

Lin Yutang as an Advocate of the 'Discursive Classical Chinese' (*yuluti*) Language Register

Jana Benická

Lin Yutang 林語堂 (1895–1976) is one of the most noted intellectuals active in the reform of written Chinese, and belongs to the circle of influential figures of the New Culture Movement of the late 1910s and early 1920s who were promoting *baihuawen* 白話文 ('written vernacular') as the language (or rather: language register) for a new literature and as a medium of learned discourse.¹ However, the term *baihuawen* itself, despite having been a widely discussed issue for decades, was never easy to define since as a language with the aspiration to become a nation-wide normative written language close to speech, it could only become a compromise within the diversity of various languages spoken in China.² In this respect, we should talk about diglossia—a hierarchical structured

- ¹ It was mostly believed by the proponents of the *baihuawen* movement that *baihuawen* should be promoted not so much through an appeal to the government and its educational system, but rather by creating major works of literature that would appeal to the public. On the one hand, *wenyanwen* was still very much in use, especially in government telegraphs and documents.
- ² John DeFrancis in his *The Chinese Language. Fact and Fantasy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984), 244, points out: »The term Baihua has come to represent a variety of substyles that can be defined by the degree to which they have incorporated elements from classical Chinese on the one hand and everyday speech on the other. Old habits die hard. Apart from some continuation of writing in a purely classical style, as in Mao Zedong's poetry, there is often considerable incorporation of classical elements—stereotyped phrases, truncated terms, even classical constructions—into what is ostensibly a vernacular piece of writing. At the other extreme are works such as those of popular writer Lao She, well known for depicting the lower

bilingualism³—in modern China: just as in old China, with *wenyanwen* 文言文 ('written classical language') and its unchallenged role.

Whichever definitions we may find and regardless of how successful the promotion of the new language media was, Lin Yutang would later find the period of his active promotion of this language (register) »pioneering«, since from the 1930s onwards he became increasingly skeptical about the role *baihua* then actually played in literature and other genres of written texts. His observations made on texts written in *baihua* made him believe that in the course of time the register had become somewhat more and more divorced from speech, or otherwise too close to spoken language⁴, and that accordingly it should be somehow reformed or even replaced! However, it is important to point out here that Lin Yutang's observations were basically focused on the aesthetic values of the language rather than based on systematic linguistic research. Lin Yutang was a prominent intellectual of his time and his voice was heard no matter whether his proposals were adopted or not. However, on this particular issue we should emphasize that his reflections did not find any tangibly positive echo, though they were presented in most influential periodicals.

Lin Yutang started to question the role of *baihua* as the media most suitable for literary production and scholarly discourse since he believed it had absorbed many deformative influences that had made it more and more artificial, divorced from speech, or, at the other end, too colloquial.

depths of society and evoking their manner of speech.«

- 3 Charles A. Ferguson defines the term 'diglossia' as follows: »Diglossia is a relative stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, a vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation.« Charles A. Ferguson, »Diglossia«, *Word* 15 (1959), 336.
- 4 Lin Yutang belonged to the intellectuals of the Republican era who believed that the role of writing is also to idealize speech, so that it would be purged of »redundancy« of spoken language—as we shall see below. For more details, see Edward Gunn, *Rewriting Chinese. Style and Innovation in Twentieth-Century Chinese Prose* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), esp. 83–85.

Which were the most serious factors then distancing *baihua* so much from common speech, thus rendering it excessively ‘ornamental’ or excessively ‘spoken’? Lin Yutang identified a number of them, but we shall mention here just two crucial phenomena which he believed had contributed the lion’s share to the deformation of *baihua* in the 1930s:

1) The ‘Europeanization’ of the Chinese language, introduced to China through translations of Western literary, scientific and other texts. Adopting stylistic and syntactical peculiarities of Western literature and scientific discourse in the Chinese translations brought up a number of unprecedented stylistic and syntactical variations in the modern Chinese language.⁵ These phenomena of Westernization then influenced the style and language of a number of Chinese writers who started to produce literature full of ‘Western deformation’.⁶

Qian Suoqiao in his preface to the *Selected Bilingual Essays of Lin Yutang* in this respect points out: »The consequence was a Europeanized vernacular Chinese with convoluted sentences,^[7] vague diction and intolerable redundancy.«⁸ However, in this context, we should always keep in mind that Lin Yutang

