# Rendering the Regional

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## LOCAL LANGUAGE IN CONTEMPORARY CHINESE MEDIA

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University of Hawai'i Press • Honolulu

Publication of this book was aided by
the Hull Memorial Publication Fund
of Cornell University.


Printed in the United States of America

11 10 09 08 07 06 6 5 4 3 2 1

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Gunn, Edward M.
Rendering the regional : local language in contemporary Chinese media / Edward M. Gunn.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-8248-2883-6 (alk. paper)
1. Language and culture—China. 2. Language and culture—Taiwan.
3. Popular culture—China. 4. Popular culture—Taiwan. I. Title.
P35.5.C6G86 2005
306.44′0951—dc22 2005004866

University of Hawai'i Press books are printed on acid-free
paper and meet the guidelines for permanence and
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Designed by University of Hawai'i Press Production Staff

Printed by The Maple-Vail Book Manufacturing Group

# Contents

# List of Maps and Illustrations

# Acknowledgments

IN ADDITION TO the many sources cited elsewhere in the text a very large number of people scattered across many locations have contributed in a variety of ways with the several local languages, or dialects, that I have sought to discuss.

Among my informants for Hong Kong and Guangzhou, I would like to thank Jennifer Ma, Tan Pack-ling, Elaine Wang, Kenny Ng, Margaret Chiang, Professor Sam Leung, and Carol Hui Lam. For Taiwan, special thanks go to Dr. Stella Wang, Amy Yun-san Huang, Dr. Chiang Shu-chen and the students at Jiaotong University, Dr. Shen Shiao-ying, Lulu Chen, and Lai Ming-sheng. For Beijing, I offer sincere thanks to Felicia Qiuyun Teng, to Zhang Quan, Jin Shan and the other members of the Institute of Literature in the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, and to Qian Kun and Qu Jiaojie. For Shanghai and Suzhou, special thanks go to Cao Lei, Professor Shi Rujie, Wu Yanyan, Ge Fei, Tan Xiaoying, Tan Tian, Ding Jingtang and Ding Yanzhao, Li Anyu, and Xu Guangming. For Fujian, I especially thank Professor Lin Baoqing and her student Zheng Bijiao. For Sichuan, I am especially grateful to Professor Jiang Xiaoli, to Professor Cao Shunqing and the faculty of the Chinese and Comparative Literature departments, to Professor Zhang Jin, and to Ren Jingqiu. In Xi'an I was greatly assisted by Wen Shizhen and Yu Genggeng. At Harvard University, Professor Leo Ou-fan Lee and the students of the Contemporary China Cultural Studies Workshop offered me much good

advice. Here at Cornell, as well, I am grateful for the comments of Professor Tsu-lin Mei and those of Liu Jin, who is now bringing her own academic background to this topic of study.

Without the knowledge, insight, and assistance of these people I could not have begun to explore the many local language sources discussed in this study. They each carry with them an extraordinary knowledge of dialects and communities that rarely finds its way to the surface of academic discourse. While I have imposed my own critical voice on their contributions, I hope at least some small portion of their own knowledge has found a constructive place in this small book.

# A Note on Romanizations

TONE MARKS HAVE been used only in particular instances where tone is a topic. The standard Pinyin romanization system appears throughout to transcribe Putonghua and Guoyu Mandarin vocabulary. For romanization of Hong Kong and Guangzhou Cantonese, the Yale System is used, as found in *Read and Write Chinese: A Simplified Guide to the Chinese Characters* by Rita Mei-Wah Choy. Romanizations for Taiwanese Southern Min follow those in Xu Jidun (Kho Kek-tun), *Changyong Hanzi Taiyu cidian* (A Taiwanese language glossary of commonly used Chinese characters). For Shanghai Wu there is no standard system, and romanizations appearing in this study are adapted from two systems introduced in Qian Nairong, *Shanghai fangyan liyu* (Shanghai slang), and Ruan Henghui and Wu Jiping, eds., *Shanghai-hua liuxingyu cidian* (A dictionary of popular expressions in Shanghai Wu). For Sichuan Mandarin there are good sources in Zeng Xiaoyu, ed., *Chongqing fangyan cijie* (Glossary of Chongqing dialect), and Luo Yunxi et al., eds., *Chengduhua fangyan cidian* (Lexicon of Chengdu dialect). Also helpful is Liang Deman, ed., *Sichuan fangyan yu putonghua* (Sichuan local language and Putonghua). For other local languages, there are sources using transcriptions of the International Phonetic Alphabet, which are herein adapted to Pinyin romanizations.

# Introduction

AFTER THE FORGING of a Chinese empire, a standard style of writing was adopted by the Han dynasty court that over time increasingly departed both from the styles of classical texts and from the speech of any region. Toward the end of the millennium and until his death in AD 18, the scholar-poet Yang Xiong surveyed these regional languages, referring to them as *fangyan*, "local languages" or, if you will, dialects, topolects, or regional speech.[1] He devoted twenty-seven years, it is said, to this labor and died before completing it, probably long before completing it. As centuries passed, traces of the speech of north China, no longer resembling the language of the Han dynasty court, appeared in the writing that the dynasty had standardized. Gradually this northern speech developed a written tradition of its own and was adopted as a lingua franca for administration and trade. By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, candidates for official positions were required to speak this language, and it became known as *guanhua*, "official speech," or Mandarin. While this language, or dialect, became the basis for a Modern Standard Chinese, known either as Guoyu Mandarin (National Language Mandarin) or Putonghua Mandarin (Common Speech Mandarin), the other, local languages of China entered the twentieth century with no sustained tradition of writing, and often none at all. Even prior to the advent of mass formal education and the mass media, writers in late imperial China producing texts of local-language operas, folk verse, and vernacular fiction often tended to adopt Chinese characters from written Mandarin vocabulary when they were uncertain how to transcribe or represent an utterance in a local language, so that the writing of local languages left sporadic and fragmentary traces.

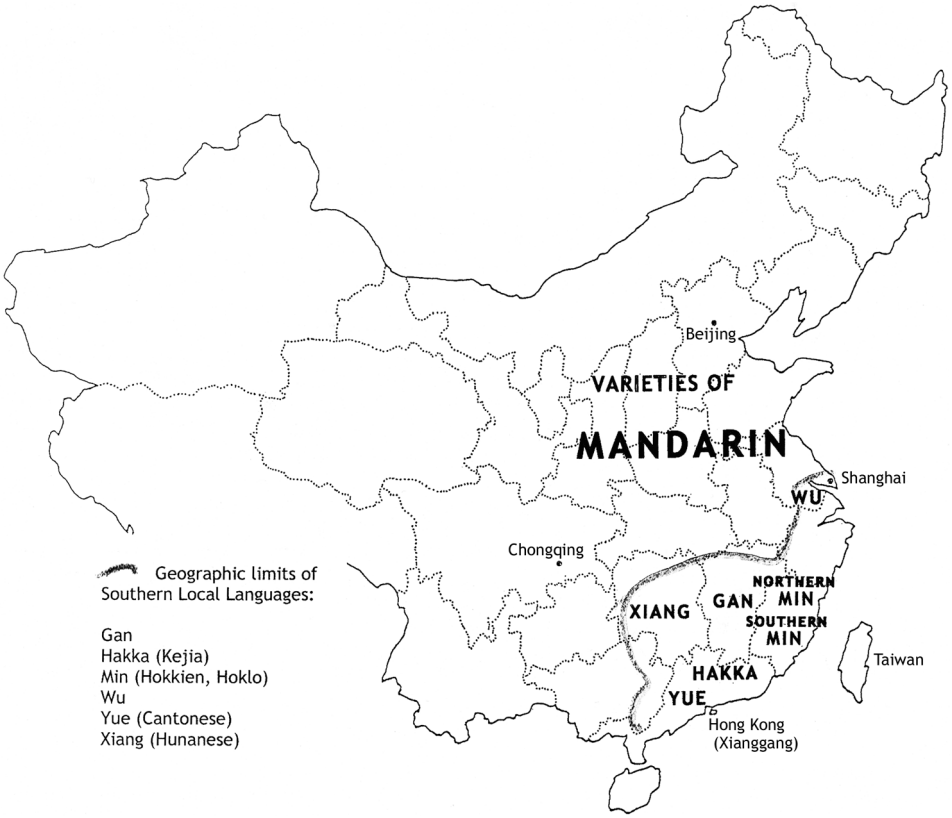


**Figure 1.** Distribution of Sinitic (Han) languages.

Among ethnic Han languages, these local languages have included many dialects of Mandarin, as well as of Gan, Xiang, Wu, Min, Hakka, and Yue, or Cantonese (see Fig. 1). All of these exist as groupings of dialects, identifiable as related to each other by linguists, but often mutually unintelligible by any standards of daily use. Since I intend to finish this manuscript, I will not follow Yang Xiong's example by dwelling here upon the uncounted varieties of local languages that Han Chinese use daily. Yet, for all the power of the state, including the institutions of education and mass media, and for all the influence that a modern, standard Mandarin has had upon their vocabulary, even upon phonology and grammar, local languages remain in widespread usage, as mutually unintelligible as they were a century before.

They are still an intimate part of daily life and the ways in which life is imagined.

## Local languages and cultural identities

These local languages have for a long time carried with them various cultural associations, including stereotypes. As one scholar of regional culture in recent Chinese literature has noted, Han dynasty texts allude to regional stereotypes. Sima Qian's *Shiji* (Records of the grand historian), describes the men of Western Chu as "customarily truculent and easily angered."[2] Ban Gu's *Han shu* (History of the Han dynasty) comments that "Shandong produces statesmen; Shanxi produces generals."[3] Chinese have been continuously inventing and reinventing such local stereotypes down to the present. The relationships between local languages and cultural stereotypes has been extensively surveyed in Leo J. Moser's *The Chinese Mosaic: The Peoples and Provinces of China* (1985), and it remains to explore this topic in literature and the media. During the Republican era, Shen Congwen relied on the historical reputation of the Hunanese (Western Chu) as fighters, Lao She on a more recent reputation of Beijing residents as glib and clever speakers. Both made use of local languages to authenticate such orientations. Even writers committed to a modern standard Chinese style could not resist inserting a few phrases of local language when their narratives touched upon a stereotypical event. The modern reputation of the residents of Shanghai for relentless bargaining is an example, as when Mao Dun in his novel *Ziye* (Midnight, 1933) depicted trading in the Shanghai stock market, or Zhang Ailing described haggling in a Shanghai street market in "Zhongguo de riye" (Days and nights of China, 1944). A still more recent generation has noted various such stereotypes as well. In "Shanghai pianjian" (Prejudices toward Shanghai), the Hong Kong writer Qiu Shiwen recalls how he was raised to think of people from Shanghai, and how people from Shanghai viewed his own background as a member of a family from Chaozhou and Huizhou in Guangdong province.[4]

Qiu Shiwen's essay is free of local language as a form of deliverance from its associations with regional stereotypes. The standard lan-

guage adopted for China has been not only of fundamental practical value, but also a vehicle to erase that portion of China that is understood through a mosaic of local languages and cultural associations. To the degree that Chinese have understood their society through these reference points, modern standard Chinese has sought to reshape their understanding through a language that opposes these forms of knowledge to the national, the educated, the elevated, and the cultured. To the extent that language was central to the projects of establishing a national popular/mass cultural hegemony by Qu Qiubai and later Mao Zedong,[5] they were resisted by local-language texts through their implicature as a voice from below that all that was local could not be reduced to a homogeneous national culture from above. Modern Standard Chinese, Putonghua Mandarin and Guoyu Mandarin, have been set in opposition to local language as the signifier of the historical past, the intimate and domestic, the humorous, the mundane and philistine, the uncultured, crude emotions, and primitive behavior. Yet, literature and the media seek outside the language of formal education to endow their texts with information beyond the redundancy of the classroom, authenticity beyond mere assertion, creativity outside the prescribed, and distinction in a field of culture. Hence, the loss or absence of local language may become associated with the loss of these qualities and of those attributes of time, place, and behavior that are so necessary to orienting readers and audiences. Various individuals or groups who perceive these losses may choose to characterize modern standard Chinese, Putonghua Mandarin and Guoyu Mandarin, as themselves the languages of groups: northerners, cultural elites, hegemonic or dominating political parties, an older or younger generation, and so forth. In other words, the standard language is always viewed by some as yet another local language that has been displaced or misplaced.

Scholars have discussed the opposition of a standard Chinese as the subject that takes local language as its supplement, an embellishment or foil that confirms the status of the standard, in the terms introduced by Jacques Derrida in his *Grammatology*.[6] Yet it is important to keep in mind that each local language and dialect also participates in a local hierarchy of hegemonic cultural status that repeats the same sets of oppositions that the standard languages have constructed. The

position of subject and supplement is not invariably fixed in an opposition of standard to local language. The standard has itself been contested and is always straining against its own division and multiplication in order to fulfill a mission to overcome the local cultural hegemonies and their contests for status. Movements to promote a standard language have also varied during this time and from place to place in the degree to which they have sought to dominate literature and mass media or elected to accommodate local languages.

## Scholarly sources for the study of language variation in literature and the media: History and linguistics

This study explores the role of local languages in the contemporary mass media and literature of Hong Kong, Taiwan, and mainland China. (Fig. 2 highlights locations referred to in this study.) During the 1960s the promotion of Guoyu or Putonghua Mandarin made steady progress in the mass media of all three territories. To be sure, the circumstances in each territory were varied and the progress of a standard Mandarin uneven. Nevertheless, by the early 1970s, although local languages still were widely used on radio, they had lost ground in print, on stage, and in film. At that time and since, the growth of broadcast television, then cable and satellite, proved important to the continued promotion of local languages as defining features of communities. This important new medium for local language directly or indirectly also affected print media and literature. During the 1990s scholars suggested studying the alternatives to "metropolitan language culture."[7] By the end of the millennium surveys of contemporary Chinese literature included "local language literature" as a category of analysis, and by January 2001 the Beijing government promulgated a new law to contain the public use of local languages.[8] Again, the effect of television on other fields of cultural production has been uneven: each field is faced with distinct practical issues and asserts a degree of autonomy and distinction from others in its practices. Each field can yield examples of using local language quite apart from television practices, whether it is film, print fiction, reportage, verse, musical lyrics, advertising, radio, or comic books. Yet, as television came increasingly

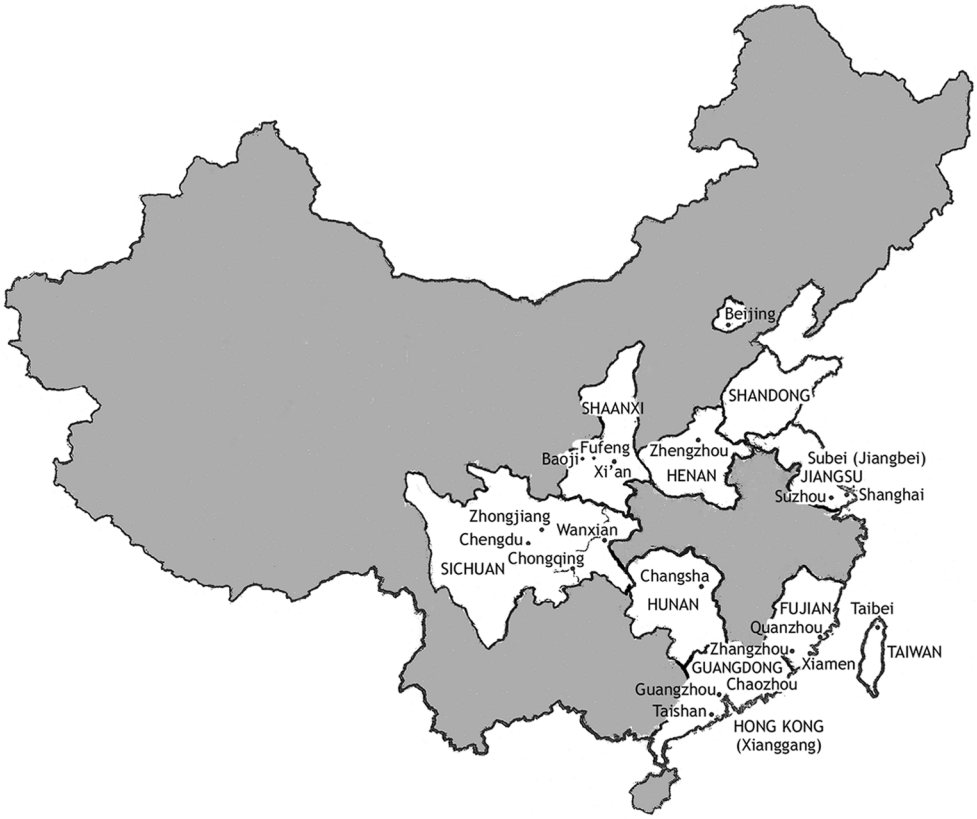


**Figure 2.** Map of locations cited in the text, including provinces, special administrative regions, and cities.

to dominate local audiences as well as national ones, social issues over the use of local language on television intensified, and local languages became, in turn, issues for cultural production in other fields. Hence, the varied time frames used in this study to explore Hong Kong, Taiwan, and mainland China take the growth of television as a key reference point.

Television, of course, has been viewed as primarily promoting standard languages. Eric J. Hobsbawm in the best-known historical study of standard languages and dialects in the context of nation building, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (1990),[9] made several observations useful to this study: that national

languages are taken from a regional base (54), and this is "rarely a pragmatic matter" (95) but one "about the language of public education and official use" (96), linked to issues of social mobility (118). Finally, Hobsbawm argues that "whatever the motivation of planned language construction and manipulation, and whatever the degree of transformation envisaged, state power is essential to it" (112). Hobsbawm considered television only briefly as one among several instruments of linguistic standardization. That remains largely true in much of Chinese territories today, where the vast majority of programming is offered in Putonghua or Guoyu Mandarin. However, local languages also found a conspicuous place in the 1990s, broadcast standards for a standard Mandarin speech relaxed, and it took a fair amount of active administrative and legal pressure to contain the use of local languages and maintain standards on television. In other words, more than any other medium, television was also a site to contest marginalizing local languages.

Much of this study is indebted to the work of linguists, to dialectologists and historical linguists who create textual representations of local languages, their geographies, and their transformations and movements. However, dialectology routinely limits its task to accurate formal description of a target local language. Historical linguistics engages major questions about the historical formation of societies, and these potentially could engage the contemporary discourse of identity in a crucial fashion, but have so far remained distant from much of what has concerned the contemporary use of local languages. Based on their methods, sociolinguistics has explored some of the contemporary questions most fundamental to this study, since sociolinguists are the scholars who seek to discover "rules specifying 'who speaks what language to whom and when,'" which is what interests this study most.[10] The state has policed the use of public language so that, within mainland China, there is no limit to the use of Putonghua Mandarin. Local language, most might agree, has its place, but it is precisely the place of what is to be limited. This study is an exploration of the limits of local language in the Chinese media. Sociolinguistics shares with the philosophy of language the view of language as a social act—that language is a set of performative speech acts. Sociolinguistics includes the study of language variation as also a social

act. Variation may be analyzed as the use of more than one language (diglossia), of shifting in a string of utterances from one language to another (code switching), or shifting within a single utterance from one language to another (code mixing). However, sociolinguists, like dialectologists and historical linguists, have been overwhelmingly concerned with what is sometimes referred to as natural speech, and where sociolinguists have made use of written texts and mass-media utterances they have been little concerned with what these examples of mediated language might signify as performative social acts. Yet it is precisely these examples of rendered language that involve this study.

## Media studies

"Rendered" is the term borrowed from Michel Chion, whose theories of sound in film and television include language that has a relationship to a social reality, mediated according to conventions of a "specific reality: neither the neutral transmission of a sound event, nor an entire fabrication by technical means."[11] For Chion, dialog in film and television generally follows the requirement of theatrical speech that dialog must be intelligible, for it occupies not only the top of a hierarchy of sound, it is also the central action that structures a film.[12] Moreover, dialog is normally visualized and attached to a body obeying "realist conventions of verisimilitude regarding age and gender."[13] Such a demand for the unity of sound and image is so fundamental that it is "the very signifier of the question of human unity, a cinematic unity, unity itself."[14] In viewing Chinese film and television, Chion's insights lead to problems. His realist conventions incorporate only age and gender but not social and cultural background or status. If such realist conventions of verisimilitude were to include them, then the demand for unity of image and sound would require some further acknowledgment of language variance, such as the local languages or varied accents considered here. For Chion, language variation on the order of "multilingualism and use of a foreign language" is acknowledged under a category of techniques designed to offset the power of theatrical speech termed "relativization."[15] Indeed, famous films

corresponding to Chion's definition of such techniques have been used since the early days of sound film, and examples are included in this study.[16] Still, Chion pays little attention to an unavoidable observation in this study, the fact that film and television audiences vary linguistically throughout China so much that what might otherwise be used to relativize dialog—the school-taught standard Mandarin—is overwhelmingly used as a standard of realist conventions providing a unity of sound and image that would otherwise be rejected by any audience outside that "specific reality" of the cultural product. Conversely, when a local language has been sustained to any degree in dialog, its recasting of the conventions of verisimilitude has drawn considerable attention, as we shall note.

Perhaps the most intriguing observation by Chion is that "[t]oday the manner in which people speak is just as strongly influenced by voices heard on television, radio, and films as by voices heard 'naturally.'"[17] If so, this in itself could motivate local communities to create radio, television, and film productions that give voice to their local languages, to take their place among the sounds of dialog deemed worthy of being rendered, and to share in their appeal. Chion has taken care to distinguish the field of film from that of television: where film is largely "'a place of images, plus sounds,' with sound being 'that which seeks its place,'"[18] television is "illustrated radio."[19] Like others, Chion has stressed the particular importance of sound in television as distinct from film. While this insight also is useful to this study, especially in an era when much film is watched on video formats, the most fundamental distinctions in consideration of these two media here are the audiences. Leaving audiences undefined, as Chion does, the language of dialog may be theorized in well-constructed categories. Once the variability of audiences is added, the functions of the language of dialog may also vary and depart from the roles defined by Chion's theory.

## Sociology of culture

The role of varied audiences is also a basic consideration of works as products of a field of cultural production. While most films were pro-

duced for national or international audiences from their conception, many television productions were financed by advertisers whose first considerations were the appeal of the production to a local audience. It follows that much fiction and poetry, like film, was written for a national audience, while many stage productions and portions of journalism, like television, were aimed first at local audiences. Such fundamental considerations of audience have resulted in my organizing this study by a field of cultural production, as well as by period and geographic location. The study of cultural production by social fields inaugurated by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has engaged scholars of several societies, including China, with the result that Bourdieu's theory has had to be amended numerous times.[20] Here the fundamental distinctions in fields are evident. Somewhat as Bourdieu envisioned, there are the fields of large-scale cultural production, such as television, for which some major portion of the audience defines the criteria,[21] in competition for the power to consecrate or legitimize works with the "restricted" field of production for producers themselves, as demonstrated in Chinese avant-garde literature, whose ability to define their own criteria is the measure of their autonomy as a field, and results in opposing artistic freedom to economic reward (115).

Still, some significant features Bourdieu took to be fundamental to his theory are less well defined. To him, a field is a social microcosm that has a fundamental law *(nomos)* and hierarchical structure to it.[22] In the Chinese mainland, all writers, whether for television or for avant-garde fiction and poetry, have belonged to a state-sponsored association, such as the Chinese Writers Association. These associations ensured that economic and social conditions for their members were adequate and helped them financially and legally when problems arose. Their support came from state subsidies, cultural enterprises of the association, donations, and members' dues. Although they were endowed with their own administrative hierarchies, the actual functioning of associations and the relations with the Ministry of Culture, to whom they reported, and with other mass organizations sponsored by the state, were left loosely structured. This condition guaranteed that if there were to be a hierarchically well-structured organization with a chain of reporting and command authority it was the Commu-

nist Party of China itself, whose members were inserted into key administrative positions of the associations. Hence, whether writers were primarily concerned that it was audiences or other writers who determined the nature and value of their artistic productions, the party-state apparatus still claimed a determining role.

Yet, as this study implies at several points, the party-state apparatus was itself subject to many internal differences and responsive to various social groups, and even its policies were executed by countless writers, editors, directors and producers, advertisers and enterprises, all in turn concerned with responding to social groups. Hence, any model introducing a fundamental law and hierarchy must place these in a context of contestation. It is this continual contest that, in fact, supports Bourdieu's arguments that the value of stylistic variation is that it produces those distinctions that contribute to the taxonomies specific to the field, thereby confirming the legitimacy of the field as engaged in the specificities of a determinate practice. In other words, stylistic variation provides a form specific to the field, as distinct from the generalized topic of the content.[23] Although this point is often read in relation to academic fields, Bourdieu also made a point of discussing the styles of Flaubert and Baudelaire in establishing an autonomous field of art for art's sake in nineteenth-century France. In this way he implied that style is a form of performative social act, like a speech act, and it has been interpreted that way. Here Bourdieu links his cultural sociology to sociolinguistics, opening three avenues of inquiry: that specific texts present speech acts read aesthetically as contained within the hypothetical world, the diegesis, of the work; that cultural productions represent fields that distinguish themselves in their varied appropriations of language; and that specific texts within a field may employ a style that distinguishes it from others in a manner that confers symbolic capital on the producer.

As much as Bourdieu's thought lends itself to the complexities of this study, it also has major limitations. In one of Bourdieu's most quoted lines, he wrote, "[v]alue always arises from deviation, deliberate or not, with respect to the most widespread usage."[24] It is difficult to sustain this assertion in the face of the practice of writing and performance in Chinese societies. It is one thing to argue that texts are inherently caught up in language as a social act, and quite another to

assert that deviation from a recognized standard is valued by any set of audiences or readers. Time and again, deviations from standard language have met with scorn or indifference in literature and the mass media, and the question remains at what time and under what circumstances instances of such deviations are given value by any social group. As one may note in the ensuing chapters, female authors have been the first or among the first to introduce a notable use of a local language in the field of fiction. Yet they have only occasionally been recognized for this in any positive fashion, even when an apparently unrelated group of male authors has subsequently inaugurated a more sustained literary movement in that local language. The male-led group may often be involved in mass media and may well have ties or sympathies with a larger social group, a class fragment, such as an upwardly mobile and newly assertive middle class. Such a group, in turn, may display an ambivalent attitude toward standard and local languages. As a social group, they may promote the use of their local language in mass media, yet they may be relatively indifferent to print fiction, or support a more conventional style of writing that represents a field of culture identified more with the status of education and the symbolic capital of a standard language. In this way, they would be less supportive of writers challenging the hegemony of a standard Chinese in writing, even though these writers might view themselves either as representing the interests of such a social group or as seeking to enlist the support of that social group. Hence, Bourdieu's dictum that "value always arises from deviation" needs to be modified in terms of his own theory, which has sought otherwise to ground the nature and value of artistic productivity in the variables of a particular field and its relations with other fields, where it more plausibly belongs. And these fields are intersected not only by class segments, but by other variables, such as gender and ethnicity, or the subethnicity of geographic background.

## Literary and critical theory

It is in this light that the specifically literary theories of heteroglossia and deterritorialization need to be considered.[25] Challenges to a stan-

dard style of writing have abounded in the local-language expressions used in comic books or pornography, in advertising or musical lyrics. They are commonplace, as noted above, in certain situations, in serious literature. If, as in the theory of heteroglossia introduced by Bakhtin, a text is to excite a perception of critiquing contradictions and differences masked by a standard style, or if, as in the theory of deterritorialization, the use of a local language is to induce freedom from the ego controls and reduce the standard to a nomad condition, deterritorialized in a flow of unimpeded desire, then the use of local language must cross yet another boundary of convention. If the local language appears contained within the conventional constraints that a readership would expect of it, then it would be either a commonplace experience or simply a confirmation of the elevated position of the standard. To the extent that it has been a commonplace practice in various Chinese territories, it has done little to alter the position of the standard. Nevertheless, this is not to dismiss the possibilities of such theories, ideas that have attracted attention in the context of globalization, or that version of it seen as a postmodern reaction to the failures of modernism, including centralization and homogenization.[26] As much as contemporary local-language texts may be compensation for the decline and loss of older aesthetic and entertainment forms (opera and ballads, folk songs, etc.) that employed local language, the context for this is inevitably tied to questions of globalization. Critics have noted that "the relationship between the global and the local is far from being easy to pin down or analyze."[27] If globalization is seen as Americanization, and the goal is recognition of one's representation of the local, then the local-language texts assert their value through writers like Twain and Faulkner, or the value of pluralism. The same local-language text could also clearly be cited as resisting global or national homogenization. The Taiwan-based critic Liao Ping-hui has cited "instances of how the local can put the global into use in the form of 'neocolonial' mimicry, in the mode of cultural bricolage or reproduction, that helps constitute multiple lines of invention and transformation."[28] Yet, mimicry of metropolitan cultural colonization within a nation-state is also a topic that has been implied in local-language texts. If globalization is seen as a decentering, then the local takes its place alongside elite international culture, popular

or mass culture from Hong Kong, soccer, karaoke, and other forms from numerous sources. Like these, local-language texts offer an identity to would-be cultural producers, the possession of a form of knowledge that can be placed alongside that of others. If nationalism demands unity and capitalism requires diversity, then the local has a place in both ideologies: the particular that contributes to the universal and the insignificant that makes room for the significant, or the distinctive attributes that imply a community and its market.

As Arif Dirlik wrote, "What the local implies in different contexts is highly uncertain."[29] Given this uncertainty, it would appear from this study that the media of various cities and provinces have employed local language in their media precisely to be identified as sites of the local to their own populations, and thereby to construct an identity for them in such an uncertain environment and enable them to participate in a global identity, as well as a national identity. Yet local-language texts do not easily conform to the kinds of officially promoted regionalism that have been analyzed in contemporary scholarship, such as that of Hu Fuguo, the party secretary of Shanxi during the 1990s. Hu has been credited with promoting a movement for regional culture or Shanxi identity, celebrating Yellow River Culture (instead of negating it) as the source of Chinese civilization, marginalizing Shanxi's role in the Communist revolution, and focusing on its ancient splendor and modern embodiment in figures like the culturally conservative, modernizing warlord Yan Xishan and his "Good People's movement."[30] By contrast, the local languages of Shanxi divide that province more than they unite it. The same is true for neighboring Shaanxi province, where one is more likely to read into the local-language television productions of the province an agenda to reassert the cultural hegemony of the city of Xi'an as the representation of an essential Chinese culture. But then, that Xi'an is also not a national voice either. If it is the nation that is to be taken as the local, then Xi'an television is audibly competing to be recognized as a major facet of that local identity. (For the geographic locations discussed in this book, see Fig. 2.)

So, too, such uses of local language may be read as postcolonial resistance to the performative of China by showing another agency, or it may be read as creating an identity to be aligned with flows of

capital.[31] That is, cultural identity is promoted as a local identity with values attractive to opportunities for receiving outside (transnational) investment and suited to benefiting from them. Some telenovelas in Shanghai have suggested such a local identity. Yet, given that flows of capital are vastly uneven, a local-language text may suggest the national metropolitan culture as itself a form of cultural imperialism, thereby blurring the opposition of China and the West, or China-as-local versus West-as-global. Chongqing television has provided examples that suggest this theme. Then again, the use of local language to identify a specific local culture is as likely to be caught up in the contradictory utterances and trends noted by the anthropologist Judith Farquhar while researching popular medicine in magazines and health books. She found "it rapidly became clear that every kind of point of view was available in these materials. . . . content analysis in search of a specific culture is immediately frustrated."[32] Hence, for example, in *People's Daily*, the same Beijing newspaper devoted to worrying over the fate of national, standard language, an article devoted to the achievements of the *xiang-sheng* comedian Hou Baolin noted that Hou was: "a great master skilled in making something innovative from something old, something refined from the vulgar, something beautiful from the ugly, and finding new significance to established materials. In 'Peking opera and local language' he first went through the dialogue between Zhuge Liang and Ma Su in the language of the Peking opera. Then he repeated the very same passage in the local language of Zhuge Liang's home region [Shandong]. Just this mere repetition achieved a superb artistic effect."[33] South in Hong Kong in one collection of essays the author points out that the myth of Homo economicus promoted in the telenovela *Da shidai/Dai sidoi* [The greed of man, 1992] was contradicted in another, *Shizi shan xia/Siji saan hah* [Below the Lion Rock, 1978], although both were Cantonese language shows representative of television culture in Hong Kong at virtually the same time and place, and produced by and for the the same class fractions.[34] Conversely, there are the many instances of the role played by the diaspora in promoting local languages when the very promoters are themselves displaced by their participation in it. Hence, writers living in Canada and the United States have contributed significantly to the promotion of Taiwan Southern Min on the island of Taiwan. A

Shanghai-produced documentary on the lives of Shanghai expatriates in Tokyo, broadcast in Shanghai in 1994 in Shanghai Wu, drew the attention of the scholar Mayfair Meihui Yang, who noted of an interview with one expatriate that

> the Shanghai audience watching him being interviewed on their own screens collectively and vicariously experience not only his separation from and longing for home but also the foregrounding of his Shanghai identity over his national identity in a foreign land, since he speaks in Shanghainese. Furthermore, in a more subtle way, they also experience his displacement from the confines and strictures of the Chinese state and the habitus of state subjects.[35]

How much weight is attached to the use of local languages in questions of affirming a Chinese identity is, like most topics discussed in this study, a variable. However, the example cited by Yang speaks to the role of local languages as the discourse of the dislocated and the relocated, as much as a location.

Local language gave voice to an uncertainty about how to define the local, and that uncertainty created the space for imagining agency and allowed the local language to be the wild card in whatever structures are formed by theory. Local languages became the wild cards that could be played to contest versions of the modern or the postmodern. As such, it is not likely that they will form new standard, national languages, or that they will be easily and lightly abandoned.

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# (Im)pure Culture in Hong Kong

## Pure Hong Kong Cantonese and local hegemony

In 1997, just as Hong Kong's commercially successful popular culture was collapsing and its artists and audience were dispersing, the local stage offered a retrospective celebration of its triumph over a chaotic era. The celebration took the form of an adaptation of an adaptation, titled *Yaotiao shunü/Jiutiu sukneoi*, literally "The Demure Maiden," but better translated as "My Fair Lady," from the 1950s musical comedy based on George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion*, itself an allusion to a classical Greek legend. Shaw's script emphasizes that the language of the cultural elite in Britain transcended or obscured identification with a particular geographic place of origin in favor of a particular social class; contrastingly, in the (post)colonial Hong Kong production, social status through language competence is dependent upon identifying it with Hong Kong.

Following its own music, lyrics, and script, *Yaotiao shunü* opens with a lively song-and-dance sequence recalling the era of Liberation around 1949, which brought a flood of refugees into colonial Hong Kong. One of these is a flower seller, Dou Lanheung, identified by Professor Tam Yinggit as one of the numerous new arrivals speaking Taishan dialect, a distinct local language common among a set of counties in the southwest region of the adjoining province of Guangdong. Tam wagers that by teaching this girl "pure Cantonese" and British table manners he can pass her off as a member of the social elite of Hong Kong. He provides the girl with the name Eliza, succeeds in training her, and then falls in love with her. But "pure Cantonese" turns out to be a combination of Guangzhou-derived pronun-

ciation and English language. Eliza makes all the amusing mistakes of a Taishan speaker. When Professor Tam assigns to her the words *tuhng*, *tauh*, *tiht*, *teui*, *tahm gauh sauh*, she pronounces them with a Taishan "h" substituting for the Cantonese "t": *huhng*, *hauh*, *hiht*, *heui*, *hahm gauh siuh*. When he instructs her to say in English, "The typhoon in Kowloon will soon hide the moon," Eliza says, "The typhong in Kowlong will song hide the mong." As for Professor Tam's own Cantonese, it is a struggle, usually exhibiting a contemporary Hong Kong pronunciation, but amusingly distracted into imitating the variants of a colleague from Southeast Asia. When he finally acknowledges to Eliza "I love you," he painstakingly pronounces it in textbook Guangzhou Cantonese, "Ngo hou'ngoi neih," instead of "Oh hou'oi leih," what is now the common pronunciation of Hong Kong that characterizes most of Professor Tam's speech.[1] When Eliza's identity is finally revealed, it turns out she is not from Taishan but an orphan raised by a Taishan nanny, thus undercutting the premise that language identifies place of origin.

Both Taishan Cantonese and textbook Guangzhou Cantonese were part of Hong Kong's past by the mid-1990s, and a stage production like *Yaotiao shunü* could imply the success of Hong Kong as a community in creating its own culture, overcoming humble origins like Taishan and freeing itself from the past cultural hegemony of Guangzhou, of China, and of the United Kingdom. It could, by extension, imply a note of confidence in the future of Hong Kong as it entered a new phase of its history, restored to Chinese administration and taking in a new wave of compatriots from the north. Like a number of other nineties productions, such as the 1999 TV series *Quan yuan man zuo/Chyuhn Yun Muhn Joh* [A loving spirit, 20 episodes], *Yaotiao shunü* looks back on an era of linguistic chaos in the 1950s and 1960s as Hong Kong was enlarged by several waves of immigrants from China bringing a variety of local languages with them. At that time these languages were a topic of media attention. Rey Chow has recalled her parents writing and performing in Cantonese radio plays that imitated the various accents of immigrants attempting to communicate in Hong Kong Cantonese.[2] A series of Cantonese film comedies derived from these plays enjoyed prolonged success in the late fifties and sixties. To be identified as an outsider had, or was feared

to have, social and economic consequences. The memories of many Hong Kong residents who came there as immigrants in the 1950s and 1960s are not mirthful, and even today it is an embarrassment for one to slip unguardedly back into the language of one's family, to say "Let's eat" (*hyak/yahk fan*, Taishan) when one means to say "Sihk fan" (Standard Cantonese). Such scenes of multilinguistic confusion and embarrassment among a later generation of immigrants to Hong Kong from mainland China appear in the film *Tian mimi* [Comrades, almost a love story, 1996], illustrating the difficulties of a young man immigrating from Wuxi in Jiangsu province whose employment and love life both are at first affected by his lack of Hong Kong Cantonese as well as of English.

The language assimilation taking place among immigrants to Hong Kong during the 1950s and 1960s was massive. The key document for the history of language in Hong Kong for those decades, the *Hong Kong Population and Housing Census of 1971*, recorded impressive figures. While over a quarter of a million residents still spoke Kejia/Hakka or Fulao/Hoklo Southern Min at home, their children were increasingly abandoning these languages. For example, of nearly 285,000 Chinese from outside Guangdong province, nearly 190,000 spoke Cantonese at home; of nearly 400,000 Southern Min speakers from Chaozhou and other Hoklo-speaking communities of eastern Guangdong, over 260,000 spoke Cantonese at home. But by far the greatest movement to assimilate came from the 685,000 residents who were native speakers of Siyi/Seiyap: only a little over 47,000 reported speaking Seiyap in their homes. Siyi/Seiyap is the language of the "four townships" of southwestern Guangdong near Macao, the most famous of which is Taishan.

The phonological shifts and lexical variations that came to distinguish Hong Kong Cantonese from that of Guangzhou and its environs had already begun prior to World War II. Even at present the phonological shifts have not been completed, so that sounds in conversations are mixed, sometimes in free variation: "I" may be said as in Guangzhou as *ngo*, or with the initial "*ng*" elided as simply *'o;* "you" may still be heard as *neih*, but many have replaced an initial "*n*" with "*l*" or *leih;* "he, she, it" was *kueih*, but now may be heard as *hueih;* persons in Mandarin named Wu may unpredictably introduce

themselves as either Ng or now Mg; many still pride themselves on retaining a final *-ng*, so that their friends are *pangyao* and the stock market index is the *Hangseng*, and laugh when they hear someone speak of their *pan'yao* or the *Han'seng* index; initial *w-* may now be heard as initial *v-*, as in Siyi/Seiyap Cantonese, so that "life" may be *sang'wut* or *sang'vut;* a person may be from *Gwongdung* province or *G'ongdung* province, and so on.[3] The Hong Kong Cantonese vocabulary is also distinctive. Not only did it create its own subcultural argot and slang, its own coinages for foreign loans, and its own borrowings from other Asian languages, but also layers of English-language usage, with one class of words absorbed as local vocabulary, and the rest used freely in educated conversational code switching and code mixing.

## A divided media and the cultural elite

The media were and remain divided in their usage. In the print media, especially newspapers, many editors and columnists were émigrés and practiced a standard written style of semicolloquial Chinese and Mandarin, styles that have been taught in schools down to the present, with little if any local Cantonese used in any textbooks. Their dominance of writing styles in the press was supported by a readership that expected the styles employed by the status culture of China. In the 1950s the commercially important literary supplements contained some fiction written in the style known as *sanjidi/samkapdai*, "three layers" of classical, modern standard, and colloquial Cantonese.[4] The serialized novels of San Su, especially *Jingjila riji/Ginggeilaai yahtgei* [Agent's diary, 1954], are the recurring reference for this writing, always associated with the mildly indecent and ribald, in confirmation of denial of any claim to recognition as status culture for this genre. But their place in the print media paled next to the serialized novels of the émigré author Jin Yong who, beginning in 1955, offered readers exquisite standard Chinese. His historical novels of martial arts adventures took up a genre that had never been regarded seriously, serialized it in a newspaper targeted at the educated elite, and eventually won status for it through overseas awards and honorary degrees. His novels promoted certain views about history that were

ignored or denounced on the mainland and in Taiwan both, exploring personal and unofficial alliances and commitments among secret societies, championing solitary heroes who demonstrate prowess in a world of violence and virtue in a world of political instability and questionable morality, and reconsidering what may be imagined for the individual—such as flying knights.

Not only historical action novels, and not only émigré writers, held to standard Chinese. Other genres disappearing from the mainland were cultivated in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and their styles reflected their place in fields of Chinese cultural production, from realist fiction to local history, modernism, romance, or historical martial arts adventure. Hence, although the Cantonese fiction of San Su and others may trace its heritage to brothel lyrics and local operas, a traditional association with the disreputable and indecent, still the documented history of Hong Kong's old red-light district by Luo Fengming (Hutchinson Law), *Tangxi huayuehen* [Traces of flower and moon in the Western District, 1962], adhered to a standard style. Hence, in the most traditional of media, Hong Kong as a cultural entity had only the status that another language could bring to it as a reminder of its place within cultural China.

Radio speech, on the other hand, was dominated by Cantonese as the local lingua franca. The fifties and sixties plays about hapless émigrés noted above were presented in the series *Tiankong xiaoshuo* [Stories on the air], described as centered on the disparities between generations—the older, who emigrated to Hong Kong and struggled to establish themselves there, and the younger, intrigued by urban youth culture and distanced from their parents' tastes and values.[5] Among these tastes, the music broadcast divided audiences across many lines. However, apart from the numerous varieties of traditional local music, the new popular music was dominated by Mandarin and English: "Before the 1970s, Hong Kong's popular music scene was clearly divided between the mainstay of Hong Kong–Taiwanese popular music sung in Mandarin, rather than Cantonese (the indigenous dialect of Hong Kong), and Anglo-American popular music . . . closely associated with better-educated urban youth."[6] Again, Hong Kong was not seen as the source of popular youth culture, but as a venue for a larger Chinese culture and its colonial encounter with the West.

The local film industry had for decades worked with various languages. The dominant languages were Mandarin and Cantonese, and the studios were divided among local and émigré artists from Shanghai. Outside of Hong Kong, as well as among its own émigré population, there was also a market for other dialects: "In the 50s and 60s, Hong Kong produced a large number of dialect films in Chaozhou, Amoy, and Hakka dialects. The Chaozhou and Amoy [Xiamen] dialect films were especially popular in Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines."[7] Yet the centers of the Southeast Asian market, Taiwan and Singapore, were promoting Mandarin, and it is probably this view of the market that prompted Shaw Brothers (Shao shi), producers of Cantonese-language films in Hong Kong since 1933, to shift in 1955 to producing in Mandarin for what would become their vertically integrated production and distribution network throughout Southeast Asia. Shao Yifu's willingness and ability to produce large-budget extravaganzas, together with a high volume of production at the Hong Kong studios and the creation of vertical integration, guided his Mandarin-language films into the commercial lead. By the end of the 1960s filming in Cantonese was coming to a dead end; by 1971 only one film was released in Cantonese, as compared to eighty-five in Mandarin.

## The role of broadcast television

Although Mandarin-language films dominated the international market, and Shaw Brothers led in this enterprise, investment in Cantonese-language production was shifting to television. And Shao Yifu would shift with it, buying the leading station, TVB, and with that moving out of film production. Broadcast television was inaugurated in Hong Kong in 1967 in the middle of the most turbulent years of the Cultural Revolution and on the eve of its demographic watershed, when in the early 1970s for the first time the percentage of persons born in Hong Kong began to outnumber those born elsewhere. That is, television arrived just as Hong Kong was separating itself culturally from the mainland in its terrifying rampage, and a generation born and raised in Hong Kong was coming of age. Television produc-

tions could not at the time have the same transnational audience throughout Southeast Asia that films had; that would have to wait until the early 1980s. Television productions, therefore, were oriented primarily for Hong Kong audiences, audiences that had by then largely assimilated Hong Kong Cantonese.

Television was to have a far-reaching role to play in the directions that popular culture in Hong Kong would take. First, it had a major effect on the themes, forms, and language of Hong Kong films and the revival of Cantonese cinema. Shaw Brothers, divesting itself of its Mandarin-language film productions as too unprofitable and setting up in television production instead, now turned to making Cantonese films, using their TVB assets and making the most of their widescreen color capabilities for film. In 1973 their remake of *Qishier jia fangke/Chat sap yi ke fong haa* [Seventy-two tenants] took in over HK$5.62 million. Originally a Shanghai stage play at the time of Liberation, satirizing social class oppression and remade as a Hong Kong film in 1963 (but set in Guangzhou in 1948), the 1973 version transformed the satire into episodic form with the flavor of situation comedy, alluding to contemporary issues in Hong Kong but refusing to identify its specific time and place.[8] This box-office success was followed by a series of even more successful screwball episodic comedies written by, directed by, and starring the Hui brothers, who adapted their recent success in music and variety entertainment on television to the big screen. It is an interesting footnote to the history of this local popular culture that while Bruce Lee's four martial arts action films, released in Mandarin, were winning commercial success and international recognition for Hong Kong film, the three Hui brothers' Cantonese comedies that followed them into theaters in Hong Kong grossed profits locally that far outstripped the Bruce Lee films.

The language of the new Cantonese films shows how far the film and broadcast media of the 1970s were taking Hong Kong Cantonese away from the Guangzhou-based standards of the education system. Even a brief example from the dialog of *Banjin baliang/bungan batleung* [The private eyes, 1976] contains virtually all of the features of Hong Kong media Cantonese concentrated in one sentence, this one spoken by the boss of a private detective agency: "社長：人去check佢嘅雪柜同個電視機嘅南碼啱唔啱。[Detective Agency Boss: How about some-

one going to check the numbers on his refrigerator and that TV set."][9] There is an English word, *check;* and an English loan word *lam mah* for "number." In *lam mah* the pronunciation of what was historically *nam mah* imitating the sound "number" has been subjected to the later free variation of initial "*l*" and "*n.*" There is also a sound shift taking place in the pronoun *keuih* ("his"), shifting on some occasions to *heuih;* and there are the Chinese vocabulary items peculiar to Cantonese, such as *syutguaih/xuegui* for "refrigerator" and *ngam mgh ngam* (or *am 'm am*) for "how about," as well as the use of *go* for standard *na* ("that") and *ge* for *de*.

Such a passage might be classified as "low" conversational Cantonese. On the one hand, the verb *check* is a fixed item in the vocabulary, not an individual choice of code switching to English. In two competing forms of a "high" Hong Kong Cantonese, the speaker would either avoid the loan word *check* and use a Chinese word, or, alternatively, add free-variation code switching from English, such as saying "TV" instead of *dinsigei*, or "refrigerator" instead of *syutguei*. The former, conservative version clearly was to dominate the many historical costume dramas of film and television. The latter would become the contemporary mark of the educated discourse.[10]

When it wanted to, film could exert considerable control over the Cantonese speech it presented simply because the dialog in most films, in whatever language, was added through postsynchronized dubbing: "Most Cantonese films made in the late 60's and 70's were dubbed. Post-sychronisation is cheaper than shooting sync sound and poses less problems especially since many actors do not speak fluent Cantonese."[11] The variants of pronunciation were somewhat less controlled in the burgeoning television industry. It was a commonplace that Hong Kong Chinese could not compete to their satisfaction in English or Mandarin Chinese circles: "British professors from overseas will criticize Hongkong English as inferior and clumsy; Chinese scholars from the north will fault Hong Kong for the low standard of its Chinese."[12] In fact, the situation was worse, as Chinese scholars came from Great Britain to criticize Hong Kong Cantonese. D. C. Lau arrived from England in the late 1970s to lead an effort to provide an improved standard for Cantonese based on the inherited prestige form of Guangzhou speech, taken from *A Chinese Syllabary Pronounced*

*According to the Dialect of Canton* by S. L. Wong (originally published in 1941).[13] On the one hand, Lau took a liberal approach to defend the use of dialects in the media:

> From the cultural point of view, much importance should be attached to dialects and dialects should be preserved, because many of them have a longer cultural tradition than Mandarin or *pu tong hua*. It would be a pity if dialects, which epitomize their own cultural traditions, were to die out. In other parts of the world a new trend is becoming apparent: greater importance is attached to dialects and regional accents than before. Take broadcasting in Britain for example. Thirty years ago, only those who spoke standard English were admitted into the profession; but in recent years, the wind has completely changed, and those with a slight regional accent stand a much greater chance of being recruited.[14]

But for all Lau's leniency toward the use of dialects, he took a stern view of impurities within the Cantonese he had heard on the Hong Kong media:

> The present confusion in Hong Kong over Cantonese pronunciation is, to put it bluntly, attributable to teachers who cannot be bothered to look up in dictionaries or rhyme books the characters the pronunciation of which they are not too sure of. The mass media have also contributed to the present state of affairs. Broadcasters are often unaware that some characters have more than one pronunciation or are pronounced differently when read and when spoken. Take for example the character in the term "to play." Since the expression is a colloquial one, the character should be pronounced "wan3" and not "wun3," a pronunciation reserved for reading. I have, in fact, heard the character mispronounced on television. And I can think of many more examples.[15]

However, the imperfect television Cantonese was aimed at a mass working-class audience on the verge of riding a coming wave of economic development into middle-class status. It also coincided with a major surge in population among youth, whose increasing disposable income, often too little for the major purchases of housing

or automobiles, could be lavished on popular culture.[16] Television opened up an impressive opportunity for young, educated Hong Kong Chinese to turn their linguistic handicaps into an advantage as they transformed Hong Kong from a venue for a culture dominated by the mainland to a site of locally conceived cultural production recognized, first, by the new generation of Hong Kong–born Chinese, and then transnationally.

Much of the celebrated new popular music during the 1970s and 1980s were theme songs of telenovelas and feature films: Sam Hui's (Xu Guanjie/Hui Koonkit) music for films like *The Private Eyes* and *The Contract*, Cheung Tak-lam/Zhang Delan's renditions of theme songs for *Mong chung yan/Wangzhong ren* [Man in the net/The good, the bad, and the ugly, 1979] and *Sheunghoi taan/Shanghai tan* [The Bund, 1980], Kwan Ching-kit/Guan Zhengjie's bold vocals for martial arts adventure series, and so on. The innovative founder and cultural hero of the new Cantopop movement has been widely recognized as Sam Hui. His early music adopted a working-class persona, and his films, written and directed by his brother Michael Hui (Xu Guanwen/Hui Koonman) adopted an attitude of general irreverence and distrust toward status and authority that must have been calculated—most successfully—to appeal to a mass audience. Thus, from the beginning there was a tacit vision of this movement as the response of the colonial capitalist community to the mass culture of Maoist China. As tributes to him often note, Hui was, like many of the participants in the new Hong Kong mass culture, a graduate of Hong Kong University possessing, in that era, the capital of the cultural elite.[17] In the midst of an avowedly commercial enterprise, the tribute of his fellow university graduate of the late sixties, the advertising copy writer and promoter of Cantonese writing Wong Zim/Huang Zhan, faintly echoes the rhetoric of the May Fourth New Culture movement: "[Sam Hui] was the first classmate at Hong Kong University to sing Cantonese songs. At that time there was still a sense of inferiority and prejudice against Cantonese popular music throughout society. It was Xu Guanjie who played the important role of breaking down this inexplicable sense of inferiority. Few could match him in this achievement."[18]

Commercial as it was, the new field of cultural production centered in Cantonese television and popular music moved with a certain

self-consciousness into a space largely vacated by Maoist China and not exploited by Nationalist China on Taiwan, as an authentic voice of a working-class youth culture poised for and then launched into upward mobility. Along with that mobility the stylistic register of lyrics is also credited with changing. By the end of the seventies, lyrics dominated either by the traditional vocabulary of love or heroism or by working-class vulgarity made room for a colloqiual language that found its tropes in quotidian details, but of the sort tastefully observed by lonely hearts reflecting on life in quiet coffee shops.[19] The vision of conservative standards promoted by the educational establishment were irrelevant when promoted as an extension of an inherited culture. English was clearly the language of status endowed with capital, making the maintenance of a rigorous code of correct Cantonese all but pointless, save for two considerations. One was the growing movement to recognize Cantonese Chinese as a legal language in the colony. This was a goal that could only demand standardization in writing and speech both, and provide education with a powerful mission to educate students in standard written Chinese, even as it taught them in Hong Kong Cantonese speech, well removed from the writing standards to be inculcated. The other consideration was to distinguish members of the Hong Kong community who had been raised there from outsiders. Both of these concerns would produce results through the medium of television.

## Promoting a standard media language

Through the 1970s and 1980s Hong Kong television and film were overwhelmingly devoted to promoting a media standard of Cantonese, its own compromise between the standards the educational system was expected to uphold and the multilinguistic conditions that characterized the history of the territory and much of its contemporary environment. The landmark telenovela *The Bund* (1980), on account of its unprecedented transnational commerical success at the moment that television gained a market in Southeast Asia, offers a representative sample of broadcast media Hong Kong Cantonese at the height of the status of television in the mass culture of Hong Kong. The follow-

ing brief exchange between the young Huei Mankeung (played by Chow Yunfat/Zhou Runfa) and the owner of a theater, Mr. Wong, provides a mild taste of the sorts of variants rippling through television dialog:

> Mr. Wong (王老板): 許生 *saang14* [Mr. Hui.]
> Heui (許): 你應該知 *ji1* 道我今日嚟 *leih* 嘅來意。[You should know why I've come today.]
> Mr. Wong: 我唔知 *ji14* 嘅。[I don't know.]
> Heui: 你唔知 *ji1* [You don't know?]
> Mr. Wong: 如果你帶一班人嚟 *laih* 嘅, 我或者會 *wuih* 知 *ji14 ge*. [If you'd brought a gang with you, I'd probably know.][20]

Among the notable items in this brief exchange, the morpheme *saang14* is given a Hong Kong pronunciation distinct from the Guangzhou standard *saang1;* the verb "to come" is pronunced *leih* by Heui and *laih* by Wong; the tones for the verb "to know" are rendered by Heui as *ji1* and by Wong and *ji14*. Elsewhere such high-frequency words as "here" may be pronounced by some performers according to the Guangzhou standard *nidouh*, or by others with the historic shift in Hong Kong favoring *lidouh*, or according to yet another variant, *yidouh*. The third-person pronoun may be pronounced by the same performer as *heuih* or *keuih;* the second-person pronoun as *leih* or *neih*.

