

THE VOICE OF WANG SHAOTANG IN YANGZHOU STORYTELLING*

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The present article examines a historical sound recording of the famous master of Yangzhou storytelling (揚州評話 *Yangzhou pinghua*), Wang Shaotang 王少堂 (1889-1968),¹ founder of the Wang School of WATER MARGIN (王派水滸 *Wangpai SHUIHU*).² While the written and printed versions of his spoken repertoire have been well studied in China, the oral version as preserved in recorded

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¹ Wang Shaotang's year of birth is given sometimes as 1887, cf. Wei Ren & Wei Minghua 1985: 23, or 1888, cf. Li Zhen 1988: 43. I follow the information given in Wang Xiaotang 1992: 1, edited by Li Zhen.

² Titles of oral sagas are rendered all in capital letters, while the titles of published editions are given in italics.

radio broadcasts of the 1960s has been given no attention to date.³ This study focuses on the sound aspect of a 1961 radio broadcast from Nanjing Radio, exploring the phenomenon of register or “speaking style” (說口 *shuokou*) from a phonological point of view. Observations on some phonetic details in the pronunciation of Wang Shaotang and his later disciples are analysed with reference to the Yangzhou storytellers’ own concepts and ideas about pronunciation, in particular the ideas of Wang Shaotang. In this way it seems possible to approach the question of dialect literature and normative language from a new perspective.

Oral Performances and “Oral” Texts

In the course of the twentieth century Chinese folklorists made an enormous effort to collect, write down and thus save living oral traditions in contemporary society. By sifting and refining the oral materials—the Chinese term for this being “correcting” (整理 *zhengli*)—folklorists have left us an important reservoir of popular culture.

³ The complete text of the performance is rendered in Chinese characters and English translation in Børdahl and Ross 2002, pp. 171-197. Other aspects of this recording, such as style and narration, are examined in the author’s forthcoming article “The Storyteller’s Manner in Chinese Storytelling,” *Asian Folklore Studies*, 2003.

Among the major traditions of Chinese oral performed arts (曲藝 *quyi*), Yangzhou storytelling was not only given much attention in the work of the early pioneers of oral literature in China, but also the storytellers' heritage was collected and published in a rich harvest of book-length editions.⁴ The great impact of these works is evident not only from the number of printed copies (some of the print runs for these editions were more than a hundred and twenty thousand copies, a noteworthy amount even in China), but other indications such as library loans, references and quotations in scholarly publications also strongly confirm this impression.⁵ This is particularly true of the work of the master storyteller Wang Shaotang, who was generally considered the greatest storyteller of his age in China. The idea of publishing and

⁴ See, for example, the works on the history of Chinese storytelling in Chen Ruheng 1985 (including reprinted works from 1936, 1958 and 1979); Hu Shiyong 1980; and Tan Daxian 1982.

⁵ A list of editions is found in Børdahl 1996, updated in Børdahl and Ross 2002. The question of impact might deserve a special study which is, however, not the aim of this article. My remarks are based on the number of printed copies of each edition, cf note 6, which is most often given on the colophon page of these books. During the 1980s and 1990s new editions of storyteller sagas, in impressions of between two thousand and one hundred and twenty thousand, were usually not for sale. They were always sold out, in many cases before they reached the bookshops. I have acquired my own collection of these books as gifts from authors (storytellers), editors and friends. Only in exceptional cases was it possible to buy a copy, and as I remember, only if I was present in Yangzhou just around the time of publication. Library copies at Yangzhou University were worn to shreds.

disseminating the oral culture in the form of reading materials was primary, while purposes of scientific preservation seem to have had only a secondary role. In spite of this, the worth of these editions to scholarly studies was and is tremendous, and they have served for most studies of the oral traditions as primary material and as fount of examples.⁶

Editions of Yangzhou storyteller's oral repertoire published from the 1950s to the present strive to adapt the spoken form for a reading audience from the whole country. With this purpose in mind, the editors seek to remove dialectal vocabulary that is considered too specialized and generally give the texts a language washing in the direction of Modern Standard Chinese, so that dialect grammar will not disturb the readers. Editors are expected to "clean" the materials of anything deemed "low taste" (erotic passages, scatological jokes, etc.) or considered incompatible with political correctness. They also remove what is considered redundant or faulty, and rewrite the spoken texts in order to obtain the kind of narrative logic expected by a reading public.

⁶ See for example Chen Chen 1985, Chen Wulou 1990. This is true not only for the Chinese researchers. At the CHINOPERL annual meeting in 1974, Boris Riftin's study of Yangzhou and Suzhou storyteller's versions of *Three Kingdoms*, summarized by Milena Dolezelova-Velingerova (see also Riftin 1970 [1997] and 1999), and the late Robert Ruhlman's contribution on Wang Shaotang's 'Wu Song Fights the Tiger', were both based on the edited and printed versions of these stories, cf. *CHINOPERL News*, No.4 (1974).

Moreover, a large-scale abbreviation is considered inevitable, since the idea of publishing the enormous repertoires of the storytellers *in toto* would go beyond all bounds. Division into chapters, chapter headings, beginnings and endings are added by the editors according to their own conception of “modern storytellers’ books” (新話本 *xin huaben*), not according to the actual wording of the storyteller or his habits of division.⁷

My approach differs from the above in attitude and research focus, not because of a revisionist stand vis à vis the Chinese editorial practice, but rather because of my linguistic and literary research methods. In contrast to the Chinese editors, my aim is to listen to live performances, record such performances on tape and video, and render the recorded performances as accurately as possible in order to document the original

⁷ In the 1990s there seemed to be a tendency among editors to record the words of the storyteller with more precision and faithfulness, cf. Fei Li 1999. On the other hand, there was simultaneously a tendency among some storytellers to adapt their words to the format of the written publication they were collaborating with the editor to bring to the world, cf. Børdahl 1996, p.189n. On the evidence of 1998 radio broadcasts of the storyteller Wang Litang, the granddaughter of Wang Shaotang, it is obvious, for example, that Wang Litang’s opening sentence of her telling of the WU SONG storytelling cycle was not *edited* into its present printed shape, but she had changed her own spoken beginning of performance into the style of the book version of her grandfather’s tale in stead of keeping the traditional opening that I have recorded among the other disciples of Wang Shaotang. See Wang Litang 1989, chapter 1, p. 1; Cf. Børdahl 1996, pp. 275, 302, 339, 361.

spoken form of storytelling. From this type of fidelity to the oral source it becomes possible to describe many aspects of the performance with a new degree of reliability. For my studies the central point of interest is the *spoken language* and the *spoken narrative tradition* of storytelling, with specific regard to four features of Yangzhou storytelling as performed orally in its traditional milieu:

- (1) the phonological features specific to Yangzhou storytelling;
- (2) the role Yangzhou dialect grammar and vocabulary play in spoken performances;
- (3) stylistic features typical and/or specific for the spoken performances;
- (4) narrative structure of storytelling sessions in live performance.

From the written and printed editions mentioned above near to nothing can be said about the pronunciation question—the Chinese characters do not in general reveal dialectal pronunciation, and they carry even less information about the finer nuances of spoken registers—something that will also usually get lost in a phonemic script. A study of these aspects is dependent on *listening* and on a sound analysis on the level of phonetics.