5 See the labelling of these procedures as ‘soft’ and ‘hard translation’, and the fervent apology of the latter in Lu Xun’s »“Yingyi” yu “wenxue de jieji xing”« “硬譯”與“文學的階級性” [»Hard Translation« and the »Class Character of Literature«; Mar 1930], in *Lu Xun quanji* 魯迅全集, 18 vols. (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2005), 4: 199–227; as »“Hard Translation” and the “Class Character of Literature”«, tr. by Yang Hsien-i 楊憲益 and Gladys Yang 楊乃迭, in Lu Xun, *Selected Works*, 4 vols. (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1980), 3: 75–96; cf. also his respective open correspondence with Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白 (1899–1935), published as »Guanyu fanyi de tongxin« 關於翻譯的通信 [A Correspondence About Translation; Dec 1931/June 1932], in *Lu Xun quanji*, 4: 379–398.

6 About the influence of the Western languages and literature (also of Japanese) on modern Chinese, see Gunn, *Rewriting Chinese*.

7 One of the most frequented examples of such »convolution« is »transpositions of sentence elements from their historically conventional locations« (Gunn, *Rewriting Chinese*, 221). According to Gunn, this phenomenon was one of the main language innovations of May Fourth Movement prose innovations (sporadically before it, yet under foreign influence). He mentions as an example subordinate clauses introduced by conjunctions and not following main clauses, with the rare exception of *chufei* 除非 (‘except’) and the use of *gai* 蓋 (‘for’)—which occurs in writing, yet it always possible in speech.

8 *Selected Bilingual Essays of Lin Yutang*, ed. by Qian Suoqiao 錢鎖橋 (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2010), xxv.

himself was educated in English—and actually bilingual—and was a prolific essayist and writer both in Chinese and English. Most of his Chinese essays were written after their English versions and were in fact translations. Thus, it is hard to believe that his own *baibua wen* was not also influenced by English.⁹

2) The mass language movement, with its ‘language of the masses’ (*dazhongyu* 大眾語), inspired by attempts to promote literacy and literature to the working class. These efforts encouraged a number of mainly left-wing writers to experiment with regional speech and thus deformed the proclaimed standards of *baibua wen*.

Lin Yutang even labels language deformed by these factors *baibua liusi* 白話六四, i.e. ‘parallel-prose style *baibua*’.¹⁰

- 9 Many of these Chinese versions were in fact re-writings or translations of the English versions that had appeared earlier, in some cases a couple of years earlier, in the »Little Critic« (in the years 1928–45) column in *The China Critic. Selected Bilingual Essays*, xv.
- 10 The term *liusi* seems to be an allusion to *siliu* or *piansi lilu* 駢四儷六, one of the terms used for the so-called *pianwen* 駢體文 parallel style, especially for its form in use mainly during the Tang dynasty, with a verse length of 4 and 6 characters.

What Lin Yutang had in mind with this term can be seen, for example, in his short essay, or rather gloss, titled »Kezeng de baihua liusi« 可憎的白話六四 (Disgusting *baibua liusi*), *Lunyu* No. 26 (Oct 1st, 1933). Here we learn that according to Lin Yutang a kind of ‘dogmatic’ language was widespread in modern China, which was in this respect resembling the role which ‘parallel style’ (*piansi lilu* 駢四儷六) had played in the past. The language in question, of course, was not modelling ancient patterns of »parallel literature«. Lin labels it so because it was, as he deems, excessively modelling another kinds of *ill* patterns: those of the language of the translations of Western literary production, and those of contemporary spoken language—both distinctive by ‘excessive verbosity’ (*lusu* 嚕嚕) or ‘talking annoyingly long’ (*lulilusu* 嚕哩嚕嚕). The essay itself was an immediate reaction to the drama named *Muxing zhi guang* 母性之光 (Maternal Instinct), which Lin saw on the stage in one of the Nanking theatres, and, as he states, he found the language of this literary piece too ‘dubious’ and too ‘modern’ (*busanbusi de sbixing baibua* 不三不四的時行白話)—resulting from »the ill digestion of foreign influence« (*shiyang bubua* 食洋不化) and excessive use of profane language registers. His objection towards verbosity and dubiousness was strongly pronounced despite the fact that, as we shall see in the following, Lin admits that longer genres like novels and dramas could keep using *baibua wen* of modern times (unlike other shorter genres). The gloss concludes as follows: »Literary revolution got rid of “parallel style”, yet adopted a new “parallel style”. Whoa! I dislike it so much!« (文學革命，剛排去駢四儷六，卻又迎來新四六。吁，吾憎之甚。) All citations are from the edition of *Lin*