*The Bund* is set in Shanghai during the 1920s, so there is an occasional concession to usage that distinguishes seventies Hong Kong Cantonese from local languages in Shanghai in an earlier decade: *noihji* 內子 for "wife," *hausaangjai* 後生仔 for "youth," *guneuhng* 姑娘 for "miss," and so on. Nor, when characters travel to Hong Kong, are they always allowed to understand terms common to Hong Kong Cantonese. In Hong Kong, Heui Mankeung does not understand the term *keitong* 企堂 for "waiter" (Episode 13); his closest friend, Ding Lik, is puzzled by the term *fuseuhng* 府上 for "home" (Episode 4); a local tycoon, Feng Jingyao, can't remember the word "mass" 彌撒 for a Catholic church service (Episode 3). However, the emphasis is overwhelmingly on dialog not only intelligible to a majority community of Hong Kong viewers but also within the realm of their own

usage. A number of critics have noted the role of television in consolidating a community, and the homogenization of language was certainly a part of that. Chen Yinghui has noted that variance from this formula was rare, citing one telenovela from 1984, *Xiangjiang suiyue* [Annals of Hong Kong] as an exceptional experiment in allowing characters portraying immigrants from Shanghai to speak in Shanghai local language.[21]

Such homogenization would also be consistent with what other critics have stressed as the standardization of community life. At that time, according to Chen Qixiang, "Hong Kong was situated in the period of emerging industrialization to form a 'beehive society,' and everything tended towards standardization. Social cohesion relied on unified consumption. Television just fit this need. A television of unified consumption became a cultural industry."[22] In media language it was this value of homogeneity that determined even the depiction of the Other of this community, so that the speech of characters cast as outsiders never shifted far beyond the range of variation established for Hong Kong media Cantonese.

Critics have discussed the role of film and the broadcast media in constructing a Hong Kong identity in opposition to the stereotype of mainland Chinese as hick, the *dailuhkjai* "mainlander" and the *daihoenglei* "hick." Hao Zaijin has noted that a Hong Kong identity was established in radio plays by shifting the focus of conflicts from those between generations of Hong Kong residents to those between established Hong Kong residents and new immigrants from China. The *dailuhkjai* image was embodied in the performer Tan Bingwen/Tham Bingmahn, in the late sixties: short and pudgy, loud, simple, and clumsy.[23] Eric Kit-Wai Ma has studied even worse images of mainland Chinese through the character of Ah Chan/A Qian in the telenovela *Sou Hat Yih/So Hak Kee* (1979), variously referred to as *The Story of Ah Chan/Qian* or *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, adding to the stereotype of the "ugly" mainlander as crude and untrustworthy. A later, upscale version of this stereotype was read into the telenovela *Daisidoi* (The greed of man, 1992), in which a family of entrepreneurs depicted as Hong Kong Chinese were identified by a significant number of viewers as mainlanders because of their ruthlessly criminal behavior. Ma concludes:

> Television, as an institutionalized gossip channel, constructs the two-set collection of Hongkonger and Ah Chian. The collection becomes a prominent public version of identities. . . . The most prominent symbolic logic of the two-set collection is its polarizing effect. When people start differentiating Hongkongers from mainland Chinese, they select the worst section of the outsiders and generalise the "bad" characteristics into the category of Ah Chian; they also select the best section of the established group and generalize the "good" characteristics into the category of Hongkonger.[24]

Such critics could point as well to other productions, such as episodes of the only long-running soap opera in Hong Kong, *Shun ching/ Zhenqing* [A kindred spirit]. Episode 430 introduces Siu Muih/Xiao Mei, a hotel housekeeper in Guangdong now two months pregnant, who has come to Hong Kong with her father and brother looking for the Hong Kong businessman who is the father of her child. After finding that he already has a wife in Hong Kong who cannot bear him a child, she agrees to have his child and surrender it in exchange for money. However, her own father objects, and she miscarries. Staying on in Hong Kong, she eventually finds a boyfriend there. Like the depictions of some other young women, Xiao Mei is conniving. She is introduced when pretending to be ill on the bus to Hong Kong and her brother professing to be a Chinese physician who cures her, so that they can sell the supposed medicine he gives her to the other passengers. She, however, is rather less of a manipulater than her predecessors, one of whom walks out of her wedding carrying all the money and jewelry she has received.

Perhaps what distinguishes Xiao Mei in *A Kindred Spirit* is her unusual accent, something that few other characters in the soap opera adopted, and few in the other broadcast media renderings of mainland Chinese.[25] Television and radio followed language assimilation both because to consistently endow negative portrayals of mainland Chinese with markedly different language features risked offending the many people whose own families had immigrated and/or still had honored relatives with such accents, and also because not all mainland Chinese characters were presented with such fear and loathing. The unflattering stereotype of Chinese identified by Hao Zaijin with the

roles played by Tan Bingwen/Tam Bingmahn also had its positive side in the context of scripts like the sex comedy *Chat kam chat zung chat siklong/Qiqing qizong qiselang* [The lucky seven, 1970], in which Tan's character is rewarded as the only one of seven admirers of sexpot Tina Ti (Di Na) allowed to sleep with her on account of his genuine caring for Tina's character. The most celebrated female *dailuhkjai/daihoenglei* was played in 1977–1978 in TV and film by no less a performer than the celebrated Josephine Siao, as Lam Ah Chun/Lin Yazhen. Condescending as the invention of Lam Ah Chun may indeed have been, it was a demonstrably sympathetic one and projected an urban need. As one enthusiastic critic notes:

> Wearing thick eyeglasses, her hair cut in a fashion we would consider ungainly ourselves, foolish and awkward, [Josephine Siao] sank from the idol of thousands to the most despised country girl. Needless to say it was a fresh idea, and Josephine Siao's talent for comedy demonstrated even more her varied gifts as a performer. The most difficult achievement is that the role of Lam Ah Chun both captured the unfairness toward countryfolk or immigrants from the mainland discriminated against by city dwellers, and made moving the difficulties of life for ordinary urban dwellers in the big city. Lam Ah Chun's rusticity reflected perfectly the longing that the Chinese in the late 70s held out toward the earth.[26]

It appears that rather than the construction of a "two set collection of Hong Konger and Ah Chian" of which Eric Ma writes, the media have at times cast the mainlander in a villainous or demeaning role along with fellow Hong Kong residents and foreigners, and that a portion of the Hong Kong population has a variety of reasons to attribute threatening behavior to mainlanders regardless of what a television script contains, as is demonstrated in the survey of viewers' responses to *Daisidoi* that Ma has cited.[27]

The representative telenovela *Sheunghoi taan/Shanghai tan* [The Bund, 1980], is illustrative of a television culture that is not unlike, but rather distinct from, the version Ma and Hao have presented. Setting *The Bund* in Shanghai, the creators of the series prided themselves on the attention they devoted to research in order to re-create

Republican-era Shanghai.[28] On the other hand, critics like Chen Yinghui faulted them on precisely this point, arguing that various details and situations connoted Hong Kong more than Shanghai.[29] Apologists for the series could point out that at one point the hero, Heui Man Keung, flees to Hong Kong to begin a new life, so there is little logic to arguing that Shanghai is a stand-in for Hong Kong. Yet, the Shanghai of *The Bund* could be said to be one vision of Hong Kong itself; the Hong Kong of *The Bund* could be another vision, the two uneasily coexisting. The hero of *The Bund* has turned his back on a messy and personally painful political situation in Beiping to take up life in a corrupt commercial world of transnational Shanghai, just as so many families in Hong Kong had abandoned a threatening situation on mainland China to enter the raw and often corrupt competition of life in Hong Kong in a global hub of transnational capitalism. The hero's daring, dedication, and intelligence win him rapid but highly insecure upward mobility in Shanghai—again a parallel to the lives of so many in Hong Kong. He attempts to escape his conflicts and insecurities by going to Hong Kong, the quieter, more leisurely, and much less violent alternative to Shanghai—and the nostalgic ideal of what many must have wished Hong Kong could be. But the violent criminals of Shanghai track him to Hong Kong, murdering the innocent of Hong Kong as they close in on him, compelling him to return to Shanghai to avenge this violation of all decency. In the end, try as he does to walk away from this corrupt society, to leave Shanghai/Hong Kong, there is no escape from the net of involvement that ultimately claims his life. The violent are not simply all and only mainlanders; there are many decent, idealistic folk among them, and the violent are as much abetted by foreign agents (like the lethal Japanese female agent Yamaguchi Kyoko) as by their own greed. Hong Kong has irretrievably lost its status as a refuge that so many hoped it could be.

Finally, the series was as much a response to the Hollywood film *The Godfather*—even borrowing its theme music for some scenes—in an effort to place a version of the Hong Kong experience of the Chinese diaspora in the framework of the globalized epic of Italian immigrants to a corrupt United States and its underworld. *The Bund* adapts this narrative to the tale of a young man journeying to Shanghai to

end up in its underworld, and in so doing, presents the tale of Hong Kong's immigrants of previous decades, alluding only briefly to those local languages which they brought with them, and which they had to correct. For this is a tale of their resourcefulness and heroism in confronting a hardened city, not a demeaning burlesque of the adjustments that they were forced to make in order to be accepted with dignity as members of a community. This is the epic of Hong Kong as an immigrant community that is now being endowed by its new generation of media artists with a distinctive, hegemonic culture.

## Promoting language variation through film

The efforts to build a unified myth of heroic assimilation and upward mobility to which the homogenized Hong Kong media language was devoted inevitably precluded a range of alternative stories among some of its writers. As much as television became the engine of a mass culture during the 1970s and 1980s, it has also been celebrated for nurturing a group of writers whose ambitions for cultural production were supported by the film industry. It is well known that directors and writers like Yim Ho/Yan Hao, Allen Fong/Fang Yuping, and Ann Hui/Xu Anhua were trained and began their careers in television workshops, and that their later film products were collectively dubbed the New Wave Cinema. The opportunities given to these writers to make feature films were perhaps a result of their willingness to experiment with productions of uncertain commercial value but with a claim to symbolic capital that could distinguish Hong Kong film from television in ways more respectable than through graphic violence and sexuality. This was at a time in the eighties when audiences with increased education and affluence demanded more from cultural production, and when greater symbolic capital was needed to assert a hegemonic cultural identity. It is a hallmark of a number of these films that they introduced multilingual dialog that supports criticism of Hong Kong society. Yim Ho's *Sishui liunian/Ci seoi lau nin* [Homecoming, 1984], Allen Fong's *Ban bian ren/Bun bin yan* [Ah Ying, 1983], Ann Hui's *Ke tu qiu hen/Haak tou cau han* [Song of exile, 1990] all employ multilinguistic dialog, which not only introduces a mark of

distinction into these films, but also relativizes the languages of the dialog and calls attention to them.

*Homecoming*, as Esther Yau has carefully analyzed it, presents the myth of a timeless China now absorbing modernity at a vastly different pace than Hong Kong. It depicts Carol, an upwardly mobile Hong Kong resident now frustrated in her career and intimate life, visiting her sister Pearl, a schoolteacher in their rural hometown. This exposes Carol and the audience to the sounds of local languages abandoned in Hong Kong:

> Hence, fictional characters, though not rigidly typified, are distinguished by a set of basic differences between capitalist urban Hong Kong and socialist rural China. Coral and Pearl, who are both economically independent professional women in their respective societies, for example, are still differentiated in the following ways: unmarried—married; childless—with child; greater ability—lesser ability to consume; and bold—conservative. These differences inform some of the subtle and not so subtle conflicts and tensions in scenes in which the women attempt to relate to and help each other while making each other uncomfortable at the same time.[30]

It is, of course, a given that it is essential for Carol's voice to sound like that of a Hong Kong Cantonese speaker. But also, beyond that, it is an aural persistence of voices in rural Guangdong of Chaozhou dialect songs, dialog, and Chaozhou-accented Cantonese belonging to Carol's cultural past that is the essential material evidence that she cannot and will not be like them—that, as Esther Yau puts it, this "homecoming" cannot be more than "home visiting" (197). It is the distance, however subtle or marked, between Carol's language and the languages of her rural roots that provides the insistent sound of an unbridgeable alienation that otherwise comes and goes visually until the inevitable conclusion.

Next to this subdued motif of language, Allen Fong's *Ah Ying* is far more dramatic in its presentation of multilingual dialog. A teacher in a film workshop begins to introduce himself to his class of aspiring performers in Cantonese. Unable to speak Cantonese fluently himself, he throws away his written notes and continues in Mandarin. When

he calls on volunteers to act out something with which they are familiar, a girl previously introduced as a fishmonger volunteers. Standing before her classmates, she starts to clear off the teacher's desk as if to mime her routine of cleaning and weighing fish, but then breaks into a fashionable folk-style song in English, "If I were a ship in a bottle."

Eventually the teacher, Zhang Songbai/Cheung Chung Pak, selects the girl, Ah Ying, to take the lead role in the class performance of a stage adaptation of Taiwan author Chen Yingzhen's short story "Jiangjun zu" (A race of generals), in which she is to play the leading role of the local Taiwanese girl, Little Skinny Maid, opposite Zhang as the mainland soldier Three Corners. For her role, Zhang tutors her in Mandarin. The tale of doomed love is paralleled in the actual relationship of Ah Ying and Zhang. Zhang is himself marked by dysfunction: a broken-down car, a failed career as a writer, a crippled body that cannot consummate his romance with Ah Ying. Ah Ying's family life as a cheap laborer at the fish stall to support her parents and her love life with a feckless partner both appear to be dead ends. Ah Ying is stuck on the inside of Hong Kong society, Zhang on the outside, a situation that recalls the story "A Race of Generals" that they are staging. She shows her potential to rise above her situation by learning how to sing in English; Zhang forces her to acquire an active competence in Mandarin.

Through Zhang, Mandarin is the language of an ideal culture now broken down, the language he speaks in contrast to the language of economic necessity, the language of compromised dreams and ideals, the language of art as a medium through which to establish relationships free of these obstacles. His Mandarin is the language meant to unite Chinese, but instead reveals their disparities and limitations, which art confronts. Mandarin is the medium of their relationship and the metaphor of opening up a cultural space in which to do more than cope with necessity and obligation. In other words, everywhere ideals among Chinese have been crushed—whether abroad, where Wang has had to face marginalized life, or within Chinese societies. Zhang, in Hong Kong on commission to script a film for local producers, dreams of making it "about our times," not to arouse social class struggle, but because "otherwise no one will ever know we existed." Art is a kind of immortality in place of religion. The experience

of art is what replaces flawed affective familialism, romantic imagination, and melodramatic imagination, even if that experience cannot be realized in actual life. Just as Zhang insists on using his Mandarin, so the left-wing filmmakers for whom Zhang is writing a script speak first of how his script, for them, "does not understand Hong Kong," and later, more plainly, of the script as a "bread-and-butter issue." However, through Zhang, Ah Ying holds out hope for another life beyond flawed, transient relationships and beyond economic necessity and kinship obligations, and through its art the film is the presentation of that possibility.

Another use of multiple languages in order to explore Hong Kong as the site of crushing limitations that can be transcended is played out in Ann Hui's *Song of Exile*. An apparently vulgar stereotype of a Hong Kong matron, now widowed and alienated from her daughters, Cheung Kwaizi (Kuizi/Aiko) decides to return to her native Japan in search of a sense of dignity and belonging. Greeting her brother at a train station in Japan, Kwaizi's Hong Kong Cantonese is transformed into Aiko's Japanese, and with that transformation a large part of the matron we have been introduced to is dramatically altered. The abrupt shift in her language is a powerful appeal to the general requirement that dialog is normally visualized as a match for conventional expectations of the body to which it is attached.[31] The shift in Kuizi/Aiko's voice and language makes credible her stunning transformation of identity and the revelation of her capacity for humane heroism in her youth that led to her marriage to a Chinese soldier at the end of World War II.

Another crucial feature of multiple languages that supports Kwaizi's transformation from a failed underdog into a heroine is the overturning of her daughters' superior linguistic competence. Hueiyin (Ann), an overseas-educated daughter returning resentfully from pursuing a career in England, commands fluent English. Seated in a hair salon on either side of Kwaizi, Hueiyin and the other daughter bicker with each other over their mother's apparently low taste in the hairstyles that she has ordered for all three of them in preparation for the other daughter's wedding. The daughters' Cantonese is filled with code switching into English, a competence that Kwaizi does not appear to possess. After Ann decides to accompany her mother to Japan,

when her mother and brother begin conversing in Japanese, it is Ann whose competence is undercut, leaving her to address the Japanese in English and reducing her to the status of a child and a foil for her mother and her mother's newly revealed competence.

*Song of Exile* is a sound film in more than just its dialog, however. Just why Kwaizi is made to appear such a failure at securing Ann's affections as a child and so vulgar as a matron is a problem that the film only gradually addresses. In retrospect we can infer that the husband's own family was so biased against her as a Japanese, and that the unfamiliarity of living as a Chinese in Macao and Hong Kong was so oppressive, that the husband responded by establishing a place of respect for her among Hong Kong matrons of a similar class. This entailed that she appear in dress and language thoroughly assimilated and well-to-do, with abundant leisure time to spend on mahjong parties and gossip, indifferent to the society and politics of China—everything that her British-educated daughter Ann despises. There are, therefore, moments when only the music sonorously insists that more is being implied than can be offered through the opaque visual presentation of this woman's life. This is exemplified by the background music when Kwaizi's husband takes her from her failed life as a young mother in Macao to live with him where he works in Hong Kong, reluctantly separating her from Ann.

*Homecoming*, *Ah Ying*, and *Song of Exile* all make pointed use of multiple languages to support themes critical of Hong Kong and to imply frustrations with China. Yet each film returns to an affirmative position supporting hope in these societies. In *Song of Exile*, for example, Ann's mother willingly concludes that she belongs in Hong Kong, and Ann's grandfather, dying in the grim surroundings of Guangzhou during the Cultural Revolution, affirms his love for China and his hope that Ann will commit herself to it. Just as Aiko adopted China for the sake of someone she loved, so Ann will try to build her life by remaining in Hong Kong out of love for her family. The use of language reifies a Hong Kong identity rather than subverting it.

A number of other films that drew considerable attention for introducing mainland characters made less ambitious gestures toward linguistic distinctions. The former gang of Red Guards who rampage through Hong Kong in *Sheng'gang qibing/Sang'gong kei'bing* [Long

arm of the law, 1984] sing and talk mixing Cantonese and Mandarin, just as the Hong Kong characters mix Cantonese and English; the Guangdong detective assigned to work with the Hong Kong police to track down killers constantly uses a mainland vocabulary in Cantonese distinct from that of Hong Kong usage, in *Biaojie, ni hao ye/Biuze lei hou ye* [Her fatal ways, 1990].

There is, then, nothing ultimately subversive implied by the use of multiple languages in these films. They are vehicles for potentially subversive frustrations that reach a point of resolution by affirming a sense of community across boundaries illustrated by the use of different languages that affirm those boundaries. It is in the film *Ruan Lingyu/Yuen Lingyuk* [Actress, 1992], directed by Stanley Kwan/Guan Jinpeng, that language suggests an unresolved criticism of China and Hong Kong.[32] *Actress* is played out as a long series of linguistic or speech acts. The plot culminates in the suicide of the celebrated silent-film actress Ruan Lingyu at the age of twenty-five. The diegetic performance of Ruan's career centered in Shanghai during the 1920s and 1930s is shown in color. Second, metadiegetic sequences of the original silent films are shown in black-and-white. These two types of sequences are therefore set up in opposition, color versus black-and-white. There is, however, a third set of sequences. These are extradiegetic scenes of the Hong Kong director and performers discussing the film they are creating, together with interviews of surviving participants of the silent-film era. These scenes are shown first in color, then gradually move to black-and-white. In this way they slide gradually from being consistent with the diegetic scenes in color to the metadiegetic scenes in black and white. As the enunciation of linguistic acts, the extradiegetic scenes of performers discussing characters and performances and of actual participants recalling the era may conventionally be taken as "serious" performative acts with literal meaning. The color diegetic scenes would be taken as "nonserious" acts with aesthetic cues. But the existence of the third set of black-and-white films disturbs this stable opposition, since these, also, should logically be read as "nonserious" aesthetic acts, but appear like many of the seriously enunciated acts.

However else Ruan's character in the film is to be defined, she is portrayed as a young woman who has never overcome the loss of her

father. Her sense of abandonment leads her genuinely to throw herself into her roles. From her "nonserious" position of acting she mounts a concerted effort seriously to enact the re-creation of her father through a determined effort to please one director after another as so many substitutes for him. The effort is ultimately a failure, and the directors and lovers so many failed fathers. At a party on the night of her suicide, she tenderly gives each of the directors in her career a kiss and thanks them in turn for all they have done for her. They assure her of their respect and friendship in the face of public condemnation of her as a slut in the Nationalist press, which is retaliating for the popularity of films she has made that journalists believe to be attacks on them. Indeed, she is the illicit lover of a married man that the press reveals her to be, and this linguistic act that defines her public identity is something she can counter only with her suicide note, authenticated by the brute fact of her death. None of her failed fathers, whether Communist or Nationalist, has risen to the occasion of rescuing her from her predicament.

Like the blurring of the opposition of serious to nonserious in the tripartite organization of diegetic color and extradiegetic then diegetic black-and-white scenes, the film suggests that the nonserious (film art) once played a serious part in portraying a society and its collective identity. The role of Ruan Lingyu in these realistic and socially conscious films was to attract the public to them, and the films in turn played on her genuine needs and emotions to exploit them for fiction. In this sense the seriousness of the individual, hysterical, and hystrionic Ruan Lingyu outshone alternative and competing narratives, and for this she was punished by the press. Neither a committed Nationalist nor a Communist, she nonetheless popularized their messages and paid the price for her success in promoting their causes. The transgressions of these boundaries of serious and nonserious are even embedded in the film technique itself. The director, Stanley Kwan, tells the actor Liang Jiahui, "You *forgot* to pull back the sheet to look at Maggie" (Maggie Cheung playing Ruan Lingyu). The discrepancies involved in this scene begin with its being shot in color (should be black-and-white "serious"), and are contradicted when Ruan Lingyu in the diegesis remarks playfully and tenderly that, when she cried on the set of the film *New Women*, the director, Cai Chu-

sheng (played by Liang Jiahui) was *afraid* to touch the sheet she wrapped herself in. Finally, in the ultimate funeral scene, the action in color is repeated twice, deliberately showing performers as performers and a nonserious expression of grief—a technique that reveals the absence of the serious and so aims at making the viewer feel the loss of the serious, the inaccessibility of it.

A suggestion of the broader criticism contained in the film appears in the second motif of language that runs through the film. This consists in the numerous switches of language: Guoyu Mandarin, Shanghai Wu, Cantonese, and English. The extradiegetic artists chat in Cantonese and English. A diegetic scene introducing producers and directors in the 1920s has them discuss plans with each other in Mandarin and a few sentences of local Shanghai Wu. Ruan, acting on the set of a silent film, rails in her native Cantonese, then breaks character to smile and ask the Shanghai director a question in his local Shanghai Wu. At home she teaches her daughter to pronounce the Mandarin word *piaoliang* (pretty) and calls attention to her daughter's habit of speaking local Shanghai Wu; Ruan speaks Cantonese with Li Minwei and his wife, Lin Chuchu (Liu Sao), and the director Cai Chusheng as fellow Cantonese. She ingratiates herself with the director Bu Wancang, speaking in his local Shanghai language. The actress Li Lili speaks to Ruan in Mandarin, and Ruan has a conversation in Mandarin with the actress Chen Yanyan while learning Mandarin from Li Lili, who points out her mistakes. The parade of languages goes on, culminating in the film artists' party on the night of Ruan's suicide celebrating the adoption of Hollywood equipment to make sound films. Liu Sao announces that Ruan has been learning Mandarin in order to star in the company's first sound-dialog film. However, as Ruan recites a speech she has prepared in Mandarin with a heavy accent, she breaks off, dismissing her Mandarin as insufficient. This also implies that she is inadequately equipped for a future in sound films. If the motif of speech acts signifies her incapacity for serious acts without the authentication of brute fact, such as suicide, her substandard Mandarin implies the end of her capacity for "nonserious" performative acts. Her voice is to be silenced by the arrival of the monolingual national film voice, which will eliminate the linguistic pluralism of an earlier era.

In sum, *Actress* suggests that, at the time this film was made, the

growing technologies of nationalism in China and colonialism in Hong Kong both have stripped society of a pluralistic field of art with a genuine concern for community, leaving art to be the vehicle of commercial and organizational interests alone. This is hardly a revelation, but the repeated reminders of this threat in the film help to define the generation of New Wave Cinema directors, and their writers, as engaged in asserting film as a somewhat autonomous field of cultural production not entirely answerable to the commercial and political interests of organizations. That, in turn, was perhaps motivated by a desire to draw increasingly educated Hong Kong audiences to the theaters, and to create a place globally for Hong Kong films with more symbolic capital than the martial arts cinema.

## The flow of language variation into broadcast media

The trend toward language variation in film that distinguished it from commercial broadcast television and commercial films also found its way back into the commercial films and television of the nineties in the form of increased variations within Hong Kong Cantonese. The comedy *92 Hei meigui dui hei meigui/92 hak mooigwai dui hak mooigwai* [92 black rose versus black rose, 1992], alluding to the media of the 1960s, includes scenes of characters speaking with exaggerated clarity and slow pacing as a parody of dialog sound tracks of that era. If films of the seventies like the Hui brothers' productions included lexical loans from English, the series of nineties films, commencing with *Baifen bai ganjue/Baak fan baak gam gaau* [Feel 100 percent, 1996] that feature white-collar career people and their love lives exemplifies the free mixing of English and Cantonese expressions that had become both fashionable and an involunatry response to a multilinguistic environment of globalization. As one Hong Kong critic of the local talk shows complained:

> The younger generation today seems incapable of speaking in one language at a time; they will always sandwich Chinese with English vocabulary or expressions in a way which is unnecessary and unappealing. Until about ten years ago, the Chinese language channels on radio chat sessions would all be conducted in Cantonese; nowadays


**Figure 3.** Two scenes from the film *Cageman* (1992). The Mandarin-dubbed edition shown here features subtitles in English and also Hong Kong Cantonese, a striking example of the development of written Cantonese in Hong Kong and the role of mass media in promoting it.

> it produces the most ungainly kind of macaroni Cantonese and English.[33]

The tension between forging a sense of community through a standard language and creating information, implicature, and authenticity through variations is illustrated in an article by Eric Kit-Wai Ma, "Re-Advertising Hong Kong: Nostalgia Industry and Popular History." Ma noted the controversy over the voice to be used for the narrative in a television advertisement for The Hong Kong Bank that aired in 1995, stressing upward mobility through the story of a local fisherman:

> To create an authentic touch, the producer and art directors went to fishing harbors and waited there for several hours. They asked every passing fisherman to speak to them and finally found the voice they needed. However, the voice-over as it is now was not the version that the producers liked most. The best one was done by the same fisherman with a Hohklou accent. The dialect is authentic because many fishermen in Hong Kong use it in their everyday conversation. The producers proposed keeping that dialect and using Chinese subtitles. The bankers rejected this idea on the ground that TV audiences do not bother to read subtitles; the commercial was for the mass audience, and Cantonese would be more direct and understandable. They were probably correct because the Hohklou accent would have given a stronger sense of locality and specificity at the expense of general accessibility. Despite the fact that the protagonist belongs to a restricted group of Hong Kong people, the commercial was decontextualized and domesticated to make it accessible to the general public. The people of Hong Kong now see the story as their own story, the history as their own history. Without this domestication, the story would not have invited its audience so readily to engage in collective nostalgia.[34]

Actually, Ma conflated two separate issues. He notes that the clients were concerned about the basic requirement for the dialog to be intelligible, but immediately shifts the question by supplying a second issue, the cultural implications of the characters' accents for their so-

cial identity, not their intelligibility. To this should be added the question of the field in which the advertisers were working that was increasingly searching for distinction through adding information to dialog, information sanctioned by the newer appeal to the authenticity of language variation over the older obligation to promote a standard local language. After all, neither the advertisers nor their clients, the bankers, rejected the idea of using Hoklo fishermen as a synecdoche to represent the people of Hong Kong, and it was a short step from using visual images of them to attempting to supply sound that suited their image. Ma's note, however, is important, if not for resolving a question, then for calling attention to the importance media language has for attempts to conform to expectations among different sectors of society; and these different sectors clearly were not unified in their expectations.

A second issue that arose from the trend toward language variation in the media is illustrated by the language of the new wave of gangster films inaugurated by *Guhuozai zhi ren zai jianghu/Guwaahkzai zi jan zoi gongwu* [Young and dangerous, 1996], which countered the romantic yuppie film dialog with an unprecedented use of underworld Triad and street slang. The reaction against this argot appeared in press criticism for allowing it to enter common usage in writing. For example, the authors of *Not Just Nitpicking: Analyzing Language in Chinese Newspapers and Problems in Reportage*, cite several examples of the use of gang argot in local reportage and stress that not even Cantonese speakers would understand many of these words and phrases.[35] Conversely, others could argue that gang argot was so widely disseminated by the media that it had entered common slang usage in Hong Kong. Although by the 1990s television had lost its role as the innovative center of a mass culture, the legacy of its cultural role in the seventies and eighties included a sharp increase of published writing in a distinctively Cantonese style.

## The role of broadcast media in literature

Written Cantonese certainly predated the era of television. The research of David Bruce Snow on the rise of Cantonese in literature

and Rey Chow's account of her mother's scripting radio plays in Cantonese during the 1950s, among other sources, demonstrate that there was a modest interest in writing Cantonese well prior to the advent of television.[36] Nevertheless, previous writing represented only a small portion of the distinctive Cantonese vocabulary, and little had found its way into publication on account of the low status such writing was accorded compared to classical and modern standards. It was most regularly found in comic strips.[37] Hence, for example, the dialect literature movement of the late 1940s promoted by writers associated with the Chinese Communist Party received little encouragement in Hong Kong, and later, Rey Chow's mother's radio scripts were not published. In fact, most scripts for stage, radio, film, and television were written in standard (Mandarin) and rendered by performers into Cantonese.[38]

However, the precision required for timing broadcast media advertising scripts, and especially for writing advertising jingles, often demanded that writers think their material through carefully in Cantonese. Huang Zhan wrote an amusing passage recounting the creation of a widely known jingle for Sanchat/Xinqi detergent in the 1970s that included the line *San chat! San chat! Sanchat saiji fan2!* "New-and-Different! New-and-Different! New-and-Different laundry soap!" The word for "soap," *fan2*, required asking the singer to add an ornamental note to prevent the tune from turning the tone of *fan2* into *fan3*, "feces."[39] It is a fundamental feature of Cantonese writing that virtually all of its published practitioners were employed in the broadcast media. You Ming, Qiu Shiwen, Gan Guoliang, Chen Qingjia (A Kuan), Du Guowei (Raymond To), Huang Zhan, and others all began their careers in radio or television.

Donald Bruce Snow's research has noted many of the texts marking the rise of written Cantonese in some detail. What is interesting is that these texts moved into a fairly wide range of forms, genres, and tastes, almost surely as a result of the entertainment offered by these and other writers through the broadcast media. This surely fell short of a transvaluation, in which Cantonese was offered and accepted as a superior style to standard Chinese. However, this movement does suggest the new assertiveness of a more recent field of cultural production in the broadcast media over its predecessors in print and on stage.


**Figure 4.** Illustrated romance in standard Mandarin *(above)* and pornography in Cantonese *(below)* published in Hong Kong (1998). Print media follow a hierarchy of styles even within popular genres such as these.

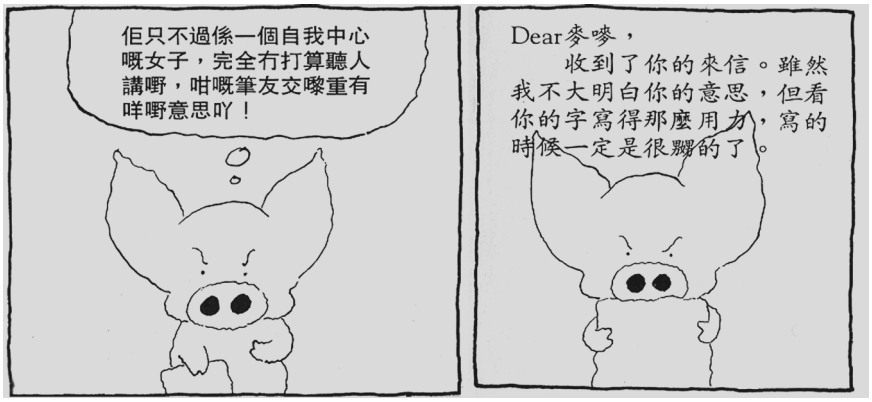



**Figure 5.** Illustrations from one of the series of Hong Kong books featuring the piglet Mcmug (Maimai). Above to the left, Mcmug appears with a thought balloon that contains written Cantonese conveying his opinion of a pen pal as self-centered. To the right, Mcmug reads her letter, written in standard Mandarin. From Xie Liwen and Mai Jiabi, *Maimai gege manhua 1* (Hong Kong: Bliss, 1993).

Hence, as Snow has pointed out, the phenomenal sales of subliterary comic books in Cantonese in the 1970s and 1980s were a stimulus to adopting Cantonese in writing.[40] Moreover, then and now, many of the comic books that have promoted written Cantonese are the violent and lewd ones, identifying themselves with a tradition of Cantonese as a low-status language in print—for example, the *Xiao liumang* (Young hoodlums) series in the 1970s and the *Guwaahkzei/Guhuozai* (Gangster) series in the 1990s, among others. Yet a series of gently domesticated, humorous comic books also claimed a different kind of space—such as the *Garfield* translations of the 1980s and the *Mcmug* books of the 1990s, the former featuring a housecat, the latter a delightfully earnest, middle-class piglet—which parodied the status of styles through a presentation of speech and thought in Cantonese and metadiegetic writing in standard Chinese. In the context of such a subliterary form as cartoons, *Garfield* and *Mcmug* may hardly claim status, but they do claim respectability. In such cartoons, written Cantonese no longer represented the intrusion of risqué or antisocial fantasies of instant gratification into the realm of mass culture, but the adoption of Cantonese as part of domestic, middle-class culture, educated and socialized.

Broadcast media and the subliterature of comic books were not the only sources of inspiration for a Cantonese literature. The moment that writing in Cantonese moved to try to claim a recognized position in literature was not owing directly to broadcast media but to the creativity within the small circle of literary modernists in print media, one of whom was intrigued by the medium of the telephone. This moment was when the modernist émigré author Liu Yichang, editing the literary supplement for the newspaper *Kuai bao* (Express), solicited a contribution from the young local author Xi Xi, who offered him the novel *Wo cheng* (My city, 1975).[41] The central metaphor of this novel is established through the principal narrator's account of her training and job assignments as a telephone linesperson connecting people across an ever-growing network of telephone lines with an infinite number of possible connections. *My City* develops as a restless, rambling excursion through the arbitrariness of signs, and is also mapped out in an arbitrary relationship to Hong Kong through the playful rewriting of Hong Kong place-names, rather than the reproduction of socially recognized names. To understand some passages a familiarity with Hong Kong is essential, as when an apparently silly comment on pineapples contains an allusion in Hong Kong Cantonese to pineapples as bombs, used in the disturbances of the 1960s and derived from the English phrase "pineapple grenades."[42] At other points in the novel Cantonese only works against the narrator, in this case a Cantonese-speaking ship's electrician who is puzzled for some time after a Mandarin-speaking ship's carpenter explains that he is looking after the ship's "cat" *mao/maàu* 貓, only to discover the carpenter is referring to the ship's "anchor" *máo/naauh* 錨. However, even in this instance, the wordplay privileges Cantonese, since a Cantonese speaker would never associate *maàu* "cat" with *naauh* "anchor," as a Mandarin speaker might, because both Mandarin words share the syllable *mao* in different tones. Such wordplay is also the one constant in the text, spanning shifts of narrator, setting, and tone.

As the translator Eva Hung has pointed out, although the novel is predominantly written in standard Mandarin, it is riddled with Cantonese vocabulary and grammar.[43] The relationship of this style to cultural production is given one explicit metalinguistic note on the

tension between writing in standard Mandarin and speaking in local Cantonese:

> In this city, when you mean the bus [*gonggong qiche* 公共汽車], you say *ba-see* 巴士; when you mean fresh cream cake [*xian naiyou dangao* 鮮奶油蛋糕], you say *ke-leem* cold biscuit 忌廉凍餅. Since this is the case, in this city, the mouth is always quarreling with the hand that writes. The hand says: You want me to write ice-cream 冰淇淋, then why do you keep saying snow-cake, snow-cake 雪糕? The mouth says: I'm telling you these two people are a football judge and a border-line guard, how come you write them down as referee and linesman?
>
> The mouth and the hand that writes have been quarreling for more than a hundred years now, so they have decided to hold a no-holds barred public debate.[44]

With its unending wordplay, the text of the novel might well be read as this playful debate. However, it is also possible that it historically signals a growing trend to adopt Cantonese in written styles. That is, echoing the phrase of the late Qing dynasty reformer, "My hand writes what my mouth speaks," when recalling the momentous cultural upheavals that installed Mandarin as a style of cultural status, Xi Xi's humorous passage also questions why Hong Kong should remain the venue for a larger culture that has never honored the speech of Hong Kong.

If broadcast media were not crucial to imagining a literature in Cantonese, they played a more formative role in establishing social recognition for it. Although Xi Xi established herself as a gifted writer, her use of Cantonese in literary circles drew more criticism than praise in the seventies, and it remained for other circles associated with broadcast media to expand Cantonese as a written style. Cantonese fiction developed in a dozen variations the search for self-respect and recognition of its middle-class characters in the upwardly mobile Hong Kong of the late twentieth century. But Hong Kong is again and again a metaphor for society as a disposable commodity. In such a city, it is the Cantonese style itself that constitutes the rhetorical assertion of a site of authenticity, filling the emptiness, the lack, it

depicts. It has certainly favored first-person narration, but it has not been limited to that style. In 1977, at the same time that *Young Hoodlums* comics were selling out, *Hou'ngoi/Haowai* (City Magazine), an upscale magazine for white-collar readers, was inaugurated, advocating the use of written Cantonese. In fact, with many writers and readers unfamiliar with written Cantonese, most of its copy remained in standard Chinese. However, among its Cantonese features were columns such as "Smart Ass" by You Ming and the first serialized novel of white-collar life, written as a diary by Jau Siman/Qiu Shiwen (pen-name of Gu Saimung/Gu Ximeng), *Jaujat congsoeng/Zhouri chuang shang* [Weekend in bed].[45] The narrator is a young office worker who struggles to cope with his sense of being trapped in a world of mediocrity and vulgarity while maintaining ties to his girlfriend, Mary, who has gone to study in France and may not return. Centered on his subjectivity, the narrative is somewhat humorously caught between his sense of self-pity for his inability to achieve his idealism, his contempt for various colleagues, and the failure of language to express or relieve these feelings. Just so, the narrative is split between the narrator's monolog in Mandarin and the dialog in Cantonese, with almost as much English employed as Cantonese.

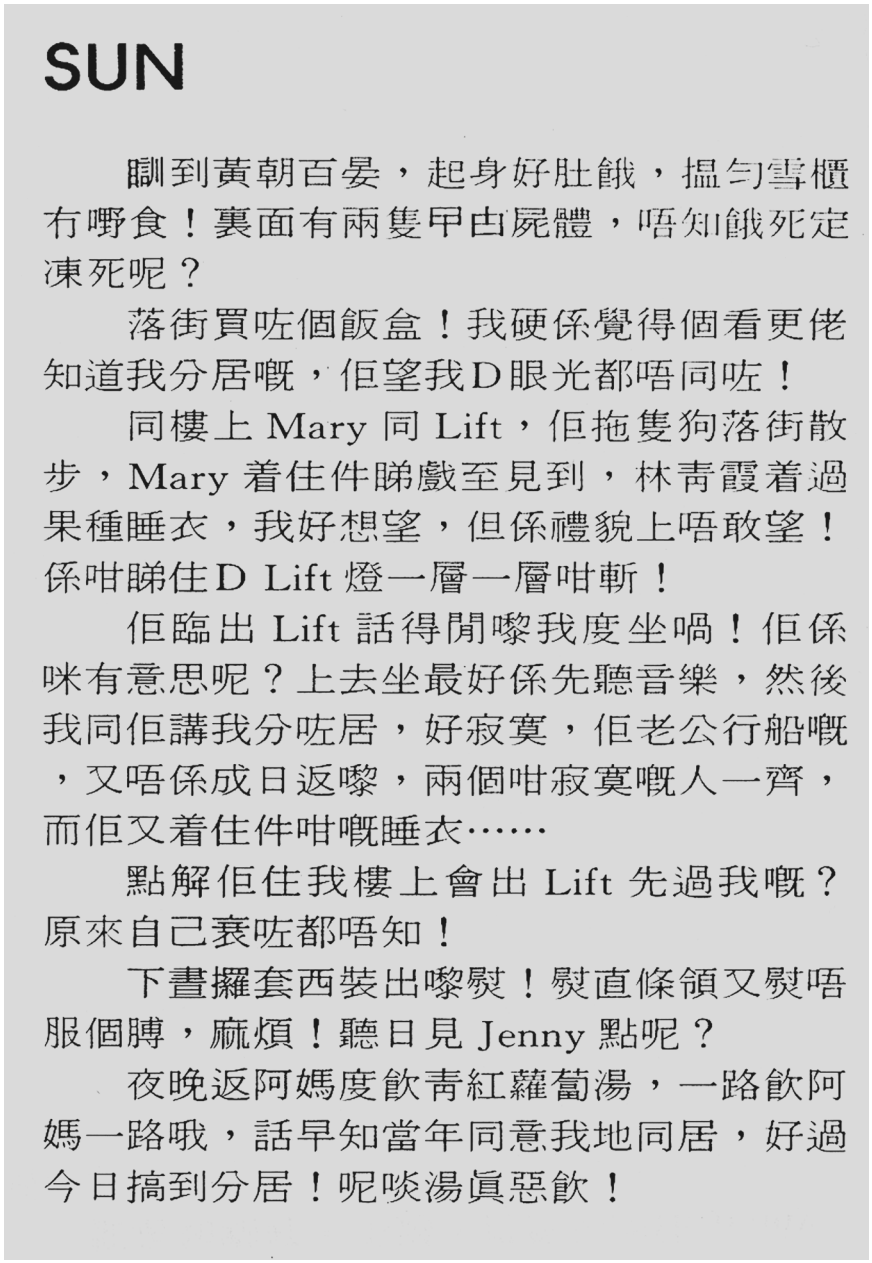
*Weekend in Bed*, together with other contributions to *City Magazine*, not only introduced a new style for fiction, but also a theme of the Hong Kong resident feeling trapped by the limitations of his/her life there and drawn to thoughts of escape overseas. Gan Guoliang's novel *Renjian zhengfa* [Disappearing into the crowd], serialized in *Ming bao zhoukan* [Ming Bao Weekly Magazine] during 1984–1985, centers on the life of a Japanese woman in Hong Kong. A young girl in the 1950s, Inamata Mari ran away from her home in Nagano and emigrated to start a new life in Hong Kong. Twenty years later her career as a bar girl is over, she is a widow with two grown children, her daughter a prostitute and her son washing hair in a beauty parlor dominated by a gay culture he does not want and now faced with supporting a pregnant girlfriend. Understandably disillusioned with their lives in Hong Kong, the three find new possibilities to start their lives afresh during a tour of Japan. Once again Mari decides to "disappear into the crowd," this time reclaiming her place in Japan. Whereas the narrator of *Weekend in Bed* despairs of finding self-respect for himself,

and Mari despairs of finding it for or through her children, the narrator of the most celebrated Cantonese novel, A Kuan/Ah Fun, despairs of finding it for anyone in Hong Kong and leaves for North America.

Funnier, hipper, and loaded with allusions to the local sites and globally marketed commodities of luxury, *Siunaamyan zaugei/Xiaonanren zhouji* [Diary of an ordinary guy] by Ah Fun/A Kuan (pen-name of Chen Qingjia), was adapted from his 1980s radio play about a young writer of advertising copy caught up in a life filled with restless coworkers, entertainment, and girlfriends. Volume one presents sixteen weeks in the life of the narrator Ah Fun/A Kuan, an ingratiatingly amusing, feckless thirty-year-old ad man in the creative department of a Hong Kong advertising agency. After his wife, Ah Ann, proposes separating and moves out, soon a vapid, free-spirited young Jenny moves in, and a shake-up at the agency rewards Fun with a promotion to copy chief. This is a move that he opportunistically overcomes his scruples to accept at the price of betraying and dimissing a friend and colleague, Q Tailang (the name of a pale and pudgy Japanese cartoon character). Fun arranges another job for Q Tailang,[46] then turns to secretly plotting to enter another company with his friend Dai Gwuwaak (Gangster) and pursues a secretary named Rosa, whose appearance attracts widespread attention from men at the agency after Fun helps her find work there. However, he submits a letter of resignation only to find out that Gangster cannot follow through on his promise; Jenny leaves him for her first husband, and he crashes Gangster's Mercedes in a drunken rage.

Both for its content and its style, *Diary of an Ordinary Guy* drew unprecedented attention. As a document of cultural studies, critics saw the new, young, white-collar "ordinary man" as a response to rising feminism, the response of males now unable to assert a patriarchy of any heroic stature but unable to abandon such an ideology altogether. The ordinary man frankly and ingenuously confesses all his failings, limitations, and humiliations, while at the same time dedicating himself to luring women into his bed. Drawing on the critic Luo Guixiang, the columnist Ma Jiahui writes:

> Tricking a female boss who bares her fangs at the office by day and later flourishes her claws to go to bed with him, freely handling and



SUN

瞓到黃朝百晏，起身好肚餓，搵勻雪櫃冇嘢食！裏面有兩隻甲由屍體，唔知餓死定凍死呢？

落街買咗個飯盒！我硬係覺得個看更佬知道我分居嘅，佢望我D眼光都唔同咗！

同樓上 Mary 同 Lift，佢拖隻狗落街散步，Mary 着住件睇戲至見到，林青霞着過果種睡衣，我好想望，但係禮貌上唔敢望！係咁睇住D Lift 燈一層一層咁斬！

佢臨出 Lift 話得閒嚟我度坐喎！佢係咪有意思呢？上去坐最好係先聽音樂，然後我同佢講我分咗居，好寂寞，佢老公行船嘅，又唔係成日返嚟，兩個咁寂寞嘅人一齊，而佢又着住件咁嘅睡衣……

點解佢住我樓上會出 Lift 先過我嘅？原來自己衰咗都唔知！

下晝攞套西裝出嚟熨！熨直條領又熨唔服個膊，麻煩！聽日見 Jenny 點呢？

夜晚返阿媽度飲青紅蘿蔔湯，一路飲阿媽一路哦，話早知當年同意我地同居，好過今日搞到分居！呢啖湯眞惡飲！

**Figure 6.** A page from *Diary of an Ordinary Guy* in Hong Kong Cantonese by A Kuan. Adapted as a first-person narrative from a radio play, this novel has been cited as a major example of written Cantonese, and it is also a prime example of the response of print to broadcast media.

> manipulating in bed a wife who is more successful in her career than he and lacks any warmth or gentleness towards him, and hoodwinking this wife while having illicit sex with lovers or prostitutes in *binguan* motels, or even hiding in the bathroom or under the covers to look at porn magazines, all constitute the greatest spiritual triumphs of the ordinary guy. Novels and programs like *Diary of an Ordinary Guy* all revolve around "how the man tricks the woman into bed and then, once in bed, conquers her."[47]

Indeed, *Diary of an Ordinary Guy* embodies the popular success of the Cantonese novel as a product of a male, mass-media-dominated field over the nearly forgotten fiction of high culture circles written by the innovative female author Xi Xi.

At the same time, within a field of cultural production, *Diary of an Ordinary Guy* shattered the limits established for Cantonese in print. Donald Bruce Snow records how the dominant publisher of pocketbooks, Boyi, balked at the degree to which Cantonese had taken over the style of *Diary of an Ordinary Guy:* "Before the first book in the series was published, there was some question in many minds as to how well a book written in purely colloquial Cantonese would be received. Boyi evidently had interest in the project, but wanted the scripts rewritten so that the amount of Cantonese would be decreased. In the event, a new company, You He, was set up by a group of young entrepreneurs to publish the books, and they became an instant success."[48] In other words, while the style perpetuated associations with the comic, satirical, local, and decadent, and in a strong first-person voice, it did so in a far more assertive manner than ever before. This unprecedented style challenged the conventions of cultural production as aggressively as feminism challenged patriarchy and as slyly as its protagonist sought to sabotage the position of status culture and the growing status of women within it.

Almost as if in answer to the Hong Kong of print fiction, the sentimental scripts of Raymond To's (Du Guowei) celebration of Hong Kong's popular culture, among his many plays, were published as part of a long series devoted to local Cantonese language culture by Subculture Ltd. (Cimanfaa tong/Ciwenhua tang). Written in the 1980s and adapted into films during the 1990s, when Subculture Ltd. pub-

lished the play scripts, Raymond To's three most popular plays provide a history of local, popular culture. In *Nanhai shisan lang/Namhoi sapsanlong* [The mad phoenix],[49] a tempermental, eccentric medical student at Hong Kong University, who abandons his career in his unsuccessful pursuit of a girl, turns to writing Cantonese operas. His early years of artistic and popular success are followed by rejection and his decline into a mentally deranged vagrant after he refuses to compromise his principles as an artist and a patriot. In *Hudumen/Fudoumon* [Stage entrance, 1982],[50] a female Cantonese opera star now over forty and staging her swan-song performance prior to emigrating with her husband to Australia must deal with a welter of conflicting feelings and with problems among friends, relatives, and colleagues. In *Wo he chuntian you ge yuehui/Ngo wo chuntin yau ko yeuk wui* [I have a date with spring],[51] a nightclub singer of the sixties and seventies who has retired to Canada returns to Hong Kong to give a concert and is reunited with friends and her former lover.

Raymond To's plays employ impressive technical skill to redeem Hong Kong from the pejorative vision of fiction by creating characters of sensitivity to others and a memory of what their talents and friendship have meant to each other. Through the ceaseless change of history and its violence through wars, riots, mass movements, and imperialisms, the culture of Hong Kong has been a compromise. However, it has also been the site of *renqing*, human sensibilities, that have sustained performers and audiences alike. Therefore, the plays, like the many characters ennobled by their own memory, construct a community of recollected feeling, the symbol for which is its popular culture.

This is a sentimental vision of the mission of popular and mass culture in Hong Kong that echoes the role and importance attributed to it in some scholarship. Take, for example, the analysis of Chan Man-hoi published in 1994:

> The general survey of the Hong Kong cultural scene might begin with the recognition that, at heart, Hong Kong is by and large a society devoid of a unifying cultural foundation.... In Hong Kong, therefore, there is not much unified, coherent cultural foundation to speak of, whether in the sense of a high culture, a national culture, a traditional culture, or even a "borrowed culture." One ventures to observe, the

> only sociocultural arena that comes closest to providing overarching cultural framework of some form is the arena of popular culture. The latter can take on this function mainly because, by its nature, popular culture does not actively shape or construe the deeper dynamics of cultural imperatives, and thus can paint over but not resolve, the fragmentary ground upon which it also stands. It is this general condition of culture, and of popular culture, that should inform investigations into the nature of culture, society, and identity in Hong Kong.[52]

However, if popular culture in Hong Kong has had the role of substituting for a "unifying cultural foundation" by painting over the fragmentary ground, it has shown itself also to be fragmented and constantly shifting its own ground. If Cantonese-language literature was to flourish in print, it had to construct multiple, disparate views of Hong Kong in order to engage the diverse visions that its audiences had of their identity, its potential and its limitations, as a site of cultural production, of commodification, of human sentiment. If Cantonese-language literature was to construct the memories that were to ground a sense of community, it had all too many distinctively varied memories to voice. What has been shared by the distinctively different voices of Cantonese-language literature in Hong Kong has been the anxiety of being forgotten—that Hong Kong as it is known to its authors, whether irredeemably disreputable or respectable in its appeal to *renqing*, will be lost to memory, and memory itself obliterated in the recurring themes of change and of emigration.

There were attempts in Cantonese-language fiction to reconcile these disparities, dismiss the anxieties, and affirm the value of remaining in Hong Kong. Taking advantge of the former popularity of *Diary of an Ordinary Guy*, Huang Zhan's *Xianggangzai riji/Heunggongjai yahtgei* [Diary of a Hongkong guy][53] continued the earlier trend of a series of novels depicting the life of young white-collar employees in Hong Kong. In this instance a wealthy young high-school graduate starting out in advertising spends his time and money on extramarital affairs until his wife divorces him and he is left penniless. Plotting to restore his wealth through a real-estate venture, he turns down an opportunity to marry a wealthy young Japanese woman. Her incurable

illness adds a touch of soap opera to what up until then has been another portrait of a feckless womanizer chasing a fortune, but she serves mainly to be refused in order for the narrator to demonstrate his aversion to being supported by a woman. Another new addition to this formula is the role of China, which is favorably portrayed. Huang's novel may be the most ambitious use of Cantonese language yet attempted in its encyclopedic range of vocabulary, from commerce to medicine to explicit sexual activity. Yet, as an attempt at finding fulfillment in a newly redefined Hong Kong, this response in the late 1990s to *Diary of an Ordinary Guy* and other novels of abandonment failed to generate an enthusiastic readership a decade later, when mass culture in Hong Kong had fallen on hard times and much of the generation that was its audience had scattered—or was busy learning Mandarin.

## The role of literature in mass print media

The Cantonese-language fiction movement suggested the new assertiveness of writers empowered by their position in broadcast media to create for local language in print a space in the fields dominated by editors whose status had derived from their education in and association with Mandarin-speaking cultural circles outside Hong Kong. The attention to the new novels encouraged newspaper editors themselves to expand their use of Cantonese, beginning in the late 1980s in *Dongfang ribao* [Oriental Daily], which had the largest newspaper circulation. By the early nineties, when the controversial newspaper *Pingguo ribao* [Apple Daily] was inaugurated, designed specifically to compete with *Oriental Daily*, it adopted an irreverent attitude featuring the most lavish use of Cantonese in expanded popular social and gossip news sections. The success of this strategy prompted *Oriental Daily* to follow suit, at which point *Apple Daily* took over the weekly *Yi zhoukan* [Next Magazine], which was totally devoted to youth culture in Cantonese. There, however, the trend peaked. *Oriental Daily* created the weekly *Dong zhoukan* [East Magazine] to compete with *Next Magazine*, but did not attempt to imitate its Cantonese youth culture language. Another attempt to create a Cantonese-language newspaper in the

late 1990s, *Taiyang ribao* [Sun Daily], further expanded the space for such writing.

If written Cantonese failed to produce a literature validated by the recognition of other high cultures, it had left its mark on writing in Hong Kong, embedded in otherwise standard texts. In fiction, Cantonese found its way into novels like *Kuang cheng luan ma* [A crazy horse in a mad city] by Xin Yuan, first serialized in 1993 in *Xiandai ribao* [Modern Daily].[54] Here the satire of Hong Kong cultural circles (especially the mainland, Taiwanese, and British elements active in them) is seen through the middle-age crises of a newspaper photographer, Lao Ma (Luan Ma) and his former lover, the reporter Niuyue Shui (New York Water). Snatches of Cantonese appear like the fragments of blurred history in this novel, with its scenes of gender switches and confusion, its unpredictable twists of plot, or the surfacing of suppressed thoughts and feelings that are incohesive with the purposefulness of the moment. The Cantonese is neither in control of the style, nor does it entirely yield to the Mandarin.

Caught up in bewildering international intrigue and forced to flee their respective flats out of fear of violent pursuers, the protagonists find themselves strangers in their own city. Disguised for a time as a female, Lao Ma is made to wonder why the people of Hong Kong are always playing the role of women (52). At the height of an identity crisis Lao Ma thinks:

> Probably he would never be able to do what he wanted. The women he had loved had all disappointed him, his home was destroyed, he had no nation he could comfortably identify with, no hometown he could return to, and his friends had all disappeared [from Hong Kong] one by one, but worse than that were the shocking stories he heard one after the other of people he knew, no matter whether friends or enemies or simply people he had met, who had sooner or later all contracted diseases or suffered accidents. (213)

The constant irritant of the cultural status of Hong Kong is repeatedly raised, as when a visiting cultural official from Sichuan is put up in Niuyue Shui's flat. She thinks:

> I am just a perfectly ordinary woman reporter. Why do you have to crowd me with so many things everyday? "*Wan an!* [Goodnight]" she added a period to their conversation in her Niuyue Shui Mandarin.
>
> "*Wan an! Wan—an!*" Xiao Pangzi corrected this woman's Hong Kong Putonghua in his standard Sichuan Mandarin.
>
> No matter what, he felt his cultural status was higher, and was delighted to cut down the many disparities he saw in the colony. (88)

The narrative, by contrast, is insistent on allowing disparities to stand as marks of what is unassimilated. By endowing the mainland official with a provincial, Sichuan accent, the narrative implies that there is little reason for a Hong Kong Cantonese speaker to acknowledge a need to assimilate.