Likewise, features of grammar, style, and narration that reflect the oral performance most closely also belong to the part of language that is most likely to be changed by the editors of storytellers' books. Although concerns with the structure and style of oral narrative, noted as (2), (3) and (4), are outside the scope of the present article, we should keep this point in mind, because we must be aware of the fact that a transcription into an alphabetic writing system instead of characters would not solve the problem we encounter in the edited texts. The questions that I like to ask when studying oral literature are intimately bound up with the storyteller's performance as an oral/aural phenomenon and as an event situated in a genuine oral communication situation. Such questions are likely to find different answers according to the kind of material one is using as point of departure—whether the material is close to the oral performance or whether it has a more distant relationship to the performance.

This essay pinpoints the distinct soundscape and speaking styles Wang Shaotang uses in his storytelling and is based on listening to a radio tape. As a listener, my ability to distinguish and analyse the sounds is based on previous phonemic and phonetic studies of the Yangzhou

dialect as well as detailed studies of the pronunciation of the successors of Wang Shaotang in the Wang School of WATER MARGIN.⁸

Wang Shaotang, his Forefathers and his Disciples

Ultimately the WATER MARGIN cycle goes back to the “father of storytelling” in China, Liu Jingting 柳敬亭 (1587–ca.1670), who came from the Prefecture of Yangzhou and was most famous for his performance of “Wu Song Fights the Tiger” (武松打虎 *Wu Song da hu*), as is recorded in lively fashion by contemporary witnesses.⁹ The historical sources on the life of Liu Jingting indicate that he was continuing an already established tradition and that he entered from the “outside” in so far as he was not born into a storyteller family. But sources on the link between him and the later Yangzhou storytellers of WATER MARGIN are fragmentary, and today we cannot establish

⁸ Cf. Børdahl 1977 and 1996. A complete bibliography of my previous research on Yangzhou storytelling is found in Børdahl and Ross 2002: 400-401. I am not blind to the fact that the corpus I have been able to analyse in detail is quite restricted and that the recordings may be coloured by my personal presence during the performances. Another corpus, collected under different circumstances, might yield other results, mainly in the domain of earthy language and possibly political and erotic comment, I suspect.

⁹ Cf. for example Zhang Dai (1597–1684?): *Tao an meng yi* (Taipei: Jinfeng chubanshe, n.d.), p. 68. English translation in Børdahl 1996: 13.

storytellers' lineages further back than the middle of the nineteenth century.¹⁰

Along with several other great lines (門 *men*) and schools (派 *pai*) of Yangzhou storytelling, there were in particular two major lines of WATER MARGIN, the Deng Line (鄧門 *Dengmen*) and the Song Line (宋門 *Songmen*), seen in Table I. Wang Yutang, the father of Wang Shaotang, defined himself within the Deng Line by taking an artist's name containing the end-syllable *-tang* (堂). But his repertoire was expanded with the parts he had learned from the Song Line. Thus, in the Wang family, the convergence of the two WATER MARGIN lines took place in their first generation of storytellers. The notion of the Wang School thus designates a branch of the Deng Line where part of the repertoire from the Song Line was taken over. It was a special honour shown to Wang

¹⁰ *Yangzhou quyishi*, 1993: 346–47. In my previous studies I only use one English term for storyteller's lineage, namely "school," covering both of the storytellers' terms: *men*, meaning "door" or "line," and *pai*, meaning "group" or "school." There is no difference in principle between the two terms, since both designate branching into groups that "inherit" the style of a certain lineage. Therefore "school" can be used for both, when we understand that there is a hierarchy of schools. For my present purpose, I do, however, prefer to make a distinction and keep the two Chinese terms separate. Obviously, the term "line" (*men*) indicates a school on a higher level in the hierarchy, or in other words, an older branching off than school (*pai*). That lineages may also merge, as in the case of the Wang School, is a fact that may remind us that oral traditions are not biological, but sociolinguistic in nature.

Shaotang, when his oral art was given prominence as a special “school” within the system of the two main hereditary lines.¹¹

¹¹ The notion of the “Wang family WATER MARGIN” (*Wangjia SHUIHU* or *Wangpai SHUIHU*) is in general use at least from the 1950s. Cf. Chen Ruheng 1985: 154. The Ma School WATER MARGIN (馬派水滸 *Mapai SHUIHU*), of Ma Hanzhang 馬漢章 (fl. 1920s), Ma Fengzhang 馬鳳章 (1899-1965), Ma Chunfang 馬春芳 (1928–1957) et al. was also famous during the 1950s, but later became overshadowed by the Wang School. Ma Fengzhang and his student Hui Zhaolong 惠兆龍 (b. 1945) are sometimes considered inheritors—not of the Ma school, but of the Wang School. Cf. *Yangzhou quyǐ zhi* 1993: 346 and *Zhongguo quyǐ zhi*, Jiangsu juan, 1996: 682–83. Within the other major schools of *Yangzhou pinghua*, some branches from the twentieth century are likewise especially revered and named according to the famous master-tellers, e.g. the Kang School, (康派 *Kang pai*), after Kang Guohua 康國華 (1853–1916), Kang Youhua 康又華 (1898–1951), et al., and the Wu School (吳派 *Wupai*), after Wu Guoliang 吳國良 (1872–1944), Wu Shaoliang 吳少良 (1889–1936), et al., both belonging to the THREE KINGDOMS (三國 *SAN GUO*) system. Cf. Wang Xiaotang 1992: 41.

Table I: Lines of WATER MARGIN in Yangzhou Storytelling¹²

¹² The tables are reprinted from Børdahl and Ross 2002: 66–67. They are based on tables found in *Yangzhou quyī zhi* 1993: 346–47; *Zhongguo quyī zhi*, Jiangsu juan, 1996: 682–83, and Børdahl 1996: 49–51. Female storytellers are marked “f.”

In 1958, when Wang Shaotang was at the height of his career, he was invited to give a public talk in Beijing on “My education and experience as an artist” (我的學藝經過和表演經驗 *Wode xue yi jingguo he biaoyan jingyan*). His words were written down and published as an article, one of the most important autobiographical sources on his life and art. Here he tells about his family background:

“My family’s place of origin is Yiling, a small town just east of Yangzhou. My grandfather, however, lived in a house in Anle Lane in Yangzhou. My father’s eldest brother died early and his second brother was ailing. His third brother, my uncle, had some education in banking and my father did, too. They opened a small moneylender’s stall in the street and tried to make a living on it. The daily income was only two or three hundred coppers. The whole family, altogether eleven persons living in the four wings of the compound, including our grandfather, depended on this for their daily meals—life was hard. My uncle was very fond of storytelling, however, particularly of storytelling from WATER MARGIN. He was not a man of much learning, but he was bright, and he had a good voice and big eyes, so he thought about changing his profession. He was accepted as a disciple of the master, Song Chengzhang, and given the artist’s name Jinzhang 金章. After less than a year my uncle was able to tell the WATER MARGIN, because he already had listened so much. He was an aficionado of storytelling. He listened and he practiced. Afterwards he closed the money stall. The whole

family was now dependent on his storytelling and the income was enough to support us.