The abovementioned observations first inspired Lin Yutang—along with other prominent intellectuals of his time like Wu Mi 吳密 (1894–1978) and Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書 (1910–1998)—to advocate more frequently the view that the more succinct and historicizing register of *wenyanwen* should be kept for writing (at least for some genres like letters) during a certain period when in China the vernacular *baibua wen* was rapidly spreading as a medium for literature and journalism. Later, he went even further and wrote a number of essays in which he proposed that there must be rediscovered another language (register) that could be adopted for modern literary works and learned discourse (namely, not *baibua wen* nor *wenyanwen*) in order to meet the goals that were originally proposed for *baibua wen*. What kind of language media/register it should have been is the topic of this paper.

In the following, I shall try to examine shortly the factors which according to Lin Yutang played the most decisive role in his search for a more proper media for literary works and educated discourse—registers that would have qualified to take over the role originally assigned to *baibua wen*. As we can gather from Lin Yutang's own works (see also his essays examined below), the main source of inspiration appears to have been Lin Yutang's individual literary tastes, i.e. his liking for the so-called 'leisure literature' (*xianqing wenxue* 閑情文學) of the Ming and Qing dynasties from the 14th century¹¹ and its most characteristic form *xiaopinwen* 小品文 ('short/minor prose pieces', or 'occasional essays').¹² Lin

Yutang mingzhu quanji 林語堂名著全集 [Complete Edition of Noted Works by Lin Yutang], 30 vols., ed. by Mei Zhongquan 梅中泉 & al. (Changchun: Dongbei shifandaxue chubanshe, 1994), 14: 193–195.

- 11 The works of the so-called Gong'an 公安 school were often mentioned in this context along with their doctrine of the »*individual genius*« (*xingling* 性靈).
- 12 The *xiaopinwen* genre existed in Chinese literature for centuries and reached its climax at the turn of the Ming and Qing dynasties. Charles A. Laughlin in his *Literature of Leisure & Chinese Modernity* points out: »The miscellaneous variety of the forms classified as *xiaopinwen* did not diminish once the term was adopted in the literary context. [...] This can be described as a comparatively casual mood and an emphasis on the trivial, the everyday, the little things that make life charming and meaningful on a day-to-day basis. It is possible to identify features that are common to this kind of essay and that distinguish it from more grand and self-important modes of prose writing—vernacular, local and colloquial elements in the language, generally short length of text, emphasis on certain kinds of subject matter.« Laughlin, *The Literature of Leisure & Chinese Modernity* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 14.

Yutang especially admired their elegant yet simple and clear language.¹³ Ming and Qing dynasty *xiaopinwen* mostly had the form of short travelogues, letters, notes, prefaces or other forms of non-formal genres, and were basically intended just for entertainment and showing off to friends. Their motto was something like »self-expression«.

There is another important phenomenon relevant to Lin Yutang's prolific activities related to the promotion of modern Chinese essay writing in the 1920s and 1930s. In order to put into practice his visions and proposals about essay writing in modern China alongside with »spreading humor around China«, in the 1930s Lin Yutang launched or co-founded a number of literary magazines.¹⁴ The genre—or the way of writing—characteristic for the contributions in these periodicals, especially those promoted by Lin Yutang himself, was the so called (modern) *xiaopinwen* (modern 'small prose pieces' or 'short essays'),¹⁵ which were defined by Lin Yutang himself (published in the magazine *Renjianshi*) as follows: »'Short essays' should centre around one's self and employ a leisurely style [...]; and in content cover everything from the big universe to tiny flies.«¹⁶ Thus, the 'leisure-styled' way of writing might have governed modern essay writing. We believe that the motto of »self-expression« or »the author speaking for himself« were the perspectives Lin Yutang could have had in mind.

Generally speaking, modern essays written in the time of Chinese movements toward modernism during the 1920s and 1930s were mainly recognized as widely inspired by European *belles lettres*. However, Lin Yutang—to some degree under the influence of Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885–1967)—at the

13 Laughlin argues that 'leisure literature' is less a genre than »a way of writing« and that by the end of the Ming dynasty these humble prose peaces called *xiaopinwen* became its most characteristic form. (Laughlin, *The Literature of Leisure*, 2).

