri coniugii memor vive, ac vale!’

On the last day of his life he asked repeatedly whether there was any disturbance without on his account; then calling for a mirror, he had his hair combed and his falling jaws set straight. After that, calling in his friends and asking whether it seemed to them that he had played the comedy of life fitly, he added the tag:

*‘Since well I’ve played my part, all clap your hands
And from the stage dismiss me with applause.’*

Then he sent them all off, and while he was asking some people who had come from the city [of Rome] about the daughter of Drusus, who was ill, he suddenly passed away as he was kissing Livia, uttering, these last words: “Live mindful of our wedlock, Livia, and be well!”⁷⁴

The following questions regarding the history of Chinese pre-Buddhist sensibilities present themselves:

- (1) Is the indirect speech in ‘every now and then ...’ possible in pre-Buddhist Chinese?
- (2) Do pre-Buddhist historical sources provide us with this kind of morally and historico-politically irrelevant detail like the untidy hair, the physical symptoms of approaching death like the sagging chin and so on?
- (3) Do the pre-Buddhist Chinese have a notion of seeming as expressed in the ubiquitous Latin verb *videri*, ‘to seem’?
- (4) Do the pre-Buddhist Chinese have a notion of life as play-acting? Do they ever speak of anything like the *mimus vitae* ‘the comic act of life’? Is man standardly conceived of as playing ‘roles’ in pre-Buddhist China?
- (5) Do the pre-Buddhist Chinese have the cultural concept of *bios* ‘life’ as a product of human endeavour and conscious action versus the zoological concept of *zoe* ‘life, state of being alive’? Do we have the notion of *vita* as in *vitam agere* ‘form one’s life through one’s

⁷⁴ Suetonius, *The Deified Augustus* 99.1. The translation of the Greek verse follows John C. Rolfe (tr.) 1914. *Suetonius’ The Lives of the Caesars. Book 2: The Deified Augustus*. London: Heinemann (*Loeb Classical Library*), p. 281.

independent actions' or as in *vita philosophorum* 'lives of the philosophers'? Do *sheng* 生 or *huo* 活 have the sort of variety of uses of that we find in the following line?

bios₁ biou₂ deomenos ouk estin bios₃.
A life₁ without life₂ is not a life₃⁷⁵

(6) Do any pre-Buddhist Chinese integrate complete quotations from foreign languages into their discourse? Does any text recognize the possibility that certain things are more easily said in languages other than Chinese?

(7) Is any pre-Buddhist emperor reported to have died in such a setting with his last thoughts being devoted to the private affairs of his wedlock? What are the deep cultural differences between the literary representations of death in pre-Buddhist China versus contemporary Europe?

From these incidental observations I turn to the history of some basic rhetorical modes in China which might be of interest to May Fourth specialists. I have worked for years on these phenomena in pre-Buddhist Chinese.⁷⁶ For the later period I can report no more than general impressions. In what follows I shall present some characteristic modes of Latin rhetoric and thought which are in clear contrast with the pre-Buddhist Chinese rhetorical traditions.

2.1 *The parenthetic mode*

When do we have the first recorded parenthetic remarks⁷⁷ in China and what kind of parenthetic comments do we find in pre-Buddhist Chinese?

Among the ancient Chinese, one might imagine that the parenthetic mode of thinking would have been considered undisciplined, disor-

⁷⁵ Menander. 1964. *Sententiae*. Edited by Siegfried Jaekel. Leipzig: Teubner. Cf. Xi Kang 稽康 (223–262), “Jiajie” 家誡 (Family admonishments), beginning: 人無志，非人也 ‘A person who has no mental orientation is not a man.’ The concept of man was so central that constructions of this sort are current.

⁷⁶ See Christoph Harbsmeier. 1999. “Authorial Presence in Some Pre-Buddhist Chinese Texts”, in: Viviane Alleton and Michael Lackner (eds.). *De l'un au multiple. Traductions du chinois vers les langues européennes*. Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, pp. 219–54.