My father followed in the footsteps of his brother and studied storytelling, too. What they had learned was the first part of WATER MARGIN. Later my father also took another master, Zhang Huitang 張慧堂, and adopted the artist's name Yutang 玉堂. With this master he studied the later part. In this way the two brothers were able to link the two parts together and master the complete cycle of WATER MARGIN: the four ten-chapter cycles on Wu Song, Song Jiang, Shi Xiu and Lu Junyi. [...] ¹³

Wang Shaotang and his brother Wang Shaoqing 王少卿 both continued the family tradition together with other students of their father and uncle. As a young man Wang Shaotang had no son of his own, but adopted his brother's son and educated this boy as his artistic inheritor, Wang Xiaotang 王篠堂 (1918–2000). Later Wang Xiaotang's daughter, Wang Litang 王麗堂 (b. 1940), showed the abilities and talents for storytelling and was taught not only by her father, but also by her grandfather. ¹⁴ Wang

¹³ Wang Shaotang 1979: 286.

¹⁴ In his old age Wang Shaotang had a small son, Wang Hui'an 王惠安, but he was not educated in the family tradition, cf. Li Zhen 1988: 45. The criteria for acknowledging a student as a true disciple and heritor to the tradition of his master are nowhere stated, as far as I know. There may not exist any "objective" criteria, and the reasons a master might have for accepting or rejecting a student probably included considerations of level of mastery of the repertoire, as well as personal liking and disliking, and even economic considerations. An impression of this state of affairs among Yangzhou

Shaotang was extremely reluctant to take in students from outside the family and teach them in the traditional way. Only one such case is reported, a certain Chen Jietang 陳介堂 from Zhenjiang, a school teacher and aficionado of storytelling who wanted to change his profession. He was just a few years younger than Wang Shaotang.¹⁵

However, in the early 1960s the government arranged for a group of aspiring young storytellers to be allowed to have classes with the old master. From among these students Wang Shaotang selected a few and gave them their artist's names, so that they were recognized as able to carry on the Wang School tradition.¹⁶

The Wang School—in the narrow sense—comprises Wang Yutang (father), Wang Shaotang (name-giver), Wang Xiaotang (son) and Wang

storytellers can be gathered from Wang Xiaotang 1992. See also the storyteller's life stories in Børdahl and Ross 2002.

¹⁵ Cf. Børdahl and Ross 2002: 117–19, translated from Wang Xiaotang 1992: 21–22. See also *Yangzhou quyi zhi*, 1993: 334.

¹⁶ Biographies of each of these storytellers are found in Børdahl 1996, Chapter 2. Autobiographical sketches, or life stories, of several storytellers, including Wang Shaotang, Wang Xiaotang, Renjitang, and Hui Zhaolong from the Wang School are found in Børdahl and Ross 2002. Tables I and II are based in part on personal information from the Wang School storytellers, as well as on the tables found in *Yangzhou quyi zhi* 1993, pp. 346–47. Another set of tables is found in *Zhongguo quyi zhi*, Jiangsu juan, 1996, pp. 682–83. My tables differ from the “official” tables, since some of the younger storytellers are not included in the official registration or the storytellers' affiliation with several elder masters leads to ambiguities in the hereditary system, something that also leads to differences between the arrangements of the tables in the two Chinese works above.

Litang (granddaughter). However, the present generation of storytellers who are affiliated to the tradition of Wang Shaotang and who have taken artists' names with the end-syllable *-tang* are also embraced by the school, although in a looser sense (See Table II).¹⁷

Recording the Oral Performances of the Wang School

During the last decade and more, I have been in personal contact with all the disciples of Wang Shaotang who continued to work as storytellers in the 1980s and 1990s and also some who did not continue in the profession. From 1989 I began to tape- and video-record their

¹⁷ See Li Zhen 1988: 45 and Børdahl 1996: 58–66. The Wang School is often referred to only as a family branch of four generations of storytellers. Such a notion seems rooted very much in the feelings of fulfillment and success that are associated with the ideal of a “four generation family” (四世同堂 *sishi tongtang*) in the traditional Chinese philosophy of life. From this point of view the other disciples of Wang Shaotang are peripheral. There seems also to be another reason, however, namely the fact that Wang Shaotang was not very interested in educating students. His adopted son, Wang Xiaotang, describes how difficult it was for himself to be accepted as a student of his “father” and master, cf Børdahl and Ross 2002: 115–25. Apparently Wang Shaotang was even more strongly opposed to educating students from “outside”. The government-initiated teaching on his part in the early 1960s may not have been very much to his liking. While many of his later students from outside the family have spoken to me about their fascination with his art, they did not establish a close relationship to him as a person—something that was probably also particularly difficult because of the discrepancy in age and the great fame that Wang Shaotang had long since won in his profession.

performances. My recordings with Wang Xiaotang, the adopted son of Wang Shaotang, served as basic core material for my studies, supplemented with recordings by other disciples of the Wang School: Wang Litang, the daughter of Wang Xiaotang; Li Xintang 李信堂 (b. 1935); Ren Jitang 任繼堂 (b. 1942); Hui Zhaolong 惠兆龍 (b. 1945); and Chen Yintang 陳蔭堂 (b. 1951).¹⁸

¹⁸ My recordings with Wang Xiaotang were made in 1989, 1992, 1996 and 1997. Wang Xiaotang, Li Xintang and Hui Zhaolong from the Wang School, as well as Fei Zhengliang from the Wu School of Three Kingdoms and Dai Buzhang from the Dai School of Journey to the West, were invited to the International Workshop on Oral Literature in Modern China, hosted by the Nordic Institute for Asian Studies (NIAS) in Copenhagen in 1996, cf. Børdahl 1999. Though I never had the chance to meet Wang Litang, the daughter of Wang Xiaotang, who was a child prodigy as a storyteller and later had a prominent career in Nanjing, I obtained her performances on commercial tapes in 1989, and friends in Yangzhou made copies for me of her entire series of broadcastings on the Nanjing Radio of her performances of the Wu Song saga in 1998, beginning with the “Wu Song Fights the Tiger” episode. In 1997 I was able to record a rare performance by Liu Xitang, the wife of Li Xintang, in their home. She was originally a disciple of Wang Xiaotang, but had given up storytelling as a profession when we met. She was, however, still fully able to perform her repertoire, in this case on my request the “Wu Song Fights the Tiger” episode. My collections of tape- and videorecordings of the other disciples of the Wang school are described in Børdahl 1996: 467–69.

Table II: Wang Shaotang and his Descendants¹⁹

	陳介堂	王麗堂
	Chen Jietang	Wang Litang*
王少堂	王篠堂	李信堂
Wang Shaotang*	Wang Xiaotang*	Li Xintang*
		劉習堂
		Liu Xitang*
	馬鳳章	惠兆龍
	Ma Fengzhang	Hui Zhaolong*
		任繼堂
		Ren Jitang*
		陳蔭堂
		Chen Yintang*

In 1998 Nanjing Radio and Yangzhou Television together offered me a copy of a broadcast by the late Wang Shaotang, recorded by Nanjing

¹⁹ The table is copied from Børdahl 1996: 49. The asterisk * indicates that my collection of tape-recordings contains one or more versions of “Wu Song Fights the Tiger” as performed by this storyteller and sometimes also other tales about Wu Song.