14 Lin Yutang established several journals during the 1930s. The journals *Lunyu* 論語 (Analects; 1932–48), *Renjianshi* 人間世 (In the Human World; 1934–35), *Yuzhoufeng* 宇宙風 (Cosmic Winds; 1935–47) and *Yijing* 逸經 (Heterodox Canonical Writings; 1936–37), as well as *Wanxiang* 萬象 (About All and Everything; 1941–45, refounded in the PRC, 1998ff) are all connected to Lin Yutang's name.

Lunyu was Lin Yutang's own enterprise; he was also seminal in founding *Renjianshi* and was an important contributor to the other journals mentioned. During their time of publication, all these journals enjoyed considerable success among an interested readership.

15 Indeed, the *xiaopinwen* phenomenon in the 1930s was largely a result of Lin Yutang's influence on the literary scene.

16 *Renjianshi* No. 1 (1934), 1.

same time strongly advocated that the way of writing of modern ‘little pieces’ should also follow the patterns of the traditional forms of Chinese ‘leisure literature’,¹⁷ i.e. older non-formal literature pieces dating back to the Ming dynasty.¹⁸

As far as the language (register) itself is concerned, Lin Yutang argued that the *baibuwen* of the Ming dynasty’s ‘minor essays’ was not as ‘deformed’ as it became in modern times—divorced from speech, or, at the other extreme, too close to spoken language—and thus the inspiration in the search for a proper language register in modern times might come from these historical texts. However, the cultural and social climate required that the language should also somehow represent modernity, and Lin Yutang was perfectly aware of this, but he did not share the views claiming that modern *baibuwen* was an inevitable media for modernity.

As for »language representing modernity« with regard to modern essay writing, Charles A. Laughlin also points out that:

The modern essay emerged in the atmosphere of the Literary Revolution and aligned itself with European *belles lettres* while distancing itself from pre-modern *guwen* (ancient style prose) and *baguwen* 八股文 (»eight-legged essays«). But only a decade later, in 1932, Zhou Zuoren was already able to associate it on a fundamental

17 One interesting remark on the issue can be read in the review on the book by Charles A. Laughlin (*The Literature of Leisure*) where David A. Pollard argues: »Was the connection between the modern essay and the Gonggan school stronger than its connection with the Anglo-American essay, which it replaced in Zhou [Zuoren]’s perspective? We may recall that in Zhou’s pioneering article of 1920, entitled »Mei wen« 美文 (Belles-lettres), he commended by name Addison, Lamb, Irving and Hawthorne (”Figures well known in China”), as well as other more recent practitioners of »belles-lettres«, but no Chinese writers. So why the change in stance? One obvious reason is that in its initial stage the New Literature looked abroad for inspiration, but once its cadres were more sure of themselves, it was to be expected that they would want to find forebears in their own history to relate to.« *Journal of Chinese Studies* 49 (2009), 445.

18 David E. Pollard admits that the affinity with late-Ming *xiaopinwen* that Zhou identified »was indeed in respect of *fengzhi* 風致 and *qiwei* 氣味, that is tenor, manner and temper. [...] However, while the starting point of both the Gonggan school and modern essayists was the same, namely that the essay was a medium of self-expression and that the author should speak for himself, in what they had to say, their range of topics and in how they conceived of the essay form, they were very far apart. Most modern essayists’ discourse derived from the Western model, not the late-Ming model.« *Ibid.*, 445.

aesthetic and ideological level with the late Ming dynasty *xiaopinwen*, while still claiming that the career of the modern essay was one of the most successful genre stories in New Literature and the greatest triumph of the *baibua* style. Zhou contends that the modern essay should be distinguished from the pre-modern one because it uses the medium of *baibua*.¹⁹

Thus, Lin Yutang seems to have shared Zhou Zuoren's views that there were fundamentally predominant aesthetic qualities of old *xiaopinwen* which should be kept in modern writing. Yet on the other hand, on the question of the language (register) proper for modern essays, their views significantly differed—for Lin Yutang, *baibua* (not only in modern essay writing) was anything but a triumph.

