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**Gunn/Rendering the Regional**

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# 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.<sup>1</sup> 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."<sup>2</sup> Ban Gu's *Han shu* (History of the Han dynasty) comments that "Shandong produces statesmen; Shanxi produces generals."<sup>3</sup> Chinese have been continuously inventing and re-inventing 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.<sup>4</sup>

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,<sup>5</sup> 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*.<sup>6</sup> 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.”<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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),<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup> 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.”<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, dialog is normally visualized and attached to a body obeying “realist conventions of verisimilitude regarding age and gender.”<sup>13</sup> 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.”<sup>14</sup> 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.”<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> 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.’”<sup>17</sup> 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,’”<sup>18</sup> television is “‘illustrated radio.’”<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> 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,<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> 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."<sup>24</sup> 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.<sup>25</sup> Challenges to a stan-

standard 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.<sup>26</sup> 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.”<sup>27</sup> 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.”<sup>28</sup> 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.”<sup>29</sup> 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.”<sup>30</sup> 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.<sup>31</sup> 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.”<sup>32</sup> 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.”<sup>33</sup> 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 hab* [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.<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>35</sup>

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 post-modern. As such, it is not likely that they will form new standard, national languages, or that they will be easily and lightly abandoned.