⁷⁷ The greek word *parentheses* is first introduced and defined in the extant literature by Quintilian (35–before 100 AD), *Institutiones oratoriae* 9.3.23. However, he clearly had earlier Greek models, as he himself explicitly claims in this passage. The Chinese *charuyu* 插入語 ‘parenthesis’ is of more recent origin than the actual phenomenon of the parenthesis in modern Chinese.

ganized and ill-suited for serious and dignified literature, if—that is—parenthetic thinking existed in pre-Buddhist Chinese literature. For it is to be understood that parenthetic insertions into sentences and parenthetic formulae⁷⁸—*horresco referens* ‘I am horrified to report’—did not exist in classical Chinese. There do, however, exist some highly interesting cases of an abrupt change of register between clauses, a change of register which shows that the parenthetic mode of thinking was not totally alien to some exotic ‘cultural logic’ of ancient Chinese mentality, and which provides a highly significant contrast in cultural and rhetorical styles between China and coterminous Greece and Rome. The contrast is sharpened, in this case, by the nature of classical Chinese syntax and morphology which makes very difficult indeed the insertion of parentheses into any given clause.

May Fourth writers have often attempted to cultivate the parenthesis, but it is arguable that this form has remained marginal in modern literature.

2.2 *The mono-dialogical mode*

Did pre-Buddhist Chinese writers articulate interior dialogue, the mono-dialogue? How did they voice their own thoughts when these thoughts were problematical? To what extent were they, in this specific rhetorical sense, explicitly self-critical? This is connected with a mode of thinking which, for want of a better word, I shall call the mono-dialogical mode of thinking in that it involves the making of the self the explicit object of one’s speech or dialogue.

In ancient China the explicit interior dialogue of the writer with himself, if it had existed, might possibly have been felt to be indiscreet, indecent, inappropriate, flippant, unserious, not socially proper. Such explicit internal dialogue did not exist in pre-Buddhist texts, although we do find a number of monologues in pre-Buddhist literature. Pre-Buddhist Chinese dialogue involved either different persons, or imaginary persons, but never, apparently, a person and himself, except perhaps implicitly in the case of the philosopher Zhuangzi (fourth century BC). The case of Zhuangzi is profoundly significant in

⁷⁸ Such as *ei kai geloioteron eipein* ‘thought it be rather ridiculous to say this’ (Plato, *Apologia* 30e), *si vera est fama* ‘if what one hears is true’ (Vergil, *Aeneid* 3.551), *horresco referens* ‘I am horrified to report’ (*Aeneid* 2.204), indeed *horrendum dictu* ‘horrible to say’ (*Aeneid* 4.454) or *horrible dictu—eloquar an silieam?* ‘shall I speak or remain silent?’ (*Aeneid* 3.33).

that it, too, shows that there was not in operation any ‘cultural logic’ which made inner dialogue or the public expression of it entirely unthinkable. The social, psychological and intellectual milieu did not lead to the public cultivation of the inner dialogue in the historical sources which have come down to us.

According to May Fourth ideals the display of inner dialogue has become a crucial element in modern Chinese rhetoric.

2.3 *The metalinguistic mode*

How did the pre-Buddhist Chinese summarize direct speech and present it as explicitly indirect speech? How did they distinguish between the mimetic effect of direct speech and the summarizing tendency of extensive reported speech? To what extent could they systematically change the speaker’s perspective from direct to indirect speech? On a more general, metalinguistic level, what evidence is there of pre-Buddhist Chinese writers correcting themselves as they write (*vel potius dicam* ‘or rather I should say’) or explaining themselves in mid-sentence (*id est, scilicet*) or creating a distance between themselves and their present manner of expression through phrases such as the Latin *ut ita dicam* ‘so to speak’? When did the Chinese start to insert parenthetically editorial or metalinguistic remarks such as *ut dixi* ‘as I have said’ (*Aeneid passim*); *mirabile dictu* ‘wondrous to report’ (*Aeneid* 2.174); *haud ignota loquor* ‘I am not saying anything unfamiliar’ (*Aeneid* 2.91); *paucis (advertite) docebo* ‘I shall (pay attention!) explain briefly’ (*Aeneid* 4.115)? Indirect speech together with such editorial comments are vital features of Greek and Roman rhetoric: they belong to what I shall loosely call the metalinguistic mode of writing and thinking in that it involves making speech the subject of speech.