Lin Yutang finally proposed grounding modern *baibua* in its own native historical linkage, namely in the style of *yuluti* 語錄體²⁰, which first originated in the works of the 'leisure literature' of the Ming and Qing dynasties, and thus advocated writing in a kind of historicizing language register imitating these old patterns.²¹ Qian Suoqiao evaluates this style of writing as follows: »The style of Lin's Chinese essays, known as *yuluti*, was a carefully cultivated choice. Lin's promotion and practice of *yuluti* were indeed major contributions to modern Chinese literature and culture.«²² Lin only gives us vague proposals as to how the historical patterns should have been modelled technically, just like his reasons why the contemporary *baibua* should be reformed via historicizing language.

In the following, I shall discuss the issue on the basis of Lin Yutang's essay published in *Lunyu* in 1933.²³

19 Laughlin, *The Literature of Leisure*, 7.

20 Regarding the term *yuluti* 語錄體, dictionaries and literary compendia basically define it as a language register imitating the language of Chan or Neo-Confucian *yulu* 語錄 ('recorded sayings'), dating back to the Song and Ming dynasties and before.

21 Edward Gunn refers to the way of modern essay writing advocated by Lin as »a refined style of *belles lettres* that owed much to literary Chinese.« (Gunn, *Rewriting Chinese*, 84).

22 *Selected Bilingual Essays*, xxiii.

23 »Lun *yuluti* zhi yong« 論語錄體之用, *Lunyu* No. 26 (Oct 1st, 1933); also in *Lin Yutang mingzhu quanji*, 14: 188–192.

Yuluti in Lin Yutang's View

The essay begins with the following rhetorical question:

有人問我，何為作文言，豈非開倒車？吾非好作文言，吾不得已也。²⁴

I was asked: Why are you writing in the classical *wenyan*? Isn't that against the historical tide [of evolution]? Well, it's not that I am fond of writing in *wenyan*, but I don't have any other choice.²⁵

As we shall see below, Lin Yutang was sort of 'compelled' to keep writing in the historicizing language (here referred to as *wenyan* 文言) also due to the fact that the modern medium of literary expression—contemporary *baibua*—was not able to fulfill its proclaimed role anymore, including the fact that it had lost its ability »to express truly the meaning of what should be pronounced«. The following passages are elaborating details:

有種題目，用白話寫來甚好，便用白話。

有種意思，卻須用文言寫來省便，〔…〕有一句話，說一句話〔…〕。

今人作白話文，恰似古人作四六，一句老實話，不肯老實說出，

When we have a certain **topic** [*timu* 題目], it is good to use *baibua* for writing, and thus we use *baibua*.

[But] when we have a certain **concept** [*yisi* 意思], on the contrary we should use *wenyan* to write it down ... [since] if we have one sentence, we say it in one sentence.

Today people write *baibua* in the way people of the past wrote *siliu* 四六, [thus] they do not allow for one true [*laoshi* 老實] sentence to be spoken out truly [*laoshi* 老實].²⁶

Baibua was suitable, or good enough, for writing longer genres based on free fabulation on a certain topic or a free longer narration, yet when the expression of *true meaning* (or a certain *concept*) was required, it failed since it was seen as too redundant, non-economic and enigmatic. Thus, for the texts of argumentation, reasoning, essays, letters or other shorter genres, there was no way but to use succinct historicizing language. Lin Yutang also illustrates the redundancy, verbosity, or otherwise biasness of the modern *baibua* in the following examples:

憂鬱則曰心弦的顫動，

欣喜則曰快樂的幸福，

²⁴ *Lin Yutang mingzhu quanji*, 14: 188.

²⁵ The translation is by Qian Suoqiao and quoted from his *Selected Bilingual Essays*, xxiv-xxv.

²⁶ *Lin Yutang mingzhu quanji*, 14: 188.

受勸則曰接收意見，
快點則曰加上速度。²⁷

»Melancholy« is then called »vibration of the heart strings«,
»Happiness« is then called »joyful happiness«,
»To be advised« is then called »to receive opinion«,
»Slightly faster« is then called »to add speed«.

And thus he confesses:

吾惡白話之文，而喜文言之白，故提倡語錄體。²⁸

I hate the »literariness«^[29] of *baibua*, and I like the »simplicity« of *wenyan*, I thus advocate *yuluti*.

