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Authorial presence in some pre-Buddhist Chinese texts

Résumé

Présence d'un auteur dans quelques textes chinois pré-bouddhiques

L'autoréférence est attestée en Chine dès le III^e^ siècle avant notre ère, avec le poète Qu Yuan, qui se met en scène lui-même. Néanmoins, il n'est pas évident que ce soit le cas pour les textes des penseurs. Les pronoms de la première personne qu'on trouve dans le *Laozi* peuvent correspondre aussi bien à un collectif qu'à un singulier ; dans la plupart des passages cités, il semble raisonnable de les interpréter comme des singuliers, mais la validité de ce choix n'est pas démontrable. On relève dans le *Zhuangzi* des pronoms qui renvoient sans ambiguïté à la première personne du singulier, mais s'ils désignent le personnage qui donne son nom à l'ouvrage, Zhuangzi, celui-ci n'est pas pour autant posé comme étant l'auteur.

C. Harbsmeier analyse de nombreuses citations. Pour conclure, il distingue cinq degrés de présence de l'auteur dans les textes chinois antérieurs à l'introduction du bouddhisme : 1) propos rapportés d'un auteur s'adressant à un public physiquement présent [ex. : les *Entretiens* de Confucius] ; 2) l'auteur présumé, dont le nom constitue le titre du livre, est difficile à situer ; on ne connaît ni les dates ni les circonstances de son existence [ex. : Laozi] ; 3) il y a un « je » qui se présente explicitement comme le créateur de textes, adressés à un public indéfini [ex. : Qu Yuan] ; 4) il y a un « je » qui se présente comme auteur et assortit son texte de remarques éditoriales [ex. : Hanfei] ; 5) il y a un « je » qui se présente comme le rédacteur de certains passages et le compilateur d'un ensemble constituant un livre [ex. : Sima Qian].

Les traducteurs qui donnent à l'auteur une présence qu'il n'a pas dans le texte original commettent une faute herméneutique.

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Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 343 – ca. 277 BC) is often celebrated as the first Chinese poet who put his name to his work. And there certainly is no reticence about the first person in the poem, "Encountering Sorrow", which is generally attributed to him. Looking through the 374 lines of the *Lisao* 離騷 , I count no less than 74 occurrences of the first-person pronouns *wo* 我, *wu* 吾, *yu* 余, *zhen* 朕, *yu* 予. The grammatical variety of first-person pronouns in this text is unique in ancient Chinese literature as far as I have been able to ascertain. The grammatical distinctions between these pronouns are interesting and important, but they need not concern us here, except that we note that the first two may be singular or plural in reference, whereas the others always refer to the first person singular.

Qu Yuan is communicative in a still more personal mode where the first-person pronoun (very often *yu* 余) is no longer just an appended poetic signature at the end of a poem:

> 不吾知其亦已兮 No matter that no one understands *me*,
> 苟余情其信芳。 [I] truly keep the sweet fragrance of *my* mind.
> 高余冠之岌岌兮 High towered the lofty hat on *my* head;
> 長余佩之陸離。 The longest of girdles dangles from *my* waist.
> (*Chuci*, *Lisao* 117 ff.[1])

Even when there is no Chinese pronoun present (the non-bold pronouns), it remains somehow significant that an English translation (like that of Hawkes 1959, from which I have quoted) will naturally introduce it where it is not there in the original. On the other hand, in a context like the present one, one should probably not allow oneself the licence to introduce first-person pronouns where there are none. In any case, there can be no doubt that this poetry is strongly ego-centered, not only in the sense of the second couplet, but particularly in the sense of

1. Couplets 59-60 as translated by Hawkes 1959: 82. I believe *gou* 苟 must mean "truly, really" here and cannot be taken to introduce a postposed conditional clause.

the remarkable first couplet. And Qu Yuan does speak of his inner life as quite separate from what is uttered:

懷朕情而不發兮 Keeping *my* feelings unexpressed,
余焉能忍與此終古。 how can *I* live forever in such a state?
(*Chuci*, *Lisao* 258.)

Note the variation between *zhen* 朕 and *yu* 余 as first-person pronouns.

孰云察余之中情? Who understands *my* innermost feelings?
(*Chuci*, *Lisao* 140.)

Given the traditional interpretation of his poetry, it is not surprising that Qu Yuan had a most profound impact on the history of authorship and personal expressiveness in China. His influence went beyond poetry. Consider the case of the *Laozi* in this connection.

Authorial presence, and the first-person pronouns in *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*

Traditionally, there was a division of labour in ancient China between the person who uses the knife or the brush to inscribe texts on various materials and the person who creates the texts that specialists in writing write down. Writing was originally a specialised craft and it remained a menial, often an anonymous task. The function of the editor/compiler was separate both from that of the originator of the linguistic content of the text and from that of the person responsible for the production of a given inscribed material object.

No overall author asserts his persistent authorial presence *as a writer* in the *Laozi* 老子, although there are many statements in the text which use first-person pronouns. The *Laozi* is an *acroamatic* text. The first thing to note is that, unlike the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, the *Laozi* never uses the unambiguously non-plural first-person pronouns *yu* 余 or *yu* 予. There is no preface in the book. There is no postface. How exactly are we to understand the first-person pronouns in the *Laozi*? I want to study this question afresh in the context of the ethnography of literary communication in ancient China.

Some basic observations are hard to illustrate simply because they concern absences. For example, if we restrict our attention to first-person pronouns that refer to the auctor[2] of a text, then it turns out that forms like "I think that", "I suspect that", "I feel that", "I assume that", "I presume that", "I expect that", "I presuppose that", "I posit that", "I maintain that", "I argue that", "I contend that", "I suppose that", "I deny that", are interestingly rare in many pre-Buddhist Chinese texts. (A striking exception is the *Shangshu* 尚書, which makes regular use of *nian* 念 and *si* 思, with sentential complements to mean something like "think that".) The proper form of denying something is simply to say *bu ran* 不然 "it is not so", which is couched in an objective mode where the author is not part of the picture he paints. The preferred form is object language. In memorials and the like, it has always been common to say things like "I hope that", "I beg (you) that", and so on.

The first, simple, task must be to assemble the evidence, to see how the authorial "I" is used. We need to know what kinds of things are predicated in our texts of the authorial "I". I start out with the traditional Wang Bi 王弼 text, consulting the variants in Shima Kunio's wonderful edition of 1973 and collating Gao Ming 1996 for the versions of the text excavated at Mawangdui 馬王堆, and try to provide painfully literal translations.[3] By highlighting the alternative "I/we", I am not suggesting that there is serious doubt, in each case, whether one should choose one reading or the other. I am only drawing attention to a problem area for translation which is easily – indeed pervasively – overlooked in the translations I have seen.