The use of Cantonese styles became a frequent target of criticism. The first complaint was against Cantonese as substandard. As one cultural critic of Cantonese complained: "Since writing Cantonese speech has become the 'new orthodoxy' it has taken over all fields of writing, from government information publications to headlines in commercial advertisements, from humorous writing to serious historical exposition (see the sentences that fill the recent publication, *A Handbook of Chinese Politics*, such as, 'This is how the Cultural Revolution began 文革係點樣開始㗎')."[55] The second type of criticism argued that writing in pure Cantonese for a Cantonese audience would be more acceptable than mixing languages.[56] This view was joined by the argument that writers should compose completely in local language or in standard, since the current mixture in the Hong Kong press was destroying any sense or recognition of a standard of any kind among young people.[57] Such critics tacitly abandoned the criticism of previous decades that Cantonese in itself was substandard and conceded the rebuttal that such a position smacked of a return to the position of conservatives opposed to the May Fourth Movement in the early twentieth century that promoted writing in the vernacular.[58]

By the end of the century, the debate had shifted to the "purity" of style noted above, and the defense of "impurity" came from such self-made, commercial publishers as Jimmy Lai (Lai Ziying/Li Zhiying). Lai wrote—in standard Chinese—that the Cantonese style of his publications, *Apple Daily* and *Next Magazine*, was part of a historic

shift to "market information," as opposed to the previous control of information by the state (32–33),[59] and that historically print also had moved more toward serving the need for entertainment as much as the need for information (30). In a globalizing world, Lai argued, the crucial standard language is English. The efforts in Hong Kong to promote a standard of the "mother tongue" served the ends of Chinese identity as cultural purity. The results of making a goal of "cultural purity" could be seen in Cambodia, in the mass atrocities committed by Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge in its name (198). However, Lai's argument that a global market endowed English with a status befitting adherence to a standard while consigning any form of Chinese to a local marketplace of entertainment was one that betrayed the very desire to retain a status for Chinese in which Hong Kong Cantonese might win recognition as symbolic capital.

Hong Kong neither rejected nor fully embraced any standard language; it maintained large groups fully committed to these, but also to a unique local language that was hegemonic in defining a would-be community distinct from other sites of cultural production. This distinctive language arose in the media as an appeal to a working class in the process of assimilating to Hong Kong, but it was promoted by a cultural elite intent on maintaining its place through such an appeal. That is, the local Cantonese did not replace textbook Cantonese, Mandarin, or English, except by asserting the presence of a group distinct from an outside group that maintained its identity through one of these standard languages. Hence, the "impurity" of the local language also became its unique hybridity, and one symbolic of a local hegemony that was more than simply a transmitter of other cultures.

# –2–
# Polyglot Pluralism and Taiwan

## Contesting the status of Guoyu Mandarin as a standard

By the early 1980s the Mandarin-dominated film industry of Taiwan was losing its cultural elite audiences to foreign films. Moreover, a very threatening political polarization had led to stringent state measures; the state was now trying to back away and seek reconciliation with the disaffected through steps at liberalization. In this setting, Central Film Studios commissioned new, innovative films by young directors. Among the most notable of their first films was *Erzi de dawan'ou* (The sandwich man, 1983), a portmanteau film that adapted three short stories of Huang Chunming, each filmed by a different director. Huang Chunming was celebrated in the 1960s and 1970s as an exemplar of "homeland literature" *(xiangtu wenxue)* for his stories about ordinary Taiwanese caught up in the shift from agrarian life to industrialization and urbanization in the fifties and sixties, fueled by Nationalist government policy and large-scale Japanese and American investment and presence. The third narrative of *The Sandwich Man*, titled "Ping'guo de ziwei" (The taste of apples), offers a particularly suggestive use of Mandarin, English, and local Taiwanese Southern Min language.

Set in 1969, a time when there was still an American military presence on the island, "The Taste of Apples" opens in Taibei with a Taiwanese pedicab driver's being struck by a limousine driven by an American military officer. The American embassy immediately orchestrates a response, rushing the injured man to the US Naval Hospital and sending the officer into a shantytown with a foreign affairs policeman from the Taiwan government to bring the family to


**Figure 7.** ''The Taste of Apples,'' third narrative in the portmanteau film *Sandwichman* (1983), set in 1969, on the eve of Taiwan's ''economic miracle.'' Lying dazed in an American-run hospital in Taibei, a bandaged laborer looks on as his bewildered wife receives an initial packet of compensation that will launch them into middle-class status. The American nun handing her the packet translates for the American military officer, standing behind her, whose vehicle accidently injured the laborer. The nun addresses the Taiwanese woman in her own local Southern Min language, thereby sidelining the Mandarin-speaking police officer *(far right),* officially assigned by the Taiwan government to mediate, but now rendered superfluous.

the hospital and arrange for compensation. The foreign affairs policeman is supposed to play the role of translator and intermediary, managing the situation. But as an apparently mainland Chinese who speaks only Mandarin, he himself needs the interpretative services of a school-educated daughter in order to communicate with the injured man's wife, as she and her husband are uneducated country folk who have migrated to Taibei looking for employment. The role of managing intermediary is now shared by the policeman and the daughter, the policeman translating for the American officer and the daughter translating for the policeman. Both exercise their own sense of discretion in these roles. The policeman at one point seeks to calm the

loudly distraught wife by warning her that her behavior will only make her husband worse, even make him die. At another moment the daughter condenses the distressing details of a report on her father's condition into a simple "He will be okay."

Upon seeing her husband at the hospital, bedridden with his broken legs in casts, the wife's anxiety peaks, when a radiant American nun appears and speaks to her in Taiwanese. Communicating directly with the injured worker and his wife, she thus displaces the policeman. Her message, delivered at the request of the American officer, is one of undreamed-of material good fortune for the family: the man will receive all medical care without charge, and the family will be richly compensated, their mute daughter even taken to America for therapy. The family rejoices in their windfall, symbolically eating apples, a luxury unfamiliar to them, delivered along with other food and a large amount of cash. A final frame shows a still photo portrait of the family, now dressed in middle-class clothing, the mute daughter absent from the group.

The parable of upward mobility is evident here; what is less evident is the symbolic use of language, the moment when the Mandarin-speaking representative of the Nationalist-dominated state is replaced as the mediator between American wealth and the upwardly mobile local Taiwanese. This is a portrait of Taiwan's economic boom that resulted in over 80 percent of Taiwanese identifying themselves as middle-class. Hence, scholars of Taiwanese society have argued that two middle classes arose, one associated largely with state-sponsored organizations, and one with unofficial enterprises permitted to grow under the liberalization of the 1980s.[1] The rise of the second middle class, because of its exclusion from the political power of the first and because of its increasing wealth, was a dramatic social event. The linguist Hong Weiren pointed to a connection between the survival of the dominant local language, Southern Min, and this enterprise-oriented middle class: "The traditional dominance of Southern Min has now been reduced to second place [after Mandarin] and has been headed gradually toward extinction. However, because of the economic dominance of the Southern Min people, it has remained the dominant language in the higher end of the marketplace."[2] It is this entrepreneurial group, and the groups that identify

their own well-being with it, that have promoted the use of local language in the media. This has been accepted by a democratized state apparatus and politicians appealing to them in a commercialized media and, hence, pluralistically inclined society.

The new linguistic assertiveness of this middle class and the response to it among the Mandarin-speaking cultural elite is typified in an anecdote contained in a familiar essay by Zhou Zhiwen titled "Tiaoxin" (Provocation). A taxi driver reproaches his passenger, the narrator, for deliberately preferring to speak "Chinese" (*Zhongguohua*, or Mandarin), the language of mainland oppressers of Taiwan, instead of Taiwanese. The passenger explains that Taiwanese is Chinese, having once been a language of north China carried historically by migrants from the north into southern Fujian (Southern Min). When the passenger goes so far as to note that some Taiwanese Southern Min expressions, given their historical pedigree, are even more "correct" Chinese than Mandarin, the driver suggests in that case they should speak Taiwanese as a "loftier" language than Mandarin. When the passenger responds that whatever language serves communication better is the better choice of language, the taxi driver waivers in his linguistic chauvinism.[3]

The narrator's appeal to linguistic pluralism was indeed the direction taken by the media as a whole. However, the fact that language is most fundamentally a performative, social act rather than a neutral tool of communication is also demonstrated by the history of disciplining the practices of linguistic pluralism in the media. The movement during the 1980s and 1990s to make Taiwanese respectable has been intersected by education and status culture, younger generations, intermarriages, and gender and media issues that blur an easy linguistic distinction between the two middle-class groups. So, too, any reference to Taiwanese as homogeneous exists only in the context of opposition to a singularity of "mainlander" policies and dominance until the late eighties, as noted by the taxi driver in the anecdote. Otherwise, "Taiwanese" has no singular identity. Hence, the rootedness in "this place" Taiwanese identity,[4] together with its focus on history, nostalgia, and rural and working-class experience, gave way to Taiwan identity as something in opposition to The People's Republic of China.[5]

Taiwanese Southern Min was the language of hundreds of films made on Taiwan during the fifties and sixties. Films in the Xiamen variety of Southern Min produced in Hong Kong had a commercial success in Taiwan during the early fifties that stimulated investors to produce films in the versions of Southern Min more common to Taiwan.[6] Although from their inception the films produced in Taiwanese were a commercial venture, for some there existed a chauvinistic assertiveness against culture from "outside the province," in reaction to the February 28 Incident of 1947, in which troops from the mainland of China under Nationalist government orders massacred thousands of local residents.[7] A handful of Taiwanese-language films were multilanguage Mandarin and Taiwanese Southern Min productions, such as *Liang xiang hao* (Two in love, 1962)[8] and *Longshan si zhi lian* (Love at Longshan Temple, 1962).[9] As romantic comedies resolving the suspicions and prejudices of local residents and their new neighbors from outside the province, these were the forerunners of the next generation of productions devoted to multiple languages as a distinctive motif in themes of reconciling the suspicions of the two social groups. However, the emphasis in these films tended to be on the need for Taiwanese to drop their prejudice against mainlanders.

In *Love at Longshan Temple* a mainland girl, Xiaofang, seeks to augment her father's income from herbal medicine by selling medicinal herbs at Longshan Temple, but is at first driven away by local Taiwanese peddlers upset by the intrusion of a mainlander into their business. Xiaofang next auditions for a radio station, where a young Taiwanese man, Tang Liang/Tng Liang, is attracted to her and finds he is soon in competition with a young magazine photographer, Luo Zhong, from a mainland family. Tang Liang's antagonism is broken down, first, when he discovers that Luo Zhong is his long-lost brother Tang Ming/Tng Bin, raised by a mainland family, and then when Tang Liang's father discovers that it was Xiaofang's mainland father whose herbal medicine once saved his life. Given both the cast of characters and the focus of prejudice, Mandarin appears more prevalent in the film than Taiwanese Southern Min, especially since Tang Liang, working at a radio station, is able to speak Taiwanese-accented Mandarin with Xiaofang, as is Luo Zhong/Tang Ming, raised by a mainland émigré family. Moreover, among the mainland émigrés is

an "uncle" from Fujian province, whose fluency in both the local language and Mandarin undercuts the identification of local language with a distinct local identity and incorporates it within a larger "Chinese" identity.[10]

Taiwanese Southern Min has been the language of the majority of residents on Taiwan, most commonly known as Fulao/Hoklo, from its use among the residents of southern Fujian province, the region sending the most emigrants to Taiwan. The vocabulary of Taiwanese Southern Min has become distinct from the varieties spoken on the mainland on account of a significant number of words borrowed from Japanese, Mandarin, and English not common to mainland Southern Min.[11] However, pronunciation has also been undergoing change as well. The principal distinctions among varieties of Taiwanese Southern Min are noted between the Southern Min of the Zhangzhou and Quanzhou regions of Fujian, the two major population centers historically providing migrants to Taiwan. During the period of Japanese colonial administration the geographic distribution of these varieties of Southern Min could be mapped out as fairly distinct regions. However, by the 1980s it appears that the dialects were being mixed across large areas, pronunciations shifting, and the major cities increasingly dominated by Mandarin.[12] These distinctions within Southern Min include pronunciation, vocabulary, and idiom. Dictionaries and some textbooks may give the literary pronunciation of "chicken" 雞 as *ke* and the vernacular as *kue*, but in the media and much of the social elite, *ke* is the accepted form in northern, Zhangzhou-derived speech and *kue* is a quaint and amusing variant, derived from the Quanzhou dialect. "Everywhere" may be written variously, according to pronunciation, as 四界 *si-ke* in Taibei and 四過 *si-kue* in Pingdong; "we" 阮 pronounced as *goan* or as *gun*. A "toy" may be a 翅物仔 or a 玩仔物.[13]

Rarely, however, do secondary sources on media productions and texts note these variants, and "Taiwanese" is virtually always referred to as a monolithic category in opposition to other languages, as if the speakers themselves did not also establish yet more categories of competence on local language. The locally made Taiwanese Southern Min films of the 1950s–1970s, which replaced the Hong Kong-produced Southern Min films employing a Xiamen dialect, were dominated

by the dialect most common to the Taibei region, where most performers were either born or trained. In any case, since all soundtracks employed postsynchronized dubbing, these films used the dialect of Taibei as a standard language, with occasional concessions to other varieties. *Taibei fa de zaoban che/Taipak huat e tsapan ts'ia* (Early train from Taibei, 1964), for example, features a family of southern villagers and gives them southern speech to match. While the family refers to a taxi dancer as a *bulu* 舞女, a Taibei businessman refers to her as a *buli*. On the other hand, in *Gaoxiong fa de moban che/Kehiong huat e buatban ts'ia* (Last train from Kao-hsiung, 1963), a family from the southern urban center of Gaoxiong, as opposed to the countryside, is largely left with a northern accent.

Perhaps what was stressed as much or more than specific geographic features of local language were distinctions in generations and rural versus urban life. The film *Early Train from Taibei* that distinguishes northern from southern speech also notes these other features, all in support of an aesthetic effect of cultural distance and psychological stress. A southern, rural mother, widowed and incapacited by illness, is dependent upon her daughter. For her, life's choices have become "intricate and complex," as expressed in the old-fashioned phrase *gohue tsapsek* 五花十色. For her daughter, who is manipulated into a career as a taxi dancer in Taibei that ultimately drives her to kill her boss, life has also become "intricate and complex," but in the sense of the new Mandarin borrowing, *hoktsap/fuza* 複雜.

## Disciplining the media

From the 1950s, as on the mainland of China under Communist Party leadership, the educational system established on Taiwan under the Nationalist Party aggressively enforced the teaching and use of Mandarin in schools, and the government promoted Mandarin in films, radio, and print media. By the late 1960s a young generation educated in and inundated with Mandarin had less and less interest in Taiwanese local-language media productions. Neither could Taiwanese Southern Min film studios compete with the salaries, use of color, or production values offered by the much better financed Central Film Corpora-

tion.[14] Beginning in the late 1960s, when broadcast television was introduced, what was left of a failing Taiwanese-language film industry sought a living on television, mainly through performances of local operas, *gezaixi/kua'ahi*. In a parallel with Cantonese films in Hong Kong, Taiwanese-language films virtually disappeared by 1971.[15] However, unlike Hong Kong, local Taiwanese language by 1973 was severely restricted on television as well.

A ribald satirical novel by Wang Zhenhe in the 1980s contains a passage that describes and reflects on the disciplining of Taiwanese language in the new medium of television in the 1960s. There are many parenthetical intrusions by the narrator throughout the text noting the discrepancies between the language and the culture of Taiwan during the sixties, in which the novel is set, and Taiwan in the eighties, when the novel was written and published. Of course, these parenthetical remarks about particular discrepancies often serve to imply the overall general similarities of Taiwan society through the intervening years—similarities that require no parenthetical asides. The most sustained of these asides appears during a description of a retired prostitute watching television:

> She was engrossed in an episode from the Taiwanese drama *The Seven Swordsmen of Xilo* (somewhere along the line they became known as Fukienese dramas). She never missed an episode, nightly from 8:30 to 9. (Back then the Fukienese dramas were broadcast at almost any hour, free of all laws and regulations. But by the time Siwen [the "fat pig of a teacher"] went to work for the Taipei TV station, for some reason the Ministry of Information required that all TV stations broadcast their Fukienese dramas between 6:30 and 7:30 at night, and for no more than thirty minutes. In other words, each station was restricted to half an hour of Fukienese programming, which had to be completed before the evening news at 7:30. All three stations were free to broadcast news and weather whenever they pleased: Central TV went on at six o'clock, Taiwan TV at 6:30. Once Siwen was in the TV business, the Electronic Media Office made it mandatory that all stations air the news and weather at exactly 7:30. I wonder why.)
>
> Every time she watched an episode of *The Seven Swordsmen of Xilo* A-hen railed at the TV set for running so many commercials. . . . It

> wasn't until Siwen went to work at the TV station that the Ministry of Information intervened to restrict the amount of TV advertising to five minutes per thirty-minute broadcast, or a maximum of 600 seconds per hour of broadcasting. Even one second more resulted in heavy fines. Finally, television got on track, became peaceful and orderly.[16]

The regulation of TV by the cultural elite as TV gained in popularity and commercial success parallels the training and disciplining of the prostitutes to welcome the US soldiers on leave from Vietnam depicted in the novel. What has been termed the "flow" of TV creates a goulash out of science and commerce, the foreign and the native, the vulgar and the sublime.[17]

On TV this flow needed to discipline the vulgar, unregulated display of commercial activity by delimiting it and providing, in the language of high culture, a regimen of scientific, patriotic, religious, and educational programming, much like the one the prostitutes and their employers are subjected to in the novel. But, whereas TV regulation dramatically reduced the use of Taiwanese to assure the place of Mandarin, the novel dramatically reduces the amount of Mandarin to promote Taiwanese and English as the more genuine languages of cultural identity and commercial gain. Just as time for commercial advertising had to be regulated and limited on TV, so the prostitution industry turned international representative of the island is framed in education and appeals to law, science, religion, and ethics, as the cultural elite join in profiting from the prostitution.

The strict regulations governing the broadcasting of Taiwanese-language programming that continued to the end of the 1980s were set in the conflicted vision of Taiwan as but one province of a government in exile and, at the same time, a microcosm of China. As a province it would have some claim to privileging the local culture in the media, but as a microcosm of China, Taiwan was tasked to host and promote the vision of a national culture. Given the latter, the small amount of daily broadcast time allotted to *gezaixi* opera and *budaixi* puppet performances still far outweighed broadcasting of local performing arts from other regions. Moreover, the genuinely popular star of *gezaixi*, Yang Lihua, was supported by a contract with Taiwan Television (TTV) beginning in 1969. In addition to the wide audience for performances by Yang Lihua, Liu Qing, and other leading profes-

sionals, local-language opera troupes performed regularly all over the island, together with the *budaixi* puppet shows throughout the sixties and well into the seventies. If their broadcast time was limited on television, local-language radio broadcasting was far more extensive, so that the media of Taiwan, even in the period that most regulated local language, still filled communities with the sounds of Taiwanese Southern Min.

*Gezaixi* virtually disappeared from television in 1978 at approximately the same time it disappeared from theaters, and was left largely to temple troupes and traveling companies. The causes of this waning popularity were not primarily the regulation of television broadcasting, but included a number of other important developments. First was that, whether on television or in the cinema or on stage, the forms of performing arts that employed local language increasingly had to compete with other local forms, whether Peking Opera or the vastly popular *Huangmeidiao* (Yellow plum melodies) musical films from Hong Kong. The quality of some of these forms appealed even to local Taiwanese artists, such as the celebrated Li Tianlu, who adapted elements of outside forms to his style of *budaixi* puppet performances. Second, younger viewers were better educated than the generations that had grown up under colonialism and war, and they increasingly sought other forms of entertainment. As competence in Mandarin broadened during the seventies and standards of expectation culturally rose with the standard of living, many of the older forms employing Taiwanese Southern Min were shunned as outdated and lacking cultural status. Finally, the very success of stars like Yang Lihua, made regularly available to mass audiences on TTV itself, must have diminished the appeal of many lesser local opera troupes. The diminishing opportunities in local performing arts were accompanied by a loss of the musical talent crucial to both traditional *gezaixi* and *budaixi*, as young people increasingly took up more modern forms of music.[18]

## Protocols for correcting language variation

Yang Lihua and a handful of troupes were themselves rescued from the declining fortunes of *gezaixi* by government-sponsored stage performances in 1981–1982. But by this time, Taiwanese-language

broadcasts on television had been left largely to rural information programming,[19] reinforcing the association of Taiwanese with the rural past of an urbanizing, industrializing society. However, reviving *gezaixi* would later become a cause célèbre for that growing middle class outside the cultural and official elite in the movement toward "Taiwanization"—toward arguing against viewing Taiwan as a microcosm of China and for privileging local Taiwanese culture over others. The first initiatives to bring status to local language in the broadcast media identified it with telenovelas rather than old-fashioned opera. By 1986, as part of the liberalization making way for Taiwanization, programming in Taiwanese was expanded somewhat through telenovelas, one of which won the media Golden Clock Award *(Jinzhong jiang)* in 1988 for best production, timed to coincide with the lifting of the martial law regulations that had governed the island since the late 1940s.[20] It is worth noting that a group from the Kejia/Hakka minority protested being ignored by the media and were given a program in 1989, again with a rural theme, followed by Hakka news broadcasts beginning in 1991.

Although separate news broadcasts were established for Mandarin, Taiwanese, and Hakka speakers, the production of telenovelas aimed largely at multilinguistic performances. The first series to break through the government restrictions on time slots for Taiwanese and air on prime time was the Huashi Station production of *Ai* (Love, 1990–1991). This telenovela ranked seventh in television ratings with over 25 percent of the viewing audience. The second landmark production, *Xiongdi youyuan/hiati u'ian* (Lucky brothers, 1994), was boosted by a recommendation from no less than President Li Denghui and firmly established the genre of multilanguage telenovelas on Taiwan.[21] *Love* is set in a rural suburb of Taibei in 1951 when mainland refugees and local residents reconcile their mutual suspicion through the love and sacrifice of the younger generation. Much of the plot revolves around the fortunes of three young women. Achun, a Taiwanese girl, overcomes a mental breakdown brought on by her father's opposition to her involvement with a mainland boy, Jin Haisheng, to elope with him against his father's wishes. Yuenü, a young Hakka woman whose husband has apparently died in the Philippines while serving with the Japanese army, is rescued by a young

policeman from the mainland, Tang Jianguo, from being sold into a brothel. Jianguo resigns from the police force and marries Yuenü, who remains with him after her first husband reappears unexpectedly. Jianguo and his female cousin, Qin Wanru, set up a meat-packing business and are joined by the second son of the local ward chief, Laishun, who marries Qin Wanru.

These and other female characters present the theme of women as victims through various subplots, balanced by woman-as-disaster in the character of Aunt Aijiao, second wife of the ward chief. Her superstitious beliefs lead her to withhold proper medical treatment for a stepdaughter, Baoxi, she plots to break up the successful meat-packing business run by Laishun and Wanru (Episode 23), is discovered to have personally arranged to have Laiwang drafted into the Japanese army and sent overseas (29), attempts to subvert the marriage of Achun and Haisheng by demanding an outrageous bride-price from Haisheng's father, Jin Kefeng (30), insists on a division of family property *(fenjia)*, pushes her husband into running for district mayor and uses negative campaign tactics and bribery to secure his election (in opposition to a reformed brothel owner), swindles her husband out of business earnings, and finally refuses to donate money to repair a dangerously dilapidated bridge. This last act results in the drowning of her eldest son and in Jianguo's brother attempting to save children who have fallen into the water after the bridge collapses (37). Unnerved by her loss, Aijiao agrees to fund a new bridge. This prompts the mainlander Jin Kefeng to contribute also. The finale presents the entire cast, contrite mainlander and Taiwanese parents, all resolved to bridge their differences and build a new society together (37).

The language of *Love* emphasizes the problems of communication between mainland immigrants and local residents. The opening scene of the series presents a mainlander in a market place asking two women vendors for peppers, *lajiao*, which from his heavy Shandong accent and appropriate gestures is interpreted by the two women as *lanjiao*, or "penis," prompting them to attack him. The new policeman, Tang Jianguo, himself unfamiliar with Taiwanese local language, is shown struggling to learn it in several episodes (1, 15, 20, 24)—all the more motivated by his attraction to Yuenü, the Hakka woman who herself has had to learn Hoklo Taiwanese and speaks an occa-


**Figure 8.** Two scenes from *Love* (1991), the first prime-time telenovela to mix Mandarin with Taiwanese Southern Min. The linguistic confusion of the early 1950s is established in the opening scene of the series *(top)* in which two local Taiwanese market vendors react with shock to the request of a mainland émigré for ''peppers'' *(lajiao),* which they mistake for a local term for ''penis'' *(lanjiao)*. Below, a police officer from mainland China tries to use Taiwanese Southern Min to propose to a local girl. Subtitles on Taiwan television have remained in Mandarin, as shown here.

sional line of Hakka language. When he proposes marriage to her in Episode 15, she cannot at first understand his attempts to make his Mandarin sound like Taiwanese. Conversely, the Taiwanese Achun and her brother Laishun struggle in several episodes to master Mandarin in their efforts to communicate with their objects of affection from the mainland, Jin Haisheng and Qin Wanru. Episode 8 features both Achun and Laishun pronouncing Mandarin adequately but using a Southern Min grammar that converts their intended meaning into its opposite in Mandarin: *gei ni dajiao* (interrupted by you) for *dajiao ni le* (I have interrupted you), and the like. There are moments of inconsistency. When Achun awakes from unconsciouness following a suicide attempt in Episode 28, her competence in Mandarin shows a sudden improvement, and the long-lost soldier Laiwang seems to understand a conversation in Mandarin all too well for his character in Episode 18. However, the motif is otherwise largely established: the young lovers who commit themselves to each others' languages are also the positive forces for building a community out of society. The motif recalls the film *Liang xiang hao* (Two in love, 1962), made nearly forty years before, in which three pairs of lovers are given scenes in which they are learning to speak each others' dialects, and much is made of misunderstandings caused by poor communication. In *Love* this motif is reinforced by the ultimate linguistic gestures of the reconciled older generation, as when the Mandarin-speaking patriarch Jin Kesheng finally says "thank you" in Taiwanese (Episode 35 of 37). But, as this gesture suggests, more than a simple reprise of the multidialect films of the 1960s, *Love* no longer weighs so heavily in favor of making Taiwanese abandon their bias and seeks to distribute turpitude and virtue more evenly among locals and immigrants.

Whereas *Love* identified positive characters historically with the willingness to adopt bilingual communication, *Lucky Brothers* identified the contemporary hero with bilingual competence and a willingness to use it according to a protocol. The hero of the series, Guo Zhengyong/Kueh Ysiaiong, his two brothers, and the two brothers' wives live together in the ancestral home, running a fruit company. They debate the possibility of dividing the family estate *(fenjia)* and institutionalizing the patriarch, who apparently suffers from Alzheimer's disease, while Zhengyong as a single father raises a daughter,

now attending college, and courts a nurse. After a series of financial losses, they are reduced to selling the home and move to Taibei, where they take up manual labor. However, they ultimately recover enough capital to regain their home, and Zhengyong, after a series of misunderstandings with the nurse, prepares to marry her.

Zhengyong, as a responsible businessman and member of society, adjusts his language according to public circumstances, speaking in his Taiwan Mandarin when it is used in a hospital, a business association meeting, or by the local, mainland-born ward chief. This is in contrast to one Taiwanese-speaking brother, Zhengzong, and his wife, Liu Xinmei, whose irresponsible management and investments bring financial ruin to the family, and to another brother, Zhengli, who perpetually asserts his educated-elite status by refusing to speak anything but Mandarin or English, goes to America against his father's wishes, and courts an American woman. The one exception Zhengli makes to his linguistic preference is when addressing the father, the one concession to filial piety that otherwise is primarily represented again by Zhengyong. By contrast, Zhengyong addresses Zhengli in Mandarin, demonstrating a loyal brother's deference to Zhengli's preference. Zhengyong's old-fashioned respect for elders especially impresses the nurse when she introduces him to her mother in Episode 4. Zhengyong's tact and skill at code switching between Mandarin, the nurse's preferred language, and Taiwanese, which the mother uses alternately with Mandarin, even as the mother's conversation makes him feel uncomfortable, demonstrate his inherent respect for others. Emotional stress is the typical cue for most speakers to break into an expostulation in their native language. Again, Zhengyong is exceptional. When his daughter is infuriated by the disrespect that Zhengzong and his wife show Zhengyong and scolds them in Mandarin, Zhengyong immediately disciplines her with a slap and an admonishment also in Mandarin.

The series suggests that the daughter has the greatest power to deprive Zhengyong of his self-control. The one time that Zhengyong is unable to switch codes according to protocol and submits to an impulsive utterance occurs in a conversation in Mandarin with the nurse he is courting in Episode 6. A physician admirer has sent the nurse flowers, but Zhengyong's daughter tells the nurse that Zhengyong

sent them in an effort to promote her father's interests. During a conversation in Mandarin, when the nurse tells Zhengyong she likes the flowers he sent her, he is too nonplussed to respond in Mandarin and blurts out his confusion in Taiwanese. The daughter's misguided devotion to her father culminates when the family falls on hard times and she secretly takes a job as a bar hostess to augment the family's income. This leads to another confrontation with Zhengyong, who again scolds and slaps her (Episode 13). Although she seeks support from her uncles, she eventually concedes her error and returns to school. The subversiveness of the daughter, portrayed through the violence she evokes in her father, suggests an association of her would-be cultural elite identity as a college student who insists on speaking Mandarin with her relative indifference to his code of propriety in advancing his status. If she is to retain the affection of the father she obviously adores, she must submit to his code, one that still places value on family solidarity through harmony and social standing achieved by propriety above all else. It is therefore suggestive that virtually the entire concluding episode is spoken in Taiwanese, in symbolic affirmation of a submission to the patriarchal values that have restored a united family.

The language of *Lucky Brothers* represents significant features of local language in the Taiwanese media. Among these are the status of languages and the protocols for code switching among them. For youth and for the cultural elite of Taiwan, the media steadily portrayed their strong preference for using Mandarin, just as *Lucky Brothers* makes the scholarly brother Zhengli and Zhengyong's college-student daughter insist on speaking Mandarin. Slapstick comedies of the late 1990s aimed at a youth market, such as *Jiche banzhang* (Screwed-up squad leader) and *Chaoji sandeng bing* (Super recruits) largely employ Mandarin dialogue with Taiwanese interspersed. As in *Lucky Brothers*, parents may be made to address their children in Taiwanese Southern Min, but the children reply in Mandarin. Perhaps more marked is the youth slang, evident in the title phrase *Jiche* (or *GGYY*) "messed up" (as in "screwed-up squad leader") and scattered throughout in initials and acronyms like *SPP* (聳斃了), "poor taste," and *LKK* (老扣扣), "old as the hills," or *PMP* (拍馬屁), "kiss ass." Here school and military institutions are the setting and demand

facility in Mandarin. Here again, the implict formula is that competence in Mandarin is part of fitness for social mobility, cultural capital. Taiwanese Southern Min remains at best the language of intimate settings between friends, at home, and only an older generation or the uneducated employ Taiwanese as the language of choice in public or institutional situations.

Throughout the 1990s telenovelas struggled with this protocol. Not all of them were either as politically correct or as realistic in the protocols for their scripts. Columnists noted, for example, that some telenovelas employed local language in scripts presenting the most vulgar of rustic stereotypes, limited local language to crude expletives as a language of primitive emotion only, or allowed characters to speak a welter of various languages—Southern Min, Mandarin, Hakka, Native Taiwanese, and Japanese—all without anyone showing the slightest difficulty in understanding each other.[22] Other critics observed that television promoted a Southern Min that affected a heavy use of Mandarin-derived expressions. The end of the decade saw telenovelas that even reversed the values of the protocol established in *Love* and *Lucky Brothers*.

Like *Lucky Brothers*, *Qianjin xifu wanjin sun/Ts'engkim sekpu bankim sng* (Treasured daughter-in-law and precious grandson, 1999), in twenty-five melodramatic episodes, narrates how the Wu family become splintered and lose their ancestral land, but finally regain both the integrity of their family and the ownership of their estate. They are beset by villains: a slick-tongued Taiwanese opportunist, Lin Tiansi/Lim Tiansu, in the employ of the Wu family matriarch and a cousin of her daughter-in-law; the Japanese-style Taiwanese gangster Liao San/Liau Sng, to whom Lin Tiansi arranges to turn over the land to repay debts; and Lü Nana, a gold-digging mainland woman in league with Lin Tiansi. However, the Wu family also suffers from its own shortcomings. The matriarch, Suzhen/Sotsin, is guided by superstitions and obsessed with having a grandson to continue the male line, so that she is prepared to replace her daughter-in-law, Caixia/Ts'aihe, with a mainland Chinese student, Luo Nan/Le Lam, who is pregnant from a brief affair with her son, Jiawen/Kawen. On the other hand, Suzhen finds it painful to recognize an illegitimate son, Chen Shunxing/Tan Sunheng, fathered by her late husband,

and prefers to arrange for Luo Nan to marry him, and have the son fathered by Jiawen recognized as an heir. Still more painful is the inevitable encounter with Shunxing's mother, Chen Meiyun/Tan Bihun, who turns out to be a mistress of the gangster Liao-san. Fortunately for the Wu family, Liao retires to Japan, Tiansi, Lü Nana, and Chen Meiyun all die violently, and Luo Nan decides to emigrate to the United States, leaving her child to be raised by the Wu family, who are engaged in a tea enterprise on their recovered land.

Given the various shortcomings of all the characters, there is no heroic protagonist acting as a role model, as in *Lucky Brothers*. In contrast to that series, facility with language in *Treasured Daughter-in-law* shifts to the principal villain, Lin Tiansi, who exemplifies mastery of both Taiwanese and Mandarin. The least offending character, the illegitimate son Chen Shunxing, stammers in Taiwanese, and both he and Jiawen speak only a heavily accented Taiwan Mandarin laced with Taiwanese expressions. Caixia, as a young, educated female much sinned against, is the most competent in code switching after Tiansi, whereas older women such as Suzhen, Meiyun, and others have much more difficulty with Mandarin, and the mainland émigré from Guilin, Luo Nan, learns to use actively only a handful of Taiwanese words. The variations in language competence extend to the Mandarin-accented Taiwanese of a photography shop assistant, the various southern and northern lexical choices and pronunciations of other, older supporting characters, and the chaotic medley of Taiwanese, Mandarin, Japanese, and Shanghai local language produced by a comically portrayed fortune-teller, Hua Butong/Hue Poktang. Several characters at one point or another display their use or study of English, suggesting that it has become the language of cultural status, while Mandarin remains as a lingua franca only, and Taiwanese a comfortable but limited marker of cultural identity and status.

Several times the series allows characters from different locales to stereotype each other or themselves as typical mainlanders or Taiwanese, though the series does not affirm these stereotypes, and has one character suggest that the Taiwanese spirit is, or should be, the spirit of compassion. Nevertheless, the resolution appears to be an uneasy one: the members of the Wu family retain their home and gain a grandson, affirming Suzhen's vision of identity. But this has been at-

tained at considerable psychological cost to the others, and the grandson himself is a symbol of all the social and cultural instability of contemporary life. The result in dialog is that linguistic confusion has replaced order, and the series presents both those who navigate this confusion with virtuous skill and those who manipulate it with treacherous virtuosity. Order, whether that which satisifies the matriarch or that which would replace it, comes at an unsettling price and an uncertain future. Such a telenovela, like *Lucky Brothers*, reassures an older generation of its remaining power to achieve conservative goals, but *Treasured Daughter-in-law and Precious Grandson* betrays a niche of distrust of the era of pluralism and the younger generation pursuing it.

The youth market remained dominated by Mandarin. The preference for Mandarin in the media has been perhaps most thoroughly examined in studies of young women's preferences in popular music in the 1990s. These studies underscore the hegemony of Mandarin in the high culture of Taiwan, the identification that young women across social classes and levels of education have made between Mandarin and status culture.[23] The censorship placed on Taiwanese music from the 1950s to the late 1980s kept much of its lyrics historically tied to a code of expression for women that was passive and implicit and had a broad social association with rural life and manual labor. Weng Jiaming credited the male group *Heimingdan gongzuoshi* (Blacklist workshop) in the late 1980s with inaugurating popular music in Taiwanese Southern Min as serious, autonomous commentary on the public realm. Singing about issues in education, transportation, and political conditions, the group adopted the voices of different types of ordinary people caught up in various historical circumstances, creating material that verged on the epic.[24] *Blacklist Workshop's* lyrics essentially developed out of the "Homeland Literature" *(Xiangtu wenxue)* movement of the 1970s, but in its very concern for the ordinary person and in adopting the persona of the ordinary person in history it reinforced the association of Taiwanese Southern Min with low cultural status.

What followed, instead, was the spread of Taiwanese Southern Min into the various areas of the popular music market. The keeper of its heritage of Japanese "blues" motifs, female vocalist Jiang Hui/Kang Hui at the Nakashi Nightclub, which was named for a form of

music popular under Japanese rule, launched into a set of bold love lyrics, stripping away the demureness of the past female voice in Taiwanese and competing with the more modern Mandarin female voice that had dominated newer popular music: "I loved the wrong man" (*Ai mtui lang* 愛不對人). Apparently for a significant audience Jiang Hui, singing in a southern accent, was a successful crossover into the Mandarin-dominated field of love songs. Nevertheless, she retained what was invariably termed a more traditional musical arrangement, referring to the Japanese motifs.[25] Her boldness, too, was not that of social consciousness, but of frank and despairing expression through lyrics that described her drinking herself to death in the face of faithless men and a loveless world, as in her breakthrough song, "Tsiu hau e simsia" (Feelings after drinking, 1992). It was left to the male singer Yang Zongxian to complement Jiang Hui, both by adopting a masculine stance of endurance through the pain of failed relationships, and by singing lyrics in a distinctly Mandarin-influenced Taiwanese Southern Min common to Taibei. In these lyrics, the Mandarin pronoun *ta*, "he," replaces the Southern Min *yi;* "tired" imitates Mandarin *leilei*, instead of *tiamtiam;* "slow" imitates Mandarin *manman*, instead of *daodao*, and so forth. The effect was to draw his language away from older associations with Taiwanese music, just as Jiang Hui's frankness did.

Other niches were rapidly filled. Wu Bai sang rock music laced with English, some lyrics written for Taiwanese Southern Min, others sung in Taiwanese-accented Mandarin, again as a challenge to status pronunciation, and reminiscent of James Dillon. The ultimate challenge appeared in the lyrics of Zhutoupi/Tit'aup'ue or Tut'aup'e, the avant-garde satirist, who was inspired by Christianity and his urge to humiliate the status of Mandarin through using the resources of multiple languages, ranging from Southern Min and Native Taiwanese Talay to English. "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" plays on the sound *bangsai*, "baseball game" in Mandarin but "defecate" in Southern Min. Sexual mores, corruption, the status of Native Taiwanese, military service, and other institutions are all treated to a harsh and dazzling assertion of the linguistic superiority of his multiple-language lyrics over the limitations of Mandarin and the culture it had represented.[26] A new place for Taiwanese Southern Min music in the juvenile and

family market was also created in the mid-nineties by LA Boyz, a Los Angeles-based group acceptable enough to perform in Buddhist services conducted by the Ciji Foundation. Finally, singers of Mandarin and Cantonese lyrics, including Hong Kong celebrities like Liu Dehua and Taiwan-based singers like Su Rui, also made a point of singing in Taiwanese in concert and for recordings. Singers positioning themselves as social commentators, like Luo Dayou, enhanced their status by singing in Mandarin, Taiwanese, and Cantonese as well. Taiwanese became just one more sound attracting attention, allowing for certain rhetorical inventions, but largely a defining feature of the new "pluralism."

The leap of Taiwanese Southern Min into the popular music market, therefore, was not the supplanting of Mandarin lyrics but the fulfillment of the new ethos of pluralism. To be unable to speak and comprehend Southern Min was by the 1990s to be divorced from Taiwan as a community. On the other hand, for most youth in Taiwan, Mandarin served to level the differences in their dialects and the biased attitudes that attended them. Too often commentators on the hegemony of Mandarin in youth culture have ignored the fact that, even if most Taiwanese youth learn only "Taiwan Mandarin" with its distinctive accent as distinct from Taibei Mandarin, "Taiwan Mandarin" masks what would otherwise be for many youth an unwanted identity associated with their particular local dialect of Taiwanese Southern Min, Hakka, or other language. There did remain a significant number of Taiwanese of mainland émigré families among the cultural elite who spoke only Mandarin and a foreign language, and some members of the other minorities, Hakka, Native Taiwanese, and so forth, who did not speak the dominant local language. However, Taiwanese Southern Min was so embedded in social relations that there were few if any politicians in the new democracy who were not employing Taiwanese Southern Min in their public appearances. The Nationalist Party candidates campaigned with good-luck wishes from President Li Denghui (Lee Teng-hui) in the form of radishes, known in Southern Min as *ts'ait'au* 菜頭, a pun on 彩頭 "a fortunate beginning." However, incompetence in Mandarin remained, as before, a lack of cultural and symbolic capital. Taiwanese local languages in the media together had value as evidence of democratic pluralism pro-

moting Taiwanization and derived their status from that alone. The status of the languages and the tensions in this situation would appear in literature and the media in the protocols for using local language.

## Relativizing the language of New Cinema

The New Cinema inaugurated by films like *The Sandwich Man* contributed a number of films placing Taiwanese Southern Min in the context of high cultural products. This was an innovation, bringing the local language out of its association with earlier, failed commercial films and into films that would win international recognition. On the other hand, a number of New Cinema films that surely were suited to local-language dialog were distributed in Mandarin—for example, *Fenggui laide ren* (The boys from Feng'gui, 1983), *Tongnian wangshi* (A time to live and a time to die, 1985), *Youma caizi* (Ah Fei, 1984), *Guihua xiang* (Osmanthus Lane, 1987), and *Kan hai de rizi* (Days for watching the sea, 1983), to name a few. Several of these films were based on print fiction that had made a point of using Taiwanese Southern Min. Yet, the audience for such art films, especially the educated elite, still valued Mandarin above local languages. Moreover, employing local language in such films, which predominantly focused on characters in or from poor rural areas, would only have stressed the stereotypical association of local language with the poor and uneducated common folk of a rural past.

Hou Xiaoxian, more than any other major director, made use of local language. From his first contribution to *The Sandwich Man*, his use of language was part of an overall aesthetic constructed in opposition to existing commercial film forms. Whereas previous standard techniques employed active camera technique emphasizing constant shifts of frame and close-ups for intensity, Hou became famous for long takes and long shots, reminding critics of Ozu. Similarly, in terms of dialog, where previous films emphasized crisp, standard Mandarin in postsynchronous dubbing, the dialog of Hou's films was delivered in the accents and expressions of Taiwan-Mandarin, as in *A Time to Live and a Time to Die*, set in his southern hometown of Gaoxiong. He made a point of adopting synchronous location sound

when the equipment became available to him, again as a contrast to existing film styles. Yet, he took care to preserve the dominance of Zhangzhou-derived Southern Min dialect by employing performers such as Li Tianlu, Xin Shufen, Chen Songyong, and others, who acted in his best-known reflections on modern Taiwan society, *Lianlian fengchen/Luanluan hongt'un* (Dust in the wind, 1987) and *Beiqing chengshi/Pitsia siatsi* (City of sadness, 1989).

*Dust in the Wind* also is constructed in opposition to previous narratives of maturation and confrontation with modernization. Where films of the 1960s like *Early Train from Taibei* focused on the urban seediness surrounding a country girl from the south trapped into prostitution and the efforts of her boyfriend to save her, *Dust in the Wind* presents a southern girl moving into a respectable job as a seamstress in a cluttered city and abandoning her boyfriend, who is serving in the army, in favor of a postman. There is no clear and lucid explanation given for her action, and the narrative refuses to be drawn into a classic Hollywood form of tight cause and effect or to make an explicit villain of modern urban society. It is much more focused on episodic moments of a vanishing way of life. The postman's Mandarin when he first speaks to the girl's boss in the city, introducing a way of life that attracts the girl, and the Mandarin of the army sergeant delivering the mail to the soldiers in the field where the boy has been assigned, are both linguistic markers in the otherwise Southern Min dialog of an ineluctable barrier that has arisen between the village girl and boy as they are drawn into a modernized Taiwan. The result is certainly to consign the local language they speak to a disappearing world that they must leave, whether willingly or not. Thus, local language is identified with the rural past, still heard in the cities but not of that world, a remnant of the rural past.

*City of Sadness* is a more explicit restatement of elements within *Dust in the Wind*. Recounting the era of the February 28 Incident of 1947 when Nationalist troops from the mainland, under the orders of the Nationalist governor Chen Yi, slaughtered thousands of Taiwanese, *City of Sadness* narrates the ever-dwindling scope within which Taiwanese patriarchs can perform serious speech acts, and performative language is pushed into the realm of the representational. The power of language in Taiwanese Southern Min is shifted from the

public voices of local men to the private voices of women survivors, emasculated and aestheticized. The narrative proceeds as a series of official and public speech acts that prove to be in bad faith or ineffective, and each reduces the status of local men. The emperor of Japan announces the surrender to the Allies in August 1945. An elderly woman mediates a dispute between a local family led by the elder brother, Lim Wen-heung, and Shanghai gangsters, but the gangsters proceed in bad faith by kidnapping one of the Lim brothers. The son of a concubine in the Lim family, A-Ga/Qiexiong, then misleads the family into yet another criminal deal, violating good faith with Wen-heung. At the same time, Governor Chen Yi announces on the radio that he will arrange for a peaceful resolution to a disturbance that has antagonized the local population, but his word proves to have been given in bad faith, as his soldiers imprison and kill. Taiwanese who try to avenge themselves are halted from pursuing mainlanders seeking treatment and refuge in a hospital by a command from Dr. Chen. The brother of a nurse at the hospital, Go Hinoe/Wu Kuanrong, saves the life of a deaf-mute brother in the Lim family, Wen-ching, by speaking for him when he cannot speak in local language to persuade a vengeful Taiwanese mob that he is not from the mainland. But neither Dr. Chen nor Wu Kuanrong can utter anything to prevent the actions of the mainland troops, who order captured Taiwanese to face their executions. Just so, Wu Kuanrong can order Wen-ching, as a deaf-mute symbolically incapable of male speech in the public or state realms, to leave the guerrilla refuge Kuanrong holds to join his sister, the nurse Kuanmei/Hinomi, but it is a woman who performs the ceremony that weds Wen-ching and Hinomi, and it is mainland troops who take Wen-ching's life.

Toward the end of this series of disasters, there is a scene in which the heavy-set, rough-spoken eldest brother of the Lim family, Wen-heung (Wen-xiong), grieved by the lot of his family beset by hoodlums and corrupt officials, orders a group of singers and musicians in the family-run inn to cease their mournful performance. When they fail to get the message, he smashes one of their instruments and stalks off. Wen-heung's father, the decrepit patriarch Ah-ba (A-gong), then apologizes to the musicians for his son's rudeness, remarks that men like him cannot be taught anything, and asks what the incident was

all about. A musician responds blankly that they don't know (Scene 82). Wen-heung's pathetic acting out parodies what is portrayed as the progressive detachment of the patriarchal family from access to serious performative position in the economic and political life of Taiwan, which functions under the sign of bad faith in the late 1940s. As Ah-ba points out, under Japanese colonial rule, as the proprietor of a modest shipping enterprise and an inn, he was able to mediate between the underworld and the authorities on behalf of the community—something Wen-heung is no longer able to do under the new regime of mainland gangsters and their access to mainland authorities governing Taiwan. Eventually he is killed by thugs.

With the older generation of patriarchs incapacitated and their successors being exterminated, there is ultimately no language of authority left in good faith: Japanese, Mandarin, Shanghai Wu, Cantonese, and Taiwanese Southern Min have all been used to utter speech acts that prove to be in bad faith or ineffective. The performative in good faith is removed to the realm of the feminine and the intimate through the diary of the survivor, the nurse Hinomi (Wu Kuanmei). She is in a position to deal with males as a professional, and her appearances at social gatherings of intellectuals set her apart from the domestically defined females and the prostitutes who attend the other male gatherings depicted. This enables Hinomi to construct herself in a modern way in a modern space, but she is not necessarily empowered to perform that subjectivity seriously, only in her diary as an act of representation. She, in turn, introduces the power of nonserious representation to initiate performative acts: a poem by a Japanese girl in the Meiji era who killed herself in imitation of the beauty of cherry blossoms; the beauty of the song of Lorelai that lured sailors to their deaths on the banks of the Rhine.

As a female, Hinomi has been excluded from the performative except through roles of nurturing and reproducing; and it is with these acts that her representation is linked and, through them, the space of the hospital and the family bequeathed by a patriarchal system but no longer dominated by it. Thus all narratives are reduced to hers as a survivor. The narrative of her and her discourse, provided in her diary and her notes to Wen-ching and others, move the representation of the era away from a central identification with the February 28 Inci-

dent of 1947 and toward the power of her representation, and its potential to initiate performance, in order to define the legacy of the era.

What Hinomi writes in her journal is audible in her voice offscreen, but it is never visible. She speaks in Taiwanese, but the ultimate act of representation in writing the journal and letters is never presented—historically it is not likely it would have been in Taiwanese. It is deferred through scenes in Japanese, which she speaks and reads; in variously accented versions of Mandarin, which she hears and writes but does not utter; and on into scenes spoken in Shanghai Wu and in Cantonese and Hakka. Like the depictions of performing arts, which include not *gezaixi* but *budaixi*, *pingan xi*, *nanguan*, marching bands, and so forth, the representation of language is diffused. Like a number of other writers, Wu Nianzhen in the published script pursued a number of innovations to write Taiwanese dialogue, but could not write it into the letters Hinomi's voice utters offscreen while still being faithful to the history he represents, so defers to Mandarin script.

However, the technical anachronism of Taiwanese voice and Mandarin script, writing a pedagogy of Taiwan through history that transcends its history and representing Taiwan with a script it could not have had historically, is ultimately a poignant performative gesture that suits the film well. As a film of multiple languages and forms of communication (photos, notes, intertitles, etc.) it is an act of nostalgia, as always the story that might have been but never was to be. Hence, multiple stories evoke the era in ways that distance it from the era in which the film was made. Japanese culture is sympathetically portrayed through a potential marriage of Kuanrong and a Japanese woman, through Japanese narration, and schoolchildren singing a Japanese song in a schoolroom led by a benign Japanese teacher. There are old-fashioned local operas, imitated by schoolboys; Marxist intellectuals commenting on "progressive" reading material; Wen-heung's recollection of being tied to a telephone pole by his father while the father went gambling with his wife's money; the entire depiction of a large, patriarchal family, filled with women confined to cooking, cleaning, and child care. These are all truncated narratives of what might have been, multiple narratives like multiple languages. Taiwan could have been something other than what it was to become, but

whether it would have been something the film audience would wish for itself is endlessly posed as a question.

*City of Sadness* also sets out the socioeconomic groupings of its characters through their language. Wen-heung is competent in Southern Min only and apparently is not very literate, since he asks his daughter to write notes for him in order to communicate with his deaf-mute brother, Wen-ching. He is thus presented as a man of integrity but limited intellect, a blunt, old-fashioned patriarchal figure amid small-scale merchants involved in underworld dealings. In these dealings he meets with characters similarly limited to their local languages of Shanghai Wu or Cantonese. By contrast, Hinoe and Hinomi are from a gentry family among the relatively few cultural elite figures educated in Japanese, as well as native speakers of Taiwanese Southern Min.[27] In turn, Hinoe and Hinomi are characters directly exposed to Mandarin through conversations with members of the mainland cultural elite and through Mandarin-language classes at the hospital. The major, historical speech acts broadcast on the radio are in Japanese or heavily accented Mandarin, again linguistic symbols of how removed most Taiwanese are from the discourse of political power.

Few films came close to the complex staging of multilinguistic dialog presented in *City of Sadness*, although Stanley Kwan's *Actress* (Ruan Lingyu) a couple of years later in Hong Kong echoed the complexity of this motif. Directors such as Li An (Ang Li) and Tsai Mingliang filmed almost entirely in Mandarin. Li's *Yin shi nan nü* (Eat, drink, man, woman, 1994) does contrast a younger generation of characters who have grown up in Taibei speaking in a standard Mandarin with an older generation of émigré characters who speak Mandarin with more pronounced accents connoting distant locations in their geographic pasts, and even one minor character who speaks in Taiwanese Southern Min. Apart from these moments, there is generally nothing to interfere with the smooth flow of intelligible dialog serving a classic narrative. However, the director Edward Yang (Yang Dechang), after a decade of filming exclusively in Mandarin, began experimenting with multiple languages in the mid-1990s. *Duli shidai* (A Confucian confusion, 1994) and *Yiyi* (A one and a two, 2001) offer two distinct movements in presenting multiple languages.

*Confucian Confusion*, like *City of Sadness*, distributes the speech of its characters across the pattern of their socioeconomic background. Unlike *City of Sadness*, however, "*Confucian Confusion* completely depends on language to show the ethnic and social origins of the characters."[28] Set in contemporary Taibei, all the characters in this fast-paced comedy are white-collar representatives of Taiwan's economic miracle and all speak Mandarin. Molly, executive of a "culture company" (a form of media company), and her sister, a talk-show host in the company's TV productions, both speak standard Mandarin on the job, in a display of symbolic capital expected of cultural elite status. Molly, however, is engaged to the financial supporter of her company, Akeem, a Taiwanese nouveau riche entrepreneur who lacks the same cultural upbringing. His dialog is either in Taiwanese, with Molly, or in Taiwan Mandarin spiced with amusing uses of Mandarin slogans and proverbs, which, as he says, he has learned to use in order to impress people. Molly's assistant, Qiqi, speaks standard Mandarin on the job and is shown speaking it with her parents at home, implying that her family are mainland émigrés. Qiqi's admirer, Xiaoming, speaks standard Mandarin among his fellow civil servants and with his divorced father, but speaks in Taiwanese Southern Min at home with his mother. Hence, the standard Mandarin of the cultural and official circles is revealed as a common language that masks the material and cultural foundations of the visible roles these people are playing, both for the public and among themselves. Qiqi, the one person who speaks the same language regardless of her situation and who is presented as the major sympathetic figure of genuine integrity, is informed by a would-be, sham social critic: "Emotion has not only become an excuse, it can be faked. Take you, for example, your innocence, loveliness, tenderness, vivacity … They can all be faked! Think about it."

By the time Edward Yang turns to *Yiyi*, this carefully orchestrated pattern of language use has shifted again. This time the main character, a middle-aged Taiwanese businessman, NJ or Jian Nanjun, and his acquaintances switch codes back and forth between Taiwanese Southern Min and Mandarin with a former sweetheart, and again into English with a Japanese businessman. As Michel Chion has remarked:

> The world is in motion and in chiaroscuro. We can only see one side of things, only halfway, always changing. Their outline dissolves into shadow, reemerges in movement, then disappears in darkness or a surfeit of light. . . . There is only one element [of this] that the cinema has not been able to treat this way, one element that remains constrained to perpetual clarity and stability, and that is dialogue.[29]

*Yiyi* is an exercise in interpreting Chion and breaking this constraint. The script is littered with lines like:

> "I can't see what you see, and you can't see what I see. So how can I know what you see?" [Yang-Yang, speaking to his father, NJ]

> "What's the point? She can't see what I tell her." [Yang-Yang to his mother about his reluctance to speak to his stroke-ridden grandmother]

> "Frankly, there's very little I'm sure about these days." [NJ to his grandmother-in-law]

> "We never live the same day twice. Every day is a new day. So why is it that we are so afraid to do something new?" [The Japanese businessman Ota to NJ]

Visually, there is scene after scene of characters seen through glass, obscured by images reflected on the glass: NJ's wife Min-Min in an office building, NJ in his car and at his office, A-Di and Yun-Yun in the Eslite Café, Ting-Ting in a coffee shop, and so on. In other scenes, attention to characters is distracted by their image in a mirror: A-Di talking to NJ in the hospital and again admiring a newborn child in a hospital nursery, Min-Min's depressed soliloquy to NJ in their bedroom, and so forth. Repeatedly dialog floats disembodied as the camera pans or tracks through a scene.