Radio in 1961. Having attempted without success through more than ten years to be allowed to listen to the radio tapes of Wang Shaotang, I had started to believe that the old radio recordings did not exist any more or—if they did exist—that they were kept in such a state that they could hardly be replayed or copied. Therefore I was highly surprised and grateful for the gift. The quality of the recording that I received was good, leaving hope that the rest of the tapes are in comparably good shape.

The intent behind the approach I take in this study is to apply an analysis in depth to a selected representative corpus of storytellers' tales, first and foremost the first story of the *WATER MARGIN* repertoire, “Wu Song Fights the Tiger” (武松打虎 *Wu Song da hu*), but also other parts of the *TEN CHAPTERS ON WU SONG* (武十回 *WU SHI HUI*), the traditional name on the storytellers' cycle of tales about the adventures of the outlaw hero Wu Song. Performances by storytellers from other schools of Yangzhou

storytelling are also occasionally referred to in order to give background and relief to the observations from among the Wang School masters.

Storytelling “Mouth” and Register

The Yangzhou dialect as spoken by the storytellers carries a long historical tradition with special characteristics different from the language of ordinary townsfolk. The storytellers have developed a rich vocabulary of technical terms for their art (行話術語 *hanghua shuyu*), describing both social customs and performance technique. The local dialect is modified according to the special demands of the acting and telling technique, comprising a number of different so-called “speaking styles” or registers (modes of discourse):

“Speaking style” (說口 *shuokou*), also called “mouth” (口 *kou*):

The quality of voice, articulation of initials and finals, mastering of language;

“Square mouth” (方口 *fangkou*): Square mouth style has a more regular sentence pattern, often using four- and six-character phrases, and performed with dignified modulation;

“Round mouth” (圓口 *yuankou*): Round mouth style is full of Yangzhou dialect everyday language, dialect expressions and earthy localisms;

“Public talk” (官白 *guanbai*), also called “talking” (說 *shuo*): Dialogue between the persons of the story; in public talk one must use the voice, dialect and tone of each person;

“Private talk” (私白 *sibai*), also called “performing” (表 *biao*) or “performing talk” (表白 *biaobai*): Every part of the performance that is not public talk is private talk, such as inner monologue of the persons, storyteller’s comment and descriptions, etc.²⁰

²⁰ Cf. Børdahl 1996, pp. 441–66. The explanations of the terms are according to my informants among the storytellers. Cf. also *Yangzhou quyiyi zhi* 1993, pp. 245–55.

The speaking styles of “square mouth” and “round mouth” constitute the major registers of the performer who usually switches between the two according to the individual status of the characters he impersonates and the mood of the narrative passage. The categories of square and round are intersected by the categories of dialogue and narration. Dialogue is called “public talking,” while other modes of narration—non-dialogue—are called “private talking,” comprising narrative passages, descriptions, comment and inner monologue of the characters²¹ “Square mouth”—a slow, distinct, solemn and portentous manner of speaking—is used in dialogue of high status characters, in recitation of poems, in narration of more serious portions of the plot and in some storyteller’s comments (especially when they take the form of proverbial sayings). “Round mouth”—a fast and smooth, plain and unpretentious style—is used for dialogue of low status characters/ordinary persons, for narration of less serious, humorous portions and in most of the storyteller’s comments.

The expressions for “speaking style” (□ *kou*) and “talking” (白 *bai*) have a close connection to pronunciation even if this is not indicated very clearly in the storytellers’ explanations of the terms. Considering that storytelling is an oral art and that the storytellers have in fact

²¹ We should note that inner monologue (or thought) is categorized by the storytellers as ‘private talking’, not as dialogue.

developed a detailed vocabulary for many aspects of their art, it is quite interesting that there seem to be few local storytellers' terms to describe pronunciation. The only items, apart from those already mentioned, are:

“Slang” (行當 *hangdang*): Imitating the language and ways of people of all kinds of trade;

“Set the words” (拿字 *nazi*): Correct pronunciation, a forceful and distinct pronunciation typical of the Wang School;

“Rhymes of the Central Region” (中州韻 *Zhongzhou yun*): Influenced by the theatre, storytellers formerly tried to apply the pronunciation of the old Zhongzhou (in present Henan) when they used Northern language in “public talk” passages. Since the 1920s this has not been practised very strictly, and nowadays it has almost disappeared.

In previous studies I have tried to define the storyteller's registers of “square mouth” and “round mouth” according to phonological and grammatical criteria, and also to characterize them on the stylistic and narrative levels. In the following I want to describe the sound of Wang Shaotang's voice in the light of my earlier observations of the specific phonological features displayed by his disciples in performance.

Wang Shaotang on Radio

The recording includes the first 30 minutes of Wang Shaotang's performed series for the radio, i.e. the first part of the episode "Wu Song Fights the Tiger" from the oral storytelling cycle *TEN CHAPTERS ON WU SONG*. Wang Shaotang narrates how Wu Song 武松 arrives at the inn of Jingyang Town, drinks the strong wine named "Three Bowls and You Cannot Cross the Ridge" (三碗不過崗 *San wan bu guo gang*), and leaves the inn, whereupon the young inn-keeper and the waiter Xiao'er 小二 start quarrelling about the silver piece that Wu Song left at the counter.²² Here the narrator stops—evidently the radio programs were intended to last only half an hour, while an ordinary session in the storyteller's house lasts two hours. Therefore Wu Song's encounter with the tiger, usually told during the "first day of storytelling" (第一天書 *di yi tian shu*) will occur during a later transmission, presumably still preserved on the old radio tapes, but not at present available to me.

This recording is our main concern here, and the vocal part of the performance as rendered on the radio tape will be compared with other

²² Cf. Børdahl 1995, pp. 10-11, and 1996, pp.183-185.

versions of the story performed by his disciples.²³ As for recordings by his disciples of this story, my materials comprise versions by his son and granddaughter as well as by three of his disciples described in my previous studies, as well as others not yet discussed.

Phonology

The phonology of the Yangzhou dialect differs from the Northern Mandarin dialects and in particular Modern Standard Chinese [MSC] in many prominent and less prominent ways. A detailed discussion of Yangzhou phonology is beyond the scope of the present article.²⁴ The

²³ Apart from this sound version of Wang Shaotang's performance of the focal story, my archives include the written version published as the first chapter of Wang Shaotang: *Wu Song* (1959 [1984]) as well as a significantly different version in the unpublished pre-1949, stencil edition of TEN CHAPTERS ON WU SONG, entitled *Wu Song shi hui* 武松十回, told by Wang Shaotang, no date. The published version of 1959 differs systematically from the radio broadcast, and also from the performances by the disciples of the Wang School, while the stencil edition seems to be less heavily edited and probably closer to the oral performance.