人之所教， What other men teach,
我亦教之， *I/we* also teach it:
強梁者， The strong and the violent one,
不得其死 does not come to his natural death.
吾將以為教父。 I/we shall make this the beginning [= 甫] of teaching.
(*Laozi* 42, Gao Ming 1996: 33.)

Here the author chooses to conform with the others: he reflects on his teaching as compared to that of others. He comments on his own, personal, starting point in teaching. He takes a stance which he explicitly relates to himself. But does he pose as the writer of these lines? We note that there is no *Laozi yue* 老子曰 to introduce the chapters or saying anywhere in the text. This is the decisive difference to texts like the *Men-*

2. It is worth noting that authorship is not limited to men in ancient China: the lyrical "I" in many songs is a woman. Whether these songs, like many *Frauenlieder* of the German Middle Ages, were written by women, is impossible to ascertain.

3. For the translations, compare Karlgren 1975: 1-18, which I have freely adapted to my purposes wherever desirable.

cius or the *Wenzi* 文子. The question then is whether the case of the *Laozi* is one of omission of something that is understood, namely *Laozi yue* 老子曰 or whether we have a genuinely different and new form in which a writer speaks in his own name without an intermediate compiling redactor. Moreover, we need to ask exactly what it is that prevents us from taking the first-person pronouns in the plural as "we".

Keeping questions of this order in mind, I shall now consider the rest of the relevant evidence:

天下之至柔， The softest thing in the world,
馳騁天下之至堅， Crushes against the hardest thing in the world,
無有入無間。 The non-existant enters where there is no space.
吾是以知無為之有益。 Therefore *I/we* know that the non-action has an advantage.
不言之教， The teaching without words,
無為之益， And the advantage of non-action,
天下希及之。 Few in the world come to apprehend it.
(*Laozi* 4, Gao Ming 1996: 37.)

Here Laozi distinguishes between what he presents as objective observations about the softest thing in the world and about the non-existant. Then he goes on to what he presents as an explicitly subjective deduction: he says *wu shiyi zhi* 吾是以知 „therefore I/we know". He does not simply say *gu* 故 "therefore, thus". Is this really Laozi's psychological and autobiographic report on himself? It seems that we know far too little about the author's person for that sort of personal psychological report to have a plausible psychological context.

There is no internal reason in the text why we should not be able to read this as: "therefore we know". In any case, since the text tells us next to nothing about this "I", it would not seem to matter whether it could be understood as a collective first-person pronoun.

聖人無常心。 The sage has no constant [heart/] mind,
以百姓心為心。 He has the people's [hearts/] minds as his own.
善者吾善之。 The good one, *I/we* treat him as good;
不善者吾亦善之、 And the bad one *I/we* also treat him as good,
得善。 So he obtains goodness.
信者吾信之。 The trustworthy one, *I/we* trust him,
不信者吾亦信之、 And the untrustworthy *I/we* also trust him,
得信。 So he obtains trust.
聖人在天下歙歙焉， The sage's attitude to the world is [contracted/] self-restrained
為天下渾其心。 For the sake of the world he muddles his [heart/] mind.
百姓皆注其耳目， The people all direct their ears and eyes to him,

聖人皆孩之。 And the sage treats them all as children.
(*Laozi* 49, Gao Ming 1996: 59 has no first-person pronouns here.)

One might insist that Laozi considers the publicly, generally, recognized "good ones", and he contrasts his own subjective attitude. He takes an independant, a "private" stance. But there is another possibility. The "I" of the text may refer to the sage, not to Laozi. In that case, we would have a case of unmarked direct speech. The rhetorical form here would be remarkable. The text would pass imperceptibly from report to direct speech and back to report.

善建者不拔。 What is well planted will not be pulled up.
善抱者不脫。 What is well embraced will not be pulled away.
子孫以祭祀不輟。 When sons and grandsons with it [*i.e.* the Way] sacrifice, it will never cease.
修之於身 Cultivate it in the person,
其德乃真。 And the inner Power will be true.
修之於家 Cultivate in in the family,
其德乃餘。 And the inner Power will be abundant
修之於鄉 Cultivate it in the village,
其德乃長。 And the inner Power will be durable.
修之於邦 Cultivate it in the state,
其德乃豐。 And the inner Power will be ample.
修之於天下 Cultivate it in the world,
其德乃普。 And the inner Power will be universal.
故以身觀身， Hence by aid of your own person you should [observe/] judge [other] persons,
以家觀家， By aid of your own family judge [other] families;
以鄉觀鄉， By aid of your own village judge [other] villages;
以邦觀邦， By aid of your own state judge [other] states;
以天下觀天下。 By aid of the world judge the world.
吾何以知天下然哉? How do *I/we* know that the world is like this?
以此。 By aid of the above.
(*Laozi* 54, cf. *Laozi* 21, Gao Ming 1996: 88.)

The text presents a long list of assertions, but then there is the sudden apparently personal question: "How do I/we know that the world is as I/we describe it?" The question refers the reader back to the chapter he has just read to find the justification. This rhetorical figure recurs several times in the book. But in some cases, the metatextual question is answered in what follows so that *ci* 此 must be taken cataphorically as "what follows":

以正治國 By open correctness one governs a state,
以奇用兵， By covert strategems one carries on war,
以無事取天下。 And by making nothing one's business one seizes the realm.

吾何以知其然哉？ Whereby do *I/we* know that this is so?
以此。 By the following:
天下多忌諱 If there are many prohibitions in the realm,
而民彌貧。 Then the people will get the poorer for it.
民多利利器 If the people have many instruments of profit,
國家滋昏。 Then the state will get the more darkened for it.
人多伎巧 If the people have many skills and tricks,
奇物滋起。 Then the strange implements will increase.
法令滋彰 The more laws and ordinances are made widely known,
盜賊多有。 The more thieves and malefactors there will be.
故聖人云 Therefore the Sage says:
我無為 When *I/we* have no actions,
而民自正。 Then the people will be transformed of themselves.
我好靜 When *I/we* love stillness,
而民自正。 Then the people will be corrected of themselves.
我無事 When *I/we* make nothing my business,
而民自富。 Then the people will be enriched of themvelves.
我無欲 If*I/we* have no [extravagant] desires,
而民自樸。 Then the people turn to simplicity of themselves.
(*Laozi* 57, Gao Ming 1996: 102 ff.)

There is no internal evidence in the text that prevents us from translating "how do we know that this is so?". The other first-person pronouns are irrelevant because they are part of direct speech.