Similarly, the voice of this sound track is modulated across a great range of techniques. Often it is clear, intelligible theatrical speech. But just as often it is inaudible, muffled, drowned out by noise, clarity giving way to a listening challenge, compensated for only by subtitles. This film features in fair measure what Chion terms "Emana-

tion Speech," which relativizes speech as opposed to giving it full priority.[30]

Likewise, the characters speak in a polyglot dialog that has become a staple feature of so many Taiwan and Hong Kong art films. It is nothing new to listen to dialog composed of the multiple languages of English, Taiwanese, and Mandarin, as well as snatches of Chinglish (我們都很excited啊。). Now, however, the characters shift unpredictably from Mandarin into Taiwanese. The shift is cued by the search of NJ and his former lover, Sherry, to recover an alternative to the lives that they now have. In their intimate realm, NJ and Sherry can switch on the telephone or face-to-face back and forth into Taiwanese or Mandarin. Without the sociological grid of characters presented in *Confucian Confusion*, there is no fixed point of reference for this use of code mixing and code switching. Their dialog shifts languages fluidly in the way reflected images flow over the glass of offices and automobiles—a language in motion, like the world defined by Chion and rendered by Edward Yang. As much as it is a form of intimacy, it is also an emblem of fragmentation and instability even within that intimacy. Moreover, it is an intimacy that NJ abandons as an alternative to his existing circumstances. In *Confucian Confusion*, language use clearly marks not only a social convention of the cultured/uncultured gap and public/private domains, but also the association of language identity with a middle class that has been identified with official culture and access to it and a middle class that has developed alongside that group. This systematic deployment of language variation has given way in *Yiyi* to the hint of an unstable, formless condition. Separated as it is ideologically from a telenovela like *Treasured Daughter-in-law and Precious Grandson*, *Yiyi* shares a theme of liberalization and pluralism cast adrift of any certainties to equate identity, language, knowledge, and culture.

## Localizing literature

It was another form of uncertainty decades before that drove Taiwanese scholars under the Japanese colonialization to consider the absence of written Southern Min as a lack that haunted them. A recent

study by Hennig Klöter, *Written Taiwanese*, details the history of the contributions, often forgotten, beginning in the seventeenth century to making Taiwanese Southern Min a literary language. One such document, by the historian of Taiwan, Lian Yatang, survived to be published in the 1950s. In the last years of his life, Lian Yatang (Lian Heng, 1878–1936) compiled the *Taiwan yu dian* (Lexicon of Taiwanese), which he prefaced with the words: "I am Taiwanese and can speak Taiwanese language. Yet I cannot write and cannot understand the meaning of these words, for which I am deeply ashamed.... I fear that soon now the Taiwanese language will disappear, and because of that the spirit of the people as a nation will fail. Therefore, my responsibility is indeed great." Lian's lexicon addressed a debate among young writers of Taiwan concerned with how to represent their local language and was followed by a handful of stories written using Taiwanese Southern Min. However, within a few years the Japanese colonial authority banned the use of Chinese in print, and the movement to assimilate the Taiwanese only intensified until the Japanese surrender in 1945. Lian's lexicon was published in Taiwan in 1957, the same year that Wang Yude, an exiled separatist dissident, published in Japan the first modern linguistic study of Taiwanese Southern Min by a Taiwanese. Ironically, although Lian looked forward in the 1930s to the growth of a "homeland literature" (*xiangtu wenxue* written in Taiwanese Southern Min), the homeland literature movement that arose on Taiwan during the late sixties and early seventies was written in Guoyu Mandarin with few features of local language. In 1976, however, Lian Yatang's granddaughter, Lin Wenyue, the widely read young essayist and scholar of Japanese and Six Dynasties literature, cited the passage quoted above in a biography of her grandfather, included in a volume of her well-known essays, *Shanshui yu gudian* (Landscape and the classics).[31] In that same year two poets, Lin Zongyuan and Xiang Yang, separately began to publish verse using Taiwanese Southern Min, and soon thereafter appeared the novel *Guihua xiang* (Osmanthus Lane) by the young writer Xiao Lihong, which attracted attention for its use of Taiwanese Southern Min.[32]

By the mid-1970s the first generation completely educated in Mandarin because the use of local languages in schools was prohibited in 1963 and thereafter virtually driven out of the media[33] was entering

the workforce or university. Once again in history, it must have seemed that the language a generation had known as children was destined for extinction. At the same time, the Nationalist government was faced with a severe decline in its international status, having failed to maintain its seat in the UN and gradually losing diplomatic recognition, including a claim to the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands, an incident that had fired youthful passions a few years before. Therefore, the legitimacy of the Nationalist regime itself was increasingly questioned, and along with it the Mandarin-language cultural establishment it had worked so hard to build. Moreover, it was a time when America as a major guarantor was undergoing its own countercultural movements, and these were echoed, if faintly, in Taiwanese literature:

> Wanting absolutely nothing to do with humanity
> Living in the woods
> Spending a life picking flowers
> We will have our own lifestyle
> In our own language
> Living as another kind of humanity in a natural landscape.[34]

The one assertion of Southern Min local language in this 1978 verse by Lin Zongyuan is the "we," written as *ruan/gun* (or *goan*) 阮. This one slight but highly visible break from a standard Mandarin style sets the identity of the persona in opposition to a standardized linguistic identity, as it also goes on to oppose an industrialized pollution of the environment to a pastoral identity, one form of humanity against another. It is this imagined cultural distance from contemporary society that all the first writings using Southern Min in the 1970s share. Xiang Yang's early verses "Jia pu—xueqin pian" (Genealogy—blood kin), and the novels of Xiao Lihong re-create a domestic past whose culture was vanishing.

Like the verse of Lin Zongyuan and Xiang Yang, Xiao Lihong's use of Southern Min style was limited to the repetition of a few high-frequency characters and the occasional use of a local idiom, adage, or grammatical construction—just enough to maintain the atmosphere of cultural distance. Both of her early novels, *Osmanthus Lane* and *Qian jiang you shui qian jiang yue* (A thousand moons on a thousand rivers,

1980), were tales of girls' maturation. Set in the early 1900s under Japanese occupation, *Osmanthus Lane* presents an orphaned girl who defies her fate by helping to arrange her own marriage into a wealthy family. Although she loses her husband in youth, she has "escaped the rain," symbolizing a fate of poverty and loneliness. *A Thousand Moons on a Thousand Rivers*, as a very self-consciously Taiwanese-Chinese narrative of the coming of age and failed romance of a young woman in Taiwan in the 1960s and early 1970s, emphasizes the capacities of the girl's local culture and kinship to sustain her in the face of crushing failure in romantic attachment, rather than the fulfillment of an ideal relationship with a man. When this novel was nominated for an award, the critics on the award committee discussing the novel were divided in their response to Xiao's style. One made a point of faulting the book for an excess of local language; two others defended the style as neither excessive nor a flaw, comparing the effect to traditional texts.[35] *A Thousand Moons on a Thousand Rivers* was recognized by other critics such as Long Yingtai for its vivid *(chuan shen)* use of local language, but also criticized for its nostalgia, its detachment from criticism of that era or of contemporary society.[36]

The fiction that followed both engaged social issues and raised the density of local language in texts to a much higher level. The novella "Youma caizi" (The rapeseed, 1982) by Liao Huiying was one of the first and most representative works of the fiction of the 1980s. It is celebrated as a portrayal of the disparities between an educated middle class coming of age in the eighties and their parents, and between women of two generations. The story illustrates well the conditions in which an author might explore a heavy use of local language. It is told in the first person by the Mandarin-educated daughter of parents educated before Mandarin-language instruction was introduced, who lives in a rural setting, which adds to the historical dimension of the novella, as it portrays a level of poverty not usually associated with life in Taiwan at the time the story was published. This is in contrast to the Mandarin narration of a contemporary, upper-middle-class, urban setting in her subsequent novel, *Bu gui lu* (Road of no return, 1983), narrated in the third person. Indeed, a similar variation in the selection of style is evident in a number of authors during the eighties who depended upon period and setting, among them Li Tong, Song

Zelai, Dong Nian, Wu Nianzhen, and Wang Zhenhe. The mixed style Liao employed in "The Rapeseed" shows her control over both Mandarin and Southern Min, a cultural competence that only an adult well educated in postwar Taiwan could demonstrate. Such a mixed style implies the narrator's willingness to display the cultural capital of education in Chinese, but also the "other" cultural capital and authority of intimate experience beyond the realm of education, in the stylistic distinction of local language. Even so, the style went largely unnoticed in critical commentary: already such a style was being accepted as a fitting way to contrast the culture of her mother's generation with that of her own.

The first novels employing a high frequency of Southern Min were completed around 1985. Wang Zhenhe's *Rose, Rose, I Love You*, introduced above, was an extension of his fascination with the relationship of high culture and vulgarity. Wang had been including occasional phrases of Southern Min, along with English and Japanese, in his short stories and novellas since the mid-1960s but had never developed a sustained use of Southern Min. *Rose* presents a substantial leap in the quantity of Taiwanese vocabulary and idioms, as well as the use of English and the inevitable scattering of Japanese vocabulary. As is well known, the novel presents the recruitment of fifty prostitutes from the local brothels of Hualien to entertain US soldiers on leave for a week from their service in Vietnam in the mid-1960s. Acting on arrangements made by the national government, the recruiters include members of the local government and legal, health, religious, and educational elite. A large part of the satirical message of elite involvement in this international prostitution enterprise is summed up straightforwardly in a brothel owner's complaints about the cultural preparation of the prostitutes to receive US soldiers required by a teacher employed for this purpose:

> That fat pig of a teacher wanted us to think of the training course as setting up a factory and think of the trainees as raw material, didn't he? And after the trainees became bar girls, they'd be available as merchandise for the GIs. OK so far. But now all of a sudden he turns into a saint, Amita Buddha and all that, telling us we musn't forget that these girls who will be pulling in all those US dollars are people, and

> that we must see them as more than just merchandise. How can he have it both ways?[37]

The deconstruction of distinct discourses is suggested here, as it is in the language of the novel. Characters may resort to Mandarin or, better still, English, to assert the refinement of high culture, only to have their pretensions ridiculed through vulgar puns and remarks. The ultimate moment in this breakdown of cultural distinctions occurs as the teacher charged with preparing the prostitutes culturally for their assignment listens to a physician warn the women to avoid contracting the venereal disease Saigon Rose from the US soldiers. The teacher, Dong Siwen (Understanding Refinement), associating the phrase Saigon Rose with the popular Chinese song "Rose, Rose, I Love You," decides this is what the women will sing to welcome the soldiers to Hualien. What Wang could not do, however, was transform Southern Min into a language of high culture; it remains an instrument of carnival, mocking the language of high culture, not a substitute for it.

Whereas Wang portrayed a society in which the collective greed of all sectors would serve to sustain any form and number of languages together, the author Dong Nian attempted an allegory of a society that was dangerously polarized beyond any appeal to reason. Dong Nian's *Shizong de taipingyang sanhao* (The lost ship *Pacific Ocean III*)[38] offers a largely thoroughgoing presentation of Taiwanese in the dialogue of sailors on an oceangoing fishing boat. In this cautionary allegory of Taiwanese society, young, bewildered university graduates join a tuna fishing boat on which the crew consists of a cross-section of ethnicities, including Southern Min Taiwanese, Hakka, native Taiwanese, and mainlanders. After the captain is swept overboard in a storm, one of the emotionally disturbed university graduates, Meijin, decides to steer the ship to China, killing all who oppose him. His rampage is finally stopped when his fellow graduate, Huabei, fells him with a fire axe. However, the engineer has already flooded the hold of the boat in revenge, and Huabei can only save himself, reaching Capetown in a lifeboat. In this lengthy presentation of unsettled social relationships on this ocean-tossed microcosm of Taiwanese society, Taiwanese Southern Min dialogue is used as the language of ignorance, toil, hopeless dreams, and unreflective action, as opposed

to Mandarin as a language of indecisive reflection and ineffectual action.

## The limits of printing the local

If respected writers had now brought Southern Min into the field of fiction in its most ambitious forms, its place still conformed to the widespread hegemony of Mandarin. Mandarin could be used without limits, but the use of Southern Min required clear markers to cue its use. These markers defined the scope of its use in first-person dialog or narration, constructing an opposition to the contemporary cultural elite through historic and rural settings, uneducated characters with perhaps occasionally some degree of wealth, but more often low on material as well as cultural capital. The poetry of nativist writers such as Lin Zongyuan and Xiang Yang was increasingly asserting itself as a break with these confinements, the poets and their personas both being voices of university-educated elite writers intent on demonstrating the worth of Taiwanese Southern Min as a style for serious contemporary poetry. Yet, even as their confidence in an increasingly localized style grew, they stirred little sustained following, even within the nativist circles of poetry. A marginalized group to begin with, many nativist poets could not share the urge to advance a style that could make their poetry yet more difficult to read and yet more marginalized. Many of their number were also not of Southern Min background, but Hakka, speaking a language that had even less of a written tradition than Southern Min and far fewer speakers than either Southern Min or Mandarin. For them, the goal of gaining recognition within a field through the established, dominant style of that field outweighed the risks of rebelling against the field to the degree that a local-language style entailed.

The same concerns existed among the nativist writers of fiction, and the same divisions. Major figures such as Li Qiao and Zhong Zhaozheng were Hakka. Others, like Li Ang, were of Southern Min heritage and firmly committed to Taiwan identity, as is evident in such sophisticated novels as Li's *Mi yuan* (Labyrinthine garden, 1991), in which she presented her contemporary urban settings and

characters in Mandarin. Chen Yingzhen argued that Taiwanese identity was, after all, Chinese, and the issues were class issues, not ethnic ones, and Huang Chunming had never been interested in placing ethnic issues above class issues. Wang Tuo and Yang Qingchu both supported greater use of local language, and Wang Tuo published fiction employing Taiwanese Southern Min after his release from prison in the mid-1980s.[39] However, there was nothing in his style that was not already available in other novels, and his own concern for political activism as a socialist drew him away from literature into organized politics. The concern to establish a place for Taiwanese Southern Min and for a nativist political voice not already subsumed under the increasingly liberalized atmosphere of the mid-eighties found its disparate adherents in three writers: Song Zelai, Dongfang Bai, and Wu Nianzhen.

Song Zelai's novella "Kangbao ge Damao shi/K'ong-pok e p'ah-niau tsi (or 'ta-ba tsi')" (The violent protest of P'ah-niau City)[40] was designed as a tour de force to establish Taiwanese Southern Min as a style breaking through the several limitations of previous texts. As the definitive example of a novella written entirely in Taiwanese, it may be the best researched and perhaps linguistically most accurate presentation of a local Southern Min vocabulary and grammar. Previous texts either limited the range of characters employed or adopted idiosyncratic choices, but Song's bristles with over three hundred footnotes, many citing the *Kangxi Dictionary* for authority.

Such an act also implied a claim to a moral authority as an avant-garde writer: whereas a writer such as Wang Zhenhe had expressed his concern to introduce Southern Min in a way that would not hinder readers' understanding and enjoyment of the text, Song was uncompromising in insisting on teaching readers a lesson in delayed gratification regardless of their approval or pleasure. Such a position further implied a commitment to high art and didactic content as well. In the story, P'ah-niau City is governed alternately by two brothers. Sons of a ruthless collaborator with the Japanese and then with the Nationalists in their purge of 1947, they maintain control of Da Mao City for forty years before they are shot down by a vengeful hawker who has lost his daughter to malnutrition while she was imprisoned and crippled on orders of the brothers. Deliberately adopting features of

# 第一章　一個病儂

這是一個厚風颱个①季節。

頭一日，當李國一對千刀萬割个疼痛中精神②起來，伊鼻著③一陣一陣溫爛④个臭味，這個溫爛个味自從一年前就開始給伊家己⑤合⑥四周圍个儂⑦鼻著，而且是一日比一日巧重⑧。伊知影，這是伊家己內臟惡化个臭味。親像值⑨伊个身軀內

① 个：音ㄜ，猶北京語「的」字，台語無字，借「个」音。康典頁三。俗。
② 精神：醒也。
③ 鼻着：聞到。
④ 溫爛：爛也。溫音ㄠˊ，烏侯切。久漬也。引申「爛」也。康典頁五七四。
⑤ 家己：ㄍㄚ ㄐㄧˇ，自己也。
⑥ 合：音ㄍㄚ或ㄍㄚㄆ。「和」也，「共」也。
⑦ 儂：ㄌㄤˊ，「人」也，音農。吳人謂人「儂」。康典頁四八。
⑧ 巧重：較重也。巧音ㄎㄚˇ。借。
⑨ 值：ㄉㄧˋ，音治，「遇」也，「在」也。康典頁三六。

**Figure 9.** The opening page of Song Zelai's novella ''The Violent Protest of Damao City'' (1988). This text is generally regarded as the most ambitious demonstration of written Taiwanese Southern Min, and it is likely the most accurate. Nine footnotes to the page guide readers and provide philological evidence.

high art, the narrative is told largely through the point of view of one of the brothers and is organized as a modernist interior monolog that extends in magical-realist fashion to the soul of the brother watching his body decay and the remains slide into hell.[41] The brothers' and their father's corrupt activities in gaining and keeping control are so widespread that the narrative offers an almost full range of topics on which to present the viability of Taiwanese Southern Min as a literary language fully capable of sustaining a modern narrative of contemporary society: construction and industrialization, organized politics and beliefs, environmental pollution, religion, the arts, athletics, journalism, and even a ghastly form of romantic attachment. On the other hand, a major motif that runs through the narrative is the constant return to the grotesque: disease, rotting and putrified flesh, violence, decay, and pollution. The use of a grotesque description of the brothers to parallel the social and environmental corruption thay have inflicted on their city does leave open the association recorded by Ying-hsiung Chou: "To concretize corruption, the author resorted to a language of excess, giving readers the impression that language itself became corrupt, too."[42] Song's novella broke with realism, standing on the authority of magical realism to portray local beliefs in the soul, and spared nothing to satirize large-scale political corruption and any betrayal of the Taiwanese to foreigners—whether Chinese, Japanese, or American. His full-scale use of Taiwanese as the language of narration aimed at finding a new standard for literature in the name of "human rights literature" and assured his work of drawing attention and himself of a leading position to *épater la bourgeoisie*. Yet the novella suggests the very fear that it is designed to counter, namely, that there is little beyond the opposition of exploiters and exploited that binds this society together as a community.

As Song himself noted,[43] his focus on fellow Taiwanese as villains in their own history of suffering was innovative among nativist writers. In adopting this theme, also, he was distinguishing himself from the other major text of Taiwanese fiction approaching completion as it appeared in installments in literary journals at the time "The Violent Protest of P'ah-niau City" was published. This was the long novel begun in the early 1980s by Dong Fangbai, *Lang tao sha* (Wave-washed sands), published in book form in 1990. Like grains of sand washed by

the waves of modern history the Taiwanese characters in this novel are models for a modern Taiwanese identity that is without fundamental differences of class, which is virtually absent from the text, or gender, which is all but equated with males. They all suffer and encounter discrimination as Taiwanese rather than as representatives of a class or gender,[44] and they never initiate any suffering or discrimination themselves, nor are they ever at odds with any fellow Taiwanese. They mostly speak the same language, and this is Dongfang Bai's innovative script for Taiwanese Southern Min and for Hakka, but no effort is made to forge their discourse into a unified, organized political voice or a perpetually angry one, only to withhold it from history as others have written it. Others' victories and losses are not necessarily theirs and, as the critic Peng Ruijin has noted,[45] the narrative is not structured around defeats and triumphs of other nations; it is concerned only with the characters' contributions to this grand narrative and its effects on their lives, and with minutely reconstructing the historical spaces of others that they have occupied around the globe as Taiwanese space. In this three-volume roman-fleuve, Taiwanese becomes the language of a dedicated educated elite who, on account of the hardships and vicissitudes of their lives in the first half of the twentieth century, are privileged with a unique access to the multiple cultures they encounter—those of Japan, Canada and the United States, the Philippines, China, Burma, and so on. Alternately welcomed and stripped of their identity by these societies, the characters perceive that no society has a monopoly on good or evil, and they forge an identity that transcends the particular ideologies of these others. That is, given the circumstances of their lives as the colonized subjects of Japan, in order to survive or to resist, they have to become something other than Taiwanese: one as a Canadian physician (the first Taiwanese female trained as a physician), one a Japanese air-force pilot then a Chinese air-force pilot, one a translator of English and Japanese for the Japanese military in Southeast Asia. Stripped of the identities with which they grew up, they construct and experience a universal humanity. The Taiwanese language becomes the shared language of their collective experience of fragmented careers among this global humanity. This is a work that is not interested in showing how characters are constructed by history or race, but in endowing the

characters with enduring characteristics of significance beyond their historical period. More specifically, it details how they have at times been Chinese but also denied that identity, performing as Japanese, Filipinos, Canadians, or Americans, and that their identity is not owed to China.

Yet, the task of fiction that sought to establish local languages as a controlling style of narrative was less to create a Taiwanese identity or a sense of injustice among Taiwanese themselves than it was to elicit a recognition of that identity and the injustice of suppressing it in a field of literary production and readership. As worthwhile as these novels were, it was not altogether unfair of the fields of cultural production centered in Taibei to treat them with little enthusiasm and categorically relegate them to surveys of political novels and political trends in literature. Despite the scope of the appeal to "human rights" or to the transnational identity of these authors, there simply was little audience for them as literary achievements in circles beyond the authors' immediate cohorts. Even as enthusiastic a reader of *Wave-washed Sands* as the Taiwan independence activist Jiang Gaishi wrote: "What fascinated me the most about this novel was not the story or the character portrayal, nor the development of the story and repeated climaxes, but the dialog of the characters in the novel, the writing of Taiwanese Hoklo and Hakka.... Really, the issue is that readers' interest can't be aroused without good literary works in Taiwanese language, no matter how much noise the academic specialists in Taiwanese language make...."[46] Perhaps the text that won the sort of recognition for which writers and their readership might hope was the film *City of Sadness*.

The scripts for the films *Dust in the Wind* and *City of Sadness*, written by Wu Nianzhen and Zhu Tianwen, were not only published in book form in Taiwan; *City of Sadness* was also published in the Beijing journal *Dangdai dianying* (Contemporary film),[47] where its Taiwanese Southern Min dialog would take its place among other productions of local language to bemuse filmmakers on the mainland in the year following the June 4, 1989, incident in Beijing. What prompted these publications of film scripts as literature was the major critical recognition given the films abroad, a phenomenon that has been credited with giving them more attention in Taiwan itself. The complaints of critics

that Hou Xiaoxian's films were for foreigners might as well have been a complaint that high art was dependent on recognition from abroad. As Zhu Tianwen argued,[48] the scripts demonstrated that the writers' conception and the filmmakers' were two different things, and scripts stand independently as literature. But now such a literature as high art was dependent upon filmmaking, and filmmaking was increasingly dependent upon foreign investors and foreign recognition. The scripts of *Dust in the Wind* and *City of Sadness* illustrated the very lack of the cultural independence in the field of literature as high art in Taiwan that proponents of a Taiwanese local-language literature wanted to assert. In part, the rise in education that had given writers the imagination to bring Taiwanese local language into writing had also promoted the diglossia, not only of Mandarin and local language, but also of Japanese and English and their inextricable relations with these languages as sources of culture.

To many, it could not have seemed that way at the time. The new surge of writing, filming, and broadcasting in Taiwanese Southern Min, together with a new era of political activity, prompted some to look for a new wave of writers who would win recognition for an aesthetically independent local language in the field of serious literature. *Zili wanbao* (Independence evening post) began the decade boldly by awarding first prize for its fiction competition to a novel of Taiwan identity, *Shisheng huamei* (Muted thrush, 1990) by Ling Yan,[49] but the newspaper itself folded before the close of the decade after a long history of sympathy with the nativist literature and secessionist politics. The award given to *Muted Thrush* was itself a declaration of independence from Mandarin/mainland-dominated cultural status, raising eyebrows among many critics and readers who regarded it as a work of limited artistic ambition and intellectual vision.[50] The indifference of the committee making the award to the standards of competitive groups within the cultural elite suggested a new assertiveness to define that elite and its social role in terms apart from those which had brought prestige to fictional narrative and film on Taiwan to date.

*Muted Thrush* itself both served and diverted attention from Taiwanese identity. In the novel the adolescent Muyun runs away from her parents and their expectations that she take the university entrance examinations to join a traveling, all-female *gezaixi* (song

opera) troupe in contemporary Taiwan. Muyun has lived away from her parents as a young child, staying in a rural community where she found consolation in watching performances of *gezaixi* (21). The young Muyun joins the opera troupe because it has advertised that it offers lessons to train young apprentices in voice and movement. However, she finds that troupes like this do not sing but rather lip-synch on stage to prerecorded music by other artists, and the drama scripts themselves have all but been drowned out by the demand of male audiences for the women to perform erotic dances to pop music. The language she brings to performance is not only replaced by that of *gezaixi*, but that voice in turn is also reduced to silent mimicry and then suppressed entirely. Rebel that she is, Muyun can only conclude that she has no access to a serious position in this setting, and her covert appeal to her parents in her letter has the effect of producing them and their intervention. It is perhaps because of the decline of the opera that the narrator of *Muted Thrush* dismisses describing the opera itself with the repeated remark that it is the stories of the performers offstage that are more intriguing than the narratives they present onstage (18, 197–198). The opera is thus masked and muted, while there is extensive description of how the women disrobe to lip-synched pop music, as if what offends a sense of decency is not eroticism but the failure to fulfill an ideal of the operatic form. The opera is made mute so that the presence and desire for its presence are thus deferred through its difference from what had consoled and given another substitute for identity for Muyun as a little girl. That is where, in the narrative, father (and mother) come in, and Muyun's search continues as she prepares to take university entrance exams, in the hope of repositioning herself to give voice to the muted opera as a serious cultural symbol.

As the sole form of art originating on Taiwan and claimed exclusively by Taiwanese, there is a discourse in which it represents the emergence of an ethnic identity as a response to modernity in the form of colonization by Japan and reoccupation by mainland Chinese. It may, by extension, also represent that ethnic identification apart from what is popularly referred to as the cultural-economic colonization by the United States. The mainland Nationalist alliance with the United States is then considered to be the agency for the demise of

the status of *gezaixi*, defined by its use of Taiwanese Minnanhua speech, as distinct from the Nationalists' and Communists' promotion of Mandarin, and by communal legends, as against the postmodern trends of multinational culture emanating from the United States. None of this is explicitly stated in the novel, but has been part of the critical context, the site of enunciation. Hence, the novel *Muted Thrush* offers *gezaixi* as a representation of Taiwan as a community displaced from a distinctive representation of itself on its own terms, a deterritorialized culture for which the *gezaixi* could conceivably act to deterritorialize the dominant culture that has silenced it. *Muted Thrush* is thus very much the representation of nonserious discourse aimed at invoking serious speech acts of communities and political parties to enact Taiwan identity as a dominant voice. The novel implies one construction of history and the power of the father to redeem.

On the other hand, the narrator of *Muted Thrush* dismisses describing the opera itself with the repeated remark that it is the stories of the performers offstage that are more intriguing than the narratives they present onstage (18, 197–198). These are the lesbian relationships among the troupe members. Muyun responds to the lesbian relations in the troupe by actually calling them "playacting" (*yanxi*, 196). The text suggests that for most women lesbianism is a situational substitution for a serious relationship. The circumstances of the performers are too nomadic to sustain a family life, and they are left with little choice but to turn to each other. Moreover, the instability of these relationships is brought into the main narrative line when the affections of a teenage girl for an older woman threaten that woman's relationship with another performer, thus instigating the breakup of part of the troupe and the end of training lessons. Nevertheless, as a nomadic, separatist community, the opera troupe introduces a form of lesbian feminist utopia, and as much as this alternative community may serve in the novel as a dystopian warning to a failed patriarchal culture to reassert itself, the theme shifts much of the emphasis onto issues of gender and away from a comfortably coherent Taiwanese identity. In this way the novel merged with a new era of the maturing new middle classes for whom causes multiplied: feminism and gender, minorities, environmentalism, and consumerism.

Commercial publishing also expanded greatly (romance, etc.), so that the demand for fiction of social realism focused on Taiwan identity and social class waned dramatically. The film version of *Muted Thrush* used it as a vehicle to explore lesbian relationships.

By the mid-1990s, generous state subsidies to *gezaixi* and other neglected art forms were flowing, and that issue was closed. But linguists like Hong Weiren warned that most people already were unable to express themselves completely in Taiwanese.[51] Perhaps Hong was exaggerating for effect, but among the cultural elite this surely was the case. As one scholar of theater noted, in 1997 the modern theater stage remained almost totally dominated by Mandarin.[52] A telling anecdote appears about the British-trained Taiwanese stage director Peng Yaling, whose work with elderly performers received a great deal of attention in the 1990s with the series of plays under the title *Tai-uan kau-pek/Taiwan gaobai* (Echoes of Taiwan): "Since most of the actors for *Echoes of Taiwan* . . . were unable to read, Peng had to show some originality in communicating with them. . . . Difficulties arose for Peng, however, because (like most people her age who had grown up speaking the official Mandarin language more fluently than their mother tongue) she felt awkward conversing in Taiwanese."[53] Although the article states that Peng regained her fluency in Taiwanese Southern Min by working with the elderly, Hong Weiren's echo of Lian Yatang that Taiwanese Southern Min was headed toward extinction without active intervention was a sentiment widely shared.

It has been left to print journalism more than literature to develop written local language, precisely where the entrepreneurial middle class has provided a substantial readership. Here the influence of broadcast media was firmly apparent in the protocols for using Taiwanese Southern Min. In 1990, as part of the loosening restraints on the use of local languages, a television advertisement for Northwest Airlines reassured passengers: "你講台語嘛也通—You'll be understood in Taiwanese too."[54] The line was then adopted in print and was followed by Taiwanese Southern Min in print advertising for other travel and hospitality offers, charitable causes, food products, and newspapers and periodicals themselves. Such ads could include a youthful readership, and a few were aimed directly at youth, such as the public service message featuring the rap group LA Boyz: "嘸呷菸

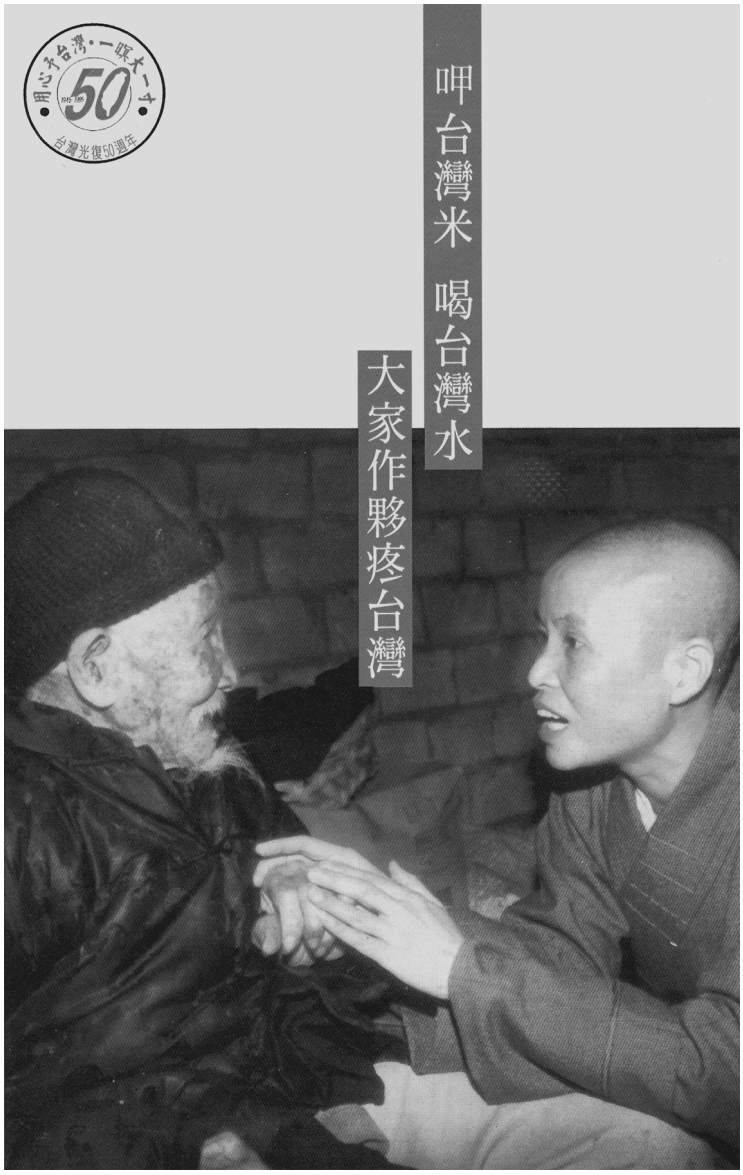



**Figure 10.** This appeal to charity through a Taiwanese identity appeared in Taiwan magazines in the mid-1990s. A Buddhist nun is shown comforting an elderly man, with a superimposed caption in Southern Min reading: ''Let those who eat the rice of Taiwan and drink the water of Taiwan all together cherish Taiwan.''

地在倒癱 錯大下鑄子兒知得母陳

# 說話沒也刑死判：望絕父林

【本報系記者陳珮琦專訪】「代誌大條了，一切攏去了了啦，以後就由官府去抓吧，判死刑，我也沒話說。」林春生的父親廿八日得知白曉燕已慘遭撕票後絕望地說。林春生的母親因承受不了兒子鐐下大錯的打擊，身體虛弱，由丈夫陪她到診所看病，兩人手牽著手步出巷子，沈默不語，最是難過父母心。

林春生的父親廿八日晚在三重市正義北路住處門口接受記者訪問，從記者口中得知白曉燕已遭撕票，頓時愣了半天說不出話來，無法接受這個事實。他說，本來他還希望林春生把白曉燕放了，或許自己還有一線生機，如今演變成這樣：「這下子代誌大條了（指事情很嚴重），一切攏去了了啦（一切完了），就讓官府（指警方）去抓吧，就算判死刑，我也沒有話說」。

林春生的父親想起白冰冰的遭遇。他說，最為難的是要如何向白冰冰交代，「我要如何開口」？

【本報台北訊】「趕快把人家的小孩放回去……」電視仍一再重播涉嫌白曉燕綁架案在逃嫌犯陳進興、林春生的父母親情的呼喚，要他們出面投案，突然插播白曉燕慘遭撕票的消息後，陳進興六十多歲的母親，從板凳上幾乎昏厥而癱倒在地；林春生的父母則在傍晚外出返家，神情木然地在巷口買了兩碗麵後，「兩位老人家躲在屋內，深鎖大門。鄰居說，林春生的父親只說了句：「人都死了，還能說什麼！」

陳進興因涉及白曉燕綁架案，陳進興六十多歲的母親便整日愁容滿面，不時落淚，甚至還一邊掃地，一邊掉淚，口中喃喃自語：「怎麼會這樣？」「以後怎麼做人？」據轄區警方調查，陳進興的父母離異後，母親改嫁，陳進興與同母異父的兄弟相處並不和睦，所以很少回家；案子曝光後，警方派員輪流守在陳家，原本就有健忘症的陳母，精神更是恍惚，一下子問警員「要不要吃便當」一下子又問「阿興是犯什麼案？」警員看在眼裡也深感不忍。

陳進興的妻子張素真也因涉嫌該綁架案被收押，留下三歲和不到一歲的幼子，因發高燒，由張素真的妹妹暫住陳家，幫忙照顧。昨天下午陳進興的母親和岳母在板橋地檢署檢察官的安排下，前往土城看守所探視張素真，兩位親家母親一回到家中，再也按捺不住悲傷，痛哭失聲。

身體原本就不好的陳母，在子女的安撫下，好不容易進房休息，但眼都沒能闔上。電視晚間新聞播報出發現疑是白曉燕的屍體時，張素真的妹妹趕緊喚醒她起床至客廳，坐在小板凳上看新聞，陳母口中突然：「害呀糟了！一定是白曉燕！」即昏厥癱倒在地，在一旁的張素真的母親則更是掩面痛哭，家人不知如何安慰。鄰居說，陳家好像準備搬至別的地方。

**Figure 11.** From the *Shijie ribao* (World News) overseas Chinese daily, Tuesday, April 29, 1997. By the 1990s, remote media, such as this North American newspaper, carried regional news items that featured local languages. Above, the father of a man accused of the kidnapping and murder of the infant daughter of television celebrity Bai Bingbing is quoted, responding to an interview in Southern Min, that there is nothing he can say in defense of his son.

阮愜意。—We don't smoke. We are happy."[55] However, youth in Taiwan were not comparable as a target audience for local-language advertising to their counterparts in Hong Kong.

Press reportage began to quote people using features of Taiwanese Southern Min instead of translating fully into Mandarin, and to carry local expressions into the narration of social news and features in a style similar to that of Hong Kong journalism. The Taiwanese Southern Min features used were usually not fully faithful transcriptions of vocabulary, but selected indications of local speech filled in with Mandarin vocabulary. Nor were the characters used to transcribe the speech necessarily scrupulously authentic. The press, like the publishers of lyrics to popular music, have simplified many characters by

replacing them with more familiar ones. "What" appears as 啥米 or 蝦米, not 啥麼 or 啥物; a girl is now "pretty" *sui* 水, not *sui* 媠 or 嫷; "luckily" is 家在 *ka-chai* or 好家在, rather than 佳哉; "striving" is everywhere seen as 打拚 rather than 拍拚.

The preservation and promotion of Southern Min were thus far more the quotidian work of mass-media advertising, reportage, and popular entertainment than of remarkable texts of literature. Literature in written Taiwanese Southern Min or Hakka had become a niche, like Xiang Yang's verse website, *Xiang Yang gongfang* (Xiang Yang workshop), or Song Zelai's collection of short fiction. By the end of the century, devoted specialists were debating how to represent in writing the estimated 20 percent of Southern Min for which no Chinese characters were known.[56] The legislature voted to offer Taiwanese Southern Min as a second language in public schools, prompting the issue of whether this would become a vehicle for preserving local varieties or for creating a standard, and voted on a new *Tongyong* romanization system for bilingual signs in Mandarin and Southern Min. The local language of the majority to represent an identity for the island state had now become a source of division among the majority, as well as among the many in the minorities for whom it was another form of domination.

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# Guilty Pleasures on the Mainland Stage and in Broadcast Media

## Suppressing and resituating the local

More than any other medium, radio sustained local languages in mainland China until the mid-1990s. Provincial and local radio stations offered news, weather, and a variety of traditional entertainment programs aimed especially at populations too old or too deprived of education to be expected to be competent in Putonghua Mandarin. With the expansion of television and of education in the 1980s, the central government began to reduce local-language broadcasting, with considerable success. Some eighteen provincial-level radio stations dedicated to local-language broadcasting were reduced to five by 1996. At the end of the century, only Guangdong Province still supported full programming in dialect, the Guangzhou-based Cantonese dialect. The Sichuan province Chengdu local-language radio station ceased service altogether in 1997. In Shanghai, scripted programming in local language was reduced to public-service broadcasts to peasants in the then rural suburbs of Pudong. In Xiamen, Fujian, as the city annexed outlying counties and large numbers of migrants, *neidi ren*, arrived looking for employment, Xiamen Television carried daily lessons in "pure Xiamen" Southern Min dialect until it conceded the role of lingua franca to Mandarin and reduced its local-language broadcasts to the community features program "Kan Xiamen" (Looking at Xiamen), leaving it to Southeast Television (Dongnan dianshitai) to broadcast news and weather in the Xiamen dialect. Southern Min was heard most frequently on the listener call-in karaoke service

of the Xiamen music radio station (*Xiamen yinyue tai*) featuring Southern Min music mostly from Taiwan.

If anything, music radio threatened to replace local radio. The Taiwanese Southern Min broadcast in Xiamen was distinct from the local Xiamen Southern Min in both phonology and vocabulary. Far more dramatic was the participation of radio in broadcasting Hong Kong Cantonese popular music. After the Spiritual Pollution Campaign of 1983 was abandoned and agreements for the return of Hong Kong to Chinese administration were secured from Britain in 1984, the Chinese government admitted Hong Kong popular culture into Chinese broadcast media. The dialog of Hong Kong telenovelas was dubbed from Cantonese into Putonghua Mandarin, beginning with the patriotic martial arts series *Huo Yuanjia* and the—also patriotic—gangster epic *The Bund.* However, their popular theme songs remained in Cantonese, and with them a host of other pop songs. Hong Kong and Taiwan pop music rapidly came to dominate absolutely the popular music field in China through the mid-nineties. By 1990, at its height, the Taiwan–Hong Kong music craze accounted for eight million of the ten million audiocassettes produced or distributed in China.[1]

In music, the initiatives adopted within China to win audiences back to popular music produced in the north in Mandarin took the form of promoting it as yet another form of regional culture, such as the "Northwest style" *(Xibei feng)*. Moreover, the attempt to maintain a boundary between high culture and popular culture, another foundation of the status of Mandarin usage, was also challenged through popular music. In 1996 the singer Li Na, whose fame rested on (Mandarin) theme songs for television shows, sought to give a concert in the Beijing Concert Hall, following a trend set by singers in Hong Kong and Singapore, backed by the symphony orchestras of those cities.[2] Although Li Na was sternly rejected at the time, soon the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra was providing its talents and its facilities to support popular singers, and the symbolic boundaries of high and popular culture were transgressed. In these ways, the development of popular music in north China paralleled the literary developments that came to be dominated by Wang Shuo's assertion of local language in texts that defied existing conceptions of the categories of

high and popular culture. The major distinction in the two, however, was that while Hong Kong Cantonese was accepted not only for its association with economic status but also as a romantic language through Hong Kong popular music, Beijing speech, through fiction and telenovelas, remained largely associated with the working class and was surely seen as a language in opposition to that of the cultural elite.

Guangzhou and neighboring cities of Guangdong next to Hong Kong shared none of the national prominence of Hong Kong popular culture. Serialized dramas in Cantonese on radio and television in Guangdong became dominated by Hong Kong productions. News and information broadcasting in Guangzhou held to a Guangzhou standard of pronunciation: initial *n*'s remained ("you" remained *neih*, not *leih*), initial *ng*'s were preserved ("I" was *ngo*, not *'o*), and so forth. Yet the competition of Guangzhou Cantonese with Hong Kong Cantonese was evident in talk shows, listener call-in programs, and other forms of entertainment. As one observer noted: "The radio and television programs of the Pearl River delta region have not only imitated the content and presentation of similar programs in Hong Kong, but also even adopted on broadcasts Hong Kong-style Cantonese or Putonghua Mandarin with a heavy Cantonese accent."[3] Code mixing became chaotic. Some announcers and hosts retained the earlier fashion of mixing Cantonese with Putonghua Mandarin: a "thing" might be heard as a Mandarin *dongsai* 东西 instead of a Cantonese *ye* 嘢, "where" spoken as *sahmma deifong* 什么地方 instead of *mihtye deifong* 乜嘢地方, or "to come" pronounced *loih* 来 after Mandarin *lai*, instead of the Cantonese *leih* 嚟. Still other speakers borrowed from Hong Kong English language loans: "daddy," "mommy," "taxi," "bo" (ball), "fei-lo" (fail), "tennis," "golf," "disco," "e-mail," "office," "fai-lo" (file), "shopping," and "facial." Advertisements could be heard switching from the Tang poet Li Bo's verse to English proverbs in the Hong Kong fashion: "*geui bui yiu mihng yuht* 举杯邀明月 … Great minds think alike" [Raising my cup I invited the bright moon. … Great minds think alike]. Nevertheless, it is important to note that there were hundreds of lexical items in common use that distinguished Hong Kong Cantonese from Guangzhou Cantonese, and the imitations of Hong Kong Cantonese in Guangdong broadcast media did not amount to a merger of the different dialects.[4]

North of Guangdong, even as radio programming was increasingly herded toward Putonghua Mandarin, announcers and hosts on radio and television began affecting Taiwan or Hong Kong accents and expressions, including that delightfully outrageous barbarism *tuokou xiu* (talk show) from Taiwan, itself an imitation of Japanese borrowings from English. The defection of such media figures, as the audible signs of control over language by a centralized standard of culture, to such southern accents became one of the best-known trends in broadcast media during the 1990s. As trends in popular music originating in the south became a vehicle to break down the opposition of high culture and popular culture, they were joined by northern-based promoters, announcers, and hosts to break down the opposition of a northern-based cultural center and marginal subcultures to the south. Even though radio was denied its older role as a medium of local language and was overtaken by television, it still played a key role in disseminating the sounds that dislocated high culture and its center, creating anxiety in those circles and eventually legal action from the government.

Some asserted that if cultural authorities in the state were exasperated by the direction in which popular culture was taking media language, they had only themselves to blame. The originating moment of error had occurred, not in the popular culture of the south, but among responsible authorities in north China in the late seventies. Only in the late 1970s, after their deaths, were the revolutionary leaders of Socialist China portrayed on stage and in film. The centerpiece of the early productions commemorating the achievements of the revolutionary leaders was *Xi'an shibian* (The Xi'an Incident), staged in 1978 and released as a film in 1981. This production recreated the 1936 abduction of the Nationalist Party president of the Republic of China by warlords, leading to negotiations that resulted in a united front of Nationalist and Communist parties against Japanese imperialism in China. *The Xi'an Incident* was praised for having "achieved a high level of unity of historical authenticity and artistic truth, and attained the unity of ideology and art."[5] Both the play and the film also made an unusual effort to realize a unity of image and sound. Although most Chinese had never heard the voice of Mao Zedong or Zhou Enlai, let alone of their Nationalist arch-rival Jiang

Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek), there was a strong urge among the artists engaged in portraying historical figures to allow performers to sound like the historical figures as well as to look and move like them. During 1978 and 1979 a series of meetings among decision makers in Chinese cultural circles on how to represent historical figures discussed at some length how to re-create their various local-language speech and accents. The consensus was that the performers' voices could imitate local-language features on the condition that the resulting sound be intelligible to audiences in general—assuming an audience competent in Putonghua Mandarin.[6] For over two decades thereafter a handful of actors made their living doing just that: Wang Tiecheng impersonated Zhou Enlai and his accent; Gu Yue imitated Mao Zedong's Hunan accent; Sun Feihu, Jiang Jieshi's Ningbo accent. Eventually, Deng Xiaoping's Sichuan Mandarin was featured in the film celebrating his early revolutionary activity in *Baise qiyi* [The Baise uprising, 1989].

## The stage as local culture

A new era of stage productions celebrating the post-Mao reforms of the late 1970s featured such plays as *Xiaojing hutong* [Xiaojing lane, produced in 1985], by Li Longyun, a native of the Beijing *hutong* and a graduate of Nanjing University.[7] Set in a "mixed courtyard" *dazayuan* housing a group of the lowliest of Beijing working-class citizens, the play was motivated to employ local speech, not only on account of the social group portrayed, but also by its aim to review the history of the People's Republic from Liberation in 1949 up to the reforms of the late seventies and early eighties through characters who represented a striking departure from the idealized stature of the preceding Maoist-era heroes. These are loyal, dutiful, even self-sacrificing but decidedly humble citizens of limited talents. Endowing such characters with local language is a rhetorical feature that both sets them off from those idealized Maoist characters and generates authenticity. It also recontextualizes the political jargon of the Maoist era. The ordinary, plain-speaking people are depicted as victims of the era, while their persecutors, political activists among the local residents, mouth slogans embedded in local language, making the political

jargon they insert into their speech sound imported and artificial. In this way the voice of Maoist rhetoric is no longer privileged as enunciated through a culturally higher form of language and knowledge. Even the voices of activist Red Guards who enter the city from other regions during the Cultural Revolution in Act 3 are scripted to speak in Sichuan dialect rather than educated Putonghua Mandarin, thus depriving them of any claim to higher cultural status or to a national identity not also mediated by a localized one.[8]

In the ensuing wave of cultural criticism that swept through the cultural elite during the 1980s, the experimental modernist theater in Beijing sought a place by staging *Sangshuping jishi* [Sangshuping chronicles] by Chen Zidu, Yang Jian, and Zhu Xiaoping. Narrated by an educated youth sent down to a Shaanxi village, the play depicts the misfortunes of villagers during the Cultural Revolution as the result of a Maoist socialism that has actually perpetuated the ills of a traditional Chinese patriarchal authoritarianism. Given its Brechtian episodic form, with a chorus and moments of magical realism, the play anchors its authenticity in a colloquial Shaanxi dialog spoken by the peasant characters, which is briefly suggested in the following exchange between a cadre and his daughter-in-law:

> 李金斗：你个狗毬的东西！你男人死了才几天啊你就这么胡毬折腾！你让你大这张老脸往哪搭放！
>
> Li Jindou: You bitch! Your man had been dead not even a couple of days and you were already fooling around! [. . .] How can your dad show his face in the village!
>
> 许彩芳：（不服地）那不怪我！都是他们往我身上泼（音：豁huo）的脏水。
>
> Xu Caifang *(Defiantly):* Don't blame me! That's all backbiting. Nothing else. [Literally: It's all their pouring (pronounced *huo* instead of *po*) dirty water on me.][9]

Beijing audiences could be expected to interpret the general meaning of such expressions and pronunciations. The unfamiliarity of various words also contributes aesthetically to the alienating effects associated with a Brechtian performance by relativizing the dialog, displacing the clarity of theatrical speech from its commanding role on stage.

Yet, much of the Beijing audience was challenged by both the Shaanxi dialect and the heavy-handedness of the bleak message of cultural criticism in modernist form, which made coping with the colloquial all the more difficult and tedious.

When a rejoinder to cultural criticism found an audience in the 1990s, theater again assumed a role, this time creating more assertive emblems of Chinese culture in Guo Shixing's *Niaoren* [Bird men], which employed a modernist appropriation of a traditional form, Peking Opera. After the old-fashioned practices of a group of local Beijing men raising caged birds as a hobby are threatened by the intrusion of three men representing judgmental westernized discourses, the "bird men" put the three intruders on trial, staged as a Peking Opera scene, and expel them from the park where the men gather with their caged birds. There is no question that the subculture of the bird men is an allegory of Chinese culture, and that the negative views of the three westernized men represent a parody of Chinese cultural criticism and globalizing forces. This parody is evident in the pseudo-Freudian statements of a psychoanalyst: "This many people spending their lives here with birds is a reflection of the subconscious problems embedded deep within the psychology of our entire nation. If I can make a breakthrough, not only a few bird-lovers, but also an ancient glorious nation, will be saved."[10]

In analyzing this play, Claire Conceison has persuasively followed Rey Chow in arguing that the Peking Opera court set up by the bird men to judge and expel foreigners "enacts a longing for an origin and past that rendered China an ungraspable entity to its Western intruders."[11] However, it is important to note also that the nation is presented only in terms of the local. The play is set in Beijing; the bird men use Beijing Mandarin, practicing a subculture of bird raising and Peking Opera that may be familiar to many other Chinese but is far removed from their cultural practices and symbols. Moreover, there is a point in the play when the bird men abduct a young man from Anhui and force him against his will to learn Peking Opera. As much as this may be an allegory of communist or traditional cultural hegemony in decline, it is still presented through the local subculture of Beijing residents imposed upon another Chinese. It is only through this domination of one local subculture over others that the bird men

can claim to be a voice of "China." Indeed, it is an integral part of the play, and this voice succeeds only to the extent that it unites a larger collective of Chinese by challenging a common enemy, presented in the form of three outsiders. The popularity of the play in Beijing in using local language and customs to stage a rejoinder to an elite discourse was not matched by enthusiasm elsewhere in China.

The complementary uses of local language in *Sangshuping Chronicles* and *Bird Men* pointed up the issue that theater, in a time of dwindling state subsidies, succeeded commercially more by appealing to local audiences than by aiming for a nationwide appreciation. Moreover, both plays also segregated their characterizations, providing the voices of cultural elite characters in Putonghua Mandarin and of local residents in local language. True to this cultural vision, many involved in theater were unwilling to allow it to turn to local languages and betray the commitment of modern spoken drama to representing a high national culture.

As the cultural elite carved out a role for themselves in the new opening of China to foreign resources, their concern with constructing an internationally recognized high culture consigned the role of local language to that of a poor relation who cannot be altogether ignored but needs to be made presentable for occasional appearance. In Chengdu, a major cultural center, subsidies to the regional opera helped sustain it there, and various experiments with local-language productions on the modern stage were launched. One such major production was the contemporary opera adapted from the Republican-era novel of the Sichuan author Li Renjie, *Si shui wei lan* [Ripples on stagnant water, 1996]. The story is set in the late Qing as the "stagnant water" of closed Sichuan society is opening to innovations from foreign sources, creating "small ripples." The tale presents a beautiful peasant girl, Deng Xuangu, who holds out against all proposals until she can be married to a shopkeeper on the outskirts of Chengdu, half fulfilling her dream of becoming a city girl and escaping the drudgery of peasant life. The other half of fulfillment is, after the manner of Pan Jinlian, to trade this husband, whom she finds repulsive, for his cousin, a Paoge secret society figure, whom she finds dashing. However, both her husband and his cousin suffer for their association with the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, and the young woman then decides to marry an

admirer who has converted to Christianity and joined the church as a society of its own, in response to having been abused by the secret society followers of the Boxers.

By focusing on Deng Xuangu as a romantic figure forced to compromise her ideals in love and in seeking national recognition in the circles of high culture, the opera, like the novel before it, was challenged to present a distinctively local community in realistic detail that was also understood to offer both an allegory of the nation historically and the parallels in contemporary society to the time in which the text was written. In adapting a novel noted for its realistic detail and representation of Chengdu but determined to present the relationship of Deng and her husband's cousin in a fully romantic fashion, the opera had her and her lover speak and sing in the pronunciation and vocabulary of Putonghua Mandarin and the supporting characters deliver their lines in Chengdu Mandarin. As Deng says to her neighbors at the opening of the opera, "I'm not like you at all, not like you at all." The linguistic stylization of the script permits Deng and her lover to claim recognition as lovers whose vision and experience allow them to transcend the coarse, practical, and humorous realm of the mundane consigned to local language. Such a formula worked well not only in winning a national award for this production, but also for adapting local-language productions for national audiences in other locations, such as the television adaptation of the Suzhou *pingtan* opera *Ti xiao yinyuan* [Fate in tears and laughter, 1998].[12] At the same time as such a stylization addressed practical needs for intelligibility and one set of cultural expectations for high culture, the oppositions created by endowing Putonghua Mandarin with an elevated status as the language of solemnity, of love, and of the nation while identifying local language with all that is limited in feeling, thought, time, and space also involved an unbalanced formula that could not consistently be sustained.

## The local stage and official programs

Official propagandistic themes also provided a significant stimulus to use local languages in many theatrical productions aimed at wider

audiences. By the late 1980s official propaganda was concerned to show that individual enterprise in a market economy had historically failed during the Republican era well prior to 1949, not through any intervention of the Communist Party, but through the failings of the old society and the iniquities of bureaucratic capitalism, which the Communist Party was pledged to correct. The result was a wave of stage, film, and television productions offering a series of honest, hard-working, individual entrepreneurs whose worthy endeavors met with unjust failure in the Republican era. Stressing the status of their characters as common people rather than cultural elite figures in authentic, historical situations, these productions all made extensive use of local languages.