²⁴ Yangzhou dialect pronunciation is written in bold letters, both phonemic and phonetic notation, cf. below. Yangzhou phonology is treated more in detail in Børdahl 1977 and 1996, for treatments in Chinese, cf. bibliographies for both works. In the following pages, MSC is transcribed in *pinyin* in italics, while Yangzhou dialect pronunciation is rendered either in phonemic transcription between oblique bars / /, or in phonetic transcription in square brackets []. Due to typographical considerations, tone markers are only inserted according to categories: 1.tone (陰平 *yinping*) is unmarked; 2.tone, (陽平 *yangping*) is written / ' /, either over or to the right of the main vowel; 3.tone (上 *shang*) is written / ^ /; 4.tone, (去 *qu*) is written / /; 5.tone, (入 *ru*) is written as short main vowel (long main vowel is indicated in the phonetic transcription by the sign :

phonological criteria that I use to define the various registers of the storytellers' performances are the following:

1) Initials: /n-, l-, r-/ or /l-/

Distinction between initials /n-/ , /l-/ and /r-/ [marked X in Table III] in opposition to no such distinction, here called 'blurred' /l-/ [marked 0 in Table III].
Commentary: In the system of initials, Yangzhou dialect differs from Northern Mandarin and MSC for example in the way initial nasals and laterals are treated. While MSC distinguishes between three phonemes, in *pinyin* rendered as *n*, *l*, *r*, Yangzhou dialect does not distinguish according to these categories, but has a kind of 'blurred' /l-/ without phonemic distinction, e.g. the three words "can" (*néng* 能), "cold" (*léng* 冷), and "still" (*réng* 仍), above are homonyms in Yangzhou dialect, and are pronounced /*lén*/ [ɛ':].²⁵ In the storytellers' diction we find sometimes the "blurred" /l-/ as in ordinary Yangzhou dialect, sometimes the distinction between three phonemes as in MSC and other Northern Mandarin dialects /l-, n-, r-/.

2) Finals: Diphthongs or monothongs

Diphthongization of certain groups of finals [marked X in Table III] versus monophthongs as usually found in Yangzhou dialect [marked 0 in Table III].
Commentary: In the system of finals, Yangzhou dialect differs from Northern Mandarin and MSC among other things in lacking diphthongs such as those written

after the vowel; absence of this sign indicates short vowel) and glottal ending, /-ʔ/ [-].

²⁵ In Yangzhou dialect the "blurred" /l/ is manifest as various [l-] sounds and [n-] sounds in allophonic distribution according to the following vowel, while morphemes that are pronounced with *pinyin* *r-*, sometimes are spoken as "blurred" /l/ in Yangzhou dialect, sometimes have zero initial, e.g. "let" (*ràng* 讓) is /*làn*/ [ɿ :], while "thus" (*rán* 然) is /*ién*/ [ɛ' :].

in *pinyin* *-ai, -ao, -ou*, e.g. “come” (*lái* 來), is /lái/²⁶ [láiː], “good” (*hào* 好) is /hâa/ [xi̯ː], “hand” (*shou* 手) is /sw˥/ [ɕw˥˥]. In the storytellers’ language such finals are more or less diphthongized according to the register.

3) Special morphemes /ar/ or /a/

Retroflex rolled ending of some special morphemes, such as “and” (*ér* 而), “ear” (*ér* 耳), and “two” (*èr* 二) [marked X in Table III] versus retaining sometimes ordinary Yangzhou dialect pronunciation /a/ [marked (X) in Table III].

Commentary: In ordinary Yangzhou dialect these morphemes are pronounced /a/ [a:] without any trace of retroflex ending. But in the storytellers’ language this kind of morphemes are regularly pronounced /er/ [ɛ̞] or /ar/ [ɛ̞] with retroflex ending reminiscent of Northern Mandarin and MSC. Only some storytellers keep the usual pronunciation /a/ in certain passages.

4) Tonesystem: Losing or keeping 5.tone (入聲 *rusheng*)

Adaptation of Yangzhou dialect *rusheng* (short, glottalized, syllable-morphemes) towards Northern tone system (modern four tones of MSC) [marked X in Table III] or keeping Yangzhou dialect tonesystem intact [marked 0 in Table III].

Commentary: In the Yangzhou dialect there are five tones: the same four tone-categories as MSC (but the tones have different contours) + the so-called 5. tone (*rusheng*), a category of syllables that are short and end in a more or less clear glottal stop. In the storytellers’ language there is sometimes a loss of *rusheng*, i.e.

²⁶ Some monophthongs are written with double letters in my present phonemic notation of Yangzhou dialect. Another solution might be to use the Nordic special vowel letters: æ instead of ae, and å in stead of aa for these monophthongs to indicate clearly the homogeneity of these sounds. However, for typographical reasons I have chosen to use only the letters common in English for the phonemic script. Note also that w is used as a vowel in this script, not as semivowel.

adaptation of *rusheng* towards the Northern tonesystem, e.g. “eight” (*bá* 八), in ordinary Yangzhou dialect /*bae*’/ [π α ^o] , may thus be adapted to Northern pronunciation /*bá*/ [π ‘:]. Keeping the Yangzhou dialect tonesystem intact, including the *rusheng*, is the normal way of pronunciation for the storytellers, but in some registers some storytellers change their tonesystem.

5) Morphophonemics: “Literary” versus “colloquial” morphemes, a phenomenon referred to as 文白異讀 *wenbai yidu* [different pronunciation of literary and colloquial forms].

Sprinkling of colloquial forms of certain morphemes [marked X in Table III] versus avoidance of such forms in favour of the corresponding literary forms [marked 0 in Table III]. Commentary: The question of *wenbai yidu* in the Yangzhou dialect is a fairly complicated phenomenon. Here I shall limit myself to a few examples that crop up in the tape-recording by Wang Shaotang. The morpheme *jia* (家, meaning “house”) enters into a number of compounds, among which are certain pronouns or pronoun-like words, such as *wojia* (我家, meaning “my house,” “my home,” and denoting “I”), *nijia* (你家 [also *niren jia* 你人家], meaning “your home,” “your person,” and denoting “you”), *tajia* (他家, meaning “his house,” “his person,” and denoting “he”), and *renjia* (人家, denoting “somebody,” “another”).²⁷ The pronunciation of these words alternates between two forms of the morpheme *jia* ,

²⁷ The meaning of these compounds is sometimes closer to the meaning of the parts, i.e. “my (your, his) house,” sometimes more pronoun-like “I (you, he).” But the alternation of the pronunciation seems to occur on the basis of register and style, rather than on the basis of meaning.

meaning “house,” “home”; the so-called “literary” (*wen* 文) /zia/ [ʎʂu :]; and the so-called “colloquial” (*bai* 白) /ga/ [κ :]. The common word *xià* (下, meaning “down,” “under”) also alternates in a similar way between “literary” form /sia/ [ʂu `:] and “colloquial” form /hà/ [ξ `:]. The point is that the density of colloquial morphemes varies according to the storyteller’s register.