天下皆謂我道大 All in the world call *my/our* Way great.
似不肖。 But it appears to be unlike [others].
夫唯大故似不肖。 Just because it is great, therefore it appears to be unlike [others].
若肖， If it were like [others],
久矣！其細也夫。 Then a long time ago it would have counted as slight.
我有三寶 I/we have three treasures
持而保之： And hold and guard them:
一曰慈， The first is kindliness.
二曰儉， The second is frugality.
三曰不敢為天下先。The third is not to dare to be the foremost in the world.
慈故能勇， I am kindly, and therefore I am capable of courage,
儉故能廣， I am frugal, then therefore capable of liberality,
不敢為天下先 I do not dare to be the foremost in the world,
故能成器長。 Therefore I can become the leader of "instruments".
今舍慈且勇， Now to reject kindliness and go on to be courageous,
舍儉且廣， To reject frugality and to go on to be liberal,
舍後且先， To reject being hindmost and go on to come first,
死矣。 That means death.
夫慈以戰則勝 ，Now as for kindliness, if you go to battle with it you will win,
以守則固。 If you fight a defensive battle with it you will be safe.
天將救之 ，If Heaven wants to save someone,
以慈衛之。 Through his kindliness it protects him.
(*Laozi* 67, Gao Ming 1996: 158.)

Laozi comments on public opinion. He then goes on to identify certain appearances that are liable to arise with respect to his person. At first thought, it seems most implausible to understand the first-person pronouns here collectively and translate them as "we". Laozi adds a rather personal comment: It is precisely because he is indeed great that he is unlike others. Laozi is aware of the uniqueness of the sage in general, and of his own uniqueness. The crucial notion is that of *du* 獨 (literally: "alone") But there is nothing in these texts to suggest that what we have here is writing rather than a saying by Laozi. And, on reflection, we had better be entirely clear what the internal explicit evidence is against taking the personal pronouns in the plural. "We are the only ones" is logically as well formed as "I alone". Why exactly are we sure that we have an individual "I" speaking to us?

用兵有言 Those who [use weapons/] carry on wars have a saying:
吾不敢為主而為客。 We dare not be the host but would rather be the guest.
不敢進寸而退尺。 We dare not advance one inch but would rather withdraw one foot.
是謂行無行。 This is called moving where there is no march,
攘無臂。 Rolling up one's sleeves where there is no arm,
扔無敵。 Attacking where there are no enemies,
執無兵。 Grasping where there are no weapons.
禍莫大於輕敵。 Among disasters none is greater than underrating the enemy.
輕敵幾喪吾寶。 If we underrate the enemy, we come close to losing *my/our* treasures.
故抗兵相加 Thus hostile armies are pitched against each other,
哀者勝矣。 Then those who feel grief will conquer.
(*Laozi* 69, Gao Ming 1996: 168.)

It looks as if, at the end of this passage, it is made clear that the whole piece should be read as a text with a personal touch. "If I underrate the enemy I come close to losing my treasures." This must surely refer back to formulations like those in chapter 67 if it is to be comprehensible. But there still is that – albeit remote – possibility of a collective first-person pronoun.

使我介然有知， If *I/we* greatly had wisdom,
行於大道， And were to travel on the great Way,
唯施是畏。 *I/we* would only fear paths leading astray.
大道甚夷， The great Way is level and easy,
而人好徑。 But people love by-paths.
朝甚除 ，The [princely] courts are well kept,
田甚蕪， But the fields are all weed covered,
倉甚虛。 And the granaries are empty.
服文綵， People wear patterned colourful clothes,

帶利劍， And on their belts they have sharp swords.
厭飲食， They are filled with food and drink,
財貨有餘。 And of precious wares they have a surplus.
是謂盜夸。 This is called the boasting of thieves.
非道也哉。 It is indeed not in accordance with the Way!
(*Laozi* 53, Gao Ming 1996: 79.)

Laozi sets out with a reflection in which he imagines himself in a certain situation, and he is surprised that other people behave differently, "love by-paths". At the end of this passage, there is no need to say that the person who is calling this "the boasting of thieves" is primarily Laozi himself. The "I" does not, in this chapter, speak explicitly as an individual writing the chapter.

It seems unnatural to translate the *wo* 我 as "we" here: the reflection seems almost on a personal level. And yet: can we exclude the possibility that the text speaks of the collective attitude of a group? What are the decisive grounds for this?

That possibility becomes even more remote as we turn to the next relevant chapter:

吾言甚易知， *My/our* words are very easy to understand,
甚易行。 And they are very easy to practise.
天下莫能知 But in the whole world no one can understand them,
某能行 。And no one can practise them.
言有宗 These words have their ancestry,
事有君。 And the [Laozi's]deeds have their guiding principle.
夫唯無知， It is because people have no understanding,
是以我不知。 Therefore they do not understand *me/us*.
知我者希， Those who understand *me/us* are few,
則我者貴。 But those who take *me/us* as their model are prominent.
是以聖人被褐懷玉。 Therefore the sage is clad in sack-cloth, and his jewel he hides in his bosom.
(*Laozi* 70, Gao Ming 1996: 173.)

Laozi speaks here as the author of words. We do not know whether these were written or spoken. He reflects on their effect on the world. Laozi is confident about his words and deeds: "These words have their ancestry. [My] deeds have their guiding principle." Then we get a direct piece of personal information on his real worry: lack of general recognition. At the same time a proud assertion: "Those [presumably few] who take me as their model are prominent." Without humility, Laozi subsumes himself under the concept of the sage: we are given to understand that his position is a humble one, limiting him to sack-cloth clothes.

Exactly why do we exclude "*our* words"? Exactly why do we exclude "Therefore they do not understand *us*", "Those who understand *us* are few". What exactly do we know about this "I" that makes the distinction important?

The isolation of the *wo* 我 comes out forcefully in the following:

絕學無憂。 Discard learning and there will be no worry.
唯之與阿， Between "Yes" and "Nay",
相去幾何? How great is the distance?
善之與惡， Between good and bad,
相去若何? How large is the distance?
人之所畏， He of whom others are in awe-struck fear,
不可不畏。 He must be in awe-struck fear of others.
荒兮其未央哉。 Waxing, it has not reached its limit.
眾人熙熙 The common people look happy,
如享太牢 As if enjoying a *tailao* sacrifice,
如春登臺。 And as if ascending a tower in spring.
我獨泊兮其未兆， *I/we* alone am/are still, with no sign of anything yet,
如嬰兒之未孩； Like a baby that has not yet started to smile.
儽儽兮若無所歸。 I am despondent, like someone who has nowhere to seek refuge.
眾人皆有餘， The common people all have affluence,
而我獨若遺。 *I/we* alone am/are like someone who is left out.
我愚人之心也哉 *I/we* have a stupid man's heart.
沌沌兮俗人昭昭。 All confused *I am/we are*, but the vulgar people are bright,
我獨昏昏； *I/we* alone am/are all dull and dark.
俗人察察， The common people are astute,
我獨悶悶。 *I/we* alone am/are depressed.
眾人皆有以， The common people all have their purposes,
而我獨頑且鄙。 And *I/we* alone am/are foolish and rustic.
我獨異於人， *I/we* alone am/are [Mawangdui: wish to be] different from others,
而貴食母。 And *I/we* set store by receiving nourishment from the Mother (*i.e.* the Way).
(*Laozi* 20, Gao Ming 1996: 319.)