In other words, in a pun intertwining the qualifiers in the terms denoting the registers of 'written classical' and 'vernacular' Chinese, Lin Yutang questions what is attributed to them, i.e. 'simplicity' (*bai* 白) and 'literariness' or 'opaqueness' (*wen* 文), and comes to a conclusion opposite to the common sense of the New Literature from the May Fourth movement. According to the lines quoted above from Lin Yutang's article, the historical (or, if modelled, historicizing) style referred to as *yuluti*, thus embodies the *simplicity* of old Chinese in the sense that it is devoid of the redundancy and opaqueness symptomatic for contemporary language registers—either too close to speech or too much divorced from speech. And it was exactly the *non-economic redundancy* of the written word which made Lin Yutang ponder about the *efficiency* of the proposed language register *yuluti*:

文人學子，有一種惡習慣，好掉弄筆墨，無論文言白話皆如此。

語錄體之文，一句一句說去，皆有意思。無意思便寫不出，任汝取巧無用也。

Men of letters and scholars have one ill habit—they like to play with brush and ink—regardless of [writing] *wenyan* or *baibua*, all are like this.

The text written in *yuluti* [simply] expresses one sentence by one sentence, and all have their meanings. If there is no meaning, there is no point in employing sophisticated expression.³⁰

The *Baibuawen* of the 1920s and 1930s simply entails the redundancy which conceals the succinct character of Chinese language as such, and, as Lin Yutang sums up, the proposed historical (or historicizing) *yuluti* style »is equal to *wenyan*

27 *Ibid.*

28 *Lin Yutang mingzhu quanji*, 14: 188.

29 Qian Suoqiao (*Selected Bilingual Essays*, xxv) translates the character *wen* as »literariness/opaqueness«.

30 *Lin Yutang mingzhu quanji*, 14: 189.

in regard to its succinctness [*jianchen* 簡練] and equal to *baibua* with regard to its essentiality [*zhipu* 質朴]—it has thus the efficiency [*shuangli* 爽利] of *baibua* but is devoid of its verbosity [*lusu* 囁蘇].³¹

In this respect, we may rank Lin Yutang among other men of letters of the first half of the 20th century, who Edward Gunn labels as »economists of style« together with writers like Liang Shiqiu 梁實秋 (1903–1987) or Yu Guangzhong 余光中 (b.1928).³²

In this context, Gunn elaborates two basic arguments on how the economy of style was justified by some proponents of the movement:

The principle of economy was upheld by several of these writers as a criticism not only of Europeanized writing for its excess but also of speech itself as a base for writing. Speech, in their view, has been too prolix and redundant to serve in itself as a model. In truth, during the Republican era, there was a widespread recognition that writing needed to idealize speech—a need to purge writing. [...] Economists of style, such as Lin Yutang and Liang Shiqiu, went further on this, however, to produce a refined style of *belles-lettres* that owed much to literary Chinese.³³

This is basically supporting what was said above. The relationship between speech and writing has enjoyed extensive attention in Lin Yutang's essays, and the ability of the written language based on contemporary speech to fulfill the standards of nation-wide written language was questioned.

Furthermore, Lin Yutang gives a list of words typical for *wenyan* (or 'older Chinese' in this context) which should be definitely kept in the written language of modern times since they were 'superior' (*sheng yu* 勝於) anyway to their equivalents in *baibua* and therefore better fitted the refined style owing much to literary Chinese.³⁴

31 *Ibid.*, 14: 188.

32 Gunn, *Rewriting Chinese*, 84.

33 *Ibid.*

34 *Lin Yutang mingzhu quanji*, 14: 189.

<i>wenyan</i> (Old Chinese)	<i>Baibua</i>
<i>gai</i> 蓋	<i>yinwei</i> 因為
<i>shi</i> 使	<i>tangshi</i> 倘使
<i>yi</i> 抑	<i>baishi</i> 還是
<i>yue</i> 曰	<i>shuo</i> 說
<i>jie</i> 皆	<i>tongtong</i> 統統
<i>wu</i> 無	<i>meiyou</i> 沒有
<i>he shi</i> 何時	<i>shenme shibou</i> 什麼時候
<i>he di</i> 何地	<i>shenme difang</i> 什麼地方

In this respect Lin argues that if somebody claims that »*yuluti* is *baibua*«, he would not disagree—if the *yuluti* is written ‘truly’ (*laoshi*) and not ‘awkwardly’ (*bieniu* 斃扭).³⁵ Qian Suoqiao comes to the conclusion that Lin Yutang considered *yuluti* to be a more authentic form of *baibua*.³⁶