The most famous of these productions is the play by He Jiping, *Tianxia diyi lou* [World's top restaurant, 1988],[13] staged in Beijing in 1988–1989. The play eventually broke all records for total number of performances and was adapted as the film *Lao dian* [Old Inn, also titled Peking Duck Restaurant, 1990]. Once again, the cultural elite are placed in the background as pathetic remnants of the last imperial dynasty or vapid promoters of a modern China, while socially humble but skilled and dedicated immigrants from Shandong have built a famous Peking duck restaurant. When the proprietor is on his deathbed he leaves the restaurant manager, Lu Mengshi, in complete control of its operations. The proprietor's own two inept sons, who devote themselves entirely to affecting the hobbies of the large leisure class of Beijing, are provided with the profits of Lu Mengshi's management. Lu and his loyal staff overcome all the many challenges to maintaining and expanding this successful business until Lu is finally destroyed by the interference of the proprietor's irresponsible sons and corrupt authorities. Lu Mengshi, his courtesan lover, and his staff are heroes of a market society, low in cultural status, but intelligent, dedicated, talented, and humane people who are the guardians of culture in the face of political chaos and the value of individual merit in the face of a corrupt social hierarchy. The play leaves no doubt that if there is anything worthwhile that Chinese have inherited from the twentieth century it is these values. The restaurant and its culture are a transvaluation of individual achievement as China was shifting from socialism to a market society, providing the symbol of a pedagogy for the nation

that matches the state's exhortation for its new vision of performance. But the language of that pedagogy is decidedly a local one.

The thematic elements of *World's Top Restaurant* reappeared in several television series of the early 1990s emphasizing local languages. In Shanghai they were used to narrate *Shanghai yijia ren* [Shanghai woman, 1991], the rise and fall of a young Subei girl who comes to Shanghai in the 1920s as a seamstress and builds a tailoring enterprise only to see it ruined on the eve of Liberation during the late 1940s. In Chongqing the theme of the virtuous entrepreneur inspired a local opera, which was then adapted by the failing local opera company as the telenovela *Ling Tangyuan* [Sugar dumpling, 1990]. "Sugar Dumpling" is the nickname acquired by an illiterate orphan of the Republican era, Lin Minghe, whose rotund appearance is associated with his inventing a variety of the local sugar dumpling that makes him a success. His achievement eventually gives him the ambition to reinvest his profits buying sundries in Guangdong and reselling them in Chongqing when warlord fighting creates a scarcity of goods there. This venture, however, arouses the ire of other local merchants and then attracts the graft of officials, eventually driving Ling Tangyuan out of business. Like *World's Top Restaurant*, the Shanghai production of *Shanghai Woman* and the Chongqing production of *Sugar Dumpling* were based on historical events, used to provide supplementary local histories that emphasized elements of local culture and the impact of historical events on the local community, creating a sympathetic place for the work ethic of a market economy as the authentic heritage of the community. Moreover, such productions attested to a sense of community predating the rise of socialism at a time when the socialist policies that had since shaped these communities were undergoing radical reforms and their ethos was disintegrating.

The concern for loss of community that provides these productions about failed entrepreneurs with much of their poignancy also directly motivated the use of local language in stage plays of the mid-1990s seeking to reconcile residents to urban renewal and their displacement in this process. The best known of these is *Gala hutong* [Back alley, 1994] by Lan Yinhai and Gu Wei, which focuses on the tensions, annoyances, and indignities of all kinds that plague life in a

crowded, dilapidated mixed courtyard dwelling in a Beijing back alley. One young entrepreneur makes enough profit to build a spacious, modern dwelling in the lane and becomes the envy of his neighbors. However, the city housing authority takes matters in hand by declaring that all residences will be leveled and new, high-rise housing built, to the consternation of the entrepreneur but the delight of the other residents. If anything, the play illustrated the inconsistency inevitable in state propaganda, which by the mid-nineties had shifted emphasis from encouraging positive portraits of individual entrepreneurs to using unsympathetic representations of them to shift the focus of conflict from the loss of a neighborhood to the state addressing inequities in their communities.

In the Chongqing response to depicting relocation, the play *Xisang* [Joy in loss, 1994] by Yang Xiao[14] centers on the response of different generations of residents of the market town of Shazhouping to plans for relocating them as construction of the Three Gorges Dam project proceeds. The grandfather patriarch of one family is determined that his grandchildren will continue to farm the land of their ancestors. The grandchildren have other plans and see relocation as a necessity that holds out promise for their small enterprises. The grandfather relies on his son, Wang Xiling, to enforce his demands that the grandchildren stay put and farm; but Wang Xiling's former partner, Xique, appears. She is suffering from terminal cancer and asks Xiling to assume the care of his brain-damaged child. That the child has suffered on account of uncontrollable flooding prompts Xiling and his wife not only to accept the child but also to agree to relocation. Now on his deathbed, the ailing grandfather understands that progress cannot be halted and accepts change. His death and Xique's are balanced by the birth of a widow's child and the wedding of a grandson. Although the mayor of the town is portrayed in very positive terms, the play emphasizes that, despite his support for the grandchildren, it is not he but kinship relations that determine the peasants' decisions to carry on with marriages, plans for occupations, and relocation. Speech acts in the drama are enunciated in local language by common people, not by any state organization using Putonghua Mandarin.

Shanghai, as well, offered an urban renewal play through the


**Figure 12.** Local language was widely used in Chongqing media to create a sense of community as the city and its environs planned reorganization as a special municipality. Above shows one episode in the ''Maoge'' (Brother bumbler) cartoon series in *Chongqing chenbao* (Chongqing Morning News, 1996). Opposite, a page from a local drama script, *Joy in Loss* (*Xixang,* 1994).

西陵婶　你、你太过份了，我们当倒爹说！

“老天牌”　（上）清早八晨的，你们又在吵啥子？

西陵婶　爹，他一天屋头的事不管，土头的活路不做，到处野跑……

“老天牌”　西陵，你是不是听倒喊要移民搬迁，想丢了田土搬上山去呀？

望西陵　不，不，我听爹的。我跟你一样，也舍不得搬……

西陵婶　一样？那才不一样呢！爹你舍不得的是田土，他舍不得的是河边那块捶衣石，舍不得梅子坡高头那个驱婆娘住过的那间烂棚棚……

望西陵　你打胡乱说！

“老天牌”　西陵媳妇，二十多年的事了，你莫要一泡屎不臭，挑起来臭哈！

西陵婶　爹，我听到个风风，说是那个女人又回沙洲坪来了。要不是他哪个像丢了魂一样满山满坡去找呢？

“老天牌”　不要说了，我的儿我晓得，他不得是那号人？西陵，你也是五十好几儿大女成人的了，各人也要规矩点。地头的草该锄一下了，粪也该淋了，眼下包谷正灌浆，就像奶娃子等倒你去喂奶哟！

望西陵　（如释重负）我听爹的，我这就去起猪圈，粪桶满了就去淋包谷。（下）

“老天牌”　（不知人已走，继续说）你默倒田土是哑巴不会说话？它灵醒得很。你不痛它，它会巴你？你误它一时，它误你一季……（一看人已不在，顿觉扫兴）

[ 望开江出门欲走……

“老天牌”　开江，哪去？（见望开江不答）又到大河去捞泡财呀？你那“水猫子”的职业是个伤天害理的活路！一天就巴不得来洪水、打烂船，你才好抢发水货去搞钱！各人安心种地才是正经！

望开江　一个人才两分地，几锄就刨了，还不够我爹一个人弄整。

“老天牌”　眼看你妹妹就要出嫁了，申家屋头正在为她修新房，你也该去帮下忙哟！

望开江　他申家疯了！这个时候还修房子，眼看就要淹了……

“老天牌”　淹了？没得啷凶！吼了啷多年，没见淹了？哼，你谨防学对门德旺，把命都丢在大河头！（气冲冲下）

[ 西陵婶忙去搀扶，同下。临走时又用脚碰了碰望开江，示意他快走。

[ 望开江站起，跺脚，正欲走……

梨　花　闷牯子，喊你呀！哎，自从喊要移民搬迁，老头子就像吃了炸药一样，跟哪个都是一顿“快发财”。莫气，莫气，树老根多，人老话多，抱鸡母老了咯哆咯哆。你这边耳朵进，那边耳朵出；就当没听倒！哪个，又到河边去呀？

望开江　嗯。

梨　花　捞泡财？

望开江　嗯。

梨　花　（学他）嗯，嗯！说你是死人，你比死人多口气；说你是活人，半天不放一个屁。就会“嗯”哪“嗯”的，包谷猪哇？

望开江　大河，发沙水了。

梨　花　今年的水硬还来得早喂。呃，你下细点，莫像你德旺哥……呸！呸！大吉大利！你看我这张臭嘴，也不会说个吉利话。

望开江　莫来头，童言无忌嘛。

**Figure 12.** (continued)

Shanghai People's Humor Theater Company *(Shanghai renmin guji jutuan)* that had performed so many stage, television, and film productions in local languages. One, titled *Fuxing zhi guang/Vuxin zak guang* [The revival of Revival Avenue, 1997] celebrates the life of A Fu/A Fo from his life as a teenager in the late nineteenth century to his honorary role in initiating the demolition of Fuxing Avenue (Fuxing donglu) in 1996. As a teenage immigrant from northern Jiangsu (Subei or Jiangbei) to the old International Settlement of Shanghai, he and his teenage lover from Suzhou together flee their employment by an exploitative foreigner and are taken in by residents of the Chinese city, where they build a house and raise children on what becomes Fuxing Avenue. They are, however, forced to flee again when the foreigner and his henchmen search them out to take them back to their old employment. It is only sixty years later, when A Fu is presiding over his family of thirteen in the same house, that he learns that his wife died while escaping. Meanwhile, the economic crisis brought on by the Great Leap Forward of 1958 has delayed housing renovations, and thirty years later A Fu's family still lives in the same house, now a "pigeon coop" *(baihelong)* crowded with great-grandchildren as well, all of whom refuse to leave until they are given new housing. Jiang Zemin as mayor visits the street to show his concern during a typhoon, and in 1996, with new housing finally prepared, a ceremony is held to begin demolishing the old housing, with A Fu signaling the start of the wrecking as the first resident and the last to leave.

What *The revival of Revival Avenue* offers in its local language that other cities tended not to present are multiple languages and metalinguistic commentary on the various local languages, a characteristic of Shanghai productions. Early in the play, when the henchmen of the foreign exploiter are searching the residents of the Chinese city for A Fu and A Xin, they attempt to identify them from their local language, since everyone present is masked for a celebration. The leader of the henchmen, Tiger Liu (Liu Ahu), and his chief guard, or *dalouluo*, surprise the local leader of the residents, Wu Dage.

> Tiger Liu *(asking two masked persons):* Have you eaten lunch?
> Wu Dage: It's the middle of the morning, and you're asking them if they've had lunch? Of course they haven't.

Daloulуo: That's what you don't understand. "Haven't" 没有 in Suzhou Wu is *m'be* 呒不, and in Northern Jiangsu Mandarin it's *m'de* 没得.

*(Everyone looks at the two persons being questioned.)*

Tiger Liu *(asking):* Speak up. Have you eaten breakfast?

(*The persons wearing masks answer in Shanghai Wu:* "*mv'mvak*, *mv'mvak* 呒没, 呒没.")

Tiger Liu *(leads a young girl over to another masked couple):* How does she look?

Wu Dage: There's no need to ask that. She's the prettiest girl around here.

Daloulуo: That's just the point. "Pretty" 好看 in Suzhou Wu is 标致, and in Northern Jiangsu Mandarin it's *haogai* 耗垓!

Tiger Liu: So tell me, how does she look?

(*The masked persons answer in Shanghai Wu:* "*hao'koi*, *hao'koi* 好看, 好看.")[15]

Just as the play is deliberate in making A Fu from Subei and his wife, A Xin from Suzhou, living refutations of the stereotype of distance between these two groups, so the play goes on to assert that the residents of Shanghai are from all corners of the map of China, their accents and language highly varied, and the henchman's idea of who Shanghai residents are is placed in question. It is a melting pot, not the location of a particular language. Yet, the play was staged for residents of Shanghai relocated to the suburbs in the mid-1990s, and the very use of local language is aimed at providing something familiar at a time of change and stress for its audiences.

In all the plays of relocation in the nineties the major function of local language is its role in substituting for the geographical loss of the local, a replacement for that which has been displaced. The theme of maintaining a sense of community through the social, economic, and geographic disruptions of the reforms also found its way into Shanghai Wu television series, such as the very popular nineties comedy of daily life *Laoniangjiu/Lvao njviang jvieu* (Good Samaritan), which provided a stock of familiar neighborhood characters whose various problems are solved by a kindly "uncle," a term connoting a good Samaritan.

## Television as local culture

The links between the stage and television were numerous during the 1980s and 1990s, not only through shared themes generated from the Central Propaganda Department of the Party. Local language as the emblem of displacement and dislocation was used most famously in the CCTV-Henan docudrama *Hei huaishu* [The black ash tree, 1992] to promote the Family Planning Policy (one child per family). In this gritty production set outside Luoyang, a widow nearing seventy, Hu Daniang, is unable to arrange for herself decent housing and care from her three sons and refuses to accept them from her daughter. After the village mayor is unable to persuade the sons to continue sheltering her and settle the matter out of court, he encourages the mother to appeal to the law. Although the matter is finally settled in court in the mother's favor, she dies shortly thereafter, disillusioned in the belief that having several sons would ensure her security in old age. Except for an introduction in Putonghua Mandarin by the director Chen Shengli, explaining that the program is a docudrama filmed on location with local nonprofessionals taking most roles, the entire series is in Henan Mandarin.

The director's introduction states that local language was used to preserve the "primitive" *(yuanshi)* quality of the setting. Granted that his decision fully supported his stated aim, the fact that this particular narrative was suited to his choice of this aesthetic has much to do with the theme of loss and displacement that attends it, that the power of the drama lies in the loss of family values and the displacement of the pathetic widow far more than in other elements of the story. Yet, given the theme of family planning, the local-language dialog is associated with the "primitive" in the form of the widow's poor judgment in assuming that having many children offers security in old age. At the same time, as a China Central Television production designed for national distribution rather than local broadcasting, and through its choice of a local language without particular prestige, this production shares with a handful of films the emphasis on local language as a cultural emblem of marginalized society. The concept of the docudrama casting largely local amateurs on location and featuring local language bears a striking resemblance to the aesthetic choices of the director

Zhang Yimou for his film released the year before, *Qiu Ju da guansi* [The story of Qiu Ju, 1991; see Chapter 4]. It is difficult to ignore the role that *Qiu Ju da guansi* may have played in deciding the language of *The Black Ash Tree*. That is, at the same time that the teleplay associated local language with the primitive, it did so following *Qiu Ju da guansi* as a model from the prestigious field of film. Yet television was more intent on developing its field independently of the field of film, and had a number of incentives to do so.

As television drastically reduced the audience for radio, apart from music broadcasts, it brought with it an unprecedented domination of Mandarin, even in its burgeoning talk-show (*tuokou xiu* 脱口秀) and game-show industries. Although this was a policy executed on orders of the central propaganda authorities through the Ministry of Film, Radio, and Television, it was also to some degree a sign of the hegemony that Mandarin had maintained as the language of cultural capital among a huge mass of the population. Even in Guangdong, it can be argued that it was the excitement of broadcasting from Hong Kong that sustained the urban audience for Cantonese, as much or more than local programming in Guangzhou, just as it was Taiwanese music that sustained the strongest audience for Southern Min in Xiamen. The hegemony of Mandarin also served, as it had always been intended, to offset local hegemonies and offer some means to level the disparities in cultural status in many places. Hence, the opening of Shanghai to a stream of outsiders from all corners of Chinese-speaking societies and from all economic levels has greatly promoted the acceptance of Mandarin as a lingua franca in that city and served somewhat to displace older, entrenched subethnic cultural disparities in which a particular form of Shanghai Wu was one inescapable measure of a person's status.[16] Finally, as production of television programs shifted increasingly to a growing number of stations themselves, producers had to be concerned about marketing their shows to other stations. As much as dubbing translations into another language could overcome most problems with productions in local language, that process added costs to production and often the entertainment value of spontaneous expressions in talk and game shows would be lost.

For all the policy, means, and motives that supported the promo-


**Figure 13.** The television docudrama ''The Black Ash Tree'' (1992) followed Zhang Yimou's film *The Story of Qiu Ju* in dramatizing the plight of ordinary people not yet assimilated to modern society through stark footage and local varieties of Mandarin. Above, an abandoned mother addresses a court hearing as a complainant *(bottom),* while relatives observe and comment *(top).* The subtitles follow their local Henan Mandarin.

tion of a standard Mandarin in the broadcast media, the same policies, means, and motives presented features that could erode a standard Mandarin. Local production of short television dramas surged in the late 1970s after film studios and theaters began charging increased fees that television stations could not or would not pay and therefore began to tape their own productions.[17] At the same time, Chinese television began advertising, and by the late 1980s was largely supported by advertising. China Central Television (CCTV) in Beijing was virtually self-supporting even by 1985, and within a decade state subsidies to most television stations had dwindled to a small fraction of what they had been. Moreover, beginning in 1983 the state authorized a four-tier system of broadcasting whereby not only the central government and provinces could establish television stations, but also municipalities and counties. Many television stations began to respond to the demands of local advertisers to emphasize programming that would generate high local ratings. These also looked to promoting "local characteristics" as a way of holding a portion of the market. Hong Kong and Zhuhai television in Guangdong provided models of programming targeted at local audiences, in which "what is discussed in this programming are local matters, what is seen are local people, and even what is heard is local language. . . ."[18]

At the same time, the target audience began to shift in the late eighties and nineties from the cultural elite to the *shimin*, the urban population.[19] This increased programming involving audience participation in game shows, listener call-in, and talk shows. Although these were largely produced in Mandarin, they also flooded programs with a wide variety of heavily accented versions. In addition, innovations in news programming severely diluted the language standard previously applied to broadcasting personnel. Programs like the news investigation-interview show *Jiaodian fangtan* (Focal reports) placed a new emphasis on reporters' facility in interviewing and editing. This included a high degree of competence in a local language in order to conduct interviews with residents of the communities being covered. The result was that reporters did not necessarily meet the broadcast standards for standard Chinese speech upheld by the state, which had supported news delivered almost entirely by reporters as "talking heads" skilled in standard Chinese. Even the international coverage

of *Focal Reports* was anchored by a man who repeatedly failed the broadcast speech examination, but was both too qualified in English-language skills and too popular with audiences for the state to insist on pulling him from the program. Hence, the value of authenticity so vital to these programs was associated inextricably with acknowledging nonstandard speech.

The success of many of the new forms of programming further stimulated television artists and producers to assert the distinctiveness of television as a field of cultural production. Citing the style of *Focal Reports* and other news interview shows, one media theorist argued:

> Television should have its own style. But it was difficult for our television to free itself from the influence of film and newspapers. The language of commentary sounded like newspapers, the images looked like film, turning television into the freak of "newspaper television" and "film television." With the intensification of research into the nature *(benti)* of television, Chinese television gradually took an individualized course. Program production began to emphasize the superiority of images, sound, and text as a whole, digging out the potential of various techniques, striving to exhibit television's individual power to fascinate.[20]

Chinese theorists were familiar with the dictum that, given the distractions often surrounding television viewers, sound is the essential feature of television that distinguishes it from film: "In general the level of attention people give to the use of sound and oral commentary on television is far greater than their use in film."[21] In allowing an increased latitude for nonstandard voices and language, Chinese television producers were, after all, following a global trend.

In fact, throughout the 1980s Chinese television was increasingly linked with global television practices. Among these were the dozens of imported telenovelas: Mexican, Brazilian, Japanese, Taiwanese, and Hong Kong Chinese. Through these, Chinese producers became familiar with the general features of the telenovela as a narrative with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Compared to the American soap opera, "the traditional melodrama where romantic love is at the centre remained," but "[n]ow plots must always be related, in one way or an-

other, to what is about to happen or has already happened in society," including "the use of realistic settings and dialogue which is comparable to daily conversation."[22] Although these imported productions were dubbed into broadcast standard Mandarin, the concern for the nature of the dialog was instilled in Chinese planning their own productions: "Family members as well as romantic partners tend to converse in a casual style on interpersonal topics and discuss domestic matters. This exchange of routine information is also the chief material of our everyday activities, and accordingly the use of conversational styles in telenovelas is a thorough imitation of real life, adding further strength to an illusion of reality."[23]

## Vox populi on Beijing television

The decision to adopt telenovela aesthetics and compete with imported telenovelas led to the adaptation of a 1940s novel by Lao She, *Si shi tong tang* (Four generations under one roof, 1985). In this production there was a conscious effort to adopt dialog with "a casual style." Given that the aim was authentic daily language, the result could not fail to be local language. Before its official termination in the media in the fifties, the local language of Beijing was most famously celebrated in the Republican-era novels and plays of Lao She. After the founding of the People's Republic, Lao She joined in the government program to eradicate indulgence in local language in 1956, before his death during the political persecutions of the mid-sixties. The early eighties witnessed revivals of his work, including his stage play *Cha guan* (Teahouse, 1982) and a staged version of the novel *Luotuo xiangzi* (Camel Xiangzi, 1982), both released as films in 1982. Lao She had written *Teahouse* in 1958 after pledging to end his use of Beijing Mandarin in favor of Putonghua Mandarin, but *Four Generations under One Roof* was the product of a previous decade and an example of his use of old Beijing Mandarin. The televised adaptation of that novel in 1985 was the first series to reach beyond ten episodes (to twenty-eight), attracting an audience large enough to compete with imported telenovelas.[24] Officially, it was chosen to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the victory over Japan in the

War of Resistance. Unofficially, it attracted audiences to what was, to them, its unprecedented imitation of daily conversation. This is rapidly established:

> 小崔：买卖街儿全关门儿了。你看我还瞎转悠什么呢？
> Xiaocui: The shops are all closed. What do you think I should hang around for? (Episode 1)

The story centers on two families in the Beijing *hutong*—the Qis and the Guans—whose members are divided in their response to the Japanese occupation, some collaborating with the Japanese as opportunists and others affiliated with resistance. The elderly and the women are given a good number of lines in Beijing Mandarin. Conversely, one of the educated grandsons of the Qis has left Beijing, and the major protagonist of Lao She's novel, a Confucian scholar-poet Qian Moyin, appears only occasionally. Thus, with important characters among the cultural elite moved into the background, the daily local language of the other characters is foregrounded.

Telenovelas lacked the supreme justification of representing the leaders of revolutionary history. Artists and producers primed to explore the appeal of local-language dialog could justify their decisions as portraying "local characteristics" *(difang tese)*. Local characteristics had always been honored as valuable in socialist art and entertainment, and awards presented for achievements in presenting them. However, officials were quick to point out that this value had never extended to local languages:

> The use of local languages in television dramas has received widespread attention. Film and television have a broad influence on the promotion of Putonghua. Therefore, the language in films and television should be standardized and local language used cautiously. Is it really necessary to use local language and substandard expressions to add to local characteristics? To be sure, local language has local characteristics, but you cannot place an equal sign between local language and local characteristics. As vast as our nation is, with "a different custom every thirty miles, a different culture every three hundred" from east to west and north to south, there is naturally an endless variety of local and

> substandard expressions, so that if teleplays employ just local languages, audiences won't understand them and hundreds of millions of viewers will be lost. In truth, a successful teleplay can express its local characteristics just as well without a single sentence of local language.[25]

The justification for such a policy acknowledging local characteristics ignored the effect of depriving local characteristics of their role in constructing China in the popular imagination through the association of local languages with essentialized identities.

Despite this firm pronouncement, the success of the modest presentation of Beijing local language in *Four Generations under One Roof* ensured its presence in the sentimental telenovela *Kewang* (Yearning, 1990). The team of writers who created this script was headed by Wang Shuo, noted primarily as a writer of fiction employing the local language of Beijing youth culture. Wang was in an important aspect a product of the television subculture of Beijing, which greatly promoted his career and his self-confidence by producing an adaptation of his early story "Kongzhong xiaojie" (Stewardess) in 1984, the year before *Four Generations under One Roof*.[26] Hardly an imitator of Lao She or the language of Lao She's characters, Wang nevertheless learned to develop the style of casual conversation using local language in response to the defining role of television in recognizing his talent, much as he owed specific elements of his voice to other fiction writers.

*Yearning* was very much a series aimed at the sagging morale of the increasingly unemployed and underemployed urban working class as China entered the nineties. In it, Liu Huifang, a working-class girl of the 1960s during the Cultural Revolution, devotes herself to raising a foundling, together with her mother, Mother Liu, and sister, Xiaoyan. Huifang's devotion survives her ill-fated marriage to a "sappy" son of an intellectual family, who bears the stigma of being from Shanghai in his name, Wang Husheng.[27] Her devotion is undeterred by the importunings of the baby's mother, a physician, or her writer husband, or even being struck and paralyzed by a truck.

A romantically desirable figure, as well as a maternal one, Huifang is given a form of speech that subdues local language, one that does not set her off too distinctly from the culturally elite figures who pop-

ulate her life. But there is no mistaking what stock Huifang is from and the stuff she is made of in the heavily accented Beijing dialect of Mother Liu. These working-class paragons of loving warmth and moral determination set against the starkness of the Cultural Revolution and the ineffectualness of the cultural elite drove viewers to appeal to Beijing Television to speed up the programming schedule in order to air the show every night. Reporters noted comments like "This drama is talking about things we've been through ourselves, it's speaking in authentic Beijing speech, it's an especially intimate feeling," and praising in particular the vividness of Mother Liu's Beijing dialect.[28] Even members of the cultural elite conceded, "The lifelike codings of daily life in Beijing in *Yearning*, the painstaking use of Beijing speech, the complex entanglements among the characters, the calculated contrast between the tiny courtyard dwelling of the Liu family and the space of the Wang family in its small building, all inextricably drew people in."[29]

The major productions in Beijing that followed *Yearning* focused on the cultural elite: the comedy *Bianjibu de gushi* (Tales of an editorial department, 1991) and *Huang cheng ge'r* (At the base of the imperial city wall, 1992). Accordingly, the major characters speak a language much more in conformity with Putonghua Mandarin, but local language is far from absent among the editors themselves. Moreover, as they involve themselves in the lives of the local residents there are numerous occasions for using Beijing Mandarin. It is irresistible to note that the cultural elite in these series are depicted in a state of social decline. The situation that defines *Tales of an Editorial Department* is a magazine staff faced with a drastic loss of readership at a time when state subsidies are also disappearing, forcing the editors to adjust and adapt to a new society with a culture in transformation. As another production headed by Wang Shuo, its satire of mainstream culture is obvious. What generates a sympathetic portrayal of the editors is their willingness to accommodate the demands of a new culture no longer determined by a cultural elite but shaped by the daily, mundane situations of ordinary residents of Beijing. The editors, shorn of their status, are left to learn for themselves how to attempt to offer a cultural product of value to a readership attempting to navigate the emerging market society. Their frequent local expressions are a significant part of their appeal as sympathetic characters.

The mission of local language in Wang Shuo's productions was demonstrated in force in 1992–1993 with the broadcast of *Ai ni mei shangliang* (Loving you for keeps): "The charm of Wang Shuo's language is glowing once again, and has brought Chinese film and television into an era of language per se as an entertaining element."[30] In this series the local language is distributed both by class and situation. After the hard-working, award-winning stage actress Zhou Hua is hospitalized for kidney failure, her relationship with her husband deteriorates, and she is supported through her illness by her husband's friend, Gao Qiang. Zhou Hua, as befits her status and career, speaks Putonghua Mandarin, but switches readily to Beijing dialect with neighbors and with her husband, a failed actor who has dropped out of his career and speaks the local language. The protagonist Gao Qiang, a taxi driver, speaks Beijing dialect: "如果您不爱听就言语, 我立马儿打住。[If you don't want to listen then say so, and I'll stop]" (Episode 31). Once again, the cultural elite are reduced to a needy situation, and the hero is an ordinary fellow in status but a heroic figure as a lover, who marries the beautiful actress and sustains her through her protracted torments and disappointments.

Wang Shuo's career in television productions and his support for Beijing dialect continued through the short telenovela *Guobayin* (Heart's content, 1994). A romantic situation involving an insecure nurse and an administrative cadre suffering a wasting disease, the story did not offer strong motivation for local language either through their careers or through their circumstances, and dialect is not stressed. Although Wang Shuo's role in television declined after this series, the appeal of Beijing speech did not. It reached a peak in the late nineties with the broadcast of *Wuhui zhuizong* (Remorseless pursuit, 1997), the tale of a Beijing policeman who for forty years pursues his suspicion that a teacher is a spy for the Nationalist government. His obsessive investigation, spanning the decades from 1949 to 1989, leads him and his family into one sacrifice and misfortune after another. Meanwhile, the teacher himself undergoes a change of heart and even names his daughter Kangmei "Resist America." It is only decades later when she is about to marry one of the policeman's sons, with whom she has been sweethearts since childhood, that the teacher agrees to admit his past, unable to bear the thought of an unhappy marriage for his daughter and the policeman's unrelenting suspicion. Once again this

minor member of the cultural elite has bowed to the will of an indefatigable representative of the people. Moreover, the language has submitted as well. Given the historical circumstances of the drama, everyone in *Remorseless Pursuit* speaks Beijing dialect, regardless of cultural status, gender, age, or prominence as a character. They like words such as *chapie'r* 岔聘 for "incorrect," *cun* 寸 for "coincidence," *deci* 得词 for "reasonable," *tiandu'r* 添堵儿 for "unhappy," *cei*4 捽 for "break," *dalieie* 打连连 for "beg," *yao'ezi* 么蛾子 for "bad idea," *meixi* 没戏 for "no hope," *jidui* 挤对 or 挤兑 for "make or force someone to do something," *bei'r* 倍儿 for "very," and so on and on.

Following *Remorseless Pursuit*, the telenovela *Da zhai men* (A family of means, 2000) created a large role for Beijing Mandarin in shaping its major protagonist, as well as many supporting characters. Based on the history of the famous Tongren Tang pharmacy of Chinese herbal medicines from the late Qing through the War of Resistance to Japan, the telenovela appropriates the language of the working classes to validate the place of its sympathetic characters among wealthy entrepreneurs. Its chief protagonist, Bai Jingqi, a capable, headstrong son of the founder, leads a chaotic personal life romancing three women and displays daringly patriotic attitudes during the foreign occupation of Beijing after the Boxer uprising and the Japanese occupation from 1937 to 1945. Through it all he speaks like an underworld character of the Beijing *hutong*, his rough language identifying him as an ideal type of the local subculture, a gallant rogue indifferent to opprobrium and fearless toward foreign oppressors, to whom he utters phrases usually banned on television, such as *Yatou yangde* ("son-of-a-bitch"). A wife who has a background as a prostitute speaks Beijing Mandarin with a Jiangsu accent, a stereotype of the Suzhou-Shanghai prostitute.

Over a decade before, the venerable writer Xiao Qian had observed in the newspaper *Beijing wanbao* that much of the old language of Beijing had vanished, in particular expressions that were polite, euphemistic, and lyrical, leaving behind an impression that local speech was merely a vehicle for irreverent patter.[31] Implicit in this statement is the association with a stereotype of the local Beijing resident as glib and smug. Perhaps a telenovela like *Remorseless Pursuit* was a retrieval of some of this lost and disappearing language. However, the era of

reviving the virtues of the local working class on television was uncertain. As the party shifted emphasis more toward incorporating into social and political leadership those who were successful in enterprise, it reasserted the dominance of Putonghua Mandarin in the media. So, too, television production shifted increasingly toward the younger and higher end of market, for example portraying intellectuals going into the business world in *Huange huofa'r* (Changing lifestyles, 1998), or re-creating imperial Beijing in the costume drama *Huanzhu gege* (Princess Huanzhu, 1999). Such productions had ample motivation to employ Beijing dialect extensively but did not, and certainly did not suffer any loss of audience for it: *Princess Huanzhu* was a major success in terms of audience ratings.

The shift in production was also certainly in part a commercially driven one, as advertisers targeted a more affluent audience. However, its timing was determined as well by a reassertion of official disapproval of the expanding use of local languages on television, and on its nightly national news broadcast on July 31, 1997, CCTV announced that it was no longer airing local language. No detailed explanation was given. Certainly, it may be inferred, the accumulated grievances of the promoters of Putonghua Mandarin had struck home. For most of the 1990s print media had carried complaints, often aimed at the fashion of adopting expressions from Hong Kong, but also at Wang Shuo's "new capital style." As one father of a teenage boy pointed out in an editorial in the official newspaper *Renmin ribao* (People's daily), the worst result of circulating these expressions was that young people simply did not know the difference between a standard and a substandard expression—an echo of complaints noted previously in Hong Kong.[32] In the fall of 1995 the Ministry of Film, Radio, and Television forbade further productions of films in regional speech dialect, following the release of the film *Hong fen* (Blush), which employed a mix of Mandarin, Shanghai Wu, and Suzhou Wu. By early 1996 the Central Propaganda Department was circulating an unpublished draft of "Regulations for Managing National Universal Language and Writing" *(Guojia tongyong yuyan wenzi guanli tiaolie: caoan)* to enforce the use of simplified characters, in the face of a fashion for reintroducing traditional full-form characters, and Putonghua Mandarin, banning local language in the media except to present tra-

ditional folk arts scripted in local language. This document would prove to be a draft of a law instated January 1, 2001.

It is likely that official anxiety over local language in the broadcast media was prompted less by Beijing Mandarin than by the local languages in the productions of other cities that also discovered their attractions. Ultimately, Shanghai and Chongqing achieved the greatest prominence in local-language productions. In the process of asserting their places as cultural centers, these cities also broadcast productions that used linguistic distinctions to define features of themselves as communities. These definitions, in turn, implied an agency that mediated the cultural and political center in Beijing and the protean mass of an otherwise ill-defined China.

## Ambivalence and identity on Shanghai television

Perhaps more than in any other city, television productions in Shanghai using local languages presented them with a self-consciousness second to none. No sooner had Beijing broadcast the hit series *Beijingren zai niuyue* (Beijing sojourner in New York, 1992), than Shanghai television produced *Shanghairen zai dongjing* (Shanghai sojourner in Tokyo), emphasizing bits of Shanghai Wu dialect and its residents as a distinctive community in competition with Beijing as a national cultural center. The restoration of Shanghai as a commercial and cultural center was crudely allegorized in the film *Gu feng* (Stock craze, also Shanghai fever, 1993), in which the stock association of Shanghai Wu dialect with commercial acumen was restored. For decades during the Republican era when the commercial role of Shanghai was at its height, even writers like Mao Dun and Zhang Ailing, whose styles normally emphasized standard Mandarin, allowed a few sentences of Shanghai Wu dialect into the dialog of their fiction when the topic at hand was bargaining, whether in the stock market or on the street. In *Stock Craze* a clever bus driver craving capital enters a financial alliance with a culturally deprived Cantonese-speaking Hong Kong businessman that saves her financially ruined, Mandarin-speaking husband, an architect. True to type, the bus driver speaks Shanghai Wu, representing an investment-hungry Shanghai that will restore China by

rescuing the Mandarin-speaking cultural elite from their own incompetence and provide a cultural leadership for the colonized of Hong Kong.

The stereotype of the clever Shanghai moneymaker spouting Shanghai Wu was given its pejorative representation in the telenovela *Pujiang xushi* (The Pujiang story, 1996), produced by CCTV as a contribution to what the Central Propaganda Department called "main melody" *zhuxuanlu* propaganda for the socialist market economy. The issue posed as central to the story was a burning one indeed: the fate of state enterprises and workers threatened with unemployment. The hero, Luo Yiming, has just returned from studying management in Japan when he is made manager of a silk factory in the process of laying off thousands of workers. After stabilizing the situation, Luo sets about acquiring new machinery from Japan. However, his wife—whom he has laid off from the factory—and others join a private company established by Shen Daxing, who seeks to pave the way for a deal to sell the factory to a Hong Kong entrepreneur by sabotaging Luo Yiming's efforts. Finally Luo's own moral strength and business acumen bring about a change of heart among some of those who would sabotage him and he wins the day for his factory, defeating his unrepentant arch-rival Shen Daxing. Typical of several CCTV productions of the time, the dialog is mainly in Mandarin, with characters slipping into Shanghai Wu depending upon the situation. Putonghua Mandarin serves to establish and relate all necessary information about the action and plot, while Shanghai Wu is relegated to the position of something like phatic communication and utterances redundant to those spoken in Mandarin. Only two characters are typified by their Shanghai dialog, the underhanded schemer Shen Daxing, and his agent, a public relations and *san-pei* escort girl named Xiao Yan. Whereas the factory workers and other minor characters are made virtually bilingual to suit the function of the dialog at any particular moment, Xiao Yan and Shen Daxing can never get through a scene without uttering at least one line of Shanghai Wu dialect, as the language of relentless scheming.

The affirmation of such types through language has been a characteristic of Shanghai entertainment, the best known being Subei (northern Jiangsu) Mandarin or accent to present the low cultural

status of people who have immigrated from that region. A fascinating example of another such stereotype appears in the telenovela *Duozi zhanzheng/Duzy shezan* (Kidnapping war, 1996–1997). As the Pudong district of Shanghai was being demolished and its residents relocated to make way for sweeping construction projects, the Pudong accent and the stereotype that went with it were broadcast on local television. Qiao Shuming/Jiao Siming is a member of a Peking Opera company in Hongkou, his attractive wife, Yu Wen, is employed in a joint enterprise, and their young son, Duoduo/Dudu, doted upon by their relatives. The wife has an affair with a vice president of the joint enterprise and the two plan to emigrate to the United States. In order to secure her son, Yu Wen has her parents trick Shuming into signing a release form for his exit visa, under the pretence that he will return to Shanghai after a short visit to the USA. But all that she leaves Shuming is a letter of divorce.

Yu Wen and her parents are the stereotype of conniving Shanghai residents; Qiao Shuming's parents are the stereotype of unsophisticated, gullible Pudong peasant stock. It is the conversations between the older generation of parents that reveal this difference. To the generation of Qiao Shuming and Yu Wen, it is Shuming's use of Mandarin, as a low-level member of the cultural elite, the language of narrative through his internal monolog, that distinguishes him from his wife, yet another variant of the available Shanghai Wu–speaking female. Surprising as it may seem that this local production incorporates these stereotypes of Shanghai, such types nevertheless served to anchor the unpredictable, "illegible" experience, or *erfahrung*, of Reform/post–Reform-era Shanghai in what are familiar categories of understanding the metropolis.

Shanghai Wu also was used against type. It is introduced predictably in the telenovela *Zouguo dongtian de nüren/Zougu dongti ghek ghnugnin* (A woman's winter passage, 1996–1997) as the language of a factory worker and her milieu. Similarly, Mandarin is a language used by management-level figures and for the Peking Opera in which the factory worker's admirer performs. However, beginning in Episodes 4 and 5, Shanghai Wu also takes its place as a language of romantic love. A Zhen/A Zen, nearing forty, actually surrenders her position at a factory laying off workers in order to help a needy friend

keep her job, and takes work at a Taiwan-backed clothing factory. There she impresses her boss, in this case a Mandarin-speaking female chairman of the board, Xueli, but quits over harsh conditions and a harsher foreman. Too late A Zen is confronted by a younger woman who reveals she has been having an affair for three years with A Zen's husband. On her own, she hawks *dapai* cakes and umbrellas in the streets until she is able to begin earning an income from making clothes at home. The overseas Mandarin-speaking executive Xueli at A Zen's second factory now takes an interest in A Zen's clothing designs. She exerts herself to restore A Zen's trust and build a working relationship with her designing and making clothes. A Zen apologizes that she cannot speak Mandarin, only understand it, Xueli dismisses this as inconsequential, and the two work toward success, each speaking her own language. A Zen also attracts the admiration of Gu Ling, a Peking Opera performer living nearby. After A Zen's husband conveniently announces that he is dying of cancer, Gu Ling supports A Zen, and together with Xueli helps her establish her own company. It is easy to dismiss this production as a fantasy intended to placate the myriads of middle-aged women workers being laid off their state factory jobs in the 1990s. But, with their lack of symbolic as well as economic capital in a city suddenly made strange to them through the shift of economic systems and the influx of outside people and capital, the use of Shanghai Wu is clearly aimed not only at reinforcing the authenticity of this narrative, but at asserting a place for such women in the opportunities for a new life, both occupational and intimate, regardless of their lack of cultural capital.

Telenovelas like *A Woman's Passage through Winter* essentially reversed the formula of another theme in Shanghai television, most famously represented in the telenovela *Niezhai/Nyihza* (Moral debts, 1995) and later in *Chuang Shanghai* (Rushing to Shanghai, 1999). Although adapted from a book written entirely in Mandarin,[33] under the direction of the celebrated Huang Shuqin, *Moral Debts* exploited the full potential of Shanghai Wu to depict a linguistic wall dramatizing the estrangement of outsiders. Thematically, *Moral Debts* is itself a reversal of a wave of literature popular in the nineties that sought to salvage the Cultural Revolution era from a vision of tragedy and affirm a heroic role for educated youth, apart from the tragedy and victimiza-

tion, best known through the title and slogan *qingchun wuhui* "a youth without regrets." *Moral Debts*, by contrast, draws on accounts of educated youth sent down to Yunnan during the Cultural Revolution era, large numbers of whom formed illicit sexual relationships, and many of whom left behind their illegimate children when they were allowed to return to their hometowns (chiefly Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu, Guangzhou). These accounts reflect on unsettled emotional and moral issues among the now middle-aged, urbanite "educated youth" and their now teenaged or young adult offspring. This telenovela at least begins as the revival of an old melodramatic formula, the sudden appearance of secret illegitimate children in respectable families, now played out in five variations, in which the generation of Cultural Revolution youth who went down to the countryside of Yunnan and fathered or bore children there before returning to Shanghai are confronted by their children migrating to Shanghai.

In the telenovela the arrival of the teenagers ignites conflicts between their parents and their Shanghai spouses, and the children encounter prejudice from other family members or schoolchildren, or meet with parental rejection, with injury, arrest, or with their own disillusionment over the fate and living conditions of their long-lost parent. Eventually four of the five decide to return to Yunnan; the fifth has been sent to prison for assault and robbery. There is a certain antithetical balance: the imprisoned boy (Sheng Tianhua) is balanced by the indomitable will of another (Lu Xiaofeng) to free his wrongfully imprisoned father, while another (An Yonghui) endures injury and intimidation to avenge his mother's being beaten by her lover. But the growing attachment of several parents to their abandoned children is set against a cross-section of social ills and failures in Shanghai, so that the experience of the children with these is too overwhelming to bind them to their Shanghai parents.

The children from Yunnan speak Mandarin; the residents of Shanghai, including their parents, speak Shanghai Wu. It is a powerful wall of language that no amount of goodwill and translation can ever quite overcome. Huang Shuqin had previously put a few lines of Wu dialect in the mouth of a stereotypically unsavory woman from Suzhou in the TV adaptation of Qian Zhongshu's novel *Wei cheng* (Fortress besieged, 1990). As the director of *Moral Debts*, she and

others were, in fact, concerned that the effect of using local language in such quantity might make the show a failure. Since the show was in fact successful, several commentators remarked that it confirmed the new place of Shanghai as a cultural and economic center.[34] But what the series also revealed was rather the unease over what constituted authentic Shanghai Wu. As the dominant language of the community, it was also a contested entity. The media broadcasts of Shanghai Wu served to stir up the insecurity that many felt over this jealously guarded emblem of status and identity, and the anxiety that younger generations were growing increasingly indifferent to it.

A group of academics at Shanghai universities pointed out that prior to *Moral Debts* telenovelas depicting Shanghai but delivered in Putonghua Mandarin had fallen flat, and agreed that programs portraying Shanghai's local culture should make use of Shanghai Wu. On the other hand, they also pointed out that it was not well developed for media usage and cited examples of dialog from *Moral Debts* in which characters borrowed from Mandarin usage to deliver their lines, as when the middle-aged Shanghai character Shen Ruochen says to a woman who has falsely accused an acquaintance of rape: "报复了伊侬心里就痛快了是哦?[35] [It felt good for you to get revenge on him?]." Whether Shanghai Wu had ever developed a standard of its own, whether it was increasingly adopting Mandarin usage, and what the cultural status of that dialect was were questions that were routinely debated by the cultural elite of Shanghai, regardless of more systematic research by linguists. Dialectologists argued that a standard had developed out of the historic swarm of immigrants to the city after it was relatively closed off in the 1950s. At the same time, they also surveyed how the younger generation had increasingly adopted Mandarin usage in their grammar as well as vocabulary, as the line of dialog above exemplifies.[36] Moreover, local film and television artists themselves were quick to point out that it was virtually impossible to cast a telenovela like *Moral Debts* with performers who had identical accents. Some trace of their family history as immigrant outsiders remained audible in their utterances, or some features that distinguished generations, so there was little point in asserting Shanghai Wu as a language for the media: it evoked disparities and controversy as much as community.

Such insecurity spawned a virulent attitude of defending the status of Shanghai Wu as a major language with an important literary heritage that was being slated for demolition in the policies of the central government. One such educated defender, in a long article analyzing features of Shanghai Wu in the context of cultural history, noted:

> Since the Communist Party assumed government, the policies of the Shanghai government have conformed to Central directives, so that in the area of language and writing it has strongly promoted Putonghua Mandarin. It has been declared that promoting Putonghua is not in order to eliminate local languages, yet the objective results are that Shanghai Wu is being transformed and eliminated. We can now no longer listen to broadcasts in Shanghai Wu; television series dubbed into Shanghai Wu—and that dubbing is not in standard Shanghai Wu, since even performers from Shanghai cannot speak standard Shanghai Wu—have time and again been banned; when it was broadcast on television that some teachers being selected for excellence communicate in daily life with their students using Shanghai Wu, this was actually criticized as "inappropriate" by a panel of specialists. The children of Shanghai lack opportunities to speak in their own mother tongue—Shanghai Wu. If this situation continues, then within one or two generations, Wu dialect in the Shanghai region may be eliminated, or if not eliminated then so impacted by northern language that it will be transformed beyond recognition.[37]

Even some of those artists who acknowledged a standard still denied that it constituted a culturally privileged language. The scholar turned media celebrity Yu Qiuyu wrote: "Yet Shanghai dialect isn't the original language of this land. The original languages were Songjiang dialect, Qingpu dialect, and Pudong dialect, all of which are scoffed at by Shanghai people. Shanghai dialect is something like 'artificial crab meat.'"[38] Having moved to Shanghai with his parents and grown up there during the Maoist era, Yu Qiuyu expressed strong ambivalence toward Shanghai Wu that confirmed its dominance as a standardized language but refused to valorize it:

> For a person or a family to move into Shanghai amounted to entering a magic circle. You had to be extremely careful to remove the least trace of anything not Shanghai-ized. Especially if there remained any remnants of your hometown language in the Shanghai dialect that you acquired you made every effort to eradicate them thoroughly, as if they were so many flies or mosquitoes. When I first arrived in Shanghai you could still hear Ningbo and Subei accents in the marketplace all the time among the older folk, but these accents no longer existed among the next generation, and now it is no longer possible to tell from a young Shanghai person's conversation where his family came from. Just as with their accents, the connections between these Shanghai residents and the hometowns their families came from have basically ended. But when they come to fill out a form listing their place of origin, they can't write Shanghai either. Therefore Shanghai people have become a tribe without roots, knowing neither where they come from nor what plot of ground they belong to. Self-satisfied and pathetic, both. Hence, they actually envy those folks from the older generation who have never corrected their hometown accents. They keep a living hometown on their very lips, and each time they speak they announce their position in life.[39]

It is not necessary to agree with Yu's interpretation of the cultural identity of Shanghai Wu to conclude that Shanghai media remained perennially unsettled in a search for a voice that might either match the expectation for the unity of voice and image or transcend it.

Throughout the 1990s, as Shanghai was both taking in a massive influx of people from the widest geographic range of China and reaching out to extend the range of its media and establish its cultural status at national and transnational levels, Shanghai Wu was rarely employed. The topic of the use of Shanghai local language was sensitive enough that it generated numerous comments in the press. The press did not support promoting the language. In 1999, for example, the largest daily, *Xinmin wanbao*, ran a feature story over several days in the "social news" section discussing an incident in which a woman could not find employment at some local restaurants because she could not speak Shanghai Wu. The paper was promoting the view

that facility in local language should not be a criterion of employment in Shanghai.[40] One of the few moments of using Shanghai Wu in television advertising was the result of Pepsi-Cola seeking to identify its product with the local community by re-creating a well-known script that pitted an athletic star against a small boy in the competition to enjoy a can of the soda. In the Shanghai version in 1996, the star of the Shanghai soccer team, Shen Si, approaches a small boy for a sip of his Pepsi, to which the boy responds in Shanghai Wu: "*Nong xiang a vakyao xiang* 农想也勿要想 [Don't even think about it]." A major limitation on the spread of Shanghai Wu in the media was a reluctance to make any sustained use of it in print, in which many of the written forms of the local vocabulary were too unfamiliar to readers to risk challenging them. The rare, brief uses of Shanghai Wu in print ranged from promoting "old Shanghai" nostalgia to youth-culture phrases, as in the ad appearing on buses for jeans bewilderingly subtitled with the ironic message: *Buyao tai xiaosa* 不要太潇洒—"Utterly cool," derived from Shanghai Wu *Vakyao tak xiaosa* 勿要忒潇洒.[41] An announcement of an exhibition of antiques in Beijing from late imperial and early Republican eras Shanghai read, in old-fashioned full-form characters, *Akla qin nong le bakxiang* 阿拉請儂來白相 (We invite you to come enjoy). Despite the obvious impact of such visual appeals, and the role of Shanghai Wu in maintaining a sense of a community and its own local hegemony, the media were aimed at too broad a national and transnational audience for this local language to be promoted in a sustained fashion.

## Chongqing, Chengdu, and the contested roles of local languages

In contrast to the uneasiness and controversy over local language in Shanghai, Chongqing radio and television from their inception had regularly found a hegemonic place for Sichuan Mandarin, and especially the version prevalent in Chongqing, that never appeared to rise to the level of contestation or controversy, let alone ambivalence. Chongqing, as much as it also sought outside investment, was no

more than a regional cultural center, a distant second to Chengdu as a national center of culture in western China. Moreover, the immigrants to Chongqing were overwhelmingly limited to peasants from the surrounding region, and outsiders with cultural or economic capital were far too few to begin to constitute a target audience. The media of Chongqing were therefore much less ambivalent about asserting the regional hegemony of their local language. The contrast with Shanghai in the use of local language in print media was striking. After the Cultural Revolution era, with the reforms of the 1980s, social-news and human-interest supplements returned to newspapers in China, and in Chongqing provided the venue for daily bits of local language. The *Chongqing chenbao* (Chongqing Morning News) was for some years the major user of Sichuan Mandarin in its social-news items. For example, it was reported that traffic police were exhorted to abandon common but impolite comments to drivers such as: "你耳朵进烧腊馆去了;…下回你才认得到我; 你醒事些;…现在没得空 [Your ears went to the pickling factory;… Next time you'll know who I am; Wise up; … I don't have time for this now]." In 1996 when the *Chongqing Morning News* published a collection of familiar essays and its popular cartoon series, "Maoge" (Brother Bumbler) in Sichuan Mandarin, two printings totaling twenty thousand copies sold out in two months.[42] Nothing like this was even attempted in the Shanghai press. However, in Chongqing, and then in Chengdu, more newspapers began employing local language in an ever broader range of increasingly serious articles. For example, the staid, official *Sichuan ribao* (Sichuan Daily) in Chengdu, seeking to increase readership, launched the tabloid-style *Huaxi dushi bao* (Western China Metropolitan News), which headlined reports of court cases and even executions in local language:

> 热水器装拐了三旅客"睡"死了 *Zesueiqi zuangguailiao; san lüke sueisiliao*
> (Water Heater Improperly Installed; Three Travelers Die in Their Sleep)[43]
>
> 赵剑峰被"敲沙罐" *Zhao Jianfeng bei kao sa guer*
> (Zhao Jianfeng Executed by Shooting [literally, Got His Sand Pot Whacked).[44]

Television advertising, first in Chongqing then in Chengdu, regularly created situations motivating the use of local language, as in these two examples, the first for a brand of the local noodle dish prepared as instant noodles, the second for a clothing store:

*(Four people are playing mahjong.)*
Man: "What are we having for supper tonight?" 今天晚上吃啥子哦？
Woman: "Tonight we're having this." *(Indicating XXDandanmian instant noodles)* 今天晚上啊, 吃这个。(指着"xx担担面")

*(The four people eat.)*
Woman: "It goes without saying, XXDandanmian tastes great!" xx担担面啊, 味道不摆了！

*(Two peasants are walking down Qingnian Road.)*
Peasant A: What's this place? So many huge apartments, where'd they all come from? 这是哪个塌塌? 咋个那个多墩墩儿[*dende'r*]房子嘛?
Peasant B: You don't know where you are? That's the "Kowloon Clothing City." 这个你都不晓的嗦? 那个是'九龙服装城'。
Peasant A: I didn't recognize it at all. They've developed. 我都认不到了。他们是发[*bua*]展了嗦.[45]

Sichuan Mandarin, unlike Beijing or Shanghai local language, was put into the mouths of characters representing all social groups in the Sichuan media. Unlike Shanghai, audiocassettes of the comic storytellers of Sichuan blared from shops along sidewalks of Chongqing and Chengdu in the 1990s. Their texts are centered on play with local language—so much so that the most popular of them, Li Boqing, could not reproduce the appeal of his texts when he appeared before a national audience in 1996 on CCTV in Beijing, which insisted on his using Putonghua Mandarin. Li specialized in the manners of the new market society and having fun with its pretensions, such as a humble *huoguo* 火锅 (firepot) restaurant of six or seven tables, where the waiters imitate their colleagues in large-scale restaurants who use two-way radios to communicate with the kitchen. Li Boqing invents a needy but arrogant traveler who abandons a taxi in a traffic jam for a three-wheeled pedicab *(sanlunche)* that he insists on naming a *sansi*

三司, as if there were three drivers instead of three wheels. Rejecting the fare demanded by the pedicab driver, he hails a mini-three-wheeled pedicab, called a *pa'erduo* 灺耳朵, or "soft ears," after the local term for a henpecked husband. Naturally, the passenger insists on calling his vehicle a *padi* 灺的, adding the syllable *di* from the fashionable Hong Kong Cantonese word for taxi, 的士 *diksih*. This vehicle also proves unsuitable when he insists that the driver use a meter to calculate the fare.[46]

To be sure, the cultural elite of Sichuan were exasperated by the vulgarity of Li Boqing's comedy and the national attention it drew while their own work remained marginalized as provincial. In what later became a nationwide form of amusement, Li capitalized on the association of local language with vulgarity, mismatching voice and audience expectation by presenting scenes from famous revolutionary works like the model opera *Hong deng ji* (The red lantern) and the film version of the novel *Hong yan* (Red crag), evoking laughter simply by substituting Sichuan Mandarin for the original Putonghua Mandarin. With the explosion of media products, a company in Chengdu produced a series of video compact discs of famous films dubbed into Zhongjiang and other Sichuan local languages. Hence in 2000 one could listen to the character of Jane Austen in the film *Jane* 简爱 talk in Zhongjiang accent and idioms to her admirer, Rochester.