The *hoi polloi* of the Greeks have their perfect equivalent in the *zhong ren* 眾人 "the common crowd". The pose of the thinker is a sentimental, tragic one: we have a case of the self-satisfied, inspired melancholy of the genius whose genius consists in feeling stupid. His stupidity arises from the fact that he does not take for granted the pleasures and values that the common crowd live by.

But how exactly do we decide that this is not a collective alienation?

One point on which Laozi, the sage, feels stupid and confused is that of terminology for his most important concepts. He does not say that there are no appropriate concepts, he describes the psychology of nomenclature. "I don't know its family name." Of course he knows that

concepts do not have family names. We have deliberate personification of the central concepts. Not only is it described as "the Mother", and so forth, we also have a playful refusal to tie important concepts to words. Playful it may appear, but it is not jocular in the spirit of Zhuangzi.

有物混成， There was a something achieved in chaos,
先天地生。 And it was born before Heaven and Earth.
寂兮寥兮獨立不改， Quiet, empty, standing alone it does not change,
周行而不殆，It completes its orbits, is never exposed to danger.
可以為天下母。 One may regard it as the mother of the world.
吾不知其名， *I/we* do not know its/her name.
強字之曰道。 If forced to give it an appellation *I/we* say: "the Way".
強為之名曰大。 And if forced to give it a style *I/we* say: "the Great".
大曰逝。 The Great is called "the Receding".
逝曰遠。 The Receding is called "the Far Away".
遠曰反。 The Far Away is called "the Returning".
故道大、 Thus the Way is great,
天大、 Heaven is great,
地大、 Earth is great,
人亦大。 And Man is also great.
域中有四大， Within the confines of space there are four Great Ones,
而人居其一焉。 And Man occupies one of these places.
人法地， Man takes Earth as his model,
地法天， The Earth takes Heaven as her model,
天法道， Heaven takes the Way as its model,
道法自然。 And the Way takes what is naturally so as its model.
(*Laozi* 25, Gao Ming 1996: 350.)

At certain points it is as if Laozi personalises certain general observations and makes them into a part of his personal conviction rather than an objective wisdom.

將欲仕天下而為之， The one who intends and wishes to capture the world and work for this,
吾見其不得已。 *I/we* can see that he definitely will not succeed.
天下神器， The world is a daemonic object,
不可為也， And it cannot be manipulated.
為者敗之， He who manipulates it will ruin it,
執者失之。 And he who holds onto it will lose it.
夫物或行或隨、 As for creatures, some choose a path, others follow,
或歔或吹、 Some breathe lightly, others heavily,
或強或羸、 Some are strong, others weak,
或挫或隳。 Some break things to pieces, others are broken into pieces.
是以聖人去甚、 Therefore the sage eschews excessiveness,
去奢 He eschews luxury,
去泰。 And he eschews grandeur.
(*Laozi* 29, Gao Ming 1996: 377.)

But how exactly are we sure that the insight here is not a collective one: "We can see..."?

Even within the context of Taoist "metaphysics" there is, occasionally, what we are inclined to read as a characteristic personal touch. Laozi declares his philosophy of life not as an impersonal doctrine but as a personal strategy:

道常無為， The Way constantly practises non-action,
而無不為。 And there is nothing it does not get done.
侯王若能守之， If lords and kings were able to keep to it,
萬物將自化。 Then the myriad creatures would be transformed of themselves.
化而欲作， If when there is transformation desires arise,
吾將鎮之以無名之樸。 Then *I/we* shall restrain it with the simplicity of the Nameless.
無名之樸， Given the simplicity of the Nameless
夫亦將無欲。 Then one surely will be free from desires.
不欲以靜， If one is free from desires and thus gains peace,
天下將自定。 Then the world will be at peace of itself.
(*Laozi* 37, Gao Ming 1996: 425-426.)

There are cases when we are not inclined to take the first-person pronoun in a strict referential sense: we are tempted to translate "we" or "one". There is an important question of what the stylistic force of this is; whether we should not feel constrained to reproduce the Chinese effect by retaining the "I" so that we get a much more lively rendering:

寵辱若驚， Favour and disgrace are like something frightening,
貴大患身。 And honours as well as great calamities are [transient] like the body.
何謂寵辱若驚？ What do we mean by "favour and disgrace are like something frightening"?
寵為下。 Favour is the lowliest thing.
得之若驚 ，When you get it you still get frightened,
失之若驚 。And when you lose it your still get frightened.
是謂寵辱若驚。 This is what we mean by "favour and disgrace are something frightening".
何謂貴大患若身？ What do we mean by "honours as well as great calamities are [transient] like the body"?
吾所以有大患者， The reason why one suffers great calamities,
為吾有身。 is because *one* has a body.
及吾無身， When one gets to the point that *one* has no body,
吾有何患？ What calamity is there for *one*?
故貴以身為天下， Therefore someone who is so honoured that he takes his body to be the world,
若可寄天下。 One can still entrust the realm to.
愛以身為天下， Someone who is so stingy that he takes his body to be the world,
若可託天下。 One can still entrust the realm to.
(*Laozi* 13, Gao Ming 1996: 278 has only two first-person pronouns.)

The explicit pronouns *wo* 我 and *wu* 吾 are common in the Laozi, but some points are clear:

1) The unambiguously singular first-person pronouns are absent in the *Laozi*;

2) There is no first-person pronoun that refers to the author of the text as engaged in the composition or production of that very text. (There is one reference to *wu yan* 吾言 "my/our words", in chapter 70, but these are not the concrete words of the book we have. The Mawangdui version in chapter 25, Gao Ming 1996: 350, 吾強謂之大 "when pushed [to give it a name] I/we call it great", does not change this picture: what is being talked about is general language policy, not concrete formulation of the *Laozi* text.)

3) Whereas the first-person pronouns are common in many chapters, none of them are autobiographic uses, so that even if we take them in the first-person, the self-references yield no biographical information except that the Way of person/s involved was widely regarded as great (ch. 70).

4) The explicit "you" referring to or appealing to the reader is completely absent in the *Laozi*. This is a crucial point on which I want to dwell.