The phonological deviations from ordinary Yangzhou dialect pronunciation described above show that the storytellers of the Wang School in some passages choose to adapt themselves somewhat to the pronunciation of Northern Mandarin. However, this is far from a complete switch to another dialect, say MSC. The phonological features of Yangzhou dialect are dominant throughout, and the whole performance is conceived as being in the local dialect. We are describing substrata of a dialect, not switching between Northern Mandarin and Yangzhou dialect.²⁸

²⁸ The concept of “substrata” within a dialect, as proposed by Yue-Hashimoto 1993, pp. vi and 47, seems to me more appropriate than talking about “dialect-with-standard” in the sense used by Norman 1988, p 250, and Chen Ping 1999, pp. 55–56, or “adulterated forms,” cf. Chen Ping 1999, pp. 41–46. The phonological differences between the various registers in the storytellers’ language of performance are relatively subtle. Even when impersonating a person from the North, such as Wu Song, his assumed “capital speech” (京話 *jinghua*) is only imitated to a certain degree and retains a heavy Yangzhou accent. The different pronunciation patterns found as characteristic for the various registers of square and round mouth, narration and dialogue, should preferably be considered reflections of social dialects within the dialect, and there is no reason to look upon the more aristocratic forms of local Mandarin as “adulterated,” since they

In my previous investigations of the Yangzhou storytellers' language I found that the above mentioned distinctions were correlated to the styles of "square mouth" and "round mouth," but also to the categories of dialogue or "public talking" versus non-dialogue or "private talking." It should be emphasized that the phonological features that are given special attention here are some of the more easily observable characteristics of the "soundscape" of the various registers. But they only constitute a selection of features, not a complete inventory of features that change or may change according to the register of the given passage. In the following table III, the features that I have registered for Wang Shaotang's pronunciation on the radio-tape from 1961 are inserted alongside with the features found for his disciples in my tape-recording archives from 1986-2000.

Table III is arranged in such a way that the more zero's – 0 – one finds, the more the language is close to ordinary Yangzhou dialect of daily conversation (揚州家鄉話 *Yangzhou jiaxianghua* or 揚州口語 *Yangzhou kouyu*; the more crosses – X – the more it tends towards northern normative pronunciation. Only the last category of the occurrence of colloquial pronunciations is not conform to this rule, since

were for centuries considered good "norms" in their own right.

such occurrences are scattered, but not infrequent in ordinary Yangzhou dialect; it is the more or less complete absence of such forms that characterizes a certain stretch of speech as tending towards northern normative habits rather than Yangzhou daily conversation.

Table III: Specific phonological features in storytellers'**usage**

Storytellers of the Wang school of WATER MARGIN

Storyteller	Mouth/talk	1) n/l/r	2) dipt	3) /er/	4) – ru	5) col
SHUIHU 水滸						
Wang Shaotang 1961	square/public	X	X	X	X	O
	square/private	X	(X)	X	O	O
	round/private	X	(O)	X	O	X
	round/public	(X)	O	X	O	X
Wang Xiaotang 1992	square/public	X	X	X	X	O
	square/private	X	(X)	X	O	O
	round	(X)	O	X	O	X
Li Xintang 1986	square/public	(X)	X	X	O	O
	square/private	O	O	X	O	O
	round	O	O	(X)	O	(X)
Ren Jitang 1989, 1992	square/public	X	X	X	X	O
	square/private	(O)	O	X	O	O
	round	(O)	O	(X)	O	X
Chen Yintang 1989	square/public	X	X	X	X	O
	square/private	(X)	(X)	X	O	O
	round	(X)	(X)	(X)	O	(X)
Wang Litang 1986, 1998	square/public	X	X	X	X	O
	square/private	(X)	O	X	O	O
	round	(X)	O	X	O	X
Hui Zhaolong 1992	square/public	(X)	X	X	O	O
	square/private	(O)	O	X	O	O
	round	(O)	O	(O)	O	X
Yangzhou dialect	daily conversation	O	O	O	O	(X)

Mouth/talk:square = square mouth, *fangkou*square/public = *fangkou* style in public talk passages, *guanbai*square/private = *fangkou* style in private talk passages, *sibai*

round = round mouth, *yuankou*, including both *guanbai* and *sibai* passages

Phonological criteria:

- 1) /n/l/r/ = differentiation of the initials /n/l/r/
- 2) diphth = diphthongization of certain finals
- 3) /er/ = retroflex rolled ending of certain morphemes
- 4) +*ru* = loss of *rusheng* 入聲 tone
- 5) col = use of the colloquial forms of certain morphemes that have two different pronunciations: colloquial *bai* 白, and literary *wen* 文

Signatures: X = regularly; (X) = intermittently; (O) = rarely; O = never

The Sound of Wang Shaotang’s Voice

Wang Shaotang’s pronunciation is characterized by a strong tendency—stronger than that of any of his disciples—to adopt distinctions reminiscent of Northern Mandarin. His language is, however, by no means uniform throughout, just the opposite. As is the case with his disciples, his pronunciation habits are intimately bound up with the various registers of his performance.

For example, Wang distinguishes /n/, /l/, /r/ not only in “square mouth” passages (both in dialogue and in non-dialogue), but also in

“round mouth” passages where most Yangzhou storytellers, including three of the students from his own school, Li Xintang, Ren Jitang and Hui Zhaolong, stick to the normal Yangzhou dialect habit of a blurred /l/. While this distinction is occasionally found in “round mouth” passages, both dialogue and non-dialogue, as performed by his son Wang Xiaotang and his granddaughter Wang Litang as well as his last student Chen Yintang, it is more systematically distributed in the case of Wang Shaotang. In the 1961 recording I find for the first time a regular difference between “round mouth” in narrative and inner monologue, i.e. “private talking,” and “round mouth” as dialogue, i.e. “public talking.” The pronunciation of Wang Shaotang during passages of “round/private,” i.e. non-dialogue in round mouth style, the distinction of /n-, l-, r-/ is always clear, but in some dialogue passages in round mouth style, where imitation of characters of low status is aimed at, the distinction disappears and these initials are the “blurred” variant typical

of Yangzhou dialect.

Example 1. Distinction of /n-, l-, r-/ in “round mouth” private talking
(narration)

This young man, Xiao'er, was from the district north of the Yangzi River, he was our fellow townsman. How come he was able to speak Beijing dialect? Because he used to stand at the doorway of the inn looking out for business. The travelers from south and north were not acquainted with the dialect from north of the Yangzi River.

這個小二麼，就是江北人[↓ ˊ:]，是我們的同鄉。他怎麼會說京話的呢？
因為在店門口招攬

[λ ≠^:]買賣。南[v ≠ˊ:]來[λ ˊ:]北往的客家對於這個江北話覺得有點不普通。

Example 2. Blurred /l/ in “round mouth” public talking (dialogue)

“If you want good wine, this one is surely not bad. If Your Honour wants something still better, it has to be ‘Three bowls and you cannot cross the ridge.’”

“還要好酒啊，這個酒就不錯了，你[λ ε^:×]人家[λ ˊ: κ:]如[λ υˊ:]再要好酒，除非是‘三碗不過崗’”

Wang Shaotang has clearly diphthongized finals in square mouth public talking. The diphthongization is also prevalent in square mouth private talking, but in such passages monophthongs are also heard and diphthongs are often less clear, more in the direction of monophthongs. In round mouth private talking passages diphthongs only occur with

words that are particularly emphasized, and in round mouth public talking monophthongs prevail absolutely. Wang Shaotang's pronunciation is therefore also in this respect very finely tuned according to the flavour he wants to give to each passage: Only dialogue passages in round mouth are completely true to the local colour of ordinary Yangzhou dialect. Other passages have in their manifestation of final vowel quality a varying degree of adaptation to northern speech habits.

Example 3. Diphthongization of finals in “square mouth” dialogue (public talking), Wu Song:

“Is this the good house wine?”

“這就是你店中的好[ɿ ʌ:ω]酒[χ ʂ ʉ .Y.ʌ]?”