The regional hegemonic positions of Chongqing and Chengdu Mandarin are emphasized repeatedly by the comedians of the nineties. Alongside the pretensions of urban dwellers, Li Boqing found a place to entertain his audience by mimicking the accents of rural migrants moving to the city. This situation is the entire basis for the performance of Jing Wen, the "female Li Boqing," as a girl from Zhongjiang county peddling chicken eggs in Chengdu. As the equivalent of the Subei region so despised in Shanghai, the accent of Zhongjiang amused millions, as Jiang Wen's persona recounted both the challenges of life in the city and the sound of weather broadcasts and militia training in her hometown.[47] Wu Wen also specialized in accents and new and demotic vocabulary, introducing the variations of location, occupation, and age groups for many of his phrases. Inevitably there is the rustic confronting the city, such as the peasant from Wanxian who attempts vainly to explain his symptoms first to a physician

from the north who speaks Putonghua Mandarin, and then to a physician speaking Chongqing Mandarin.[48]

The role of telenovelas was, first, to incorporate local language into narratives that reaffirmed a community of nationally based values, to preclude the spread of local language in the media as a language of indifference to the values of the center. Whereas local language evoked fascination with the local and with the disunity and mismatch of voice and image, the telenovela was initially designed to restore local language to a seamless unity of society. Between 1982 and 2000, Chongqing television produced some ten telenovelas, which began attracting national attention with *Ling Tangyuan* (Sugar dumpling), then major popular success with *Sha'r shizhang/Ha'r sizang* (General Asinine, 1994) and *Shancheng bangbang jun/Sangcen bangbang jun* (Shoulder stick brigade of the mountain metropolis, 1995–1996). Both *General Asinine* and *Shoulder Stick Brigade* represent socializing unleashed forces that have been suppressed during the Maoist era. *General Asinine* is historical adventure based on the career of an officer serving a Republican-era warlord in Sichuan. *Shoulder Stick Brigade* makes use of social realism to shape into a well-formed narrative the mass of peasants flooding into the streets of Chongqing as casual laborers during the nineties, dubbed *bangbang* for the short shoulder poles they carried with them at all times, in readiness for any job they might be hired for on the streets.

As the story of a young man from a gentry family who joined and then led a bandit organization in Sichuan that was ultimately wiped out while patriotically resisting the Japanese invasion in the 1930s, *General Asinine* belongs to the genre of supplementary histories of the revolution. But as the story of a popular leader of unpredictable behavior it creates a new hero of the revolutionary history, more familiar to readers of classic novels about characters like the eccentric monk Ji Dian or one of the heroes of the *Shuihu zhuan* (Outlaws of the marsh). Fan Ha'r, under the tutelage of an uncle who presides over a gentry clan, is not only a hopeless student of the Confucian classics, but incapable of performing the errands expected of him. When sent to collect a debt, he immediately blows the money drinking and gambling in a local tavern. Then, in the sort of gesture that makes him famous, he slices off a piece of his leg in payment of his debt before

reporting to his uncle that he was robbed. Joining with a gang of thieves in the underworld Paoge organization, he accepts their decision to rob his uncle's home. For this his uncle buries him alive, and he is rescued by a trick contrived by his cousin. Rejoining the gang, he saves a member from the government troops pursuing them, but also kills the leader for committing a brutal rape. For these acts he is made a leader, and is eventually commissioned by a warlord officer to serve his forces. Fan Ha'r's uncle, however, hangs himself in protest over the shame Fan Ha'r has brought upon the clan.

Whereas leaders like Mao Zedong strove to present a cultured image, Fan Ha'r is addicted to gambling, compulsive, impulsive, infantile, and manifestly uncultured. Whereas women were strongly attracted to Mao, Fan Ha'r's unpredictable and equivocal behavior repeatedly disappoints them. The culture surrounding the Republican era in which Mao operated and the culture of the Maoist era itself had become archaic in the socialist market society of the 1990s, and General Ha'r embodies a hero for the surging urban population driven into that society, as a repressed libido contained by a gallant if unschooled sense of justice. In one of the lines that characterizes his dialog, after killing their rapist leader, Fan Ha'r explains to his men in the language of the Paoge organization: "袍哥人家绝不拉稀摆带" (Robber brothers never go around shitting all over the place). It is only nationalism that finally brings Fan Ha'r into conformity with society. While serving in the United Front resisting Japanese aggression, General Ha'r even controls his compulsive gambling. When he is lured into a mahjong game against general orders that prohibit gambling, he accepts an officer's joking proposal that offenders should swallow a mahjong tile by swallowing one himself, then ordering the other offending officer to swallow one in front of his men.

*Shoulder Stick Brigade of the Mountain Metropolis* is contemporary drama of life among the casual manual labor force of peasants migrating to Chongqing. The series is intended to affirm the positive character and goals of the migrant labor force, in accordance with the state policies that encouraged it. Through the porters, the series also introduces a cross-section of the community coping with market society. The telenovela is most concerned with seeking a balance in its portrait of this otherwise lopsided social situation. The narrative proceeds as

a set of balanced antitheses. Hence, there are successes, such as Meng Xiaoyu, a high-school-educated youth whose father as an educated youth once had an affair with a peasant woman during the Maoist era. Xiaoyu helps Professor Hu, who is so moved that, in turn, he helps Xiaoyu go on to university. On the other hand, another migrant labor youth, Man Niu, dies in a fight with inner-urban thugs attempting to rob the home of yet another professor. Although some girls turn to prostitution, Zhang Shuhui is hired by a sympathetic entrepreneur when no one else will because she is married. Inevitably, he makes advances toward Shuhui, but he also appreciates and rewards her skill, and eventually she and her husband return to the countryside to open their own restaurant. In this way, while some of the "shoulder stick" brigade are drawn into crime, others like Man Niu are crime fighters. Through such tales of upward mobility and heroic sacrifice, the migrant workers are assimilated to staples of revolutionary history, and the target urban audience is also invited to see themselves in this light. While the comic dominates much of the series, it concludes with porters mourning the loss of Man Niu.

In marked contrast to comedians such as Li Boqing, Wu Wen, and Jing Wen, *Shoulder Stick Brigade* uses Chongqing Mandarin throughout, so that the migrant workers speak the same dialect as the established residents of Chongqing. Like the texts of the comedians, the telenovela characterizes some of the migrant workers as objects of derision, such as the girl-crazy Maozi, or as another peasant mystified when a woman he is following disappears with a man behind a closing elevator door, something he has never witnessed in the countryside. Other migrants turn to petty swindling or prostitution. However, the role of local language is to support a largely sympathetic representation of young men and women from the countryside honestly striving for an opportunity to demonstrate their worth, and largely respected by the residents of Chongqing on that basis. In such ways, the telenovelas of Chongqing used the hegemony of its local language to secure an association with national policies, and to erase the cultural gaps opened in the texts of comedians and advertisers. However, by the end of the century Chongqing television also addressed the relation of local language and culture to national, metropolitan language

and culture in a highly suggestive satire, *Kong le chui/Kong liao chui* (Hot air, 1999). Here the object of derision is not peasant folk, but society as a vast web of deceit, depicted as a series of swindles, for which Putonghua Mandarin is the ideal language.

*Hot Air* is a situation comedy built around a group of working-class youths who have lost their factory jobs and have opened a small restaurant in Chongqing. In such a social context, Putonghua Mandarin is an affectation, suitable only for members of the cultural and economic elite: teachers, television announcers, press reporters, a pop singer from Beijing, together with a handful of people from other regions employed in Chongqing, or people pretending to be from other regions, such as a swindling entrepreneur from Chongqing who has had success in Guangdong Province and adopted a Guangdong-accented Putonghua. Given that *Hot Air* is devoted to a series of swindles and deceits, Putonghua Mandarin is inevitably drawn into association with a society devoted, wittingly or unwittingly, to endless deceit. These episodes satirize the metropolitan culture of Putonghua Mandarin for promoting a disingenuous image of society, whether local or national. In such moments the series suggests a critique reminiscent of postcolonial theory.

The main character, Meng Xiaohui (rhymes with Kong liao chui), is introduced as one of the diligent and talented youths who have set up the restaurant, taking classes in performing arts in his spare time. A celebrity singer from Beijing who looks like Meng Xiaohui (and is played by the same actor) arrives in Chongqing to offer a concert. After a series of misrecognitions, Meng finds himself on stage to fake the singer's act, assured by the producers that many performers at concerts "fake singing" *(jia chang)*. However, when the real singer, Lin Xiaodun, finally arrives, the producers try to persuade Meng to relinquish the stage to Lin. Meng instead appeals to his enthusiastic audience, first in an accented version of the Putonghua Mandarin of mainstream popular culture:

> "… 我不是外地来的林小顿, 我是我们重庆的"空了吹。"刚才他们后台的人喊我下去, 你们干不干?(下面的观众喊: 不干!)他们想换一个是假唱的但是真正的林小顿。"

> "I'm not Lin Xiaodun from outside; I'm Hot Air from our own Chongqing. Just now they wanted me to get off the stage. Is that what you all want?" (*Below the audience shouts, "NO!"*) "They want to replace me with the real Lin Xiaodun who fakes singing." (Episode 5)

Having asserted the opposition of Chongqing and the outside *(waidi)*, Meng now breaks into Chongqing Mandarin:

> "其实我默倒想也给大家整个假唱, 但是, 不知啷个搞的, 我的那个磁带被耗儿咬了个缺缺。"
>
> "Actually, I was also going to fake singing for you all, but, I don't know how it happened, a mouse chewed a hole through my tape." (Episode 5)

Meng's appeal to his authenticity through local language is still disingenuous. And having delivered this introduction, he still delivers a performance in Putonghua Mandarin, as prescribed by mainstream cultural hegemony. Local language and culture cannot claim a superior position morally or aesthetically, but only that they have been positioned by metropolitan language and culture in a way that fosters artifice, and that through the need to mimic mainstream language and culture, they reveal an artificiality to them.

After Meng risks his life in Episode 6 to put out a fire in a neighbor's kitchen out of fear that the fire will spread to his own apartment, a newspaper reporter is reminded by a local cadre to report the story, embroidered as a heroic act, in standard Mandarin and hackneyed phrases. Eventually, Meng meets a financial officer for a television station, who tells him in Shanghai-accented Putonghua Mandarin that a celebrity host from the station, Li Jiaming, will visit and promote the factory on television in return for a substantial fee. Meng informs representatives of his old factory, which under new management has reopened and seeks publicity in Putonghua Mandarin broadcasts supporting its new efforts. Li Jiaming is pleased to volunteer to visit the factory and promote it, unaware that the conniving administrator at the television station will pocket a fee for the announcer's services, so that both Meng and the unsuspecting announcer are still made to play an unwitting role in an endless game of deceit. Ulti-

mately, Meng Xiaohui begins speaking Putonghua Mandarin to his friends and proposes for a fee to help them scheme to defraud a Chongqing entrepreneur whose success in Shenzhen has led him to affect speaking Putonghua Mandarin in a Guangdong accent to suggest his economic status. The entrepreneur is himself scheming to defraud the local youths in order to clear himself of a debt owed to the Chongqing underworld that is close to murdering him. Like everyone else in this satire, the entrepreneur has not transcended the local or escaped the claims it makes upon him; he only pretends to as an image of success. It is that image that suggests what underlies a hegemonic position of mainstream language and culture in the western interior of China.

Yet the tale of Meng Xiaohui is complicated by the casting of him and his friends as young men, while endowing him with characteristics that are more associated with middle-aged men. Meng bemoans his lack of education; his concert performance is an aria from a Cultural Revolution–era revolutionary model opera; he quotes Marx sardonically; and at the end of the series he seeks to escape the net of deceit by moving to a rural village, as if he were a middle-aged man recalling the idealism of an urban youth of the Cultural Revolution era sent down to the countryside. As much as he avoids claiming model heroic stature, however, Meng is provided with heroic moments, as when he rescues a child from drowning. Such details provide a subtext for the series as the story of a vanishing era and its culture, opposing the passing culture of an older generation to a contemporary metropolitan culture. As much as the series flirts with a vision of Chongqing as a colonized community, it also repeatedly suggests, like the Shanghai telenovela *Moral Debts*, the fissures between generations. The efforts to define Chongqing through linguistic and cultural boundaries are inevitably blurred by traces of the historical movement of time.

## Xi'an as the crossroads of history

One effect of the popular and sometimes critical success of local-language dramas in Beijing, Shanghai, and Chongqing productions was to encourage other cities to produce theirs. This resulted at times

in a self-conscious regionalism that, in turn, was submitted to a complex negotiation. In Xi'an the director of the telenovela *Da qin qiang* (Xi'an opera, 1996) stated in an interview: "In every way we have sought as much as possible to thicken this atmosphere of the yellow earth [Shaanxi] to distinguish it from Shanghai style and Beijing flavor."[49] The title *Xi'an opera* was, he explained, a metonym for a historical portrait of the region:

> [T]he life passions of the Qin [Shaanxi] people for their ancient soil, their mutual relations of flesh and blood, their mutual dependence of life and death, mutual immersion in love and hate, mutual opposition of joy and sorrow. It's neither a biography of Qinqiang artists, nor the performance history of a Qinqiang opera company, even less a romance of the theater and the love lives of performers. It is a local culture [*fengtu*] picture scroll that includes the fate of an ancient city, the fortunes of its commerce, the course of human events, the character of the Qin [Shaanxi] people, a song of life that makes people recognize its superlativeness, a story told honestly and plainly of the common, ordinary people themselves.[50]

Not only is local opera a metonym for an imagined culture, but Xi'an is a synecdoche for Shaanxi: such a drama reasserts Xi'an's place as the cultural center of Shaanxi, representing that province. All this was to be represented through the career of an impulsive, virile Xi'an opera celebrity of the Republican era, Han Maochen. Han Maochen's voice beguiles women and through them a brood of Shaanxi children. His voice also charms men and spares him and his children from a ruin to which his impulsiveness might otherwise lead. This voice is the production of Xi'an/Shaanxi culture, uniting its otherwise divided women and children and reconciling them to their existence. Such a culture is, of course, at the expense of the female characters, who die in childbirth, go blind, or remain tormented by questions of paternity and status, yet remain attached to that opera, no matter what their feelings for the man with the beguiling voice. The story is of a male as a vessel of a local culture, and how all around him are lured into becoming vessels of that culture themselves, regardless of personal feelings toward anyone as an individual or particular political loyalties.

Such a project entailed strong attention to the language of the dialog, and the script as written by Wang Zhen is a tour de force of Xi'an Mandarin. Nevertheless, the drama proceeded as a joint production of Shaanxi Television and CCTV, which argued against a purely local-language script, as it did in its coproductions in Shanghai, Northeast China, and elsewhere. Yu Genggeng, the director, explained the result: "You can see we thought a lot about the local-language characteristics of this script, but we opted for Putonghua in view of the national audience as a whole so that it would be acceptable to audiences who are 'not Northwestern.' But we haven't ruled out [a local-language sound track], and if the circumstances become ripe, we will produce a local-language edition, so that we can preserve the original flavor of the work."[51]

In revising Wang Zhen's script, the dialog of the sound track created its own interesting patterns. The local-language dialog of early scenes establishes Han Maochen's regional identity. He is about to be beheaded by local authorities outside Xian when he is rescued by a passing warlord officer, Dou Babai, who is enchanted by Han's singing:

> Dou Babai: "Judging from your accent, are you from Shaanxi?"
> Han Maochen: "I sure am, from Chang'an [Xi'an], Shaanxi."
> (Episode 1)

Suddenly alerted that a son he has forgotten in his joy over his own rescue is about to be decapitated as a substitute, Han exclaims in Xi'an Mandarin, "我的娃！[My kid!]." The boy, it turns out, is saved when the executioner is too distracted by Han's singing to swing the axe accurately and misses the boy. As the sound track moves into Putonghua Mandarin, the movement from local language to standard is paralleled by questions of Han's paternity. Now he questions a pregnant wife whom he suspects of infidelity, asserting his authority as patriarch in the voice of Putonghua Mandarin, the word for "child" shifting from the local term *wa* to *haizi*: "说实话！你肚子里的孩子到底是谁的？[Tell me the truth, just whose child are you carrying?]" (Episode 7). Conversely, when Han suspects a man whose bride he took for his own wife of making love with one of his wives, the man evades Han's

assertion of patriarchal authority by responding in a rural Shaanxi Mandarin, "俺俩啥也没啥！[There's nothing between us!]" (Episode 8). In essence, a cultural hierarchy of language has been extended to social hierarchies and also subverted by them: just as Han Maochen is introduced through local language in evading the execution ordered by local authorities, so his assertion of authority through Putonghua Mandarin is evaded by characters made to speak another local language.

This tension between status and its subversion paralleled by using languages of varying cultural status is also present in the distinction drawn between major characters, who speak Shaanxi-accented Putonghua Mandarin, and minor characters, who speak local language itself. This applies not only to minor characters speaking Xi'an Mandarin but also to minor characters from other regions. Xi'an becomes a field of competing languages, dominated by Putonghua Mandarin but constantly interrupted by subnational voices. In this way, Xi'an represents China by synecdoche, even as its identity as Xi'an is visualized through many famous settings and vocalized through its opera and local minor characters. Technicians speaking Shanghai Wu record its opera (Episode 25); warlord soldiers speaking Henan dialect seize Xi'an as a strategic prize (Episodes 12 and 13); Nationalists with Shandong accents and Communists working with the gallant but uncouth warlord Dou Babai struggle for control. This epic of the modern history of Xi'an concludes after the chaos of the Cultural Revolution era, as the children of Han Maochen are scattered and dying, while the family's property is being torn down to make way for urban renewal. Haunted throughout the series by the moment when the headsman's axe nearly took his life, and now facing the dissolution of familiar landmarks, Han Maochen's aged son now reconciles himself to death by making his way to the city wall to join a group of elderly people singing Xian opera. Like so many other locally inspired television dramas, *Xi'an Opera* has sought to offer the familiar sounds of local language as a substitute for the vanishing vision of the local and the marginalization of its culture to supplementary history. Yet, as high culture for the nation was itself increasingly relegated to a marginal position by the new wave of popular culture, the opposition of local language to standard language intrigued its artists all the more.

# –4–
# Inadequacies Explored
## Fiction and Film in Mainland China

### The unassimilated

Much print fiction and film used local languages in ways distinct from the stage and broadcast media. Many of the literary periodicals and film studios were simply less embedded in the local communities in which they were located, so that they appealed to and depended upon nationwide distribution more immediately and directly than stage and broadcast media productions. The emphasis on a standard, on Putonghua Mandarin, as a controlling style has therefore been both a practical matter and a mark of the claim to cultural status—practical to avoid excessively challenging the reader and a mark of cultural status to show competence in the language of education. The occasional uses of local language in defining characteristics or imitating dialog were, as they had always been, rhetorical evidence that the text included information beyond the realm of officially recognized education, authenticating the text and opening a space for imagining thought beyond the limits of formal education. Although observers have often asserted that the use of local languages in film and television could be traced back to the late 1970s play *The Xi'an Incident* and the many productions about revolutionary leaders that it inaugurated, there was no such originary text for fiction in the post-Mao reform era. Rather, it may have been the writers of the new narratives of "supplementary history" and the authors of fiction on "rural themes" who separately took up a modest use of local languages that appeared to restore a sense of continuity with writers of the Republican and

early Maoist eras, prior to the drive to standardize style in the late fifties.

Most evident was the fact that the genres of fiction and film shared an overarching trend away from depicting characters in nationalistic and socialist themes as participants in a broad social mainstream, as occurred in the decades prior to the 1980s. Rather than characterizing a national confluence of subcultures, fiction and film after the Maoist era increasingly turned toward characters outside any such mainstream. Local language thus served the representation of the unassimilated.

## China as an aggregate of marginalized subcultures in fiction

In Beijing, the early novellas of supplementary history at first appeared as the natural accompaniment to the revival of the fiction and drama of the celebrated narrator of Beijing during the Republican and early Maoist periods, Lao She. By the early 1980s, some of Lao She's novels were republished, his 1958 play *Chaguan* (Teahouse) was restaged and filmed, and his novel *Luotuo Xiangzi* (Rickshaw, the Novel of Lo-t'o Hsiang-tzu) was adapted for the stage and then as a film. The fictional restoration of old Beijing in Lao She's texts was quickly followed by Deng Youmei's neo-Lao She novellas set in old Beijing, such as "Yanhu" (Snuff bottle, 1982) and "Nawu" (1983) and "Suoqi de houren" (1984). According to Gladys Yang in her preface to the translations of Deng's selected novellas:

> Indeed, one of his reasons for writing about old Beijing is to fill in a gap in young people's general knowledge.... Comparing his qualifications with those of other writers, he decided that many ex-Rightists could write about their painful experiences, and he was less skilled than Wang Meng or Liu Binyan in highlighting social problems. His forte was an extensive knowledge of Beijing and its history, people of all walks of life there and their social customs.... He has been compared with Balzac because he writes the history that many historians omit, the history of social conventions and everyday life.[1]

Deng Youmei's novellas were thus part of a project to provide a history that could accommodate the political and economic changes of the reform era, adjusting, as it were, the pedagogy of society to a new performance. It is also notable that the writers who reintroduced Beijing local language were not born or raised in Beijing. As a writer in the 1950s, Deng resided in Beijing for over a decade. Local Beijing was, in effect, the creation of informed outsiders, authentic no doubt in the distinctive features of language and setting, yet presented by these writers with the aim of fashioning a very distinctive space to define their position in literature.

As a respected writer and cultural leader by the time he wrote these novellas, Deng also opened the field for younger writers to assert their position through this restored language. These younger writers, such as Chen Jiangong and Wang Shuo, were local to Beijing, adopting the stylistic space created by the older writers but adapting it to contemporary settings and new agendas. They converted history into the troubled youth genre of the late 1980s. In these contemporary settings, Beijing dialect becomes associated with an oppositional subculture, a particular entity not reducible to the standard language now associated with the cultural elite and the media. Chen Jiangong met with critical and popular success when he united the local language with a first-person narrator modeled upon Holden Caulfield in J. D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*, in "Juan mao" (Curlylocks, 1986).[2] This Holden Caulfield, or Lu Sen, has resisted passing the university entrance exams and is now faced with how to make a living independent of his educated father's influence. Dozens of distinctive expressions of contemporary local usage set off the voice of Lu Sen, a newspaper editor's son rebelling against his father's vapid didacticism, making the son's language appear spontaneous and authentic in contrast to the practiced rhetoric of the cultural elite in their careerist conformity. As Hu Lingyi has noted, the first-person narrator derived from Holden Caulfield provides strong motivation for the local language and slang. Addressing the success of this style, Hu noted:

> In order to make this point clearer, I would like to take "tamade" or "taniangde" (its closest English equivalent is "shit," but there are also a

> number of variations in real translation) as an example. Instead of being used as an abuse in conversation in "Curlylocks," "tamade" is a pet phrase of the narrator/agent, or more exactly, his characteristic diction for narration. While it contributes as a significant parlance to the formation of a tough and slangy style of the novella, it more importantly features the mode of expression of the protagonist, paving the way for readers to feel concretely why Lu Sen calls himself "a young ruffian." … The reason why it [*tamade*] is being used in particular is simply its typicality of the traits that critics call "language with Beijing flavor."[3]

Chen did not stay with such a local Beijing style. It is, for example, notably softened in the novel and teleplay *Huang cheng ge'r* (At the base of the imperial city wall, 1992) that he coauthored with Zhao Danian. Although the setting is an old neighborhood in Beijing, the narrative in the novel is in the third person, and the principal characters in both the novel and the teleplay are sympathetically portrayed members of the cultural elite, typically made to speak Putonghua Mandarin. However, Hu Lingyi also notes the role that "Curlylocks" played in paving the way for the fiction of Wang Shuo and its style, "for it will not escape the perceptive reader that it is Curlylocks that prompts the final formation of the anti-hero as a new dominant force in literature."[4]

Like writers before him, Wang Shuo was wary of associating his literary position with a local-language style. He came into local language through his experience with television at a time when television in Beijing was seeking a more authentic-sounding dialog in the mid-1980s. Whether seen in popular terms of his enormous commercial success or in critical terms of his satirical critique of both the cultural elite and their nemesis among his aimless, alienated youth, Wang's literary position was defined by him as much in terms of time, constructing a generation at a particular point in time, as in terms of imagining a place. At the height of his success, he defined his style as "new capital flavor." That is, he adopted the stereotype of "old Beijing flavor" as playfully irreverent chatter, or *kan*, "hacking," and *wan*, "fun."[5] Wang conceded that this meant making use of expressions in speech. However,

> it is not entirely the same as language in life, it just seems like speech. I draw mostly from popular urban language, and I actually don't understand old Beijing dialect that well. There are a lot of sources for these popular expressions, in sayings, in major events, new allusions, and so forth. I've never lived in a dialect district. The language I've come in contact with is still the kind discussing current events and politics. Even this can't be put as is into my work. If you make direct use of speech, readers won't understand it.[6]

Wang was surely correct in assessing that his use of local language did not add up to local speech itself. He was also very much aware that much of what attracted attention to his prose were the allusions to nationally known expressions dating from the Cultural Revolution to the latest TV commercial advertisements. At many points Wang even avoids using Beijing local language. Ultimately, it is most tempting to read his warning that the dialog of his fiction "just seems like speech" as an attempt to claim a controlling unity of his style with his own thematic obsession with the thirst for self-delusion that his characters display, as when a young couple tour a museum:

> They are dumbfounded when they enter the last exhibition hall on the third floor of the museum. They seem to be placed in a dream world: in the tall glass counters along the walls, countless beautiful, exquisite diamonds sparkle under the glare of incandescent lights, in unimaginable and incomparable brilliance. Here are the most famous diamonds in the world. Every one of them has an infatuating name. It is a genuinely moving sight—a breathtaking effect that only beautiful counterfeiting can achieve.[7]

Counterfeiting may be a useful concept in describing the relationship of a writing style to speech. However, Wang also used local Beijing expressions with a density rare in most writing and this feature is also a very distinctive one. The density varies according to setting, character and theme, but some of his most celebrated stories of satire are quite notable for use of local language. For example, in the novella "Yidian zhengjing meiyou" (Nothing serious, 1989),[8] the title itself avoids any Beijing variant, but the text is still crowded by quite a few

examples. Looking at the first ten pages, as printed in the magazine *Zhongguo Zuojia*, there are some three dozen local expressions, ranging from *zige rizi*, "a life of one's own" (111), to *chuan men*, "visit" (116), to *ke Beijing*, "all Beijing" (120), and so forth. As a novella pointedly parodying the literary activities of the cultural elite through a group of uneducated, unambitious friends seizing on writing as an easy means to make a living, the density of local dialect as substandard language serves to recontextualize the various claims to cultural achievement that these young men encounter among the members of the cultural elite in their ill-fated search for literary inspiration.

Given this distinctive feature of his writing, Wang Shuo eventually conceded a special role for local language in his writing: "Beijing speech is useful for writing oral language, and that's an advantage writers who speak Beijing local language have over others."[9] Wang was still reluctant to attach a specifically local significance culturally or geographically to this style, only admitting the advantage that the capital city has customarily had in privileging its dialect. Yet, Wang eventually transformed this advantage into an aesthetic virtue when he defended his writing against the standard Mandarin style of the ever-popular martial arts novels by Jin Yong in Hong Kong:

> Judging from *Tian long ba bu* [Semi-deities and semi-demons], Jin Yong's language and conceptualization basically haven't emerged from the hackneyed formulas for the old-fashioned vernacular novel. Probably he had no choice but to write in a dead style, since he couldn't write in the Zhejiang local language [of his birth] or in Cantonese [in Hong Kong, where he wrote and published]. This limited his language resources to something called *baihua wen* vernacular, but really amounts to *wenyan wen* classical style. Moreover, Jin Yong has never displayed the gift for language of others, from Shi Nai'an to Jia Ping'ao. Given that the people of Zhejiang were once all from Henan and that Cantonese has affinities with ancient Chinese, something could still be done to put these dialects into literature. If a writer doesn't have any contribution to make to written Chinese he's better off getting a job as a typesetter in a printing shop.[10]

Here, in ridiculing Jin Yong, Wang finally indicated the agenda of

local language in his style. That agenda is to assert the creative role played by local languages in literature in the face of the alternatives, which would be simply to imitate the language of the education system or to adopt expressions derived from foreign languages by cultural and political elites, as Chinese had done for a century. What drives Wang's narratives is the role of these self-serving elites in shaping a forlorn society of ordinary people who long, in one novel after another, either to escape the shadow of these elites or plunge into deluded pursuit of sham fulfillment and recognition. What defines Wang's imagined position in literature is his role of asserting the place of writers who lack the symbolic capital of the elites, just as Wang himself had no university degree, even from one of the university-run writers' programs. These views associated his substandard style with an intentional break from the identification of literature with the institution of education and confounded critics' sense of cultural categories: critics who wished to label his work popular, *tongsu*, still had to deal with the fact that Wang was published in periodicals of established status, was read by large numbers of the educated elite, and exhibited a rebelliousness against tastes and values that other popular literature did not.

However, though Wang seriously held to this agenda for his local language it was vitiated within a few short years. Critics pointed out that his themes actually supported the adjustment of readers to marketization of the economy rather than subverted state policy. His critique of established status and the nationalism that served it can be interpreted as the vanguard of a literature entering the emerging market economy, and hence approaching a popular culture product. But it is also significant that Wang's strongest supporters were younger members of the cultural elite, and so were his imitators. Perhaps the best-known derivative text that emphasizes Beijing dialect is the novel *Zhao bu zhao bei* (Aimless, 1997) by Zhao Qiang and Guo Tongkun.[11] *Aimless* focuses primarily on the misadventures of three young men and their relationships with women; on their careers as honest reporters for the state press, from which they resign after being ordered to bury a story exposing corruption; then on their experiences in the private commercial sector, in which they are lured into corruption themselves. They view their only alternatives as going overseas to work or

study or moving on to graduate school in China. The narrative balances the wisecracking humor and satire that made Wang Shuo popular with Wang's characteristic disillusioning revelations of corruption, swindling, unhappy sex, unstable or failed relationships, and ultimately an ingrained attitude of resentment. However, as this summary suggests, the protagonists are now members of the cultural elite rather than Wang Shuo's ordinary young men. Within a decade, the voice that had distinguished itself from the cultural elite in Wang Shuo's Beijing had now been appropriated by that elite.

Writers to the south also took up the themes of supplementary history and troubled youth in the 1980s. Perhaps the best-known author to develop a fiction of supplementary history in a southern dialect is the Shanghai writer Cheng Naishan, who won attention for her use of Shanghai Wu beginning with the novella "Lan wu" (The Blue House, 1983) and continuing through the long novel *Jinrongjia* (The banker, 1990). In "The Blue House," a young, underpaid intellectual, Gu Chuanhui, learns from an acquiantance, Xiao Zhu, that he is a grandson of a wealthy entrepreneur who once lived in a luxurious mansion known as the Blue House. He is introduced to his cousin Chuanye, who lives in the Blue House, and is lured by the estate as a means to attract a spouse. However, his own father, Gu Hongfei, had severed his relationship with the entrepreneur and lost all his inheritance before Liberation in order to marry the woman he loved, Fen. The father reluctantly agrees to meet with his brother Hongji, now owner of the Blue House, only at the urging of his beloved wife, as they are concerned that their son find property more suitable for a home than sharing his parents' apartment. However, the brother's mercenary attitude angers the father, and the son's girlfriend, Bai Hong, loses all respect and affection for him when she learns that he has missed dates with her, not to improve himself as an intellectual, but solely to secure a portion of the family estate.

Bits of local vocabulary are scattered throughout the narrative, yet when Chuanhui is being introduced to high life in Shanghai, a waiter at the Jinjiang Club addresses them "in perfect Mandarin."[12] This detail only serves to remind the reader that the novella is not written in perfect Mandarin, as if to open the inference that "perfect Mandarin" is somehow inadequate or inappropriate to the representation. Man-

darin dominates the narrative, but no longer entirely determines its order, and that order is shaken by unassimilated fragments of another language. The bits of local language fused with Mandarin signal the doubt of a master narrative of history, a doubt that the capitalist bourgeois narrative was ever really banished from or assimilated to the socialist narrative. The father's opposition to that bourgeois narrative has been essential to the construction of his identity in giving up the luxury of the Blue House and family income to be with the woman he loves, but disappoints his son and renders him less heroic as a father. The young intellectual's search for origins concludes with emptiness and separation. The entire story is a series of gaps and separations—among family members, between generations, sexes, social classes and values. Encounters that are marked by destiny are disrupted by chance encounters. No one's narrative in the story is entirely fulfilled. The random utterances of local language suggest that none of these narratives has been or can be assimilated to another narrative, but that they coexist, and that their reality is no longer determined but contingent.

In *The Banker*, Zhu Jingchen is the banker himself, president of the most prestigious private bank in Shanghai in 1937, who is faced with the takeover attempts of Nationalist state-run banks and their bureaucratic capitalism, the economic ruin and danger of the War of Resistance to Japan and Japanese occupation authority, and then the bullying and corruption of Nationalist authorities. A much larger cast of characters is introduced through the romantic attachments and varied careers of Zhu's family, especially his children. The meticulously researched historical setting and stereotypical financial and commercial activity that fill much of the novel provide ample motivation for using Shanghai local language. The novel sustains largely the same fragmentary usage of local language set in Mandarin, scattering these fragments across the dialog of many characters and the narrative itself. The use of Shanghai Wu spans a wide variety of characters and situations. There is the coarse language of the vicious wife of a hoodlum:

> "这批瘪三, 现在寿世已满了,.... 阿拉可是丑话说前头, 再有与老娘为难, 老娘一个个打死他们, 往黄浦江里一掷, 任他们变成汆江浮尸一只只,..."

> "The life span of this riffraff's gonna be over and done with.... Lemme put it to youz people straight. If anyone gets in my way again, I'll kill 'em one by one and toss 'em into the Huangpu River so you'll become just so many floating corpses in the water,..."[13]

But there is also a place for Shanghai Wu in the patriotic sentiments of the banker, when he refuses gold in exchange for helping supply the resistance with medicines: "收不下手的!"—(358) "I won't touch it" (419). Indeed, the narrative comments disapprovingly on characters who will not adopt Shanghai Wu, whether the powerful or the humble. When at the end of the war an official of the government bank audits the bank of Cathay for enemy property, the official's language is pointedly decribed: "Using the official Mandarin dialect instead of his native Shanghainese, he began lecturing Jingchen in condescending tones" (435). Then there is a note of the Subei (up-country) accent spoken by a servant, indicating that such people are not fit as domestic servants:

> 一个老妈子粗声粗气地接了电话喝问着:"啥人?寻啥人?..."满嘴浓厚的苏北口音。(374)
>
> The harsh voice of an old woman servant came over the wire. "Who is it? Who do you want?" she asked in a heavy up-country accent.

The narrative continues: "If Mr. Gong kept uncouth maids like this, all his guests would feel they were being shooed away. At bottom a parvenu, Mr. Gong here simply revealed his basic flaw—a shaky foundation. Things that required particular attention he was not particular about, while things that did not especially matter he was very fussy about" (438).

Thus, while acknowledging through the character of the gangster's wife a side of Shanghai society that is vicious, the narrator adopts a view of Shanghai Wu that is virtually chauvinistic in the value it places upon conforming to a local linguistic standard, acknowledging a local cultural hegemony that recognizes a standard Mandarin only in relation to, not incorporated within, the community. This reassertion of a local culture as allied with but distinct from a larger

national community was published at a time when Shanghai had not yet been opened to the major economic reforms that it would adopt so aggressively after 1992. Like "The Blue House," it implies a set of gaps within a national narrative, gaps that are stylistically inaugurated in the assertions of its mixed style.

The fiction of supplementary history employing local language grew through the 1980s and 1990s, appearing sporadically in major literary periodicals such as *Xiaoshuo yuebao* (Fiction monthly), *Shiyue* (October), and numerous provincial periodicals.[14] Yet, the fiction of the eighties that was to generate the most commentary on the implications of its form was the "troubled youth" genre, exemplified by the novella "Ni bu ke gaibian wo" (You can't change me, 1986) by the Cantonese author Liu Xihong.[15] Like the fiction of Chen Jiangong and Wang Shuo, this story introduced a rebellious young person, this time an adolescent girl. The girl Lingkai both attracts and exasperates the narrator, a woman approaching middle age. The novella, indeed, inverts the "troubled youth" genre by shifting the trouble from the young to the mature character, and from male to female. While the narrator forces herself to study in order to advance her career as a pharmacist, she is filled with insecurity in her relationship with her boyfriend, who comes and goes unpredictably. By contrast, Lingkai, although doing well in high school, has decided not to go on to study at university but to take up a career in modeling. Unperturbed by the insecurity of her life and indifferent to conventional expectations, she moves freely into the new lifestyle of the reform era in south China. The prestigious writer Wang Meng recommended the story for its fresh style and unsentimental, uninhibited presentation of intimate relationships: "I have always secretly thought that in a nation that takes northern speech as the standard for its common language, southern writers have suffered from a disadvantge."[16]

Other critics were quick to note the use of Cantonese in the story, like the feminist scholar Huang Lin, who saw in "You Can't Change Me" a significant moment in the development of contemporary fiction about romantic love and Chinese culture:

> It is on shattered fragments of the dream of heterosexual love in Zhang Xinxin's [fiction] that Liu Xihong constructs a warm nest of female

> homoeroticism—in Shenzhen, where the atmosphere of commercialism smothers the breath of culture emanating distantly from Beijing, an even more authentically urban professional woman, especially an independent, young, educated woman, becomes the model for Liu Xihong's fictional characters.... Fundamentally, Liu Xihong's novellas are more like a pose, and an attitude. The stubborn, willful tone of "You can't change me," "Wo yu ni tonghang" [You and I are colleagues] and "Ziji de tiankong" [Her own sky], together with the themes of these stories, form Liu Xihong's distinctive linguistic pose, an unconventional, uncompromising assertiveness and self-consciousness. The southern emotional appeal and colloquialism in the language of her fiction also form one of the attitudes of her resistance against male-centered discourse. Breathing into fiction the popular southern flavor far distant from the ideology of the center, she externalizes the independent will of a female living in a commercial and economic society through the linguistic acts of her characters.[17]

Huang Lin is indeed correct to point to the Cantonese features in the story as, for once, associated with a positive, innovative social milieu. The established society is not necessarily rewarding those who follow its conventions (as the narrator suggests), while the newly developing society in Shenzhen does not look to older conventions for rewards. Hence, the story had an impact on readers at the time, particularly those in the north, where nightlife, models, and abandoning school when one is doing well at it were all seen as very exotic and unconventional things. So, too, the style suggests the unconventional and the rewards of abandoning convention. That is, the style is aligned with the thematic departure from convention.

Whatever label best serves to describe the sudden and emotionally intense relationship between the narrator and Lingkai, it continues Liu Xihong's repeated observations about romantic love in unconventional terms. Her early stories trace disappointments and unhappiness in love. In "Ziji de tiankong" (Her own sky) a young wife from Suzhou retains her fondness for her native region after marrying a man from Guangzhou and settling down with him there. Her predilection spurs her mother-in-law and sister-in-law to despise her. In "Wo yu

ni tonghang" (You and I are colleagues) three women meet each other through their friendship with one young man. Eventually the woman narrating the story takes more interest in another woman as a friend and the man leaves for South America. In "Hei senlin" (Black forest cake) the divorce of a girl's older brother and sister-in-law prompts her to ponder the role of men and love in her life. "Airen a, zai lu shang daochu dou you" (There are wives everywhere on the streets) narrates the life of a taxi driver who has returned to Guangzhou after living several years in England and falls in love with a nurse who becomes engaged to a film director. "Jiujiu jin" (Pure gold) offers the character and daily life of a good-hearted hairdresser.[18] The first-person narrative of many of these stories inaugurates much of the Cantonese in them. Also, they are not tales affirming romantic fulfillment but explorations of questions about fulfillment in love, hence not in the mold established by Qiong Yao and followed everywhere in print romance, even Hong Kong. Therefore, as Huang Lin's study argues, there is an implied connection between the interrogative and suggestively homoerotic tone of the stories and the attention given in them to displacing standard Chinese. This sense of displacement is what accounts for the fondness for using Cantonese grammatical word order as much as Cantonese vocabulary, and is consistent with the repeated shifts of word categories (noun to verb, etc.). This is style as displacement in conjunction with love stories as deviations from romance stories.

Yet the identification of Liu's use of Cantonese within a defined thematic range preserved the convention of justifying the use of a local-language style within a limited set of accepted motivations, rather than accepting it as a style freely available for unlimited use, as with Putonghua Mandarin. By occupying the space of the unconventional in depicting intimate relationships, such a style, effective as it was in evoking critical commentary, still conceded the status of a standard Mandarin as the language of romantic love in print fiction. That is, as in Hong Kong and Taiwan, the style expected of romantic fiction on the mainland remained standard Mandarin. Conversely, scattered efforts to introduce local language into the realm of romance fiction had little success. It is, therefore, of passing note that there were

novellas which sought to displace that convention, such as the Shanghai story "Xiao qiao yinyuan/Xiao jiao yinyuoe" (Bridge of romance, 1992).[19]

Friends since childhood, Xiao Hongfei (Xiao Hongfi) and He Zhiliang (Hou Ziliang) as sent-down youth once both admired the same girl, Qin Fen. After the three were returned to Shanghai, Hongfei and Qin Fen married, while Zhiliang was introduced to and married Yu Liping, who went to work in Hongfei's small restaurant. Qin Fen, however, has intellectual ambitions to be an engineer, while He Zhiliang is also employed at a university and works as a writer. Both couples become estranged and eventually divorce. Hongfei and Liping then wed and their restaurant prospers. Qin Fen at first rejects Zhiliang's advances, but in the end searches him out at the Shanghai Municipal Library, where a picture of her is on display in an exhibit of photos of model workers. Her photo shows her standing on a small bridge. It had been her habit to relax on a small bridge over a stream when they all lived on a rural commune, and it was there that the young Hongfei and Zhiliang had met her. She later reveals that her nanny once entertained her with stories of a "bridge in the east," which endowed anyone who crossed it with good fortune. The story contains a theme of the times: the disparity in values and income between the pleasure-loving, well-to-do entrepreneurial Yu Liping and Hou Zhiliang as opposed to the overworked and underpaid, intellectually motivated He Zhiliang and Qin Fen. Perhaps the most successful touches are the various details of city life in early nineties Shanghai, such as the way in which neighbors compare the two couples to the hit Mexican telenovela *Feibang* (Slander), the glamor of Shenzhen, gambling and barroom scenes, and so on.

The dialog of "Bridge of Romance" is entirely in Shanghai Wu; the narrative in standard Chinese. Shanghai Wu may here be the language of the past recuperated, just as the photo in the exhibit shows the woman on the bridge as remembered from their youth, a bridge that was imagined for her as a small child, and with which she and her lover are now united. This is a bridge between the culture of Maoist China and that of an emerging market society in the 1990s. Yet, here, Shanghai Wu is also used as a language of romantic attachment and fulfillment, and the style is also an attempt to bring to writ-

ing some distinction from the TV, film, and print fiction depictions of romance—to construct a community distinct from Hong Kong–Taiwan media language and Beijing-enforced standard language just at the outbreak of scripted local language on Shanghai television. Nevertheless, stories such as "Bridge of Romance" remained isolated and largely ignored experiments with local-language style.

It might have seemed in the late 1980s that local languages from southern Chinese cities as well as the capital were set to stage a major comeback in fiction that would parallel their economic status, but this never materialized. The field of fiction was dominated by movements in other directions, all of which were divided in their use of local language. However one classifies the geography, form, and affiliation of narrative texts, the use of local language was divided among its practitioners, however much they confirmed a place for local language as a fundamental feature of their own experience. If Liu Xihong in Guangdong used Cantonese, Zhang Xin avoided it. If Cheng Naishan in Shanghai inserted fragments of Shanghai Wu, Wang Anyi would not make more than a nod to it until the novella "Meitou" (2001). Fan Xiaoqing made sporadic use of Suzhou Wu, but Lu Wenfu did not. Han Shaogong and He Dun would make extensive use of two very different dialects of Xiang language in Hunan, as we shall see, but not Ye Weilin or Gu Hua. In the "seeking roots" genre, Han Shaogong's trademark was Hunan Xiang language, but A Cheng and other figures of seeking roots fiction wrote in a standard style. Su Tong's periodical *Zhongshan* promoted Wang Shuo's fiction as part of neorealism, but Su Tong's own neorealism was never put into his native Suzhou Wu. In reportage, Zhang Xinxin and Sang Ye introduced varying Mandarin dialects to *Beijingren* (Chinese profiles, 1985) as part of their landmark text of reportage. Yet numerous others who followed in their path made no such use of a local-language style. And so on. Seen in this light, the use of local language appears to have been purely the decision of individual authors to employ it as a mode of stylistic distinction. However, the decision was also a matter of genre, and increasingly of a particular concern to construct a social and cultural space, designated as marginal, from which to critique a center, consisting of dominant or metropolitan social formations and their cultures.

## Seeking roots, abandoning roots

Rural China formed the earliest marginal space, and the use of local language in narratives about it in the late 1970s was thus remarkable less for its appearance than for the sporadic revival of southern dialects. A very modest use of Mandarin dialect expressions had been continued through the Cultural Revolution era in rural fiction, and the political rehabilitation of the experienced screenwriter Li Zhun in the late seventies allowed him to publish a multivolume novel, *Huanghe dongliu qu* (Yellow River flows east, 1979–1985), that employs a variety of rural Henan Mandarin expressions. Mao Dun is quoted as having expressed envy for Li Zhun's ability to employ such local language, commenting, as many had and would, that writers from southern provinces like himself found it difficult to use their own in writing.[20] Li Zhun's introduction to the first volume of *Yellow River Flows East*, published in 1979, is also credited with the first statement of what would become the seeking roots literary movement proclaimed by Han Shaogong.[21]

Perhaps Li Zhun's style in turn helped to prompt the revivial of southern dialect expressions that was more innovative, such as the Xiang dialect of rural Hunan in the fiction of Han Shaogong, beginning with the story "Yuelan" (1979), set in 1974 during the Cultural Revolution era. "Yuelan" has been described as "a rather conventional denunciation of the evil consequences of extreme leftist politics, expressed through a tear-jerking plot and highly melodramatic tones."[22] Yet, at the least, here Han established local language as a voice apart from official, national language as a modernized rhetoric supporting exploitation and abuse, a rhetoric of rationalization concealing an irrational agenda. Thus, as critical attention among intellectuals during the 1980s moved toward denunciation of conventional discourse, Han announced the literary movement named "seeking roots," for which his own fictional contributions maintained fragments of Xiang dialect as a space outside modern discourse, albeit not a space idealized as utopian.

As much as Han may have led a loosely knit movement exhorting all to find a new modern subjectivity through the exploration of cultural traditions marginalized by previous modernizing movements,

his attention to local language was ignored. The critical movement on literary language was intent on focusing attention on language as discourse in order to invalidate the writing of a previous generation, and had no interest or desire to identify that agenda with language as a set of dialects, with their confusing array of cultural associations and lack of status among the cultural elite. The most celebrated example of fiction "seeking roots," A Cheng's "Qi wang" (King of chess, 1985), depicted high-school-educated youths settling into an unidentified rural location and communicating with local residents without a trace of dialect distinctions. In "King of Chess" the suppression of any formal linguistic distinctions among the urban and rural characters serves to focus attention upon Chinese society and culture as sharing a unified tradition in opposition to a monolithic socialist modernity. In this very popular form of fiction, to call attention to varied languages would merely detract from the excitement of discovering a suppressed tradition and the unifiying, transcendent subjectivity it offers.

Rural local languages became an emblem of the failures of modernity. In a steady stream of regional literature that promoted the use of southern dialects through the 1980s and 1990s, the more removed from contemporary life and discourse the settings, the more sublime and purposeful the characters. Peng Jianming's tales of backwater Hunan featured men of daring; Zhang Guoqing's contemporary Jiangsu characters were mildly satirical portraits, his Jiangsu females of the past more beautiful and resourceful.[23] The local language that merely reduces the cultural status of a contemporary character identifies a character remote in time with a culture unsullied by a demeaning and deceitful modernity.

As the author Li Rui pointed out, a text employing a rural dialect marked the text as "fiction on rural themes." Like Han Shaogong, Li's short stories using bits of Shanxi Mandarin were implying as much about modern standard discourse as employing the language of rural underdevelopment. Li drew attention in 1987 for his "Hou tu: Lüliangshan yinxiang (san pian)" (Thick earth: Impressions of the Lüliang mountains [three sketches], 1987).[24] All three sketches set up an opposition between a modern discourse and a local, traditional one, in which neither is adequate to explain or to evaluate the experiences of the people described, who live in the remote, desolate Lüliang Moun-

tains of Shanxi Province. When two farmers pause from cutting corn to smoke their pipes in front of the grave of a recently deceased neighbor, they recount how he was a veteran of warlord and then Communist armies, and late in life was rewarded with a wife who was a widow unable to bear him sons, and conclude that probably her spirit will sleep with her first husband, leaving the veteran a lonely ghost. In a second sketch, a production-team leader leads male team members in feasting on food left behind by a man who has committed suicide. During land reform decades before, the man had been forced to submit to punishment as a rich peasant for his absent wealthy brother, even though he had not shared in this wealth and subsequently lived in deep poverty, tending an aging apple tree. The apple tree has ceased to produce apples, and the men debate whether it stopped because of the man's death or whether he killed himself upon realizing it would no longer produce apples.

The final sketch is narrated by an educated youth sent down from the city in company with a mule driver to fetch coal for their production team. The driver has a wife and a lover, to each of whom he doles out an equal, extra share of coal, while the youth is despondent over a girl who has left him for a lover living in better circumstances. The driver is incredulous that the youth can claim the girl is his lover when he has never slept with her; the youth is bemused by the driver's singing, which consists of repeating the same two lines introducing a girl but omitting any further description or narration. Indeed, the youth is also at a loss to explain his experience of love to the driver. Clearly, the modern accounts of these characters and the premodern accounts not only have little in common but also seem each to negate the significance of the other—neither commands credibility. Set against the vast silences of the "thick earth" of the mountain range, the voices of humans, whether speaking or singing in the standardized language of modernity or the local language of traditions, are more sounds merely testifying to human existence than persuasive or conclusive accounts of existence.

As Li Rui's "Thick Earth" was being published, a group of avant-garde writers, as Wang Jing put it, separated language from reality, "collapsing the old metonymic formula of 'language-representation-reality.'"[25] Such an aesthetic would seem to banish any representation

of local language, and to all appearances it did. And yet local language was present in its absence. Major figures of the avant-garde, all of whom used Putonghua Mandarin style, hailed from the linguistic maze of Jiangsu and Zhejiang, and had very sharp views about languages as social practices as well as about language as a structure. Ge Fei, from Dantu, a Subei Mandarin-speaking community upriver from Shanghai, had little love for Shanghai Wu.[26] Yu Hua suggested that the violence, the disjunction, and the fictiveness presented in his narratives suggest a metaphor for the failure of his own local language to achieve literary status and his compromise with a standard language:

> The language of our northern region has had the advantage in the distribution of power. Since before the Qing dynasty, the historic inclination of power toward the northern region made the language of that region that of the rulers, while the language of other areas declined into demotic local language. Thereafter, works written in the powerful north according to this arrangement became historical documents, official or unofficial histories, while those in the south could only be consigned to the category of folk legends.
>
> I grew up within local language. One day, when I sat down to decide to write a story I discovered that the language I had lived with night and day for twenty years suddenly turned into a pile of incorrectly written characters. The disparity between spoken language and written expression left me at a total loss, as though a door had suddenly slammed in my face, so that I lost the road when I advanced.
>
> That I was able to become a writer in China is in large degree owing to my talent for making compromises in language.[27]

Yu Hua's statement echoed the comments of Hu Shi decades before that the living language was local language, and that Guanhua Mandarin was an "artifical affectation" (做作不自然).[28]

Even in Yu Hua's comment there is a particular form of regional bias, for in opposing north to south linguistically, Yu mistakenly suggests that the language of the north is unified and supported by a written tradition. Yet the challenges to writing northern dialects could also be so formidable as to demand compromise, and the ambivalence

toward Putonghua Mandarin as strong. This problem is confronted in the writing of the realists. How difficult it was to represent many of the local languages even within the province of Shaanxi, a Mandarin-speaking region, is suggested in a brief passage from the novel *Chou zhen* (Town of shame, 1995) by Qiao Shi, in which a young woman of Xi'an encounters a young man from the Xilu district selling books on a Xi'an sidewalk:

> "那就买了这书吧!" 他说
>
> "In that case, you should buy this book!" he said.
>
> "念 '湿' (书) 喂 '知' (猪) '者' (捉) '湿' (鼠)。" 她笑着: "是西路人吧?"
>
> "Read *shi* (for *shu* 'books'); feed *zhi* (for *zhu* 'pigs'); catch (*zhe* for *zhuo*) *shi* (for *shu* 'rats')." She smiled: "Are you from Xilu?"[29]

The woman's amused, condescending mimicry of the bookseller reveals both the pervasiveness of the place of local languages in culture and the difficulties, practical and cultural, that writers have had in exploring them. Chen Zhongshi, another writer of Shaanxi, limited his use of local language to a few high-frequency function words, even though he was at pains to depict linguistic disparities in his fiction. Early in his historical novel *Bai lu yuan* (White deer plain, 1993) the narrative introduces a southern Confucian scholar admired for his prodigious intelligence by his Shaanxi host, but amusing to the host's students on account of his accent: "The heavy speech of Shaanxi and the lilting sounds of the south were no different than foreign languages, and always amused them.... When Zhu Xiansheng gave in and delivered a talk, language once again became a great obstacle, and some of the less serious students snickered surreptitiously at his pronunciation and lost interest in listening to him."[30] This passage from Chen's novel echoes Yu Hua's vision of a linguistically divided culture. Yet, that those divisions are not so distinctly defined is not only shown in the passage from *Town of Shame*, but also in the statements of northern writers who felt unease, as well, with Putonghua Mandarin, such as the Xi'an-based author Jia Ping'ao:

> I tried hard to learn Putonghua. The first time was when I had a tooth capped with gold, then again when I was in love, and again after I established a bit of a reputation and was often asked to give talks.... I never did learn it. Then I thought, even Chairman Mao Zedong didn't speak Putonghua, so I wouldn't either.... Putonghua [common speech] is what common people speak![31]

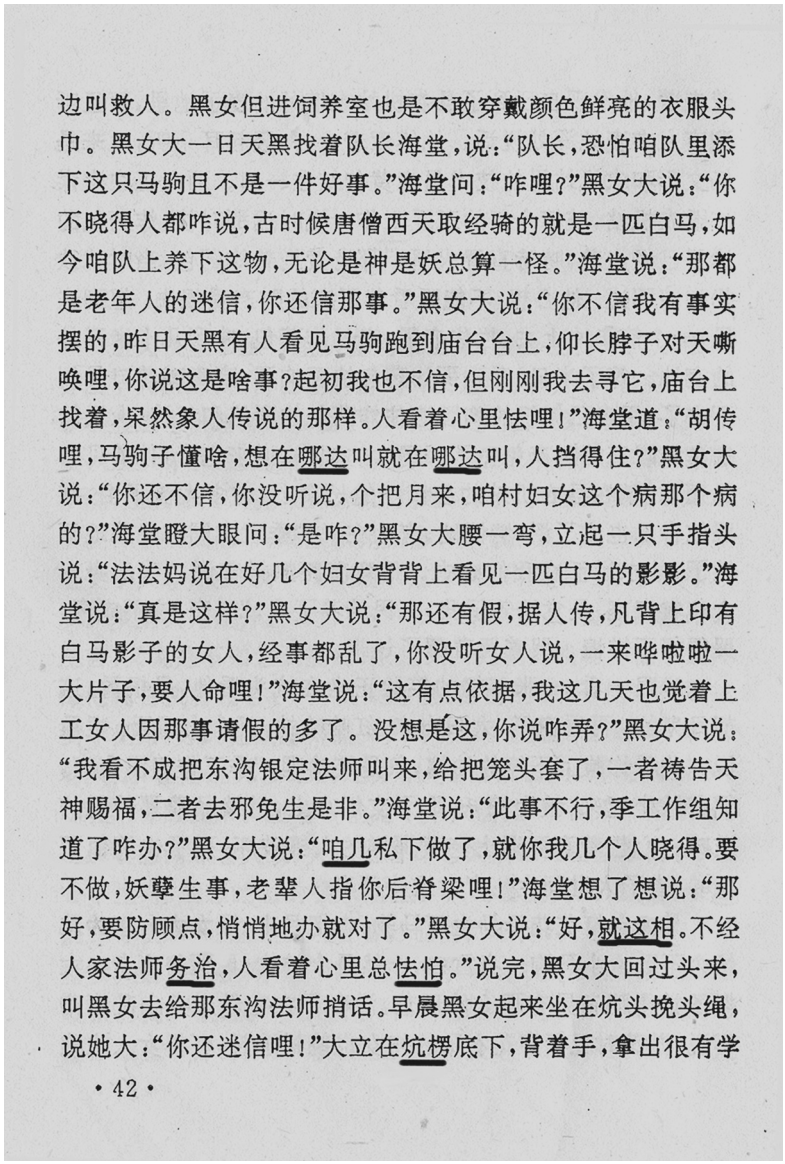
Jia Ping'ao's casual joking actually brings up some interesting points about the status of Putonghua Mandarin. Besides the obvious play on the word "common," shifting its meaning from "universal" to "ordinary," he reverses the discourse that delimits the use of local language by listing occasions for the use of Putonghua, all having to do with displays of economic or cultural capital: showing off expensive gold dental work, pursuing a romantic relationship, and addressing audiences as a cultural figure. He then enlists the status of Mao Zedong, who, during his career as chairman, was held up for public adulation, never emulation, but now is appropriated as a model rather than as an idol. As a writer of fiction, Jia practiced a Putonghua Mandarin style, just like Yu Hua. However, it is evident from this irreverent banter that employing standard Chinese was as much a compromise for him as it was for Yu Hua.