Zi 子 "you", or other words with this kind of meaning, never refer to the reader in Chinese prose literature. Direct address is to the listener, or to the recipient of letters, memorials and the like. In ancient China this form was not transferred to larger-scale books. These, unlike their Roman counterparts, do not have overtly addressed addressees. For example, the following has to be within the scope of direct speech.

丘也與女皆夢也；予謂汝夢，亦夢也。 Confucius *and you* are all dreams. And I calling you a dream is also a dream. (*Zhuangzi* 2.)

There is no clear evidence that Zhuangzi addressed his readership with a second-person pronoun. But somehow one would not be surprised if one found an example where he did. We shall return to this question of the explicitly addressed public at several points below.

We must now remember that *yu* 予 "I", like *yu* 余 "I" are unambiguously singular. The phrase *yu yi ren* 余 / 予一人 "I, the single person", is current in early Zhou literature. And the pronoun would be singular even without the addition of *yi ren* 一人 . Sima Qian regularly uses unambiguously singular first-person pronouns, and so does *Chuci*.

The case of the *Zhuangzi*

The following could not, according to the rules of pre-Han Chinese rhetoric as I understand them at this stage, involve Zhuangzi addressing his reader, except if we assume that breaking rhetorical rules is exactly what we would expect of Zhuangzi.

既使我與若辯矣，若勝我，我不若勝，若果是也，我果非也邪？
我勝若，若不吾勝，我果是也，而果非也邪？其或是也，其或非也邪？其俱是也，其俱非也邪？
You and I having been made to argue over alternatives, if it is you not I that wins, is it really you who are on to it, I who am not. If it is I not you that wins, is it really I who am on to it, you who are not? Is one of us on to it and the other of us not? Or are both of us on to it and both of us not? (*Zhuangzi* 2, tr. Graham 1981: 60.)

In his translation Graham takes Zhuangzi to be addressing the reader as "you". This is plausible for a Westerner and perhaps to westernised modern Chinese, but such a reference is exceedingly rare according to the rhetorical conventions of pre-Han Chinese. Most modern punctuated editions (except Guan Feng 關鋒) will take this to be part of Chang Wuzi's speech, in which case there is no reference to the reader of the book. We need a set of neat examples of the reader being addressed by *ruo* 若 ("if") before such an interpretation begins to be plausible. Words like *zi* 子 "you" cannot refer to the reader of a book, only to the listener within a story, or to the addressee of a letter or memorial.

This is the general rule throughout pre-Buddhist literature. And yet Zhuangzi can address his readership in an unusually communicative chapter like "Rifling Trunks", thus demonstrating that there is nothing somehow completely unthinkable in addressing the readership. The exception shows up the element of manifest cultural choice in the rule:

子獨不知至德之世乎？
Have you never heard of the age when inner Power was perfect? (*Zhuangzi* 10, ed. Wang Shumin 1988: 360, tr. Watson 1968: 111, tr. Graham 1981: 209.)

I am extremely keen to find more examples of this sort, especially in other pre-Buddhist authors.

By comparison with the *Laozi*, the *Zhuangzi* strikes one in several ways as a much more personal book, as has been often noted. For one thing, a character by the name of Zhuangzi figures prominently in the book. For another, autobiographic first-person pronouns might seem to abound in that text. One might even want to cite to the opening of chapter 3 as a case in point:

吾生也有涯，知也無邪。
Giles (1889: 48) My life has a limit, but my knowledge is without limit.
Graham (1981: 62) My life flows between confines, but knowledge has no confines.

These translators take this to be an autobiographical reflection. But there are other versions:

Watson (1968: 50) introduces a second-person pronoun: Your life has a limit but knowledge has none.

Liu Kia-hway (1969: 46) translates, not implausibly by "human life is limited": La vie humaine est limitée; le savoir est illimité.

As for the translations into modern Chinese: Ye Yulin (1964: 48) is ingenious in using a form that retains the ambiguity between singular and plural: 吾人的生命有窮盡。Zhang Mosheng (1993: 135) simply has: 人的壽命是有窮盡的。Chen Guying (1991: 94) freely and plausibly opts for the plural: 我們的生命是有限度的。

One notes, from a grammatical point of view, that, if Zhuangzi had written *yu* 余 or *yu* 予, there would have been no ambiguity: Giles and Graham would have been right, everyone else would have been wrong.

I want to investigate the varieties of the modes of first-person reference in the Zhuangzi, and ultimately I want to reconstruct a "bestiary of first-personae" in that book.

Mostly, *wo* 我 or *wu* 吾 "I" refers to the *Zhuangzi* who is a part of a story about Zhuangzi that is being told in the book that bears his name:

莊子曰：「吾以天地為棺槨，以日月為連璧，星辰為珠璣，萬物為齎送。吾葬具豈不備邪？何以加此！」
I will have Heaven and Earth for my coffin and coffin shell, the sun and moon for my pair of jade discs, the stars and constellations for my pearls and beads, and the ten thousand things for my parting gifts. The furnishings for my funeral are already prepared – what is there to add. (*Zhuangzi* 32; tr. Watson 1968: 361.)

Here Zhuangzi is an embedded persona in a story, not the author of the book. I am not at this stage concerned with these cases of self-reference.

The authorial "I" is absent throughout most of the book, but that means there is all the more reason to pay careful attention to the deviating cases. Here are apparent representative examples of the authorial "I" in the *Zhuangzi*:

人之生也，固若是芒乎？其我獨芒，而人亦皆不芒者乎？
Is the life of man inherently confused like this? Or *am only I/are only we* confused, and among the others there are those who are not confused? (*Zhuangzi* 2.)

Here the author, *wo* 我, is contrasted with the others, *ren* 人, but significantly there is nothing in the context which definitely or absolutely excludes a plural reading: "or are only *we* confused". The first-person pronoun may be self-referential but it is not autobiographical. It might even plausibly be taken to refer to the group constituted by the author and his intended esoteric audience. Certainly the first-person does not present himself as the writer of a whole book or any part of it.

This is part of a quite unusual internal dialogue where Zhuangzi writes as if transcribing his inner uncertainties. This rhetorical feature is rare even within the book *Zhuangzi*.[4]

百骸，九竅，六藏，賅而存焉，吾誰與為親？
Of the hundred joints, nine openings, six viscera all present and complete, which should I [or: *we*] recognise as more kin to me than another? (*Zhuangzi* 2, tr. Graham 1981: 51.)

Again, nothing excludes the plural here, but nothing particularly recommends it.

雖有神禹，且不能知，吾獨且柰何哉！
Even the daemonic Yu could not understand you, and what am I [or: *are we*] supposed to manage to do about it [*i.e.* how am I supposed to understand]? (*Zhuangzi* 2, ed. Wang Shumin 1988: 56, tr. Graham 1981: 51.)

The plural remains possible.