Lin Yutang does not provide us with a complex study elucidating the *yuluti* issue in its various aspects—linguistic, aesthetic and cultural. Yet, whatever the term *yuluti* may exactly denote as the most suitable language register proposed for modern Chinese essay writing (keeping in mind that longer narrative genres were still proposed to be written in modern *baibua*), representative works from the past to be modelled should have been identified. Accordingly, in Lin Yutang’s article the literary pieces in shorter non-formal genres dating back to the turn of the Ming and Qing dynasties are mentioned—among them works by the 17th century *literator* Jin Shengtan 金聖嘆 (1608–1661), but also poems written by the Tang dynasty poet Hanshan 寒山 (691–793). Lin Yutang’s literary favourites are presented in more detail in an essay published in 1934 and titled Examples of *yuluti*.³⁷ On the other hand, speeches of contemporary politicians were cited by Lin Yutang as typical examples of language deformation—stylistic, lexical or aesthetic.³⁸

35 *Ibid.*

36 Lin Yutang, *Selected Bilingual Essays*, xxiv.

37 »*Yuluti* juli« 語錄體舉例, *Lunyu* No. 40 (Mar 1st, 1934).

38 Zhang Pei 張沛 in this respect deems that it might have been also due to Lin’s contacts with Guomindang that he searched for a soul retreat in the old literary works of the Ming dynasty. »Lun Lin Yutang de yuluti chuanguo« 論林語堂的語錄體創作 [On Lin Yutang’s Works in

Historical precedence for the literary style and language register were set, yet what was the right way to create such a historicizing text? Lin Yutang provides us with the following »manual«:

大體上是文言，却用白話說法，心里頭用文言，筆下卻比古文自由得多〔…〕語錄體甚宜做文言的“閑談體” (*Familiar style*)，如用“汝”字便是閑談體，較用“先生”、“足下”親密得多，稱人“汝”者既自由不拘〔…〕。³⁹

[*Yuluti*] is basically *wenyan*, but using the mode of expression from *baibua*. In my mind I use *wenyan*, yet what is put down is much freer than classical prose *guwen* [...]. *Yuluti* is really most appropriate for writing classical »familiar style«. If we address somebody with *ru* ['thou'], then it is »familiar style«—and much more intimate than using *xiansheng* ['Sir'] or *zuxia* ['your revered']. Addressing people with *ru*—this is an act of freedom [...].

At the end of the article, Lin Yutang again argues that though *baibua wen* might be used for writing longer narrative genres, it is absolutely unsuitable as soon as shorter genres, letters, glosses, or legal texts are concerned.

How was the role of *yuluti* characterized in general? As »a bridge between *baibua* and *wenyan*«⁴⁰—this is how the last line of the text reads.

Concluding Remarks

Lin Yutang was one of the most active intellectuals in the reform of written Chinese, and belonged to the circle of influential figures of the New Culture movement who were promoting *baibua wen* as a language of a new literature. Yet soon afterwards, in the early 1930s, he became fairly critical towards the *baibua wen* in its contemporary practice because he considered it basically *deformed* by two factors: the syntactical, grammatical and lexical deformations of Chinese originating in the language of translations of Western literary and scientific texts, and on the other hand by the excessive infiltration of all levels of vernacular language registers into written genres resulting mainly from the 'mass language movement'.

As an intellectual attracted by the elegant style of literature from the past, Lin Yutang soon came to voice his disgust, and started to advocate the use of a kind of historicizing language which he considered to be a more authentic form

yuluti], *Dongfang congkan* 東方叢刊 3/2004, 186.

39 *Lin Yutang mingzhu quanji*, 14: 197.

40 *Ibid.*, 14: 195.

of *baibuawen*—the *yuluti*, modelled after patterns of the *xiaopinwen* from the Ming and Qing dynasties. Though his efforts in the field did not exert a broader impact on literati in his times, his visions were well known in China mainly due to his essays published in the periodicals he founded or co-founded and which had an important number of readers. His mode of essay-writing, the so-called ‘modern *xiaopinwen*’, was widely spread by these magazines and enjoyed high esteem among intellectuals. Yet in the time of Chinese modernism, his plea for using historicizing language was also seen as retrogressive, if not outright conservative or reactionary. But for Lin Yutang, the language or the mode of writing modelled after the elegant urban style literature of »self-expression« in the Ming and Qing dynasties was a legitimate literary medium representing modernity also in the 20th century.

However, Lin Yutang examined the issue mainly as a cultural problem with its various outcomes and did not base it on a serious linguistic analysis.

Comenius University in Bratislava, Department of East Asian Studies