How far a writer in the north might have to go to present a rural dialect is demonstrated in the novel *Sao tu* (Prurient earth, 1993) by Lao Cun.[32] A travesty of the discourse of national culture, the novel safely sets the action in Fufeng County, west of Xian, during the Cultural Revolution era. As if to parody the theory of cultural sedimentation advanced by the aesthetician Li Zehou, the novel begins with a passage of magical realism in which the walls of a cave outside the village of Yan'gucun were once covered with erotic paintings that were eventually scraped away by art collectors. The remaining earth was used by the local peasants for fertilizer, resulting in a prurient earth that drives everyone to promiscuity. Such is culture in a land of deprivation. So, too, politics parallels culture when, during the Cultural Revolution, the political alliances of the local people are as promiscuous as their sexual relationships. Leading a band of Red Guards imported from Beijing, an activist named Jigongzuozu (literally, "Seasonal Work Team") enters the village to initiate class struggle against

the local counterrevolutionaries. The first counterrevolutionary targeted, the school principal, who has slept with a fox spirit, then is enlisted to write denunciations of others. In response, the son of a party cadre under attack forms a gang of 108 rebels on the model of the Ming dynasty novel *Shuihu zhuan.* When villagers are on the point of starvation, his gang opens the local grainery to feed them. After he is captured and executed, a deaf-mute girl whom he once seduced hides his body in a cave, where it is rumored he is transformed into an immortal. When not engaging in class struggle, lesser figures occupy themselves with rape, experimenting with aphrodisiacs, or seeking out women who are sexually available without having to resort to either.

The language of this community is presented with relentless density, from high-frequency core and functional vocabulary to various idioms and expressions. So dense is the use of local language that when a character like Jigongzuozu speaks in Putonghua Mandarin it is ludicrously out of place. What the stylistic parody in *Prurient Earth* suggests is that if the local language is delimited by space, the legacy of national culture through Putonghua Mandarin is delimited by time. The expressions in Putonghua Mandarin are those of a particular moment in history, while the expressions of Yan'gucun are not bounded by historical events, and thus appear to endure as the authentic legacy lying outside official history of the nation. But it is a legacy of deprivation and abandonment. For all the concern that Shaanxi writers expressed over the deficiencies of Putonghua Mandarin for depicting the culture of the "yellow earth" or the great "Northwest" and responding to the onslaught of local languages from the major urban centers of China, the one writer to develop a sustained style in local language was Lao Cun in this novel.

*Prurient Earth* can be read as, stylistically, the most ambitious of a set of novels that incorporated local language into dialog with a frequency well beyond the display of substandard scatology, local characteristics, or regional stereotypes. As in *Prurient Earth*, in these novels the style is an emblem of writing divided between inadequate languages: the local is inadequate to a modern, educated narrative diegesis; the national is inadequate to mimesis of words. The oscillation between the two displays a gap in the logic of cultural production—



边叫救人。黑女但进饲养室也是不敢穿戴颜色鲜亮的衣服头巾。黑女大一日天黑找着队长海堂，说："队长，恐怕咱队里添下这只马驹且不是一件好事。"海堂问："咋哩？"黑女大说："你不晓得人都咋说，古时候唐僧西天取经骑的就是一匹白马，如今咱队上养下这物，无论是神是妖总算一怪。"海堂说："那都是老年人的迷信，你还信那事。"黑女大说："你不信我有事实摆的，昨日天黑有人看见马驹跑到庙台台上，仰长脖子对天嘶唤哩，你说这是啥事？起初我也不信，但刚刚我去寻它，庙台上找着，呆然象人传说的那样。人看着心里怯哩！"海堂道："胡传哩，马驹子懂啥，想在哪达叫就在哪达叫，人挡得住？"黑女大说："你还不信，你没听说，个把月来，咱村妇女这个病那个病的？"海堂瞪大眼问："是咋？"黑女大腰一弯，立起一只手指头说："法法妈说在好几个妇女背背上看见一匹白马的影影。"海堂说："真是这样？"黑女大说："那还有假，据人传，凡背上印有白马影子的女人，经事都乱了，你没听女人说，一来哗啦啦一大片子，要人命哩！"海堂说："这有点依据，我这几天也觉着上工女人因那事请假的多了。没想是这，你说咋弄？"黑女大说："我看不成把东沟银定法师叫来，给把笼头套了，一者祷告天神赐福，二者去邪免生是非。"海堂说："此事不行，季工作组知道了咋办？"黑女大说："咱几私下做了，就你我几个人晓得。要不做，妖孽生事，老辈人指你后脊梁哩！"海堂想了想说："那好，要防顾点，悄悄地办就对了。"黑女大说："好，就这相。不经人家法师务治，人看着心里总怯怕。"说完，黑女大回过头来，叫黑女去给那东沟法师捎话。早晨黑女起来坐在炕头挽头绳，说她大："你还迷信哩！"大立在炕楞底下，背着手，拿出很有学



**Figure 14.** A page from the novel *Prurient Earth* by Lao Cun (1993) shows some of the local Shaanxi Mandarin features underlined. Although the text reinforces the association of local language with cultural limitation, the introduction of standard language through the ephemeral vocabulary of the Cultural Revolution era also relativizes the status of standard Mandarin.

between the recognition of the national language as an inalienable part of cultural production and the rejection of local language as, similarly, an inalienable portion of cultural production. Style thus becomes a statement about a failed paradigm. Beyond the rules of educated speech and writing, outside the realm of cultural capital, the local language becomes an unpredictable element of information that eludes codified knowledge and questions the claim of national culture as an adequate form of knowledge sufficiently codified. It reveals the national culture of educated language as arbitrary in its choice of words and patterns or limited in its capacity to provide meaning for variant words. Such a style reclassifies narrative as knowledge beyond paradigmatic knowledge, and narrative as about failed paradigms. Hence, it presents new forms posing as information to gain recognition that only a new paradigm can incorporate and make redundant. It thus participates in the search for a new paradigm of culture.

Wang Anyi offered a very different treatment of the relationship of local language to time and space when she finally made a place for Shanghai Wu in her fiction in the novella "Meitou" (2001). Like other writers who held to a standard Putonghua Mandarin style, Wang was also acutely aware of the deliberateness of her choice. She recalled growing up in Shanghai with parents who spoke Mandarin:

> I felt my family was like an isolated island in the city. My father had a surprising accent, and my mother spoke only standard Chinese although she could speak Shanghai dialect. We had no relatives or old acquaintances, only male and female "comrades," the relationship among whom, like the standard language, had the mark of artificiality and was not natural.[33]

Not until the 1990s did Wang include the concept of local language as a feature of her fiction, and then indirectly, through the character of a hotel clerk in an Anhui city who disdains admirers addressing her in local language and is won over by film artists visiting from Beijing who speak to her in Putonghua Mandarin.[34]

The erotic appeal of the sounds of a particular language also figures in the character Meitou (or *Mvedveu*), a girl who grows up in Shanghai during the Cultural Revolution, marries, and eventually

takes a lover. Meitou's lover, A Chuan, as a boy once bullied girls skipping rope in the lanes off the main thoroughfares of Shanghai. When Meitou confronts him, stretching the rope across the lane, she is made to say in Mandarin: "Go ahead, ride your bike, ride it, ride it!" (你騎！你騎！你騎!).[35] Years later, when she makes love with A Chuan, the narrator has Meitou recall their childhood confrontation:

> "Ride it! Ride it! Ride it!" This is the way it's said translated into Mandarin. In Shanghai Wu a bicycle (Mandarin *zixingche*) is called a "foot pedal vehicle" *(jiaotache)*. So what Meitou yelled was "Step on it!" which had a sound more like "Do it! Do it! Do it!" The sound *dvak* in Mandarin is pronounced *da*, a breathier, panting sound: *Nong dvak! Nong dvak! Nong dvak!* 儂噠！儂噠！儂噠！Listening to this sound it had a sadomasochistic stimulus, intensifying their pleasure.[36]

What is particular about the use of languages here is that the scene of challenging A Chuan in her childhood is presented entirely in Putonghua Mandarin rather than endowed with "local characteristics" of Shanghai Wu. It is only years later, when Meitou makes love with A Chuan, not in Shanghai but in Guangdong, that the narrator provides the remembered sound of her voice, so that the sound of Shanghai Wu is identified with the reconstructed memory of the past as much as the Putonghua Mandarin of the narrative is identified with the construction of fictional narrative. Whereas a local language of Shaanxi in *Prurient Earth* is shown as bounded by space and unbounded by historical time, Shanghai Wu in "Meitou" is presented, conversely, as the sound of a particular historical era that is passing and scattered geographically into a diaspora.

Here Wang thematizes what the mass media had implicitly addressed—Shanghai Wu as an aural constant in the vanishing of a visually familiar city and its way of life—by tracing the growth of a woman named Meitou from her childhood during the Cultural Revolution era through her marriage to a writer in the Reform era, her affair with a childhood acquaintance with whom she opens a clothes store, and her ultimate departure from Shanghai after Reform. Wang simply sets up in Meitou's mind an opposition of Mandarin as official and of high culture with Shanghai Wu as sensually gratifying and

often irrational. There is Meitou's association of Mandarin with official propriety (32, 36) and with intellectual pursuits (118, 126), and she refers to it variously as Guoyu, "national language" (118), or Putonghua (32, 36). Her favorite instructor is a somewhat effeminate art teacher who "spoke standard Shanghai language, without any other accent, such as Suzhou, Ningbo, or rural accents.... Such accents were, for the most part, substandard" (34). The local barbers and hairdressers speak the Yangzhou Mandarin of Subei, and even a Shanghai woman who went to work as a barber with them speaks Yangzhou language to demonstrate her qualification for the profession (40).

Hence, the characters of "Meitou" are associated with stereotypes of a vanishing Shanghai, in which the vestiges of what previously, before Liberation, had been a distinctive local culture were preserved in the sights and sounds—particularly linguistic sounds—of neighborhoods—neighborhoods that were vanishing as "Meitou" was being written and published at the turn of the century. Wang's ambivalence toward the value or inevitability of a major cultural place for a local language still acknowledges the role it has played in constructing her local society as a vehicle of resistance to what has been perceived as officially sponsored culture from outside Shanghai. Yet, in consigning the language to the realm of a "petty urbanite" character, Wang was also closing the door on Shanghai Wu as a language of the high culture in which her writing circulated. Wang's decision to express a chauvinistic attitude toward Shanghai Wu through Meitou as an anti-intellectual, worldly stereotype of Shanghai women is a condescending gesture calculated to devalue the language in cultural production and to associate it with the past.

There are a number of novels of urban as well as rural life in which the abandonment and deprivation portrayed in *Prurient Earth* are used to authorize the display of the local languages of urbanites, such as *Ji'e de nüer* (Daughter of hunger, 1997) by Hong Ying and *Wo'men xiang kuihua* (We are like the sunflowers, 2000) by He Dun. In these two novels educated narrators evoke the culturally deprived milieus of their upbringing through local language. Liuliu, the narrator of *Daughter of Hunger*, has been raised in the lowest ranks of the working class in Chongqing. Born into the period of famine following the Great Leap Forward of the 1950s, she feels that, like most people

in China, she is superfluous excess.[37] Eventually she learns that her sister is the daughter by their common mother of a former secret society Paoge member who died of starvation in detention, and that she is the daughter of a worker who slept with her mother while the husband was away. Rejecting these absent fathers and her mother for accepting them, she sleeps with her high-school history teacher, until he too abandons her by committing suicide in response to accusations of criminal behavior during the Cultural Revolution. A major strength of the novel is its vivid description of Chongqing, and among the many details of this description are the local-language expressions of the city dwellers:

> "你龜兒子尖嘴滑舌, 夜壺提到老子頭上來, 耍假秤! 也不去打聽打聽, 老子是可以洗刷的嘛? 你貓抓賜糍粑, 脫得了爪爪嘍。" (22)

> "You bastard, you talk so smoothly, but you dump the chamber pot on my head, trick me with your phoney scales! Go ask anybody if I am the sort you can push around. Just like a cat sticking its paw in sticky rice balls [ciba 糍粑], you can't just walk away from this clean."

> "他啷個死了, 老天爺長啥子眼睛嘛?" (374)

> "How can he be dead? Has god gone blind or something?"

This is the language of her mother (not her father, who is described as speaking with a Zhejiang accent), of her eldest sister (esp. 90–91, 99), of clerks, street vendors, and even a physician who performs an abortion on her. Significantly, it is not the language of her high-school history teacher, the only person with whom she forms a close attachment and experiences sexual awakening. There are positive moments in local language, such as a man's feelings for his deceased mother (203), but this is also about loss and deprivation. The presentation of local language is also far from thoroughgoing, and it is mixed with northern expressions. Hence, there are particles like 吧, but not 叫; *aiya* 哎呀 but not *ehe* 哦嗬. When she rejects her biological father, she uses northern Mandarin: 要想我認你作父親, 沒門 (281). The style has become one that has incorporated features of Chongqing Sichuan

Mandarin as an emblem of a condition, justified by its association with Chongqing but not strictly determined by that metonym, rather, by the author's controlling sense of aesthetic information and achieving distinction.

Although very different in its details, He Dun's *We Are Like the Sunflowers* offers a similar rendition of local language, here the Xiang dialect of Changsha, Hunan. Told by the university-educated son of a factory manager, this narrative follows the careers of the sons of several workers in the factory with whom he went to school during the Cultural Revolution era. The central character, Feng Jianjun, is raised by a Korean War hero and his wife, the former concubine of a Nationalist official, until the father is sent to a labor camp after he accidently defaces a portrait of Mao Zedong and his mother is driven to suicide. When he is fifteen, Feng is imprisoned on a charge of attempted rape, after which his guardian secures a job for him at a shoe factory, where he is eventually put in charge of an apprentice, the girl who once informed on Feng's father for defacing the picture of Mao. Feng succeeds not only in seducing her, but in persuading her to deliver their baby, for which they are dismissed from the factory and forced to fend for themslves as household entrepreneurs, selling sundries from their apartment. Drawn to the girl who once accused him of attempted rape, Feng is able to establish an extramarital relationship with her, and is divorced by his first wife. He soon joins in smuggling foreign cigarettes from a supplier in Guandong Province, eventually stabs a creditor after a shipment is confiscated, and is again imprisoned. Throughout, Feng's closest friends are repeatedly involved in fighting, gambling, and illicit sexual relationships, which lead to criminal records for them as well. Thus, after Feng is released from prison, they are plunged into violence and their lives ruined. Left with no social support, Feng turns to a life of crime, for which he is finally imprisoned for life.

Feng and his cohorts are the generation who were taught to be sunflowers turning toward Mao Zedong as their sun. The metaphor of the characters as sunflowers for whom the sun has now forever set is most directly expressed at a primary-school reunion set in the early 1990s: "Sunflowers forever face the sun. Now the sun that in our hearts never sets has set, and we can only walk on with our heads

bowed."[38] Like the characters in *Daughter of Hunger*, the denizens of Changsha are "superfluous" to the nation they were taught to cherish. Too poorly educated to develop skills and too lacking in judgment to establish stable lives, they blunder through youth until by middle age their opportunities have been squandered. Their language thus consists of substandard expressions, often though not always, as a stylistic intensification of violence. The examples always mix Changsha Xiang with Putonghua Mandarin:

> "我不要你假惺惺!" 她哭着说, "你是这样打老子, 你好毒呢, 呜呜呜。"
>
> "Don't be *two-faced!*" she said crying. "You were *cruel* to hit me like that. Boohoo." (140)
>
> "你这小鳖莫学着讲狠, 慢点打了你, 还不知道是哪个打的就是的。"
>
> "You *little squirt*, *don't try to act tough*. *Otherwise*, when I'm done with you you won't know *who* hit you." (243)
>
> 那种笑容让冯建军想起米汤开折。有的人生下来并不蠢, 但被父母骂得变蠢了。
>
> The smile on her face made Feng Jianjun think of *the film on rice soup when it splits open:* Some people weren't born witless, but scolded into witlessness by their parents. (219)

In this milieu, people drink tea as *qiaza* 呷茶 (276), smoke cigarettes as *qiaye* 呷烟 (261), ask what time it is as *haodozhong* 好多钟 (190), and ask for agreement as *li kan yaode ma?* 你看要得吗? (218). Again, like *Daughter of Hunger*, the novel *We Are Like the Sunflowers* offers its local language, not as a systematic introduction to a dialect, but as the stylistic variant that carries aesthetic information controlled by a narrator who can demonstrate competence in both a standard and a local style that mediates the inadequacies of the two to produce a form of distinction.

The project in print fiction to use local language to demonstrate the inadequacies of representing China within a single, standard lan-

guage won widest public recognition in Han Shaogong's account of a Hunan village in *Maoqiao cidian* (The Maqiao lexicon, 1996).[39] Han presents the village in which he worked as a sent-down educated youth during the Cultural Revolution through a set of anecdotes and reflections on the local language of the community. Organized thus as a series of lexical entries, the form of the text suggests the arbitrariness of language. Some of the terms are defined in opposition to standard Mandarin. Others offer connotations distinct from those in standard language. Some suggest the heritage of a southern culture. Still others may be unique to the Maqiao region, or converge with a universal usage. Reflecting on the limitations of both local and standard languages, the narrator illustrates through anecdotes about each lexical entry the contradictory operations of language use. Language is a form of control that falters before the uncontrollable, such as sexuality, or fails to comprehend complexity, such as the attempt to define the character Dai Shiqing (97), the rich beggar-king, a wealthy peasant without any land, who could not fit any ready category of political economy at the time of Liberation. Language operates socially through status hierarchies, dominated by older males, determining who has how much linguistic power, or *huafen* (174–177). Yet the limitations of the efficacy of this system generates a custom in which the mentally disturbed and females like the "crazy woman" Shuishui (85–86) have enormous power to be heard based on their skill at divination, especially winning lottery numbers, and can thus invert hierarchies. Language conceals reality (58), so that cultural officials may insist on representing peasants in ways that peasants find absurd (59), and any relationship between man and woman outside marriage is *ligelang* 哩咯啷 (62), a nonsense phrase; *long* 龙 "prick" was also the name of Wan Yu, rumored to be a womanizer, who turned out not to have a *long* (65). Yet the origins of the function of language as concealment rest with preserving control and hierarchy, since the language of humans is what separates their cultural reality from that of animals (278); at the same time, it is fear that animals will understand human language which inspires hunters deliberately to adopt a code of incorrect usage (288).

The narrator reserves space to declare that with this text he is abandoning fiction: strong plots, characters, and moods to create a unified work follow a belief in what is significant that is determined

by "fashion, habit, and cultural trends" (68). Han wishes to critique these. Yet, however one reads *The Maqiao Lexicon* and the way in which its author seeks to position himself, the book thematizes what print fiction of the post–Mao era had been implying. Because language is used to control and dominate societies through status hierarchies, and to conceal reality in a reality that changes moment by moment (390–393), language itself will continually be driven to invent outside a standard. Han alludes explicitly to television as a vehicle to make Putonghua Mandarin more and more of a necessity in order "to enter modernity" (399). The spread of standard-language media has, he argues, shifted the gap between languages to one that is less and less spatial and more and more temporal, in other words existing between older and younger people and cultures. Yet, the very movement to conform to a common language may itself be generating variants and a mentality that rejects Putonghua Mandarin (401).

If the avant-garde had separated language from reality, Han's *Maqiao Lexicon* incorporated their position; but it also incorporated the realists' confrontation with language as social practice rather than a single, abstract structure. The realists' use of local language revived the question what is the social, performative relationship of different languages—standard and local—to each other. Han also adopted features of Milorad Pavic's *Dictionary of the Khazars: A Lexicon Novel in 10,000 Words* (1988) as a model for *The Maqiao Lexicon* to bring local language into the internationally recognized avant-garde forms of postmodern literature. Joining Pavic in a long line of authors whose novels were defined by the postmodernist Robert Coover as precursors of computer generated hypertext, *The Maqiao Lexicon* partakes of their strategies of nonsequential reading to "counter the line's power," culminating in hypertext that

> provides multiple paths between text segments, now often called "lexias" in a borrowing from the pre-hypertextual but prescient Roland Barthes. With its webs of linked lexias, its networks of alternate routes (as opposed to print's fixed unidirectional page turning), hypertext presents a radically divergent technology, interactive and polyvocal, favoring a plurality of discourses over definitive utterance and freeing the reader from domination by the author.[40]

In taking such a form, one that rhetorically decenters the author, *The Maqiao Lexicon* also rhetorically marginalizes Putonghua Mandarin and its cultural status, if not its practical value. By the time it was published, Han's position in the field of fiction was well established. When he assumed editorship of the periodical *Tianya* (Ends of the earth), the journal bore the marks of his presence, setting up its office with symbolic marginality on Hainan Island and running a long series of contributions listing the vocabulary of local youth cultures throughout China's various cities, along with a variety of avant-garde contributions. His position was significant enough for a major critic to challenge his authenticity by accusing him of plagiarizing from the *Dictionary of the Khazars*, a sign that Han was taken seriously as a contender in the contest for preeminence in the avant-garde. In other words, Han Shaogong over an extended period of time had succeeded within the field of high-culture literature in making an issue of standard language, just as the mass media had brought its own pressure to bear on high culture externally.

## Critical surveys

For authors like Han, there was no better figure for a discourse of the margin *(bianyuan huayu)* than local language. As print fiction became marginalized, taking up a style of marginalization in local language became a way to identify this marginalization with other forms of it that collectively create a mosaic of small spaces. These, in turn, relativize the standard as voice of the center that is itself increasingly contained within a local identity. The market and the ambition of the cultural elite to be the voice of China vied with this. In cultural politics, this was to contest defining the local through a binary of China/West—China as local versus West as global—that opens the possibility for a single, monolithic voice to speak on behalf of China. Local language introduces an uncertainty about how to define the local, and that uncertainty allows other voices into the contest. This widespread ambivalence toward the use of local language, already finding its way into statements on creativity in contemporary Chinese literature, would be implicated in still more.

From the most celebrated critical statement on literary language during the 1990s, local language was conspicuously absent. A series of articles initiated by the scholar-poet Zheng Min framed the debate on literary language in terms of the use of structuralist and poststructuralist methods to argue for the value of classical Chinese over the vernacular in modern China.[41] Like Han Shaogong, Zheng Min invoked the status of international discourse to attack contemporary discursive standards within China and promote an indigenous but largely abandoned style as more authentic. Although Zheng's arguments were considered idiosyncratic, they were original and provocative enough to cause some to wonder why they did not stimulate more discussion in print than they did. Yet the articles raised some points useful to considering the place of local language in contemporary print literature.

First, the focus of the discussion is poetry. If local language was conspicuously absent from these discussions about literary language, poetry has also been absent from this study because it has attracted local language the least in its contemporary forms. Contemporary poetry has overwhelmingly subscribed to Putonghua Mandarin as the standard for the field, local language occupying a tiny niche. Just as the cultural status of Putonghua Mandarin has waned—at the same time that its utility has increased—so, too, the status of poetry has diminished to the point of provoking Zheng Min's angry dismissal of the vernacular as a language worthy of poetry. But, second, Zheng Min refers to vernacular language as a single entity, alternately described as used by writers in opposition to the classical language, yet also as filled with elements of the historical legacy of classical language. By describing the vernacular collectively in such a fashion, Zheng Min, although herself a native of Fujian Province, identified it entirely with Putonghua Mandarin as the standard modern literary language, and thereby erased the multiplicity of languages or dialects, each with a varying relationship to modern written vernacular styles and a distinct history and relation to the cultural past and classical language.

It is a commonplace among educated defenders of the status of a given local language—be it Wu, Min, Cantonese, or other dialect—to point out the evidence for its distinctive relationship to the language

of premodern literature and the value that it therefore brings to contemporary culture in maintaining access to the cultural heritage. Inadvertently, therefore, Zheng Min's denunciation of Putonghua Mandarin as the language of poetry both slights and indirectly highlights the marginalized status of the local languages in literature. Although they, too, are mere vernacular styles, their exclusion from a vision of the highly politicized legacy of twentieth-century Chinese literature positions them to rewrite vernacular literature and to explore the links to a cultural heritage in ways distinct from the standard.

Zheng Min's articles also raise a third point: the authenticity that Michelle Yeh refers to when she interprets Zheng Min to mean that "Chineseness is China's only ticket to the international cultural community."[42] Yeh translates Zheng Min's statement: "When an ancient nation enters the forest of world culture, the possession that it needs most to bring with it is its own cultural tradition. If it goes empty-handed it will not be a partner of . . . world culture."[43] Yeh is quick to point out that Zheng Min's own appeal to restore authenticity to Chinese literature followed the lead of similar criticisms by two prominent foreign sinologists. Thereby Zheng is implicated in a search for cultural identity in which it is foreigners who determine recognition of this identity in a particular era of globalization. To turn this issue to the purposes of this study is to ask to what extent there is any recognition of a parallel or even similar situation within China. This is to ask whether there are writers in China who believe as well that the culture of China is also a "forest," and that when writers whose inspiration is indelibly associated with the experience and imagination of a specific locale enter that forest, the possession that they need most to bring with them is their own cultural tradition, lest they appear empty-handed. Inevitably there is a second round of questions that then explore whether a writer employing local language is also implicated in a search for recognition of his/her cultural identity that is determined by those outside that identity. In the case of the styles of classical poetry, the obvious answer lies in the repeated reminders by scholars of Cantonese and Fujian Min that their languages provide a more authentic and aesthetically superior phonological rendering of the language of classical poetry.

The elements of these issues were eventually articulated in an

article written at the turn of the century by the author Li Rui, best known for the novel *Jiu zhi* (Old address, 1993). After he published fiction employing local language, Li complained that his stories of peasants in the Lüliang Mountains region of Shanxi were categorized as "fiction on rural themes."[44] This, he argued, was in marked contrast to the way a writer like William Faulkner was treated: even though he used demotic southern American and Afro-American language in many of his novels, they were never categorized as "fiction on rural themes." In China, status rested with the kind of Chinese used to translate such foreign literature, not with any appreciation for the aesthetics of the language in which the text was written; unlike the appreciation for demotic English, demotic Chinese is marginalized. This double standard among China's cultural elite is now facing the era when even standard Putonghua Mandarin is being turned into a demotic local language marginalized from the universal language of English. In this way, Chinese have accepted self-colonization.

Li's direst vision is that literature is being moved off paper onto the internet, where all language must be formatted by programs written in English, so that eventually Chinese culture may be reliant upon an English-language software company and formatted by an information industry. The history of such centralized control over culture has not been benign, Li argues, and there is little reason to believe that such technology will not be used to dominate and control cultural production: "In such an age of the internet, under such circumstances, resisting formatting, resisting the hegemonic force of the language of the center, upholding the independence of local language, reexamining the value and significance of local language, and appealing to and establishing the equality of languages are things unavoidable for literature and for every person" (44). Li turns to Han Shaogong's *Maqiao Lexicon* to illustrate the value of local language, pointing out that in this text "you can observe clearly the complex and lively mutual infiltrations of and exchanges between the 'language of the center' and 'local language.' . . . The complexity and liveliness of the local language of Maqiao cannot be replaced by Modern Chinese, nor can they be expressed through any computer formatting in English. . . . This testifies to the unlimited resourcefulness of language and literature" (47).

Li outlined a worthwhile project for Chinese literature: to explore

imaginatively the implications for culture of the interaction of languages within China. It is a project that, despite his strong reservations about the role of science and technology, may well draw its inspiration as a cultural equivalent of ecological preservation, maintaining and exploring the resources of local languages for the implications they may have for cultural insight. Although he expressed strong skepticism that history offers a benign vision of centralized cultural authority, he was able to overlook the inequality and various forms of dominance and hegemony among local languages and to hope for the establishment of an equality among languages that the project of national language had been committed to breaking down. He presented all the elements of the nightmarish vision of globalization that were promoting cultural nationalism and placed local languages squarely within that project to argue that a nation that can no longer recognize local languages as crucial to its culture is condemned to inauthenticity. Yet Li offered as evidence the very *Maqiao Lexicon* that avant-garde critics had gone out of their way to label as an imitation of a foreign novel, and therefore inauthentic. Any of these, or better, arguments might have been published to rebut Li, but his article drew no published response.

It is difficult to believe that promoters of the status of local languages in urban centers like Shanghai, Chongqing, Chengdu, Guangzhou, or Beijing would have found common cause with Li Rui's defense of the value of rural local languages. Apparently they did not. Nor is it likely in the competition to command authority within the fields of literature that writers and critics would give way to Li or to Han. The only answers to his arguments appeared indirectly in government policies, for instance the announcement of October 22, 2001: "The Ministry of Education requires Chinese universities under its direct administration to use English textbooks in teaching the English language, information technology, biology, finance, and law."[45]

Nevertheless, despite the conservatism within print fiction and poetry during the 1990s, the new circulation and adoption of terms derived from what would otherwise have been described as local language had other subtle effects on the metalanguage used to define and describe Chinese. Many studies sought to ensure that the disorder of

local-language usage be contained within a protocol preserving the status of Putonghua Mandarin. For example, a survey of new trends in print-media language of the nineties categorizing innovations as "new and different/fresh and lively," as "humorous," or as "exaggerated," does not mention dialect, but the major examples in each category came from Hong Kong Cantonese and Taiwan Mandarin.[46] The status of these is contested, since they are seen as part of commercial culture, which threatens to displace official culture. Another study of the role of local language in literature published in 1992 was devoted for the most part to the contributions of local language to Putonghua Mandarin in terms of colorful language or economy of expression of something particular to a region, and noted the inevitability of writers including some traces of their local language in their writing, referring to the language as a vehicle of "local characteristics." However, the article also stressed that popular, oral language is vulgar 俗 and unrefined 粗俗, and therefore should not be used as the language of narration (diegesis), only as the means to show a person's identity and individual characteristics. Clearly, the aim is to maintain the cultural status of local language as low, a mark of lack of education.

Yet education was clearly admitting "local" terms to universal usage, and the arts and media were constantly looking for language outside the bounds of what they had experienced of formal education.[47] Eventually a study was completed that details the words and phrases from Taiwan and Hong Kong appearing in print in mainland Chinese publications. It demonstrates that during the eighties and nineties the vast majority of traffic was one-way, from Hong Kong and Taiwan to mainland China, and that the vast majority of words were new to the mainland (as opposed to readoption of older, disused words, or the reinterpretation of words in use). More predictably, it notes that the majority of these words appeared in print on the mainland in the 1990s, primarily in newspapers and magazines, with a minority finding a place in "authoritative" publications.[48] The adoption of vocabulary from "local language" in "authoritative" publications threatened more than a shift of cultural capital to Hong Kong or Taiwan. It also implied that local languages could produce language of status. It was not simply that a woman might be considered "beautiful" in the Cantonese term *leng/liang* 靚, that asking for the restaurant bill is *maidan*

埋單, or that furniture is *jiasi* 家俬, but also that "information" is *zixun* 资讯 and "interactive" is *hudong* 互动, and so forth. This blurred the boundary assumed between national and subnational or local language, not only for youth, but for cultural arbiters as well. Thus, by the time in late 1995 that the Central Propaganda Department of the Communist Party was drafting proposed regulations on the public use of language aimed at restricting both local and foreign languages, the term used for acceptable language was no longer Putonghua, but *Tongyong yuyan*, "Language in general use" or "universal language." Not surprisingly, the use of the term *tongyong* as "general" or "universal," as distinct from its older use to translate "interchangeable," was derived from the Taiwan–Hong Kong translation of the name for the General Electric Corporation.

## Film, fiction, and distinction

What was difficult for print literature to do culturally and practically was technically simple for film. Film, although it remained dominated by the general requirement that dialog must be readily intelligible (theatrical speech, as Michel Chion terms it), also made a few gestures that distinguished it from both print media and broadcast media in its use of local language. Local accents, and even actual local language, were not new to film in the People's Republic following its founding in 1949. A handful of films in the 1950s offered local-language sound tracks. Among these were *Zhua zhuangding* (Seizing conscripts, 1958?), adapted from a stage satire in the Sichuan local language of the Zigong region, and the comedy *San Mao xue shengyi* (San Mao studies business, 1958), filmed in Shanghai Wu and Yangzhou (Subei) Mandarin. *San Mao Studies Business* followed a Shanghai stage tradition of presenting stereotypical associations with local languages in the previous Republican era, and it was performed by a local stage company. *San Mao xue shengyi* appears to hark back to stereotypes of vaudeville popular in early-twentieth-century Shanghai, in which performers acting "army officers and policemen spoke Shandong dialect, wealthy matrons and socialites spoke Suzhou dialect, compradores and interpreters for foreign firms spoke Cantonese, important bosses and mer-

chants spoke Ningbo dialect, scholars, scribes, and fortunetellers spoke Shaoxing dialect, barbers and rickshaw pullers spoke Yangzhou dialect, and so forth."[49] However, the demands of education, disseminating Putonghua Mandarin through the media, moved films in the direction of sound tracks with broadcast-standard Mandarin. Late in the Cultural Revolution era the film *Juelie* (Breaking with old ideas, 1975), offered a scene in which the peasant parents of a young, gifted student mortify him when they visit him at school by speaking in their local accents. Perhaps it is in this context that the decision to endow the images of revolutionary leaders with local accents can be understood as drawing notice. That the films of revolutionary leaders focused attention on the local accents of major historical figures while leaving the supporting casts to uphold standard Mandarin was also not lost on audiences. As one writer quipped, "If it's not suitable for the masses to speak local language, then it's given to leaders as a special privilege."[50]

Bits of local language were quickly restored to characters representing the masses in such films as *Cheng nan jiushi* (My memories of old Beijing, 1982), set in the late 1920s in the *hutong* lanes of the capital. Nanny Song, a Hebei peasant who cares devotedly for the children of a Taiwanese family, was scripted with some lines of what was called *lao mazi* (maidservant) Beijing speech.

宋妈指点着拉煤的人:"劳驾, 给搭搭手。"

Nanny Song, pointing to a coal porter: "I need to trouble you to lend a hand."[51]

"敢情你也疯啦。"

"So you're crazy too, after all." (149)

"丫头子那儿别忘了到时侯送钱去给人家多道道乏…."

"When you take the money to the family looking after our daughter don't forget to tell them what a burden it must be for them."
(236, 516)

Originally an autobiographical novella published on Taiwan (1960) by Lin Haiyin, herself a native of Taiwan who grew up in Beijing before returning there, *My Memories of old Beijing* as a film imaged a collective past for audiences in Taiwan and on the mainland alike, a theme supporting United Front publicity. Unlike the novella, the film evoked the voices of old Beijing as consisting of local Beijing language among the masses, particularly Nanny Song, and the standard Mandarin of the educated family from Taiwan. Indeed, although the novella gives Nanny Song several expressions distinctive to Beijing dialect later used in the film, the narrator of the novella points out that she is not fluent in it. In one passage the narrator plays on the variety of accents produced by Nanny Song and the narrator's parents, alluding to a nearby compound called the Huian Guest House: "Nanny Song was from Shunyi County and didn't speak good Beijing speech. She pronounced it the 'Huinan Guest House.' Mom said 'Huiwa Guest House.' Pa said 'Feian Guest House.' I followed the pronunciation of the kids in the lane as 'Huian Guest House,' but which pronunication after all was correct I still don't know" (425).

The narrator delivers other distinctive sounds of her parents' speech, her mother's mispronunciation of Mandarin words and her father's various Hakka phrases. The standard Mandarin of the narrator thus is a language that transcends what would otherwise be an incoherent assortment of sounds. Like the episodic events of caring, death, and separation that are the leitmotif of her childhood, coherence lies in the maturation of a young girl, the construction of an individual subjectivity, overcoming her philandering father and the failures of his generation's society. The film, on the other hand, is about the re-creation of what was suppressed, a historical Beijing that, for all its cruelties and injustices, was marked by pleasures, affection, and devotion across many social divides, all of which were banished: in the final scene, the narrator faces the death of her father, and Nanny Song departs with her peasant husband to sad oblivion in the countryside. With Nanny Song, historically of course, went local language.

Many of the themes promoted by the Central Propaganda Department for attention in literature and the arts during the 1980s and 1990s were specifically occasions for employing local language. After

the celebration of revolutionary leaders, post-Mao urban economic reforms were promoted through films like *Yamaha yudang* (Yamaha fish stall, 1984). Although the film was released dubbed in Putonghua Mandarin, even the title phrase *yudang* for "fish stall" was new to its northern audiences and alluded to its Cantonese setting. In the film, a deliquent Cantonese youth released from detention finds himself "awaiting employment," and decides to take up individual enterprise as a fish merchant. The deliberate portrayal of the relative wealth of life in economically advanced Guangdong and the relative freedom of young people in pursuing romantic relationships seized the attention of viewers in the more conservative north, many of whom were incredulous. Although this film served central government purposes in promoting small-scale enterprises, it also clearly boosted the image of Guangdong. Cantonese is heard in popular songs and in the language of some extras, fixing attention on Guangzhou and the south as the site of an innovative and appealing lifestyle.

The attempt to win national recognition through television for the status of Xi'an Mandarin as on a par with Beijing or Shanghai speech was compromised or frustrated not only by the authorities and market considerations, but also by film artists. Established directors like Zhang Yimou and Zhou Xiaowen exploited Shaanxi for local languages regarded as low-status. For his celebrated film *Qiu Ju da guansi* (The story of Qiu Ju, 1991), Zhang Yimou even set his film in and around the Shaanxi town of Baoji, a crossroads of migrants from Sichuan, Gansu, and Ningxia. Like Zhongjiang and Wanxian in the comedy of Chengdu and Chongqing, or Subei in the comedy of Shanghai, the residents of Baoji were ridiculed in Xi'an as the stereotype of quaint, slow-witted boors. A native of Shaanxi, Zhang Yimou knew in the most specific terms that he was creating a story about the demand issuing from a marginal corner of society to recognize its dignity. His own account of the film avoided any mention of this, however, and only stressed: "It's like a documentary film. I'm aiming for a natural and real look, no dramatic stuff.... The characters are played by real people: peasants, policemen, judges, and so on. We only used four professional actors."[52] The reason for this decision was left unstated. The critic Wang Yichuan was certainly insightful in reading the film in terms of a heroic myth in which its director, like its protagonist,

has emerged from the margins of global culture to win a *shuofa*, recognition from the center of global culture in the form of awards.[53] At the same time, the choice of setting and local language had a significance specific to the region, inverting the regional hierarchy by making Baoji the site of a forbiddingly large and confusing city to which the peasant woman Qiu Ju journeys in her search for a legal decision that would compel the mayor of her village to recognize that he has wrongfully injured the dignity of her husband and herself—and not simply her husband's crotch, where the mayor kicked him during an argument.

In Qiu Ju's journey, not only is her lack of competence in standard usage fundamental to the story, but also the local language of Baoji as the ultimate conveyor of her quest for legal authority. The authorities in Baoji can order the offending village mayor to be arrested and punished, but are at a loss to comprehend and act on the woman's request that he simply apologize and thereby restore her sense of dignity. Neither her language nor that of the Baoji authorities is associated with dignity. But this carried different connotations for the spectators of Xi'an and Baoji, who heard the dialog as the language of Baoji, and for spectators elsewhere, to whom it was simply unintelligible without subtitles. Hence, to an international audience unfamiliar with Chinese, it is Qiu Ju's vaguely articulated demand for a *shuofa*, a "statement," translated as a "public apology,"[54] that is the center of attention. To a Chinese audience at large, there is an implication that, just as the legal system does not have a language that suitably addresses the needs of its citizens, so they also lack competence in the language in which this drama unfolds. To a regional audience, the implication is that the language of the characters is itself associated with depriving people of dignity: the imposing city to which the peasant woman journeys to obtain the support of authorities is only the hick town that supplies beer and migrant labor to Xi'an. The demand to recognize human dignity is thus presented, not in the abstract terms of contemporary China and globalization, but in the materiality of specific language and a particular location. Nonetheless, this does not deprive the film of its more universal implication—that the film interpolates all audiences alike as speakers of "local languages" at once valid and ill-suited to a dominant discourse that is not altogether responsive to what is valid. The signif-

icance of the local language does, however, point to the predicament as one not exclusively identified with a global situation, or even a national one, but a local one as well.

Inevitably, *The Story of Qiu Ju* is also a gendered study, a parable showing that when males fail to maintain order, that order is subject to female intervention. The organizations and institutions of social authority that Qiu Ju encounters, from the village mayor to the court in Baoji, are all male. Her demand of that order to recognize the dignity of her family on her terms, the *shuofa*, reveals a system that is as ill-suited to her needs as it is to the standards of Putonghua Mandarin. In this way, the language of the dialog is feminized as a discourse inadequate to an ideal vision of male-dominated order.

This gendered discourse of local language dominates another rural drama film of the nineties, Zhou Xiaowen's *Ermo* (1994), which uses what is reportedly a local variant of Mandarin along the border of Shaanxi and Shanxi Provinces. Once again, when males lack insight or ability the result is the spread of disorder through females. The young wife Ermo pays little attention to the changes taking place in society under the new socialist market economy until her young son begins to display indifference to family life, preferring to watch the neighbors' new television. The neighbor's wife is, in fact, envious of Ermo for producing a son, since she has been unable to fulfill that ancient role. Ermo, unable to look to her sickly, dysfunctional husband, formerly village chief, to redress the affront to a properly ordered family, takes it upon herself to earn enough money to purchase the largest television set available in the county.

In contrast to her own husband as a symbol of patriarchal order in decline, the neighbor Blindman is an entrepreneur of market socialism who has access to technology—his truck—which can aid her in her quest for lost status. He introduces Ermo to the truck, and through it the city, the larger market, urban consumer life (restaurants, clothes, beauty aids), status in the technology of the urban restaurant, and foreign culture (on TV). In introducing Ermo to all this, Blindman is hoping to create an exchange of the commodities for the woman. This works well as long as Ermo does not see herself as a trade for commodities. This realization robs her of her sense of control and self-respect, which is at the core of her mission. She is able finally to

achieve her goal of purchasing the TV for her family. When, in the final scene, an exhausted Ermo stares blankly into a screen filled with static snow, the implication is that all is far from well. Blindman is so named for his inability to understand the consequences of his attempt to manipulate Ermo.

The parable of the cultural elite as a male institution of order and the masses as childlike female is thus set out. The male believes that his traditional status or command of technological skills and social relations will shape and guide the female, like the poor and ignorant; however, females as the poor and ignorant will overcome all obstacles to achieve a very traditional sense of self-respect. They will not become informed and thoughtful participants in a new social order. They are determined, invincible seekers. But in their search to achieve a basic goal, such as their self-respect according to a traditional set of family values, they are so uninformed that their achievements will spread disorder, empower popular culture, and leave them with a sense of emptiness despite their triumph. High culture in film thereby pronounces its judgment of popular mass culture as the worst of both worlds: a set of values inherited from traditional patriarchy and a manipulation of the potential of technology and knowledge to unfulfilling ends. In such a world, the Putonghua Mandarin intended to be the standard for national culture is now delivered chaotically through the flow of television, uttered by a foreign couple making illicit love, while English is mouthed by Chinese discussing Chinese culture. The backwater local language of characters like Ermo and Blindman constitutes the poorly informed, half-comprehending commentary of remote consumers destined for frustration.

*The Story of Qiu Ju* and *Ermo* both allied themselves with fiction by adapting novellas and distinguished themselves by adopting local-language dialog that fiction would have been hard-pressed to represent in print. Li Shaohong, a director for Beijing Film Studios, made a similar decision in 1995 when adapting Su Tong's novella *Hongfen* (Blush) about prostitutes and a wealthy client-lover at the time of Liberation in 1949. The title connotes the ending of the novella, omitted from the film, in which a reformed prostitute's son discovers the last remaining relic of her former life, a container of rouge, which she forbids him to play with. What the film provides is Wu local language in

opposition to Putonghua Mandarin. Although written in Mandarin, the novella is set in Shanghai, where Communist Party cadres close the brothels and reform the prostitutes, who are, however, still able to lure a client into embezzling funds, for which the Communist Party executes him. To film the adaptation, the director agreed to a location in nearby Suzhou. Since local actors hired there spoke Suzhou Wu, and since several of her principal performers spoke Shanghai Wu, the director decided to film in a mixture of Suzhou and Shanghai Wu, while making characters who represented the liberating Red Army and Communist Party speak Mandarin.

The result created a set of hierarchical oppositions in which the local, intimate, and irrational are overwhelmed by conformity to the national, official, and rational. At the same time, the film undoes the hierarchy by criticizing the ideas and policies of the Maoist era for creating a unified, metropolitan, hegemonic culture. The Mandarin-speaking female officer charged with reforming the prostitutes is quaint in her manner, and supposedly represents the impersonal program of a modernizing state seeking to liberate social classes from oppression. Her words, however, are also revealed to be the personal, intimate thoughts and feelings of the female cadre's story of her relationship with her mother, once a prostitute. Moreover, in a unique gesture, the film is narrated off-screen by an unidentified female speaking in Shanghai Wu. Even though her narration contains no explicit lines challenging the Mandarin voice of authority, she is positioned to speak as the ultimate authority for the story outside the diegesis—the world of the film. Mandarin is thus associated with arbitrary authority and as dispossessing people and their space. Every scene is framed in a claustrophobic manner, imaging cramped spaces in which characters are trapped or from which they are being expelled. Everything is made to look old and tattered and drab, against which colors like yellow stand out as passionate flames of irrational human resistance to being subsumed into some new rational order. Thus, although the film represents the extinction of a way of life and its language, it also restores that language to the media as the authentic voice of a vanished world, once again liberated from a vision of the nation that was itself vanishing.

Like the films set in Shaanxi, *Blush* presented Suzhou and Shang-

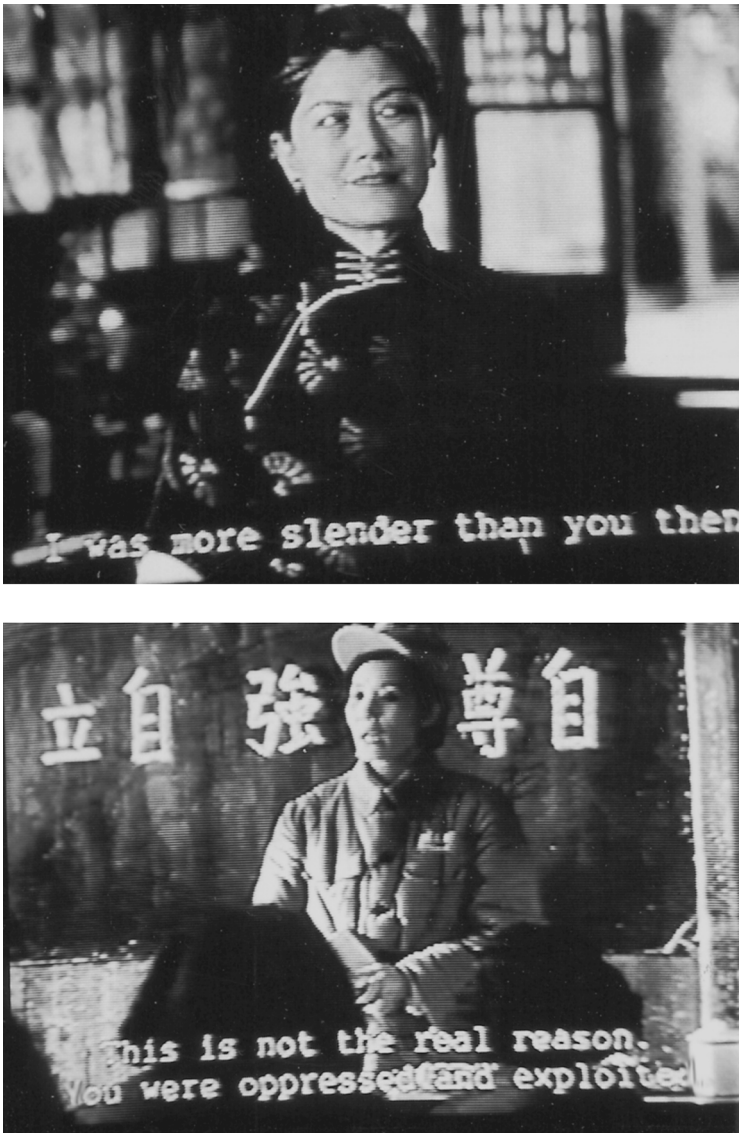



**Figure 15.** The film *Blush* (1995), adapted from a story by Su Tong, was directed by Li Shaohong, who had characters representing society prior to the Revolution of 1949 speak in varieties of Wu, such as the matron of a landlord family addressing a prostitute *(top).* Communist authorities representing the revolution speak in Mandarin, such as the cadre engaged in reeducating prostitutes through appeals to self-respect and autonomy *(bottom).* This relativization of language also heightens the sense of historical discontinuities as a whole.

hai Wu dialects as a subaltern, feminized voice. Unlike them, however, Wu had a long history of being recurrently associated in both fiction and film with commercial sex. In fiction it dated back at least as far as the novel *Haishanghua liezhuan* (Flowers of Shanghai, 1897), adapted by Hou Xiaoxian as the film *Haishanghua* in 2000, complete with Shanghai Wu dialog. Even fiction of the nineties when presenting a prostitute might typify her with a few lines of Shanghai Wu, as in the novel *Tian nu* (Heaven's wrath).[55] However, the implications of the oppositions evident in the film *Blush* made its use of Shanghai Wu too subversive, and the Ministry of Film, Radio, and Television banned the use of local language in feature films in the fall of 1995, following the film's release. This action turned out to be a precursor of the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Use of Chinese Languages and Chinese Characters promoting standard Mandarin, adopted on January 1, 2001.

Yet film was not done with its own distinctive version of the aesthetic of the marginal and the unassimilated. The release of such studio productions as *Xun qiang* (Missing gun) in 2002, using Guizhou Mandarin, together with a wave of independent, "underground" films and videos deviating from Putonghua Mandarin, indicated that a demand on the part of both the market and the cultural elite had formed an alliance through the uses of local language that, however tenuous, symbolized an unsettled vision of China's culture.

# Conclusion

## The Rhetoric of Local Languages

IN THE CONTEXT of a standard (Putonghua or Guoyu) Mandarin, local language is one means to provide unpredictable information that reduces the redundancy of a standard style. As such, local languages have and will continue to have a role in creative texts. What in particular has stimulated their specific uses in texts and their acceptance of them among readers and audiences has been the principal concern of this study.

Local communities in the later decades of the twentieth century varied substantially in the degree to which they adopted local languages and in the selection of media and genres for their use. Such variations, like the languages themselves, also suggest the distinctiveness of those communities. Nevertheless, common features among these communities also stimulated their use and acceptance. Four such common features should not be overlooked. The first is a sense of threat to the community that caused a shift in its collective ethos. From 1967, the disturbances of the Cultural Revolution in China startled Hong Kong, triggering a wave of emigration, uncertain investment, and a new sense of its identity as a site of distinctive cultural production, not simply the venue for transmission of a larger, national culture. The declining international political status of Taiwan throughout the 1970s, casting its national identity into doubt, prompting emigration, increasing uncertainty over patterns of investment and economic security, and arousing fear of social disintegration, also prompted a major revision to its collective ethos as a society distinct from China. From the late 1980s on, sweeping economic reforms on the mainland of China created massive migrations of peasants into

cities, where residents also faced the insecurities of a growing market economy, and under the stress of these conditions, each city itself has had to give serious consideration to integrating its residents into a collective identity that has included their role as agents of cultural production.

Second, the periods that threatened local social disintegration in these ways also gave rise to new, socially mobile, market-oriented groups. In Hong Kong the first generation of a largely immigrant population to be raised in Hong Kong came of age to take their place as consumers and producers of culture. Similarly, on Taiwan the first generation of a Mandarin educational system with no immediate ties to the mainland of China matured, also forming a large, well-to-do middle class, divided in its interests in the Chinese mainland and Taiwan itself. Finally, by the 1990s what has been termed a "proto-middle class"[1] appeared in mainland cities as key agents and consumers of a market society.

Third, new media and newly commercialized media with a variety of target audiences rapidly expanded during these periods, creating new fields of activity for cultural production in a competitive market. Their appeal to consumers through experiments with audio and graphic distinctiveness was inevitable.

Fourth, English or other international languages were increasingly disseminated in each community as central to key fields of academic and economic endeavor. Thus, standard Mandarin as the national language and as an increasingly international language was also repositioned as only one of a set of necessary or desirable languages. In the media, standard Mandarin became increasingly identified with state and educated-elite institutions that were themselves undergoing reforms or in need of reforms, rather than centers of stability and opportunity.

The social groups engaged in reconstructing the ethos of their communities had divided linguistic preferences, seeking recognition of their local languages, but also acknowledging the need and prestige of some form of a standard Chinese language. This divided preference played out differently in different locations, depending upon a variety of local factors. Most commonly, writing, as the medium that is expected to perpetuate the standards of education, upheld the desire for

a standard. Yet, this standard was challenged from two directions. The first was the promotion of news and information as a product independent of official sources and editing, displayed through the use of local language understood as a vehicle of entertainment, and entertainment as an institution at least somewhat removed from official organizations. This institution of entertainment had previously been perpetuated through local operas and puppet theater, storytellers and ballad singers, and, when these lost their appeal, was carried into the contemporary period through popular music, video, and film from Hong Kong and Taiwan, which in turn prompted writing in local languages. The second challenge came primarily from fields of literature and film that advanced the use of local languages as emblems of the primitive, that is, distinct local subcultures not assimilated to modern culture. Such use of local language also implied the inadequacy of a single, standard language or style to represent a society and its culture(s). These texts participated in the several broader movements to redefine cultural identity that followed the Cultural Revolution era.

That these two challenges to the standards of education as state institutions existed does not mean that local languages in the media and literature served only these ends. Officially sponsored cultural productions aimed at supporting new policies and programs also displayed an ambivalence and ambiguity in employing local languages. For the state as well as other groups, local-language productions could be used to define a location as a site of cultural production, not simply a venue for the transmission of a larger culture. Such productions could construct the nature of that culture, and through these affirm the existence and value of such a community. Time and again, the lure of employing local language to appeal to a sense of community, to give it a history, and to valorize the achievements of local residents overrode the educative demand to offer Putonghua Mandarin dialog. On other occasions, officially sponsored productions associated local language with the primitive, spoken by characters presented as specimens of severe cultural limitations, moral and rational. Explicitly or implicitly, local language was a major portion of the culture of everyday life, including the stereotypes by which people oriented them-

selves. As such, it was largely eschewed by the genre of written romance as the transcendence of these limitations.