Example 4. Monophthongs in finals in “round mouth” narration (private talking):

Why did he say ‘Good!’ in this way? There was a reason to it. The wine was not merely good, it was extraordinarily good!

這樣“好!” [ɿ ʌ:]是何故? 這樣“好!” [ɿ ʌ:], 就[χ ʂ ʉʌ:]有[ʉʌ:]一個道[τ ʌ:]理。他家這個酒[χ ʂ ʉʌ:]啊, 不但好[ɿ ʌ:]的, 太[τ ≥ ʌ:]好[ɿ ʌ:]了。

The special series of morphemes with zero initial mentioned above under 3) are invariably pronounced with a retroflex final /-r/ as /ar/[ʌ] or /er/[ʌ] (in free variation). Not even in dialogue passages in “round

mouth” do we hear the normal Yangzhou dialect pronunciation /a/ [:] for these morphemes. His son and granddaughter show the same absolute predilection for this aberration from the local dialect, while his other students sometimes in “round mouth” passages switch to the /a/ form.²⁹

Example 5. The young inn-keeper calls for the waiter (round/public), and then follows a storyteller’s comment (round/private):

“Wang Er!”

The waiter’s surname was Wang and he was second among his brothers, so the young innkeeper called him Wang Er [Wang Second].

“王二[:]!”

這個跑堂的姓王，排行第二[:]，就叫個王二[:]。王二[:]聽見小老板喊

呢，隨時跑到前頭腰門口。

In round mouth, both private and public, and in square mouth private talking Wang Shaotang’s tonesystem is true to that of the Yangzhou dialect and the *rusheng* is manifested as short glottalized syllables, cropping up ever so often. But in square mouth public talking we find

²⁹ Maybe it is a “slip of the tongue”? When I was present during rehearsals of young storytellers at Yangzhou Drama School in 1989, I noticed that their teacher often corrected their pronunciation in this respect. The /a/ pronunciation was not tolerated, but it was obviously the most natural for most of the young students.

that *rusheng* syllables are changed and adapted towards Northern Mandarin. There is also a tendency to change the tone contours of the other tones in the direction of the northern pronunciation, but the change of *rusheng* is by far the more prominent feature in the tone system. Wang Shaotang's son, granddaughter and several of his disciples show a similar usage, but according to my earlier observations this is not the case with all of them, and it is certainly not the case with storytellers from other schools.³⁰ One of the storytellers of the Wang School, Hui Zhaolong, once told me a story about Wu Song where another hero, Zhou Tong, is introduced. It turned out that when Wu Song was speaking—in square mouth, of course—being a “major person” (*da renwu* 大人物), his way of speaking would carry all the characteristics of square mouth described above. But on top of that, Wu Song did not speak with *rusheng* tones, but had the northern tone system. However, the other fellow—also a big hero—was equally speaking in square mouth and showing the same distinctions, apart from the fact that he *did* retain his Yangzhou tone system and kept his *rusheng*. This point, together with other evidence from other schools of Yangzhou storytelling, helps us to see that square mouth dialogue should at least be divided into two subcategories, namely

³⁰ Cf. Børdahl 1996, pp. 92–93.

the Wu Song variant—without *rusheng*, and the Zhou Tong variant—with *rusheng*. In the Wu and Kang Schools of Three Kingdoms the heroes speak in a square mouth style that is very close to that of the Wang School, apart from the fact that these heroes keep their *rusheng*.

In the performance at hand by Wang Shaotang, we only have occasion to observe the Wu Song variant of square mouth dialogue, because there is no southern hero in that episode. We do in fact hear another person speak in square mouth public talking, namely the first few sentences spoken by Xiao'er, the waiter, and the poem he recites about the wonderful wine of his house. But he is also supposed to reflect the northern variant, the same kind of Mandarin that Wu Song speaks, having taught himself a few phrases of this “capital language” in order to make a nice impression on the travelers on the road. However, as soon as the first formalities are over, Xiao'er switches back to his own home-dialect, Yangzhou dialect—with *rusheng* as usual.

Example 6. Wu Song in conversation with Xiao'er (square mouth, public talking). The word “eight” (*bá* 八), having *rusheng* in Yangzhou dialect /*bae*'/ [π α '], is here adapted to northern Mandarin [π ']:

“What eight lines?”

“那八[π ':]句？”

Example 7. Xiao'er in conversation with Wu Song (round mouth, public talking). The words “not” (*bu* 不) and “eat” (*chi* 吃), both have *rusheng* /be'/ [π °] and /cie'/ [χʂ ≥ ɿε°]. This pronunciation is also found here in Xiao'er's usual language:

“Oh, don't be in a hurry! Ordinary people cannot drink this wine, or else they get drunk!”

“呷！不[π °]能玩，那個酒，差不[π °]多的人不能吃[χʂ ≥ ɿε°]，或就吃[χʂ ≥ ɿε°]醉了。”

In Wang Shaotang's performance the colloquial forms are found almost exclusively in round mouth, both dialogue and narration, as is also the case with his later students.³¹

Example 8. Round mouth narration and dialogue with examples of colloquial pronunciation of words that have two forms, one the “literary” (*wen*) form and the other “colloquial” (*bai*) form, such as, for “down” (*xià* 下): literary form /sià/ [ʂɿ ̀:] and colloquial form /hà/ [ξ ̀:]; for

³¹ Some of these forms only occur rarely and therefore it is not at present possible to evaluate their frequency of occurrence in the various registers. I also think that words affected by this phonological phenomenon in quite a few cases seem to follow individual rules of occurrence, e.g. the adverb meaning “also” or “still” (還): colloquial /ha/, literary /huan/ (also in the adverbial sense, not as in MSC a verb ‘return’), which has a different pattern of occurrence from that found for the majority of these words: the colloquial and literary forms both occur throughout, according to rules that seem to be correlated to speed rather than register.

“home” or “person” *jia* 家, literary form /zia/ [ʒʂɿ :], colloquial form [κ :]. Cf. also Example 2.

What good is there in drinking good wine?

好酒吃下[ξ ː]去，有什麼好處？

“Does our guest want to drink more?”

“他家[κ :]添不添啦？”

Wang Shaotang and Normative Language in Storytelling

Apart from the Yangzhou storytellers’ professional terms that have been listed and explained in later years, we have few sources on the storytellers’ own ideas about pronunciation. One of the most explicit statements on this question is, however, found in the above-mentioned talk from 1958 by Wang Shaotang. In a section on the requirements of performance, he is quite specific about pronunciation. He defends the view that storytellers should attempt to speak according to the old standard language of North China, the so-called Rhymes of the Central Region (*Zhongzhou yun* 中州韻):

Let me say something about sound (音 *yin*) and rhyme (韻 *yun*) [pronunciation]: we should absolutely stick to the Rhymes of the Central Region, i.e. the central

region of Henan. The rhymes of this area do not deviate [from the norm]. The dialects from all the various places have irregular rhymes, or deviate completely from the [normative] rhymes. If we take the southern and northern dialects, most of the northern dialects do not deviate in sound and rhyme, their pronunciation is correct, and Beijing speech sounds better than that of any other place...The Rhymes of the Central Region are not distorted. Therefore not only storytelling (*pinghua*), but also Kunqu opera and Beijing Opera all stick to the Rhymes of the Central Region. Local rustic dialect is always difficult to understand, but Beijing speech is nice to listen to. Well, if you hear Beijing localisms, you may also find this difficult to understand at times.³²

It is interesting to notice that he does not speak of the Rhymes of the Central Region (*Zhongzhou yun*) as an obsolete, old-fashioned norm that nobody pays attention to any more.³³ On the contrary he thinks of this norm as “correct” and of Beijing speech as “nice,” but regards the local Beijing dialect as about as unpolished as any other dialect. From our investigation above it appears that he also adhered fairly closely to his theory in his practice: he certainly strived to keep important distinctions of Northern Mandarin in his narrative style, most rigorously in the square mouth dialogue and narration, but also to a higher degree than any of his disciples in round mouth narration. However, in round mouth dialogue,

³² Cf. Wang Shaotang 1979: 301.