自我觀之， From my [or: *our*] point of view,
仁義之端， The starting points of goodness and humaneness,
是非之塗 and the path of right and wrong,
樊然殽亂。 are hopelessly confused.
吾惡能知其辯 How should I [or: *we*] be able to tell the difference.
(*Zhuangzi* 2, ed. Wang Shumin 1988: 79.)

庸詎知吾所謂天之非人乎？ How do I [or: *we*] know that what I call Heaven is not human?
所謂人之非天乎？ And that what I [or: *we*] call human is not from Heaven?
(*Zhuangzi* 6, beginning; ed. Wang Shumin 1988: 205.)

夫大塊載我以形， The great clod supports *me/us* with a body,
勞我以生， it bothers *me/us* with life,
佚我以老， it gives *me/us* peace in old age,
息我以死。it gives *me/us* rest in death.
故善吾生者 Therefore *my/our* considering life as good,

4. See *Zhuangzi* 12,end, for a less spectacular but still relevant case of authorial *yu* 予.

乃所以善吾死也。 is exactly the reason why *I/we* consider death as good.
(*Zhuangzi* 6, ed. Wang Shumin 1988: 223.)

One might argue that the author relates in a personal way to the Way. There is an apparent contrast with the *Laozi*. But one might still go on to insist that all these may be plausibly read in the plural. What this means is that even when read in the singular, they have no truly personal, individual ring to them in this context. We still do not have the autobiographical "I", even less the authorial "I".

Paradoxically, the authorial "I" is more manifestly present in the *Zhuangzi* without any overt pronoun or pseudo-pronoun whatsoever:

雖然， However,
嘗試言之 let [me!] try to say it:
庸詎知吾所謂知之非不知邪？ How do I [or: *we*] know that what I [or: *we*] call knowing is not ignorance?
庸詎知吾所謂不知之非知邪？ How do I [or: *we*] know that what I [or: *we*] call ignorance is not knowing?
(*Zhuangzi* 2, ed. Wang Shumin 1988: 79.)

請嘗試言之 Let me try to say it:
天無為以之清。Heaven practices non-action and because of that becomes clean.
地無為以之寧。Earth practices non-action and because of that becomes restful.
(*Zhuangzi* 18, ed. Wang Shumin 1988: 642.)

The object of *qing* 請 "beg", if we do take it as a semi-grammaticalised transitive verb, would have to be the reader in this passage. The author seems to make a polite request addressed to his readership.

The phrase recurs almost literally:

雖然，請嘗言之 This may be so, but let *me* try to explain this.
(*Zhuangzi* 2, ed. Wang Shumin 1988: 70.)

The possibility, in English, to translate "let us try to explain" is logically quite irrelevant. The point is that the author, as he is in the process of composing his texts, is the subject of the verb phrase *qing chang yan zhi* 請嘗言之. We have clear instances here of an authorial persona of the text under discussion being explicitly present in that text.

嘗試論之。 Let me try to explain this.
(*Zhuangzi* 10, ed. Wang Shumin 1988: 349.)

In this coherent set of examples, it is tempting to consider that this particular use of *changshi* 嘗試 represents something of a personal style of the writer Zhuangzi, a feature that was then imitated by his imitators in the book. There are similar well-known cases involving speech habits of Confucius. The "trying" is not a collective trying, it is not a collective but an individual pose, a pose close to, but not identical with, the traditional Western *dubitatio*, "hesitation".

Authorial presence is a matter of degree, and it will not come as a surprise to anyone that there is more of it in the *Zhuangzi* than in the *Laozi*. Large parts of the book *Zhuangzi* have a presupposed omniscient and ultimately impersonal sage "I" as the authorial persona. But there is another note in the *Zhuangzi*. It turns out that the question of the rhetoric of authorship in the *Zhuangzi* is sometimes extremely complex and almost post-modern.

I shall consider the opening lines of the first chapter of the book as an example. The first thing mentioned is a *bei ming* 北冥 "Northern Dark". And we only understand this reference if we realise that the author does not really intend to make a reference to anything at all. Commentators like Sima Biao 司馬彪 suggest that this is at the North Pole. The place is imaginary. The next thing we hear of is a fish, and the same is true of this fish. It is no use speculating whether it was a whale, as some commentators do: the thing is a figment of the writer's poetic and philosophical imagination. Next comes a little philological scandal: the fish is called a *kun* 鯤 "spawn, tiny baby-fish", just as the vast sea in the North is called the *tianchi* 天池 "Pond of Heaven". It is no use explaining this away as a scribal error for some name of a gigantic fish: the name is a playful figment of the author's imagination. There is, of course, a philosophy behind this apparent incongruousness: what we must describe as a gigantic fish might still be, in a cosmic perspective, *sub specie aeternitatis*, a tiny fish. The author teases his congenial readership into this insight. Many later commentators were unable to enter into this world of flippant rhetoric.

What all this complex rhetoric does, however, is to force the reader to speculate on the author's underlying intention as opposed to the overt and covert linguistic meaning of the text. We are not told about the fish and the bird because we are invited to believe in their existence and transformation. The meaning is beyond the discourse. The text is an instrument in the hands of an author who must be focussed if the text is to be appreciated properly. The vast expanse of water that sustains the gigantic fish is referred to as a *chi* 池, "pond": the usage is provocative, certainly not naive, but neither is it mystical in a technical sense, as we often find in the *Laozi*. The *Zhuangzi* cultivates the traditional Western rhetorical category of the *aprosdoketon*, "the unexpected", sometimes to the point where one comes to expect the unexpected. Even when Zhuangzi

quotes the "Jests of Qi" as an authoritative text, we suspect an authorial intention of ridiculing the insistence on references to historical authorities. What kind of a serious "authority" are the "Jests of Qi"? We read this source with suspended belief.

Then, in an abrupt change of rhetorical perspective, the reader is faced with a short passage of philosophical poetry. The giant bird is described as *ye ma* 野馬, "floating vapour", and minute dust blown about by the creator breath: the reader suspects he is hearing the Master's Voice, Zhuangzi himself. Or does he? He has no way of being sure. Before the reader has made up his mind on this, the perspective changes radically again. Zhuangzi invites the reader to join the bird in the subjectivity of its mystical flight, to see the world through its eyes. He does this by first inviting the reader to join his own subjectivity: "Is what appears as the blue of the sky the true colour of the sky, or is it just an optical effect of distance?" When this our world appears thus to the bird, then it stops.

We are almost metaphysically elevated. But, abruptly, the reader is brought down to earth with perfectly mundane reflections on the amount of water needed to float a boat. Parenthetically inserted into this, again, a surely trivial reflection on how mustard seed would float in a puddle: are we to take this as Zhuangzi's serious discourse? Surely we have parody of mundane pedestrian thinking. His rhetoric keeps us guessing.