Hence, state organizations, as well as the commerical sectors and the most autonomous of the artistic circles, all recognized in varying degrees the inadequacies of conceiving a national popular culture that is monolingual. They were drawn to the role that local languages can play in constructing numerous oppositions within a group of communities that are being redefined, and in identifying and imagining the agents of that redefinition. The lure and the limitations of using local languages involve interests not only described as class and subethnic local identity, the state, the market, and the cultural elite, but also gender. Time and again women authors have been among the first to reintroduce elements of local language as a sustained style into the autonomous fields of high culture fiction: Xi Xi in Hong Kong, Xiao Lihong and Liao Huiying on Taiwan, Cheng Naishan and Liu Xihong on the mainland. And in many cases male authors have subsequently taken up and developed this innovation into more ambitious styles. Yet, the increasing frequency of local language in mass, commerical texts—whether pop music, social interest news, or telenovelas, and so forth—was so widespread that local language could never be taken as a sign of distinction within high culture, no matter how much pressure its expanded presence in the media placed on high culture to acknowledge and find a role for it.

The movement of local languages into the media and literature was, of course, paralleled by a global rise of new hybrid vocabularies that provoked delight and despair from Europe to Asia, from the Denglisch of Germany to the Hinglish of India, the Singlish of Singapore and Malandarin of Malaysia, and ultimately the Chinglish of China as well. Formally, it was simply the latest of many waves of such ephemeral lexical coinages. Yet, the issues that accompanied globalization made this new pidgin into a symptom of larger cultural concerns. These concerns have had to do with the status of Chinese cultural production conceived as "national forms" dominated by a standard Mandarin. Within China, globalization diminished the status of national forms conceived as emanating from a center that spoke and wrote in a standard Mandarin. This concern for the fate of local lan-

guages among some was comprised of a fear that if a standard Mandarin was devalued in the rush to acquire English and other foreign languages, that local languages might be pushed out of use altogether, and with them the most visible and audible signs of the local as a site of cultural production. However, there was also recognition that the diminished status of a standard Mandarin provided the opportunity to reconceive the role of the local in shaping cultural production. So, too, the centuries of cultural colonization of China by a standardized form of Mandarin, culminating in an abandoned alternative to modernity through Maoist socialism, set the stage for local languages to play a role in reinventing and reimagining both the pedagogy of what has defined the cultural past and its role in the present for the performance of a modern China.

Certainly the role played by local language was ambivalent and ambiguous. The assertion of local languages in the same forms of media otherwise dominated by standard language might have suggested the voice of the subaltern in all its heterogeneity. Then again, its authenticity could be evoked only to demonstrate its own disunity, its hierarchies, its need to be rescued from its limitations or condemned for them and reeducated. Yet local language had a broader role to play on the mainland of China.

In both the media and literature on the mainland of China, local language always implied a project of cultural excavation to expose older layers of cultural colonization by the metropolitan culture of the empire, adapted to construct opposition to modern forms of colonization from overseas. The successes of that modernization through a plan for hegemonic national culture were followed by its limitations, then by a turning to the overseas that destabilized the status of a standardized language of modernity and created conditions for various media to revisit the cultural conditions of all forms of colonization, foreign and Chinese alike. The very need for state organizations to coerce the media by imposing policies and passing legislation to curtail the public use of local languages also announced the demise of metropolitan culture as hegemonic, except where it maintains its national identity in the form of opposition to foreign domination by drawing upon the association of Putonghua Mandarin with symbolic capital and social status.

Thus, though local languages on the mainland played little role in redefining any borders of China, they plainly implied a reconsideration of who inhabited those borders and their role in defining them. If they did not, like foreign languages, alter the forms of a standard Chinese, they did revive or invent a vast vocabulary that altered the status of the standard from a fixed code to a canon, promoting a recognition that any standard could be other than what it was, even be a sign of contingency. Even if they could not stage a transvaluation of signs, local languages did imply that such a transvaluation was possible.

Containing the public use of local languages, in part through hegemony and in part through coercion, has allowed the formation of a coherent cultural elite. Nothing has threatened to undermine that identity more than the surge of local languages into the products both of a high culture and of a greatly expanded broadcast media in which the products of popular culture have encroached upon the territory of high culture and often displaced or reshaped it. In such a well-known cultural milieu there no longer remains a single field of the elite with privileged access to culture. Instead, at some point, everyone has had to rely upon translators and interpreters, subtitles or voice-overs, dictionaries and glossaries, in order to render coherent some aspect of contemporary culture. Never before the late twentieth century had local languages played such a prominent role in the most salient cultural products of the time and increasingly reduced the cultural elite to a state of dependence upon creating knowledge about a world external to China or one reliant upon the apparatuses of broadcast media and local popular taste.

Only by containing the public use of local languages can a coherently identified cultural elite define China in a way that promotes a coherent relationship to its historical past and to the present global position. In such a globally conceived China, large geographic regions or even China itself are privileged as the sites of the local. Such a privileging allows the linguistic local to be dismissed as an insignificant marker of past civilizations. In this way, such markers can be bulldozed or educated into oblivion, to be replaced by a coherent pedagogy of the past and performance of the present. It would come as no surprise if such a vision succeeded, or then again, if it failed.

In the tide of new vocabulary and language that swept through Chinese societies, all fields of cultural production were challenged to display their participation and creativity in addressing the flow of the verbal environment. Local language was one of several means to these ends, and was distinctive in extracting the unpredictable from the mundane, reimagining communities and inventing for them a cultural capital where there had otherwise been little or none.

# Notes

## Introduction

1. The full title of Yang Xiong's text has been translated as "Local words of different 'countries,' explained by the language of bygone generations [as collected] by the imperial messenger(s) [who traveled] in the light cart"; see Paul Leo-Mary Serruys, "Prolegomena to the Study of the Chinese Dialects of Han Time according to *Fang-yen*," (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1956), I.2. The explanations are in the language of "bygone generations" because Yang Xiong was reportedly working with previously unpublished material collected by officials of the preceding Zhou and Qin dynasties.

2. Quoted in Fan Xing, *Dangdai wenxue yu diyu wenhua* (Contemporary literature and regional culture) (Wuhan: Huazhong shifan daxue, 1997), 249.

3. Ibid., 274.

4. See Qiu Shiwen "Shanghai pianjian" (Prejudices toward Shanghai), in *Kan yan nan wang: zai xianggang zhangda* (Unforgettable sights: Growing up in Hong Kong) (Hong Kong: Youth Literary Bookstore, 1997), 115–119.

5. Liu Kang, "Popular Culture and the Culture of the Masses," *boundary 2*, vol. 24, no. 3 (Fall 1997): 112.

6. Liao Xianhao, "Fangyan de wenxue juese: san zhong houjiegou shijue" (The literary role of local language: Three post-structuralist viewpoints), *Zhongwai wenxue* (Taibei) 19.2 (1990): 92–106.

7. Glen Dudbridge, "China's Vernacular Cultures: An Inaugural Lecture" (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 6.

8. See Zhang Weizhong, *Xin shiqi xiaoshuo de liubian yu Zhongguo chuantong wenhua* (The course of new-era fiction and Chinese traditional culture) (Shanghai: Xuelin, 2000), 263–287.

9. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

10. J. B. Pride and Janet Holmes, *Sociolinguistics: Selected Readings* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), 36, citing J. A. Fishman, *La linguistique* Vol. 2 (1965): 67.

11. Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, ed. and trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 103.

12. Ibid., 6, 171; Claudia Gorbman, ed. and trans., *The Voice in Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 169–170.

13. Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, 132.

14. Chion, *Audio-Vision*, 171.

15. Ibid., 178–182.

16. Note, for example, *Trouble in Paradise* (1932); *Tovarich* (1937); *Open City* (1945); *Paisan* (1946); *The Big Sky* (1952); *The Longest Day* (1962); *The Godfather* (1972). Chion provides other examples.

17. Chion, *Audio-Vision*, 104.

18. Ibid., 68.

19. Ibid., 157.

20. For a study of Bourdieu's theories applied to China, see Michel Hockx, *The Literary Field of Twentieth-Century China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), esp. 1–20.

21. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 120.

22. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 61.

23. Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, 117 and 119.

24. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 60; cited in Richard Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu* (London: Routledge, 1992), 159.

25. See Liao Xianhao, "Fangyan," 96–102.

26. Ibid., 92–93.

27. D. P. Martinez, *The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture: Gender, Shifting Boundaries, and Global Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 11.

28. In Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake, eds., *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 344.

29. Ibid., 23.

30. See Tim Oakes, "China's Provincial Identities: Reviving Regionalism and Reinventing Chinese-ness," *Journal of Asian Studies* 59.3 (August 2000): 667–692; Oakes is citing David Goodman, "King Coal and Secretary Hu: Shaanxi's Third Modernization," in Hans Hendrischke and Feng Chongyi, eds., *The Political Economy of China's Provinces* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).

31. See Oakes, "China's Provincial Identities," 671.

32. *The Faculty Forum* (Duke University) 10.1 (September 1998): 6.

33. Zhu Jiangyuan, "Xiangsheng de shengming zaiyu su zhong sheng ya" (The life of *xiangsheng* is in generating the refined from the vulgar), *Renmin ribao* (People's Daily), January 13, 1994.

34. See Ma Jiewei, *Jiedu puji meijie* (Analyzing popular media) (Hong Kong: Ciwenhua, 1996), 110.

35. Mayfair Meihui Yang, "Mass Media and Transnational Subjectivity in Shanghai: Notes on (Re)Cosmopolitanism in a Chinese Metropolis," in Aihwa Ong and Donald Nonini, eds., *Ungrounded Empires: The Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Transnationalism* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 295.

## Chapter 1. (Im)pure Culture in Hong Kong

1. *Yaotiao shunü/Jiutiu sukneoi* (My fair lady), directed by Gu Tiannong, script adapted by Chen Junrun, 2 video compact discs (Hong Kong: Universe Laser and Video Co., 1997).

2. Rey Chow, "Playing on the Air: Recollections from a Hong Kong Childhood," *Journal of Modern Literature in Chinese* 1.1 (July 1997): 109–127.

3. For sources on phonology, see Robert Stuart Bauer, "Cantonese Sociolinguistic Patterns: Correlating Social Characteristics of Speakers with Phonological Variables in Hong Kong Cantonese" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1982). See also Robert S. Bauer and Paul K. Benedict, *Modern Cantonese Phonology* (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1997).

4. For a recent source on *sanjidi* style, see Huang Zhongming, *Xianggang sanjidi wenti liubian shi* (History of the development of Hongkong sanjidi style) (Hong Kong: Xianggang zuojia xiehui, 2002).

5. See Hao Zaijin, *Yingxiong mo wen chuchu: Xianggang de yi min yu churu jing* (Ask not whence heroes come: The background of Hong Hong immigrants) (Beijing: Renmin wenxue, 1999), 208–209.

6. Joanna Lee, "All for Freedom: The Rise of Patriotic/Pro-democratic Popular Music in Hong Kong in Response to the Chinese Student Movement," in Reebee Garofalo, ed., *Rockin' the Boat: Mass Music and Mass Movements* (Boston: South End Press, 1999), 132.

7. *Hong Kong Film Archive Treasures: An Exhibition* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 1998), 46.

8. Li Cheuk-to, "Postscript," in *A Study of Hong Kong Cinema in the Seventies* (Hong Kong: Urban Council of Hong Kong, 1984), 127.

9. *Banjin baliang* (The private eyes), directed and written by Xu Guanwen and Xu Guanjie, video compact disc (Hong Kong: Universe Laser and Video Co., n.d.).

10. See the topic of levels of Cantonese and code mixing discussed by Kang-Kwong Luke, "Why Two Languages Might Be Better Than One: Motivations of Language Mixing in Hong Kong," in Martha C. Pennington, ed., *Language in Hong Kong at Century's End* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1998).

11. Li Cheuk-to, "Postscript," 130.

12. Ye si, *Jiyi de chengshi, Xugou de chengshi* (Remembered cities, fictive cities), cited in Luo Feng, *Shijimo chengshi* (The city at the end of the century) (Hong Kong: Oxford, 1995), 104.

13. Robert Stuart Bauer, "Cantonese Sociolinguistic Patterns: Correlating Social Characteristics of Speakers with Phonological Variables in Hong Kong Cantonese," (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1982), 26.

14. "Interview: D. C. Lau," *Chinese University Bulletin* (Summer 1979): 6.

15. Ibid., 4–5.

16. For one source on this, see Lu Yan, *Xiang'gang zhanggu* (Anecdotes of Hong Kong) (Hong Kong: Guangjiaojing, 1979), 57–72.

17. The founding artists of the television industry were largely cultural elite: The Hui brothers, Liu Tiansi, Deng Weixiong, Huang Zhan, Liang Shuyi, Wang Jing, Sun Yupiao, and Xiao Ruoyuan were all university graduates. See Ma Jiewei, *Dianshi zhanguo shidai* (The warring states era of television) (Hong Kong: Ciwenhua, 1992), 61–62.

18. Huang Zhan, *Langdang rensheng—renwu pian* (Misspent life—essays on people) (Hong Kong: Yizhoukan, 1994), 29.

19. See Zhu Yaowei, *Xianggang liuxing geci yanjiu* (Studies of Hong Kong popular song lyrics) (Hong Kong: Sanlian, 1998), especially 83–88; 452–453.

20. *Shanghai Tan*, Episode 1, from notes made by Tan Pack-ling, July 1999.

21. Chen Yinghui, "Letian zhiming dianshiju," in Liang Bingjun, *Xianggang de liuxing wenhua* (Popular culture of Hong Kong) (Hong Kong: Sanlian, 1993), 169.

22. Chen Qixiang, "Xianggang bentu wenhua de jianli he dianshi de juese" (The establishment of indigenous culture in Hong Kong and the role of television), in Elizabeth Sinn (Xian Yuyi), ed., *Xianggang wenhua yu she hui* (Culture and society in Hong Kong) (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 1995), 84.

23. Hao, *Yingxiong mo wen chuchu*, 209.

24. *Culture, Politics, and Television in Hong Kong* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), 93.

25. A Malaysian character, Kwai Ah Nam, and a few mainland characters are made to speak with distinctive features.

26. He Siying, "Baibian Xiao Fangfang," in Jiao Xiongbing, ed., *Xianggang dianying chuanqi: Xiao Fangfang he sishinian dianying fengyun* (Tales of Hong Kong cinema: Xiao Fangfang and forty years in film) (Taibei: Wanxiang, 1995), 43–44.

27. In *Daisidoi*, the Fong family is persecuted by the ruthless Ting family. Even though both the Fong and the Ting are presented in the series as Hong Kong families, "the two-set collection of Hongkonger and mainlander appears in the serial in a very complicated way. The most striking fact is that some of the audience read Ting as a mainlander and even as a communist." Ma, *Culture, Politics, and Television in Hong Kong*, 105.

28. Liu Tiansi, *Tifang dianshi* (On guard against television) (Hong Kong: Tiandi, 199), 194.

29. In Liang, *Xianggang de liuxing wenhua*, 169.

30. Esther Yau, "Border Crossing: Mainland China's Presence in Hong Kong Cinema," in *New Chinese Cinemas: Forms, Identities, Politics*, ed. Nick Brown, Paul Pickowicz, Vivian Sobchack, and Esther Yau (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 195.

31. See Michel Chion, *Voice in Cinema*, 132.

32. The version used for this study is the videotape of the director's cut distributed by Tai Seng Video Marketing of Hong Kong, n.d.

33. Louise Ho, "Apartheid Discourse in Contested Space: Aspects of Hong Kong Culture," *Comparative Literature and Culture* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University), no. 3 (September 1998): 5.

34. *Positions* 9.1 (Spring 2001): 131–159.

35. Huang Yu, Lu Danhuai, and Yu Xu, *Bing fei chui mao qiu ci: Zhongwen baozhang de yuyan wenti yu baodao wenti fenxi* (Not just nitpicking: Analyzing language in Chinese newspapers and problems in reportage) (Hong Kong: Sanlian, 1998), 46–51.

36. See Donald Bruce Snow, "Written Cantonese and the Culture of Hong Kong: The Growth of a Dialect Lterature" (PhD diss., Indiana University; Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1991). A revised and expanded version of this study is scheduled for publication by Hong Kong University Press in 2004.

37. See Wendy Siuyi Wong, *Hong Kong Comics: A History of Manhua* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002).

38. See Snow, "Written Cantonese," and also Edward Gunn, *Rewriting Chinese: Style and Innovation in Twentieth-Century Chinese Prose* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 42–43.

39. Huang Zhan, *Langdang rensheng lu: Renwu pian*, 141–142.

40. Snow, "Written Cantonese," 187–188.

41. Taibei: Yunchen wenhua, 1990; *My City: A Hongkong Story*, trans. Eva Hung (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1993).

42. Eva Hung points this out in her introduction to the translation, xvi.

43. Hung, *My City*, 14–15.

44. *Wo cheng*, 144; Hung, 119–120.

45. Boyi, 1985. See Snow, "Written Cantonese," 205–209.

46. Hong Kong: Youhe, 1989, 1:181.

47. Ma Jiahui, *Boba MTV* (Big boobs MTV) (Hong Kong: Tiandi/Cosmos, 1992), 65.

48. Snow, "*Written Cantonese,*" 212–213.

49. Du Guowei [Raymond To], *Nanhai shisan lang* (Mad phoenix) (Hong Kong: Ciwenhua tang, 1995).

50. *Hudumen* (Tiger gate entrance) (Hong Kong: Ciwenhua tang, 1996).

51. *Wo he chuntian you ge yuehui* (I have a date with spring) (Hong Kong: Ciwenhua tang, 1995).

52. Chan Hoi-man, "Culture and Identity," in Donald H. McMillen and Man Si-wai, eds., *The Other Hong Kong Report: 1994* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1994), 447–448.

53. Hong Kong: Wenlin [Feel Company], 1998.

54. Xin Yuan, *Kuang cheng luan ma* (A crazy horse in a mad city) (Hong Kong: Qing wen shu wu/Youth Literary Bookstore, 1996); originally serialized in *Xiandai ribao*, beginning in 1993.

55. Ma Jiahui, *Boba MTV*, 140. See also this note: "Cantonese cannot be an independent language. And even in relatively free Hong Kong, using written vernacular is frowned upon. The one novelist who writes much in Cantonese chooses to use a pseudonym; one reader of his (admittedly trashy) novels says she was recently harangued by an indignant fellow traveller while reading on the subway." "Chinese Whispers," *The Economist*, January 30, 1999, 78.

56. See the columnist Cai Jiaping, "Wo yu zhuanlan" (Columns and I), in Liang, ed., *Xianggang de liuxing wenhua*, 130.

57. Han Wen, *Tan wen shuo yi* (On literature and art) (Hong Kong: Xianggang wenxue bao she, 1997), 209–210.

58. See Snow, "Written Cantonese," 208.

59. Li Zhiying [Jimmy Lai/Lai Ziying], *Feilao Li buduan geming zhi xin meng* (Chubby Lai makes continuous revolution to create new dreams) (Hong Kong: Yi chuban she, 2001), 32–33.

## Chapter 2. Polyglot Pluralism and Taiwan

1. Hill Gates, "Ethnicity and Social Class," in Hill Gates and Emily Marting Ahern, eds., *The Anthropology of Taiwanese Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1981), 241–281; quoted in Murray A. Rubinstein, *Taiwan: A New History* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1999), 386–387.

2. Hong Weiren, *Taiwan fangyan zhi lü* (Journey through Taiwan local language) (Taibei: Qianwei, 1992), 102.

3. Zhou Zhiwen, "Tiaoxin" (Provocation), in *Sange Beiduofen* (Three Beethovens) (Taipei: Jiuge, 1995), 57–60.

4. Cited by Thomas B. Gold, "Civil Society and Taiwan's Quest for

Identity," in Stevan Harrel and Huang Chun-chieh, eds., *Cultural Change in Post-War Taiwan* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), 61.

5. See Jospeh Bosco, "The Emergence of a Taiwanese Popular Culture," in Murray A. Rubinstein, ed., *The Other Taiwan: 1945 to the Present* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1994), 401.

6. Li Tianduo, *Taiwan dianying, shehui yu lishi* (Taiwanese cinema, society and history) (Taibei: Yatai tushu, 1997), 125–126.

7. Dianying ziliaoguan koushu dianying shi xiaozu (The Film Archive Team for Oral History of Film), *Taiyu pian shidai* (The age of Taiwanese language films) (Taibei: Guojia dianying ziliao guan, 1994), 147.

8. For notes on this film, see ibid., 299.

9. For notes on this film, see ibid., 303.

10. One viewer reported a slight distinction in the accent of the Fujian uncle that set it apart from accents more common to Taiwan.

11. See Xu Jidun (Kho Kek-tun), *Changyong Hanzi Taiyu cidian* (A Taiwanese language dictonary of commonly used Chinese characters) (Taibei: Qianwei, 1998), 1002–1012.

12. See Hong Weiren, *Taiwan fangyan zhi lü* (Journey through Taiwan local language) (Taibei: Qianwei, 1992).

13. Such variations can be found in contemporary school texts, such as the Zhangzhou-derived pronunications and written forms found in Wu Xiuli, ed., *Taiyu du ben* (Taiwanese reader), vol. 1 (Taibei xian zhengfu, 1993), versus the Quanzhou-derived pronunciations and written forms in Fang Nanqiang, *Xiangtu muyu* (Homeland mother tongue) (Pingdong xianli wenhua zhongxin, n.d.). For a survey of variations in the major Southern Min dialects, see Zhou Changji, *Minnanhua de xingcheng fazhan ji zai Taiwan de chuanbo* (The development of the formation of Southern Min and its dissemination on Taiwan) (Taibei: Taili, 1996), 235–312. The romanization used in this chapter for Southern Min follows Xu Jidun (Kho Kek-tun).

14. *Taiyu pian*, 185.

15. See ibid., 383–384.

16. Wang Zhenhe, *Meigui, meigui, wo ai ni* (Taibei: Yuanjing, 1984), 150–151; translated by Howard Goldblatt as *Rose, Rose, I Love You* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 100–101.

17. "Flow" is the term invented by Raymond Williams to define what he termed "the central television experience," which is "an increasing variability and miscellaneity of public communications" jumping from news, to

weather, to a football match, to a variety show, a lecture, etc. See Raymond Williams, *Raymond Williams on Television: Selected Writings*, ed. A. O'Connor (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 88.

18. The celebrated puppet-theater artist Li Tianlu cited the reason for the decline of *budaixi* as the decline of folk music. See *Xi meng ren sheng: Li Tianlu huiyilu* (Life as a theatrical dream) (Taibei: Yuanliu, 1991), 221.

19. Su Heng, "Yuyan (guo/fang) zhengce xingtai" (Language [national/local] policy styles), in Zheng Duancheng et al., eds., *Jiegou guangdian meiti: jianli guangdian xin zhixu* (Deconstructing broadcast media: Establishing a new system for broadcasting) (Taibei: Boshe, 1997), 160.

20. Ibid., 266.

21. Qu Jiyao, "Renxing xiju; tuxing jianqiang" (Human drama, rural persistence), *Yuanjian zazhi* (Global Views Monthly) 121 (July 1996): 90.

22. Ibid., 90–91.

23. See Hei-Yuan Chiu, "Shehui jieceng, wenhua rentong, yuyinyue xihao" (Social stratification, cultural identification, and music preferences in Taiwan), in Ly-yun Chang, ed. *Jiuling niandai de taiwan shehui* (Taiwan society in the nineties) (Academia Sinica: Institute of Sociology, 1997), 1:189–228; Fang-chih Irene Yang, "A Genre Analysis of Popular Music in Taiwan," *Popular Music and Society* 17.2 (Summer 1993): 83–112; also "The History of Popular Music in Taiwan," *Popular Music and Society* 18.3 (Fall 1994): 53–66. Yang notes that Taiwanese music has provided an aggressive counterculture folk culture identity, alluding to economic hardship, which boys like. See "Genre Analysis," 108; "History of Popular Music," 60.

24. Weng Jiaming, *Cong Luo Dayou dao Cui Jian: dangdai liuxing yinyue de guiji* (From Luo Dayou to Cui Jian: The locus of contemporary popular music) (Taipei: Shibao wenhua, 1992), 67.

25. See ibid., 27.

26. A number of notes on Jiang Hui, Yang Zongxian, Wu Bai, and Zhu Toupi were provided by Lulu Chen.

27. These observations were made by Huilan Chou in a report dated May 11, 1998.

28. Huilan Chou, 11.

29. Chion, *Audio-Vision*, 169–170.

30. Ibid., 177–183.

31. Taibei: Chun wenxue, 1976, 210.

32. Taibei: Lianhe bao, 1977.

33. Hong, *Taiwan fangyan zhi lü*, 145.

34. Lin Zongyuan, "Hutou feng de hua" (The hornet's speech), in *Zhongguo dangdai xinshi dazhan* (An exhibition of the contemporary new poetry of China), ed. Xiao Xiao et al. (Taibei: Dehua, 1981), 1:380.

35. See "Lianhe Bao liujiuniandu zhong, changpian xiaoshuojiangzongpinghuiyi jishi" (Record of the critical discussion for the 1980 award for novel-length fiction by United Daily), in *Qian jiang you shui qian jiang yue*, 5–12.

36. *Long Yingtai ping xiaoshuo* (Long Yingtai criticizes fiction) (Taibei: Erya, 1985), 158–166.

37. Wang Zhenhe, *Meigui, Meigui*, 180–181; Goldblatt, *Rose, Rose*, 122.

38. Taipei: Lianjing, 1985.

39. Both Wang and Yang were imprisoned on charges of fomenting a riot in Gaoxiong in 1979. Wang Tuo later subsidized his own publishing: Wang Tuo, *Niudugang de gushi* (A story of Niudugang) (Taibei: Wang Tuo, 1985); *Taibei, taibei* (Taibei: Wang Tuo, 1985).

40. In *Ruoxiao minzu* (Small nation) (Taipei: Qian wei, 1987).

41. See Song's own comments in Song Zelai, ed., *Taiyu xiaoshuo jingxuan juan* (The best of Taiwanese language fiction) (Taibei: Qianwei, 1998), 32–34.

42. Chou Ying-hsiung, "Imaginary Homeland: Postwar Taiwan in Contemporary Political Fiction," *Modern Chinese Literature* 6 (1992): 33.

43. Song Zelai, *Taiyu xiaoshuo jingxuan juan*, 32–34.

44. For example, when one character is caught by Nationalist soldiers executing people during the February 28 Incident of 1947, he is roped together with Taiwanese of every class and age (Taibei: Qian wei; Los Angeles: Taiwan chuban she, 1990), 3 vols., 1939.

45. See Peng Ruijin, "*Lang tao sha* lüeying" (*Wave washed sands* at a glance), *Wenxun*, 64 (February 1991): 69–71.

46. Jiang Gaishi, "Wo de taiyu shengya" (My Taiwanese language career), *Taiyu wenzhai* 27 (June 1992): 52.

47. *Dangdai dianying* (Beijing) 1990, no. 3.

48. *Beiqing chengshi* (Taibei: Sansan shufang, 1989), 21–25.

49. Ling Yan, *Shisheng huamei* (Taibei: Zili wanbao xi, 1990).

50. Wang Dewei makes note of this in "Yi ming bu jing ren: ping Ling Yan de *Shisheng huamei*" (An unremarkable debut: A review of Ling Yan's

*Muted Thrush*), in *Yuedu dangdai xiaoshuo* (Reading contemporary fiction) (Taibei: Yuanliu, 1991), 119.

51. Hong, *Taiwan fangyan zhi lü*, 145.

52. Qiu Kunliang, *Kangzheng yu rentong: Taiwan xiju xianchang* (Resistance and identity: Present circumstances of Taiwan drama) (Taibei: Yushan, 1997), 3.

53. Winnie Chang, "Old Folks Hit the Stage," *Free China Review* 48.11 (November 1998): 59.

54. Cao Mingzong, *Taiwan guanggao fashao yu* (The language of Taiwan advertising fever) (Taipei: Lianjing, 1995), 48–49.

55. *Free China Review* 44.11 (November 1994): 49.

56. Hong Weiren, *Taiyu wenxue yu taiyu wenzi* (Taiwanese language literature and Taiwanese language characters) (Taibei: Qianwei, 1992), writing in Taiwanese serialized in the *Independent Evening News* in 1988–1990, has several things to say about the difficulties of using Chinese characters to represent up to 20 percent of the Taiwanese vocabulary from other, non-Chinese languages, about disagreements over what characters should be used, the unfamiliarity of these to many readers (including Taiwanese, who may be accustomed to etymologically incorrect characters), the need for a literature that fully employs Taiwanese, not just a "homeland literature" employing some for flavor, and other problems.

## Chapter 3. Guilty Pleasures on the Mainland Stage and in Broadcast Media

1. Chen Gang, *Dazhong wenhua yu dangdai wutuobang* (Mass culture and contemporary utopia) (Beijing: Zuojia, 1996), 127.

2. "Beijing yinyueting jujue liuxing geshou" (Beijing concert hall refuses popular singer), *Chengdu wanbao* (Chengdu Evening Post), June 5, 1996, 6.

3. Chen Shiguang, *Xianggang dazhong chuanbo chanye gailun* (Survey of the Hong Kong mass broadcasting industry) (Hong Kong: Tiandi, 2001), 201.

4. For an account of the differences in Hong Kong Cantonese and Guangzhou Cantonese vocabulary in the media, see Tang Zhixiang, *Dangdai Hanyu ciyu de gongshi zhuangkuang ji qi shanbian: 90 niandai Zhongguo dalu, xianggang, Taiwan Hanyu ciyu xianzhuang yanjiu* (The state of contemporary

Chinese vocabulary and its transmutation: Studies in the situation of vocabulary in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan during the 90s) (Shanghai: Fudan University, 2001), 234–247.

5. Ding Maoyuan et al., eds., *Dangdai huaju mingzhu shangxi* (Analysis of famous contemporary plays) (Fuzhou: Haixia, 1992), 236.

6. See Gao Wensheng, ed., *Zhongguo dangdai xiju wenxue shi* (History of contemporary Chinese dramatic literature) (Nanning: Guangxi renmin, 1990), 353.

7. In Li Haiquan, ed., *You zhengyi de huajuben xuanji* (Selected controversial playscripts) (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju, 1986), 107–279.

8. Ibid., 168.

9. Chen Zidu, Yang Jian, and Zhu Xiaoping, *Sangshuping jishi* (Sangshuping chronicles), *Juben* (Playscripts), 1988, no. 4, 10–11; trans. Haiping Yan, *Theater and Society: An Anthology of Contemporary Drama* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), 209.

10. Guo Shixing, *Niaoren* (Bird men), *Xinjuben*, no. 3 (1993): 8; trans. in Claire Conceison, "The Occidental Other on the Chinese Stage: Cultural Cross-Examination in Guo Shixing's *Bird Men*," *Asian Theatre Journal* 15, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 90.

11. Conceison, "The Occidental Other," 92.

12. See "Suzhou pingtan dianshipian 'Ti xiao yinyuan' yu zou xiang quan guo" (The television production of the Suzhou *pingtan* 'Fate in tears and laughter' prepares to go nationwide), *Guangming ribao*, September 3, 1998, 6.

13. *Shiyue* (October), no. 2 (May 1988): 47–75.

14. Yang Xiao, "Xi sang" (Joy[ful] loss), *Chongqing xinzuo*, 1994 no. 4 (December): 10–38.

15. Unpublished stage script, 6–7.

16. See Emily Honig, *Creating Chinese Ethnicity: Subei people in Shanghai, 1850–1980* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 110–112.

17. Zhang Yaxin, *Dianshi gailun* (Survey of television) (Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi, 1997), 142.

18. Liao Jinpeng, "Tuchu difang tese, ba lanmu banchu difang tese," in Yao Fuxiang et al., eds., *Chengshi dianshi gaige yu fazhan* (Reform and development in urban television) (Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi, 1997), 221.

19. Zhang Jinli, *Jiemi zhongguo dianshi* (Unraveling the secrets of Chinese TV) (Beijing: Zhongguo chengshi, 1999), 48.

20. Zhong Danian et al., *Dianshi kuaguo chuanbo yu minzu wenhua* (Transnational television broadcasting and national culture) (Beijing: Beijing guangbo xueyuan, 1998), 213.

21. Zhu Yujun et al., *Zhongguo yingyong dianshi xue* (Chinese applied television studies), 2nd ed. (Beijing: Beijing shifan daxue, 1996), 623.

22. Aluizio R. Trintas, "Realism and Melodrama in Brazilian Telenovelas," in *The Television Studies Book*, ed. Christine Greaghty and David Lusted (New York: Arnold, 1998), 277–278.

23. Ibid., 281.

24. Xiang Bing, ed., *Yingshi fengchao juan: shiqi nian da shanhui* (Film and television in turmoil: Seventeen years in flashback) (Beijing: Beiyue wenyi, 1993), 355.

25. Wang Cong, "Fajue, hongyang, chaoyue: Jing jin hu diyu tese dianshiju xueshu yantaohui pingshu" (Explore, enhance, surpass: Notes on the academic conference on teleplays of local characteristics in Beijing, Tianjin, and Shanghai), *Zhongguo guangbo yingshi*, 1991 no. 2: 9.

26. Xiang Bing, *Yingshi fengchao juan: shiqi nian da shanhui*, 374.

27. Wang Shuo and the other creators of the drama conceived the character Wang Husheng in these unsympathetic terms. See Meng Xiaoyun, "'Kewang' muhou" (Behind the screen of 'Yearning'), *Zuopin yu zhengming*, 1991 no. 2 (February): 13.

28. Meng Xiaoyun, "'Kewang' muhou" (Behind the screen of 'Yearning'), *Zuopin yu zhengming*, 1991 no. 2 (February): 14.

29. Xie Mian and Zhang Yiwu, *Da zhuanxing: hou xin shiqi wenhua yanjiu* (The great shift: Studies in post-new era culture) (Harbin: Heilongjiang jiaoyu, 1995), 359.

30. Li Mingguang, "Ai ni meishangliang yilun zhongzhong" (Comments on "Loving you for keeps"), *Renmin ribao* (overseas ed.), January 30, 1993, 7; quoted in Wang Huazhi, "Problematizing the Nation: The 'Wang Shuo Phenomenon' and Contemporary Chinese Culture" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1999), 143.

31. "Beijing cheng zayi" (Recollections of the city of Beijing), *Beijing wanbao*, November 11–December 26, 1985; reprinted in Lu Xun et al., *Bei ren yu nan ren* (Northerners and southerners) (Beijing: Zhongguo renshi chuban she, 1996), 147–181.

32. Ma Licheng, "Chongti yuyan de chunjie he jiankang" (Readvocating the purity and health of language), *Renmin ribao*, September 23, 1994, 4.

33. Ye Xin, *Nie zhai* (Nanjing: Jiangsu wenyi, 1995). The book was first serialized in *Xiaoshuo jie*, 1992–1993.

34. See, for example, the remarks of Shen Xiaolong in Tang Dawei, "Yingshipian liuxing fangyan baozhuang" (Films and television popularize local language packaging), *Wenhui bao* (Shanghai), April 4, 1995.

35. See Episode 9. The example is cited in "Haipai yingshi de yuyan zhuiqiu yu kunkuo" (The search for a language and its problems in Shanghai-style film and television), *Wenxue bao* (Literature press), no. 754 (February 23, 1995): 2.

36. For such a survey, see Qian Nairong, *Shanghai fangyan liyu* (Shanghai slang) (Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexue, 1989), 23–92.

37. *New Century Net*, http://www.ncn.org/zwgInfo/da.asp?ID=19100&ad=10/3/2002.

38. Yu Qiuyu, "Xiang guan he chu" (Where is home?), in *Wang Anyi xuan jinren sanwen* (Wang Anyi selects contemporary essays), ed. Wang Anyi (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi, 1997), 229.

39. Ibid.

40. "Shanghaihua gai shi qiuzhi jineng ma?" (Should Shanghaihua be a criterion for seeking employment?), *Xinmin wanbao* (New People's Evening News), June 21–24, 1999, 6.

41. See Ruan Henghui and Wu Jiping, eds., *Shanghaihua liuxingyu cidian* (A dictionary of popular expressions in Shanghai Wu) (Shanghai: Hanyu da cidian, 1994), 30.

42. Chongqing chenbao fukanbu, ed., *Chongqing shiba guai* (Eighteen oddities of Chongqing) (Chongqing: Chongqing chuban she, 1996).

43. *Huaxi dushi bao*, September 20, 1998, 1.

44. Ibid., July 20, 1997.

45. Text supplied by Ren Jingqiu, January 2000.

46. Li Boqing, *Li Boqingxiansheng sanda pingshu biao jinghua jingxuan* (The best of selected storytelling performances by Li Boqong), audiocassette (Chengdu: Sichuan yinxiang, n.d.).

47. Jing Wen, *Jidan mei'r* (The egg-peddling girl), audiocassette (Chengdu: Sichuan yinxiang, 1997).

48. Wu Wen, *Shan cheng yanzi'r* (Chongqing talking), audiocassette (Chengdu: Sichuan chuban yinxiang, n.d.).

49. Yu Genggeng in *Sanshisan ji dianshi lianxuju Da qin qiang ziliao hui-*

*bian* (Collected source materials on the thirty-three episode telenovela *Xi'an opera*) (Beijing dianshi yishu zhongxin, Shaanxi dianshitai, 1996), 55.

50. Ibid., 54.

51. Ibid., 57.

## Chapter 4. Inadequacies Explored

1. Deng Youmei, *Snuff-Bottles and Other Stories* (Beijing: Panda, 1986), 9–10.

2. *Shiyue* (October), 1986 no. 2 (March): 4–38.

3. Hu Lingyi, "Hero, Non-Hero, Anti-Hero: A Critical Study of the Development of Chen Jiangong's Fiction" (master's thesis, University of British Columbia, August 1990), 188–189.

4. Ibid., 219.

5. *Wo shi Wang Shuo* (I am Wang Shuo) (Beijing: Guoji wenhua, 1992), 60.

6. Ibid., 61.

7. *Wan zhu* (Wise guys), *Shouhuo* (Harvest bimonthly), no. 6 (December 1987), trans. Wang Huazhi, in "Wang Shuo's 'Wise Guys': A Brief Introduction and Translation" (master's thesis, Cornell University, 1992), 109.

8. *Zhongguo zuojia* (Chinese writers), no. 4 (1989): 110–140.

9. "Wang Shuo: 'gou' yan kan shijie" (Wang Shuo: The world through a dog's eyes), *Keji xinwen: shenghuo zhoukan* (Science and technology news: Shenghuo weekly magazine), 55 (June 9, 1999), 24.

10. Wang Shuo, *Wu zhizhe wu wei* (The ignorant are fearless) (Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi, 2000), 75–76.

11. Beijing: Zuojia chuban she, 1997.

12. *Zhongshan* 1983 no. 4; reprint ed. *Xiaoshuo yuebao* 1983 no. 12: 14–45.

13. *Jinrongjia* (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi, 1990), 293; *The Banker*, trans. Britten Dean (San Francisco: China Books, 1992), 338. Page numbers for subsequent citations of these texts are given in parentheses.

14. To cite a few examples, see, for example, stories by Lin Xi and A Cheng in *Xiaoshuo yuebao* (Fiction monthly), 1995, no. 1, and the fiction by Fu Taiping and Shu Xinyu and reportage by Gao Hongshi in *Shiyue* (October), 1995 no. 2. These works include features of varieties of Mandarin in

Shandong and the northeast, Tianjin, Jiangxi, Yunnan, and southwest (Hunan, Guizhou, Sichuan).

15. *Renmin wenxue* (People's literature), 1986 no. 9 (September): 4–30.

16. In *Zuojia*, *pinglunjia*, *bianjijia tuijian 1987 nian quanguo duanpian xiaoshuo jiazuoji* (The best works in the nation from the short fiction of 1987 recommended by writers, critics, and editors) (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi, 1988), 135.

17. Huang Lin, *Xinchao nüxing wenxue daoyin* (An introduction to new-wave women's literature) (Changsha: Hunan wenyi, 1995), 49–50.

18. These short stories are all collected in *Hua'r weishenma zheyang hong?* (Why are the flowers so red?) (Changchun: Shidai wenyi, 1995).

19. *Shanghai xiaoshuo*, 1992 no. 42: 38–58.

20. Fan Xing, *Dangdai wenxue yu diyu wenhua*, 185.

21. Ibid., 16.

22. Paola Iovene, "The Search for a Native Aesthetics in Han Shaogong's Writings" (master's thesis, Cornell University, 2001), 23.

23. The fiction of Peng Jianming is collected in the volume *Ye du* (Wilderness ford) (Beijing: Beijing chuban she, 1998) as part of a series of volumes of regional literature edited by Ding Fan, titled *Xinshiqi diyu wenhua xiaoshuo congshu* (Anthology of regional culture fiction of the new era). A collection of Zhang Guoqing's novellas, *Guliuzhen yijing* (A view of Guliu township, 1998) also appears in the same series, and his early fiction from the 1980s is collected in *Zhuhuo* (Cooking fire) (Taibei: Yuanliu, 1994).

24. In *Zhongguo xiaoshuo: yijiubaqi* (Chinese fiction: 1987), ed. Huang Ziping and Li Tuo (Hong Kong: Sanlian, 1989), 238–258.

25. Wang Jing, *High Culture Fever: Politics, Aesthetics, and Ideology in Deng's China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 229.

26. Ge Fei, personal interview, Shanghai, January 1993. For a more extended discussion of the avant-garde writers' views on local language, see Zhang Weizong, *Xin shiqi xiaoshuo de liubian yu Zhongguo chuantong wenhua* (The course of new era fiction and Chinese traditional culture) (Shanghai: Xuelin, 2000), 273 and 277–278.

27. "Yidaliwen ban zixu" (preface to the Italian edition), in *Xu Sanguan mai xue ji* (Xu Sanguan selling his blood) (Haikou: Nanhai, 1998), 9–10.

28. "*Haishang hua liezhuan* xu" (Preface to *Flowers of Shanghai*) (1925; Taipei: Tianyi, 1974), 28.

29. Qiao Shi, *Chou zhen* (Xian: Luyou, 1995), 217.

30. (Beijing: Ren min wen xue chu ban she, 1993), 21.

31. "Shuohua" (Speaking), *Guangming ribao;* reprinted in *Duzhe* (Readers), 1993 no. 10: 5.

32. (Beijing: Zhongguo wenxue, 1993).

33. Wang Anyi, *Jishi he xugou* (Reality and fiction), in *Fuxi he muxi de shenhua* (Paternal and maternal mythology) (Hangzhou: Zhejiang wenyi, 1994), 9–10; trans. in Wang Lingzhen, "Modern and Contemporary Chinese Women's Autobiographical Writing" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1998), 242.

34. "Miaomiao," in Wang Anyi, *Shushu de gushi* (Uncle's stories) (Taibei: Yeqiang, 1991), 94–143.

35. *Meitou* (Taibei: Maitian, 2001), 104.

36. Ibid., 162. Page numbers for subsequent citations of this text are given in parentheses.

37. *Ji'e de nüer* (Taipei: Erya, 1997), 49 and 210. Page numbers for subsequent citations of this text are given in parentheses.

38. (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue, 2000), 380.

39. (Beijing: Zuojia, 1996). Page numbers for subsequent citations of this text are given in parentheses.

40. Robert Coover, "The End of Books," *The New York Times*, Sunday, June 21, 1992.

41. See Zheng Min, "Shijimo de huigu: Hanyu yuyan biange yu Zhongguo xinshi chuangzuo" (Retrospect at the end of the century: Chinese language reform and the creation of Chinese new poetry), *Wenxue pinglun*, 1993 no. 3: 5–20. For commentary, see Michelle Yeh, "Chinese Postmodernism and the Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Poetry," and Haun Saussy, "Postmodernism in China: A Sketch and Some Queries," in *Cross-Cultural Readings of Chineseness: Narratives, Images, and Interpretations of the 1990s*, ed. Yeh Wen-hsin (Berkeley: University of California, Berkeley, Center for Chinese Studies, 2000), 100–158.

42. Michelle Yeh, "Chinese Postmodernism," 114.

43. Zheng Min, "Guanyu 'Ruhe pingjia "Wusi" baihuawen yundong' shangque zhi shangque" (A rejoinder to the rejoinder "How to evaluate the May Fourth vernacular movement"), *Wenxue pinglun*, 1994 no. 2: 120; trans. Michelle Yeh, "Chinese Postmodernism," 114.

44. Li Rui, "Wangluo shidai de fangyan" (Local language in the age of the internet), *Dushu* 2000 no. 4: 42.

45. Xinhua News Agency, October 22, 2001, in *China News Digest*, http://www.cnd.org.

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48. See Tang Zhixiang, *Dangdai Hanyu ciyu de gongshi zhuangkuang ji qi shanbian: 90 niandai Zhongguo dalu, xianggang, Taiwan Hanyu ciyu xianzhuang yanjiu* (The state of contemporary Chinese vocabulary and its transmutation: Studies in the situation of vocabulary in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan during the 90s) (Shanghai: Fudan University, 2001).

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50. Zhou Yinong, "Fangyan wenhua yu 'tui pu' xiaoyi" (Local language culture and the benefits of promoting *putonghua*), *Zhejiang shehuikexue* (Zhejiang social sciences), 1999 no. 2: 138.

51. Cao Ruyi, ed., *Cheng nan jiu shi: cong xiaoshuo dao dianying* (My memories of old Beijing: from fiction to film) (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying, 1985), 137. Page numbers for subsequent citations of this text are given in parentheses.

52. Interviewed in Mayfair Yang, "Of Gender, State, Censorship, and Overseas Capital: An Interview with Chinese Director Zhang Yimou," *Public Culture* 5.2 (Summer 1993): 308; reprinted in *Zhang Yimou Interviews*, ed. Frances Gatewood (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 45.

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54. See Chen Yuanbin, *The Story of Qiuju* (original title: "Wanjia susong"), trans. Anna Walling (Beijing: Panda, 1995), 16 and passim.

55. See Fang Wen, *Tian nu* (Beijing: Yuanfang, 1996), 24.

## Conclusion: The Rhetoric of Local Languages

1. In discussing mainland China during the 1990s, Zhang Xudong and others have referred to this group as a proto-middle class that "has been forming a semiautonomous social and cultural space of its own." See Xudong Zhang, ed., *Whither China? Intellectual Politics in Contemporary China* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 315.

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## Film, Video, and Audio Sources

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*Chaoji sandeng bing* 超級三等兵 (Super recruits). VCD. Directed by Zhu Yanping 朱延平. Kuanjun duomeiti, n.d.

*Da qin qiang* 大秦腔 (Xian opera). VHS. Directed by Yu Genggeng 于庚庚. Written by Wang Zhen 王真. Beijing dianshi yishu zhongxin; Shaanxi dianshitai. CCTV; Wah Ngai Enterprises, 1996.

*Da shidai* 大時代 (The greed of man). VHS. Directed by Zhang Yingming 章英明. Written by Chen Baohua 陳寶華 et al. TVBI; Meidong (UE Enterprises), 1992.

*Da zhai men* 大宅门 (A family of means). VCD. Directed by Guo Baochang 郭宝昌. Guangdong Zhongkai, 1999.

*Duli shidai* 獨立時代 (A Confucian confusion). VHS. Directed by Yang Dechang [Edward Yang] 楊德昌. Yuanzi (Atom Film), 1994.

*Duozi zhanzheng* 夺子战争 (Kidnapping war). VHS. Directed by Liang Shan 梁山. Written by Jin Yongqin 金勇勤. Dongfang dianshitai, 1996; broadcast August 1997.

*Ermo* 二嫫. VHS. Directed by Zhou Xiaowen 周晓文. Written by Lang Yun 郎云. Evergreen Entertainment, 1994.

*Gaoxiong fa de weiban che* 高雄發的尾班車 (Last train from Gaoxiong). VHS. Directed by Liang Zhefu 梁哲夫. Written by Lin Dongsheng 林東陞. 1963. Taibei: Chinese Film Archive.

*Gufeng* 股疯 (Shanghai fever/stock fever). DVD. Directed by Li Guoli 李国立. 1993. Tai Seng Video, 1998.

*Guhuozai zhi ren zai jianghu* 古惑仔之人在江湖 (Young and dangerous). VHS. Directed by Liu Weiqiang [Andrew Lau] 劉偉強. Written by Wen Jun [Manfred Wong] 文雋. Meiya (Mei Ah Video), 1996.

*Hei huaishu* 黑槐树 (The black ash tree). VHS. Directed by Chen Shengli 陈胜利. Written by Ma Qide 马其德. CCTV and Henan TV, 1992.

*Hongfen* 红粉 (Blush). VHS. Directed by Li Shaohong 李少红. Written by Li Shaohong, Ni Zhen 倪震. 1995. First Run Features, 1996.

*Huang cheng ge'r* 皇城根儿 (Roots in the imperial city). VHS. Directed by Zhao Baogang 赵宝刚. Written by Chen Jiangong 陈建功, Zhao Danian

赵大年. Beijing dianshi yishu zhongxin (Beijing Television Art Centre), 1992.

*Jiche banzhang* 機車班長 (Screwed up squad leader). VCD. Directed by Jin Aoxun 金鰲勳. Kuanjun duomeiti, n.d.

*Jidan mei'r* 鸡蛋妹儿 (The egg-peddling girl). Jing Wen 景雯. Audiocassette. Chengdu: Sichuan yinxiang, 1997.

*Kaoshi yijia qin* 考试一家亲 (Family tie). VCD. Directed by Liu Xiaoguang 刘小光. Shanghai. Chiaomeiren (Beauty), 2000.

*Ke tu qiu hen* 客途秋恨 (Song of the exile). VHS. Directed by Xu Anhua [Ann Hui] 許鞍華. Written by Wu Nianzhen 吳念真. Kino Video, 1990.

*Kewang* 渴望 (Yearning). VHS. Directed by Lu Xiaowei 鲁晓威. Written by Li Xiaoming 李晓明. Wah Ngai Enterprises, 1990–1991.

*Kong le chui* 空了吹 (Hot air). VCD. Directed by Song Xuebin 宋学斌. Written by Yang Xiao 阳晓 et al. Chongqing dianshi tai; Emei dianying, 1999.

*Li Boqingxiansheng sanda pingshu biao jinghua jingxuan* 李伯清先生散打评书精华精选 (The best of selected storytelling performances by Li Boqong). Audiocassette. Chengdu: Sichuan yinxiang, n.d.

*Liang xiang hao* 兩相好 (Two in love). VHS. Directed by Li Hang 李行. Written by Ding Yi 丁衣. Taiwan: Zili, 1962. Taibei: National Film Archive.

*Lianlian fengchen* 戀戀風塵 (Dust in the wind). VHS. Directed by Hou Xiaoxian. Written by Wu Nianzhen, Zhu Tianwen. Central Film; The International Film Circuit, 1987.

*Longshan si zhi lian* 龍山寺之戀 (Love at Liangshan Temple). VHS. Directed by Bai Ke 白克. Written by Bai Ke, Xu Tianrong 徐天榮. Taiwan, Fuhua, 1962. Taibei: National Film Archive.

*Niezhai* 孽债 (Moral debts). VHS. Directed by Huang Shuqin 黄蜀芹. Shanghai dianshitai; Gaoxian qiye zixun youxian gongsi, 1995.

"Pingguo de ziwei" 蘋果的滋味 (The bitter taste of apples). VHS. Directed by Zeng Zhuangxiang 曾壯祥. In *Erzi de da wan'ou* 兒子的大玩偶 (His son's big doll/The Sandwich Man). Guoji shiting (International Audio-Visual), 1983.

*Pujiang xushi* 蒲江叙事 (The Pujiang story). VHS. Directed by Su Zhou 苏舟. Written by He Guofu 贺国甫, Bai Zhi 白芷. CCTV; Wah Ngai Enterprises, 1996–1997.

*Qianjin xifu wanjin sun* 千金媳婦萬金孫 (Treasured daughter-in-law and

precious grandson). VHS. Directed by He Dongxing 何東興. Written by Yinghua bianju xiaozu 映畫編劇小組. Guoji shiting (International Audio-Visual), 1999.

*Qiuju da guansi* 秋菊打官司 (The story of Qiu Ju). VHS. Directed by Zhang Yimou. Sony Pictures Classics; Columbia Tristar, 1992.

*Quan yuan man zuo* 全院滿座 (A loving spirit). VHS. Directed by Liang Huijian 梁輝堅. Written by Liang Enshu 梁恩束, Ouyang Shan 歐陽珊. TVB, 1999.

*Ruan Lingyu* (Actress). VHS. Directed by Guan Jinpeng [Stanley Kwan] 關錦鵬. Written by Qiudai Anping 邱戴安平, Jiao Xiongbing 焦雄屏. Tai Seng Video, 1992.

*San Mao xue shengyi* 三毛学生意 (San Mao learns business). VCD. Directed by Huang Zuolin 黃佐临. Tianma, 1958; Guangzhou chiaojiaren, n.d.

*Shan cheng bangbang jun* 山城棒棒军 (Shoulder Stick Brigade of the mountain metropolis). VCD. Directed by Shu Yide 束一德. Written by Wang Yihong 王逸虹, Shu Yide. Emei dianying; Ya'le yinxiang, 1995–1996.

*Shan cheng yanzi'r* 山城言子儿 (Chongqing talking). Audiocassette. Wu Wen 吴文. Chengdu: Sichuan chuban yinxiang, n.d.

*Shanghai tan* 上海灘 (The Bund). VHS. Directed by Zhao Zhenqiang 招振強 et al. Written by Cen Guorong 岑國榮 et al. TVBI; Meidong (UE Enterprises), 1980.

*Shanghai yi jia ren* 上海一家人 (Shanghai woman). Directed by Li Li 李莉. 1991–1992.

*Sha'r shizhang* 傻儿师长 (General Asinine). VHS. Directed by Shu Yide 束一德. Written by Liu Deyi 刘德益, Tu Nianzhi 涂年智. Chongqing Fuan; Chongqing yinxiang; Chongqing dianshitai, n.d.

*Sishi tong tang* 四世同堂 (Four generations under one roof). VCD. Directed by Shi Kefu 史可夫. Written by Lin Ruwei 林汝为 et al. 1985. Shenzhen shi xianke yu'le, n.d.

*Sishui liunian* 似水流年 (Homecoming). VHS. Directed by Yim Ho/Yan Hao 嚴浩. Written by Kong Liang 孔良. Meiya (Mei Ah), 1984.

*Si shui wei lan* 死水微澜 (Ripples on stagnant water). VHS. Directed by Xie Ping'an 谢平安. Written by Xu Fen 徐棻. 1995.

*Taibei fa de zao che* 台北發的早車(上集) (Early train from Taibei [Part 1]). VHS. Directed by Liang Zhefu 梁哲夫. Written by Lai Yueshan 賴越山. 1964. Taibei: National Film Archive.

*Tian mimi* 甜密密 (Comrades, almost a love story). DVD. Directed by Peter

Chan 陳可辛. Written by An Xi [Ivy Ho] 岸西. Meiya (Mei Ah Laser Disc Co.), 1996.

*Wuhui zhuizong* 无悔追踪 (Remorseless pursuit). VHS. Directed by Yin Li 尹力. Written by Shi Jianquan 史建全. CCTV; Wah Ngai Enterprises, 1997.

*Xiongdi you yuan* 兄弟有緣 (Lucky brothers). VHS. Directed by Li Xunnan 李勳男. Written by Cai Wenjie 蔡文傑. Guoji shiting chuanbo (International Audio-Visual), n.d.

*Yaotiao shunü* 窈窕淑女 (The demure maiden/My fair lady). VCD. Directed by Gu Tiannong 古天農. Written by Chen Junrun 陳鈞潤. Huanyu (Universe Laser and Video), 1996.

*Yiyi* 一一 (A one and a two). DVD. Directed and written by Yang Dechang. Fox Lorber; Winstar, 2000.

*Zhen qing* 真情 (A kindred spirit ). VHS. Directed by Yao Tiantang 姚天堂 Written by Chen Baohua 陳寶華 et al. TVBI; Meidong (UE Enterprises), 1997.

*Zhua zhuang ding* 抓壮丁 (Seizing conscripts). VCD. Directed by Chen Ge 陈戈, Shen Yan 沈剡. Written by Wu Xue 吴雪 et al. Guangzhou chiaoren wenhua, n.d.

*Zouguo dongtian de nüren* 走过冬天的女人 (A woman's winter passage). VHS. Directed by Xu Songzi 徐松子. Written by Lan Zhiguang 兰之光. Dongfang dianshitai; Shanghai shengxiang, 1996–1997.

# Index