As a Westerner, one may be tempted to regard the Graeco-Roman practice as a norm of civilized discourse. On the contrary the metalinguistic mode of European antiquity was, I believe, an exception, anthropologically speaking. It was an exception which was marked by the conventionalized personification of discourse. This characteristically involved the intrusion of the author of the text as the text’s overt speaker—and his own commentator.

Would correcting oneself, hesitating about formulations, admitting repetition, admitting the infelicity of one’s diction or the inappropriateness of one’s vocabulary, had they been current in pre-Buddhist China, have been considered marks of an informal draft rather than a

polished final work? Such metalinguistic comments played a considerably lesser role in pre-Buddhist China than in ancient Rome. What is noteworthy is the absence of an explicit grammatical distinction between direct and indirect speech and of a considerable amount of editorial and metalinguistic idioms in pre-Buddhist classical Chinese. It is, therefore, all the more important to concentrate on the evidence that we *do* have from pre-Buddhist China, and the incipient, but very limited, use of indirect speech in Han times. These examples are fundamental because they demonstrate that the Chinese mentality was not the by-product of an exotic 'cultural logic', which somehow systematically excluded indirect speech, or which made metalinguistic discourse inherently impossible. What we do have is a cultural style which fails to develop and cultivate these forms in that small portion of pre-Buddhist literature still extant.

According to May Fourth ideals, a very wide range of metalinguistic features have entered deep into modern colloquial Chinese. But, for example, sustained and elaborated indirect speech (which is such a striking feature of Western literature since Caesar's *De bello gallico*, nearly half of which is in indirect speech, and long before that) still poses severe problems even for modern Chinese. Multiple parenthetical sentences like the preceding (common since Cicero) are also hard to find even in modern Chinese.

CONCLUSION

I have tried to show that the contrast between May Fourth *baihua* and its ancestor classical Chinese (and to a lesser extent its direct predecessor *guanhua*) was very importantly a matter of a radical change in rhetorical preferences. In addition it was a matter of *intended* functional universality, and of manifest as well as hidden Westernization in the lexicon. Finally, there is the pervasive but characteristically hidden Westernization of the syntactic habits. Above all, the use of *baihua* became a political signal and a symbol for an orientation through Western concepts and ideals. We find a series of culturally and politically motivated lexical, stylistic and—in some cases—gram-

matical *Sprachregelungen* (rules for the politically correct use of language).⁷⁹

Developments in China turn out to be closely comparable to those in other parts of the world. What distinguishes the Chinese case from most other cases I have compared is the remarkable depth of persistent historical styles and registers that *continue* to be a living and productive part of the language. Here the cultural tradition of China showed its resilience. (The case of Arabic is strictly comparable.) In the context of the all-powerful tendency towards cultural globalization it is not surprising that this feature of the spoken and written forms of the Chinese language is disappearing at a considerable rate to bring the Chinese language more into line with globalized cultural and linguistic tendencies, the Coca-colonization of the linguistic imagination. Modern linguistic globalization tends to continue much of the work that was begun by May Fourth Westernizers of the Chinese language and Hellenizers of Chinese rhetoric.

But perhaps, in the end, the Chinese Westernizers and Hellenizers did in fact slow down rather than accelerate the modernization of China. For they failed conspicuously to build on the powerful indigenous potential momentum towards modernization in China that had been building up within traditional contexts, and to work for an organic growth of Chinese literary and linguistic culture. Instead, they associated the notion of modernization with radical cultural disembowelment and wholesale Westernization. One's judgement on this matter vitally depends on one's assessment of the indigenous potential for a viable autochthonic variety of modernization inspired by indigenous and traditional Chinese developments. Such an assessment would require a more detailed study of post-Buddhist linguistic, rhetorical, and intellectual developments than there is room for in this paper.

⁷⁹ A certain weakness of *baihua* as a written medium will continue to be the pervasiveness of the graphic redundancy: the written form *zhidao* 知道 is no clearer than the written *zhi* 知. And incidentally it turns out that from a linguist point of view *dao* 道 in this construction is a scribal error: dialectal evidence makes it very likely that the morpheme in question is *dao* 到 as in *kandao* 看到. This error—along with many others—has become orthodoxy.