After all this parenthetic material, Zhuangzi returns briefly to straight poetic and reasoned narrative: the bird faces south. Then, abruptly, Zhuangzi enters the psychological world of the cicada and the turtledove: a new change of philosophical perspective. The discourse of these little animals is entirely from their own world of undergrowth and bushes. Abruptly again, Zhuangzi goes on to an ordinary and reasonable human perspective: surely, one has to make sure that one has proper supplies according to how far one intends to travel. These little animals have a hopelessly narrow perspective. "What do they know?" Surely, small intelligence does not reach large intelligence.

Zhuangzi's conclusion, introduced by the potentially pompous *gu yue* 故曰, "therefore it is said", is a sequence of oxymora, "contradictions in terms", in which he rises above these various perspectives: The person with a perfectly developed self has no self; the person with spiritual achievements has no achievements; the renowned sage has no fame. Thus the momentum of the liberation from omniscient-sage mode of authorship represented in the *Laozi* leads not only to an occasional personal authorial presence, but to a highly complex ironic display of assumed authorial personae. This is manifest in the first chapter of the

book, common in the Inner Chapters, and there are quite a few reflections of it in the rest of the book. Soon afterwards, this initial momentum was lost. There is none of it left in *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (second century BC), none in Guo Xiang 郭象 (died 312 AD) or Xiang Xiu 向秀 (ca. 221–309 AD), certainly none of it in the *Liezi* 列子 (third century AD).

Thus, in the *Zhuangzi* we not only have *yu yan* 寓言, "attributed, fictitious words", we have an author who assumes a whole range of voices, an author who deliberately avoids the ordinary straight mode of saying "I the author of this piece of writing am telling you, the indended reader of that piece, my current honest opinion as follows...", the mode which is assumed throughout, for example, by Wang Chong 王充 (27 AD–ca. 100 AD). Lu Deming 陸德明 (AD 556-627) in his preface to the *Zhuangzi* comments very much to the point:

> 辭趣華深。 The literary zest[5] is lush and profound.
> 正言若反。 His [seemingly] straightforward formulations are as if turned round [*i.e.* ironical(?)].

In the *Xunzi* 荀子 the typical uses of *wo* 我 outside quotation is impersonal:

> 若夫志意脩，德行厚，知慮明，生於今而志乎古，則是其在我者也。
> Was nun solche Dinge anbelangt, wie die Pflege des eigenen Innern, ernsthaftes Bemühen um sittlichen Lebenswandel, Klärung des eigenen Wissens und Planens, trotz des Lebens im Heute nicht auch die Alten vergessen u.s.f., so hängt das alles vom Menschen persönlich (*wo*) ab. (Köster 1967: 218.)
> ... ce sont des choses qu'on a en soi. (*Xunzi* 17, Kamenarovic 206.)

> 故我聚之以亡，敵得之以疆。
> Was also [die Regierenden] selbstsüchtig horten, dient nur dem eigenen Untergang, während der Feind, falls er das Gehortete erobert, dadurch nur stärker wird. (Köster 1967: 94.)

Knoblock posits a quotation and thus avoids a reference to the author of the *Xunzi*:

> Thus, amassing tax revenues on my part will bring on my destruction, and my enemies by gaining my lands will be made stronger. (*Xunzi* 9.29; Knoblock1988, I: 98.)

The case of *wu* 吾 in *Xunzi* is similar. The meaning is close to the impersonal "one":

5. *Qu* 趣 "zest" is an important technical term of aesthetic appreciation.

吾慮不清，未可定然否也。
When our thoughts are unclear we cannot quite fix affirmations or negations. So lange unsere Überlegungen nicht zu klaren Ergebnissen führen, sind wir noch nicht in der Lage, bestimmte positive oder negative Aussagen zu machen. (*Xunzi* 21.68, Köster 1967: 281.)

There is nothing personal in the following:

故非我而當者，吾師也；是我而當者，吾友也；諂諛我者，吾賊也。
Thus he who disapproves of one/me and is right is one's/my teacher. He who approves of one/me and is right is one's/my friend. And he who flatters one/me is one's/my worst enemy. (*Xunzi* 2: 1; Knoblock 1988, I: 151.)

Often *wo* 我 must be understood impersonally or in the plural:

我以墨子之「非樂」也，則使天下亂。
If we act according to Mozi's *Against Music* then we will cause the world to be chaotic. (*Xunzi* 10.)

人之所惡者，吾亦惡之。
What other men detest I detest also. (*Xunzi* 3, end; Knoblock 1988, I: 180.)

Other translations (Köster 1967: 28: "das verabscheue ich auch"; Kamenarovic 59: "je le déteste, moi aussi") all invite us to read this as a personal report by Xunzi on his own attitude, whereas the Yang Liang 楊倞 (fl. AD 818) commentary, quite rightly, takes the intention to be general:

賢人欲惡不必異於眾人也。
What the talented will desire or detest is not necessarily different from the ordinary people's [desires and dislikes].

There may be reason to tone down the personal touch of this by taking the *wu* 吾 in the plural. The personal note would certainly seem to be out of place in the context of this phrase in a way that such authorial first-person reference is not out of place in *Zhuangzi* 2.

Consider, however, the following which comes closer to authorial presence:

若是，則雖未亡，吾謂之無天下矣。
Under such circumstances, then even if there is no ruin as yet, *I/we* say of them that they are not in control of the world. (*Xunzi* 18.15; cf. Köster1967: 226: "...so leugne ich doch nicht, daß sie noch im Besitz der Weltherrschaft waren.")

There are many, many other cases like *Xunzi* 17.81 *shi xu yan ye* 是虛言也 "This is empty/insubstantial talk", where translations like Köster's spuriously personalise the statement, thus distorting the impersonal mode of the original: "Ich nenne das Behauptungen von Phantasten", "I call that the opinions of men with uncontrolled phantasies."

The varieties of the authorial "I" in ancient Chinese literature

The constitutive features of textuality are manifestly problematic in traditional ancient Chinese prose literature.[6] (Inscriptions, letters and the like raise complex problems in their own right that are beyond my present scope.) The books we have (our *textus recepti*) are results of long processes of literary accretion from widely different sources. Compilation, editorial redaction, scribal, and authorial functions tended to be disconcertingly separate.

If we were to treat such texts as written statements by an author intending to convey his thoughts to a general public (present and future), we would be making a very serious hermeneutic category mistake. Such hermeneutic category mistakes affect translation. Thus, for example, it is often directly relevant for translation that the "gentle (generalised) reader" of a book, the person addressed by the proverbial *caveat lector*, is practically never mentioned in all of traditional pre-Buddhist prose literature and that he certainly is not routinely addressed in any of our traditional texts of the period. One must realise that, when one interprets an author as directly addressing his audience by a second-person pronoun, one attributes to him an act of hermeneutic revolution.