³³ Cf. *Yangzhou quyiyi zhi* 1993: 247.

normal Yangzhou dialect phonology is played out in full—only with the general exception of the /er/ morphemes. Wang Shaotang does not seem to aim for the new language norm of the “common speech” (普通話 *putonghua*) (i.e. MSC), something that we can also see from the fact that he never tries to change the tone system, apart from when he imitates Wu Song’s “capital language” (京話 *jinghua*).

Wang Shaotang speaks of the *Zhongzhou yun* norm as a medium for good mutual understanding between the various parts of China, but since Yangzhou storytellers seldom traveled around in larger parts of China, but had their traditional audience among people along the lower Yangzi River from Nanjing to Shanghai who were well acquainted with the Yangzhou dialect, there seems behind his attitude to be mainly a different aim: to contribute to the atmosphere of status and good breeding that follows a normative language, and to the feeling that one speech is “correct” and according to accepted (upper-class) language behaviour. There may also be a deeply felt aesthetic component, stemming from the fact that the languages used for the prestigious operatic arts were also adapted to the *Zhongzhou yun*.

From Wang Shaotang’s remarks in his 1958 speech we cannot gather much about his understanding of register and pronunciation. His

only formulation of this aspect is in fairly broad terms, more concerned with performance in general than with pronunciation in particular:

You have to look like whoever you are impersonating!...For example in this session of storytelling, in this very short episode, you, the storyteller, alone, have to impersonate a young man, a woman, a clown and an old man, four persons' every move and turn: the cries of the crying, the laughter of the laughing, the worry of the worried, the fear of the anxious! You must perform in such a way that both their sound and their looks are reflected. Moreover, you must demand from your own art of performance, that the audience should feel like seeing those several characters as if in actual life, like listening to these various persons' conversation here and now!³⁴

Our study of this short sampling of Wang Shaotang's voice in performance seems to support a view on his pronunciation habits that is somewhat different from his own ideas on pronunciation—but not different from his description of “impersonation.” It seems to me most likely that he used normative language and dialect as different keys on a finely tuned instrument, something that I have tried to describe in more detail in my previous studies of his disciples and other storytellers. He is able to shift from one key to another with every turn of his story,

³⁴ Wang Shaotang 1979: 298.

adapting his voice and his linguistic sound-system to the atmosphere of narration, comment or dialogue, as the case may be.

Conclusion

The tradition of Yangzhou storytelling, orally transmitted for centuries from master to disciple, offers a unique kind of material for investigation of linguistic usage and stratification in an old cultural center along the Lower Yangzi River. Wang Shaotang's voice as preserved on the Nanjing Radio tape from 1961 furnishes an expressive example of the interplay between dialectal and normative strata within an apparently uniform performance in Yangzhou dialect. The storyteller's usage of "low" and "high" Chinese—dialect versus local Mandarin—testify not only to the flavour and special charm of the local dialect, but also bear witness to conservative forms of local educated speech, local Mandarin (地方官話 *difang guanhua*)—a field that has not been given much attention in Chinese phonology.

A comparison of Wang Shaotang's pronunciation with that of his disciples, Wang Xiaotang, Wang Litang, Ren Jitang, Li Xintang, Hui Zhaolong and Chen Yintang, indicates that Wang Shaotang's "soundscape" is closest to that of his son, Wang Xiaotang. Characteristics

such as timbre, rhythm, level of the voice, and other acoustic features—features that are usually considered irrelevant for phonemic analysis—give an immediate impression of close similarity. Testing the set of phonological features described above, one finds exactly the same distribution of features with Wang Shaotang and his son, perhaps with the exception that there seems to be a different usage of /n-,l-,r-/ in round mouth private talk (narration). However, the discrepancy between Wang Shaotang and his other disciples, particularly his granddaughter Wang Litang and his disciples Ren Jitang and Chen Yintang, is also minimal, something that testifies to the force of the oral transmission inside each school.

Wang Shaotang was an outspoken upholder of the old Northern Mandarin norm of the Rhymes of the Central Region (*Zhongzhou yun*), to which his slow aristocratic diction in large portions of his performance bears witness. But it is equally obvious from his performance that he was playing on the two registers of square mouth and round mouth in a deliberate artistic way, mixing local dialect with more conservative upper-class speaking habits, so that characters and descriptions would be coloured by the phonetic soundscape. Wang Shaotang's command of his vocal instrument is extremely subtle, and his performance is, in my view,

a testimony to the beauty of dialect literature—a beauty that is intimately bound up with the unique dialectal form.

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Appendix:

Page one of Wang Shaotang: “Wu Song Fights the Tiger,” transcribed into Chinese characters by the author from a personal copy of the 1961 radio tape, Nanjing Radio. The whole performance is translated into English and transcribed into Chinese characters in Børdahl and Ross

武松打虎

王少堂口述

橫海郡柴進留賓

景陽崗武松打虎

灌口二郎武松在橫海郡柴莊得著哥哥消息，辭別柴進，趕奔山東陽谷縣尋兄。在路非止一日，走了二十餘天，今日已抵山東陽谷縣地界，離城二十餘里。其時十月中旬天氣，太陽大偏西。

英雄腹中飢餒，意欲打尖。抬頭一望，只見遠遠的烏泱泱一座鎮市。英雄背著包裹，右手提著一根哨棒，大踏步前進，走到鎮門口。抬頭再望只見扁磚直砌到頂，圓圈鎮門，上有一塊白礮石，三個紅字：景陽鎮。

進著門街道寬闊，兩旁店面倒整齊，草房居多。人倒有還不少，正走之間只看見右邊有家酒店，三間簇嶄新草房，檐下插了一根簇嶄新青竹竿，青竹竿上挑了一方簇嶄新藍布酒旗，藍布酒旗上貼了一方簇嶄新梅紅紙，梅紅紙上寫了簇嶄新五個大字：“三碗不過崗”。

再朝店裡一望只見簇嶄新桌凳，簇嶄新鍋灶，簇嶄新案凳，簇嶄新櫃檯，還有兩個簇嶄新的人……你說笑話了，旁的東西有新的，人哪裡會有新的？何嘗不得。

櫃檯裡頭坐了個小老板，二十外歲，櫃檯外頭站了個跑堂的，十八九歲，大概青年人就謂之新人。果然年老的人當然就稱輩上了。俗語說得好：“長江後浪催前