First, there is the speaker who is quoted, the context-bound "I" presented in explicit quotation, where a speaker is addressing a concrete audience that is within earshot. The *Lunyu* 論語 is a text that presents predominantly such context-bound quotations. But already in that text, one has to be aware that what is said may begin to be intended as decontextualised statement, where the "I", while physically addressing an audience within earshot, is aware that he will indirectly reach a wider audience. Confucius, Mo Di 墨翟 (late fifth century BC), Yan Ying 晏嬰 (ca. 580–500 BC) and Mencius belong into this category: they are known not through writings but as the originators of dicta. In these books there is an embedded "auctorial" I. Consider the case of *Mozi* 15:

6. I disregard, for the time being, the complicated question of the oracle-bone inscriptions and the bronze inscriptions.

此言禹之事，吾今行兼矣。...
此文王之事，吾今行兼矣。...
此言武王之事，吾今行兼矣。
This speaks of matters relating to Yu. We can, then, universalize love in conduct ...
This is what King Wen had accomplished. We can, then, universalize love in conduct. ...
This relates the deeds of King Wu. We can, then, universalize love in conduct. (*Mozi* 15, tr. Mei Yi Pao 1929: 172. Compare Schmidt-Glintzer 1975: 145, who follows Mei.)

As an interesting borderline case, one might mention the "I" presenting himself in self-quotation, as in the famous *taishi gong yue* 太史公曰 "the Grand Recorder said".

The speaker may be more or less context bound to his concrete physical audience in his pronouncements. To varying degrees he may say things to an audience, expecting these to be remembered and repeated by his audience. The extent to which this happens in any given instance of recorded speech is crucial for correct translation and interpretation.

Secondly, there is what – until I find a more suitable term – I call the "*auctor*", the "I" presented in implicit quotation, where a book is built up from sayings implicitly attributed to a speaker, the attribution being indicated through the title of a work. The *Laozi* is a text that predominantly presents such quotations, which by the nature of things have to be less concretely and openly context bound than direct speech within a given historical situation would tend to be, but the utterance of which must have entered a social and intellectual context which it is often hard to reconstruct. The presumed author Laozi 老子 , of uncertain date and existence, would be such an auctor.[7]

Thirdly, there is the author, the "I" presenting himself as the creator of a passage which is addressed to a certain public. To varying degrees, the author abstracts from the concrete audience he is addressing and begins to have a wider, generalised audience in mind. The eunuch Mengzi 孟子 in Mao Shi 毛詩 200 is a case in point, and so is Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 343–277 BC).

Fourthly, there is the writer, the "I" presenting himself as the person who composed a certain written document, where editorial remarks indicate the writer's scribal intentions and show his responsibility for the scribal act. Hanfei 韓非 (died 233 BC) poses as such a writer in parts of the anonymous collection *Hanfeizi* 韓非子 .

7. I shall abandon the term "auctor" as soon as I hear of a less offensive way of putting the matter.

Fifthly, there is the writer-editor, the "I" presenting himself as the person who composed certain written documents and who declares himself responsible for the overall arrangement of these documents in an integrated "book" through an editorial policy and editorial remarks. Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145 – ca. 85 BC) is a case of such a writer-editor, who even introduces cross-references to other parts of his book into his text.

Finally, one might be tempted to introduce the compiler-editor, the "I" presenting himself as the person who is responsible for the overall arrangement of certain materials from different sources. Liu An 劉安 (179–122 BC) and Lü Buwei 呂不韋 (ca. 290–235 BC) might appear to be cases of such compiler-editors. However, it is characteristically difficult to find passages where these editors refer to themselves in the first person.

If we now turn to the instances where a person refers to himself in some sense or another as the author of a given text, further complications arise. We have already noted the important question of whether he ever engages in a dialogue with the public reader, whether he ever dramatises this dialogue in something like the form "You might say... But I tell you..." The answer is, he does not.

But there are important further questions concerning pre-Buddhist Chinese texts:

1) How do writers pose for their audience: what are their standardised poses? What is the cultural register of authorial personae "masks" in pre-Buddhist China?

2) To what extent and how do writers explicitly place passages in their writing in a personal-life autobiographic context? What is the cultural register of autobiographic contextualisation in pre-Buddhist China?

3) To what extent do we find the fictionalisation of the authorial Self? What is the cultural register of prosopopeia?

4) To what extent could authors explicitly address their writings to themselves? Archilochos: thyme thym' amechanoisin pemasin kykomenos. ... Cicero's "Consolatio", written as advice to himself after the death of his beloved daughter, Tullia.

5) What is the cultural register of sustained and explicit inner conflict among writers?

6) To what extent could authors correct their own use of language through such phrases as "or rather"? What is the cultural register of second thoughts on one's own formulations in pre-Buddhist China?

Questions of this order are legion. Few of them have been investigated by a "historical critical method". Historically well-founded answers to these questions will severely restrict the range of plausible translations in all those Chinese texts where one of the grammatically possible readings would attribute to a pre-Buddhist writer authorial ploys and devices that were alien to the culture at a given stage.

Aside from questions of historical grammar, historical lexicography, the semantics of sentences, and so on, there are crucial dimensions of the historical anthropology of literary communication which should define and limit the options translators have when approaching traditional Chinese texts. We need more than W.V.O. Quine's *Principle of Charity* (interpret in such a way that a maximum of statements you interpret turn out to be true) and more than Richard Grandy's *Principle of Humanity* (interpret in such a way that a maximum of the statements you interpret turn out to be consistent with each other). What we need is a *Principle of Hermeneutic Austerity*: Do not attribute to texts of a certain culture, time and genre semantic features and rhetorical devices that are not a plausible part of the literary communication in that culture, at that time, and in that genre. This may sound plausible to the point of triviality. It is therefore all the more surprising that this principle is so consistently overlooked in translations from classical Chinese.

Concluding remarks

Some relevant contrasts between different varieties of authorial "I" must be distinguished. Firstly, and crucially, one has to emphasise the fact that the non-explicit authorial "I" is often much more personal and individual than the explicit authorial "I".

There is the important question of the scope of authorship claimed by the authorial "I": is it a passage in a chapter, a sequence of passages or episodes, the chapter as a whole, a sequence of chapters, or a whole book?

There is an important progression from the abstract, untensed authorial "I" which construes itself as the author of the whole text or passage to the tensed author who construes himself as being at a given stage in the production of his text.

There is the basic difference between an author who construes his role as emotionally expressive versus the authorial "I" which poses as a transmitter of fact and judgment.

There is the difference between the authorial "I" that construes itself as the producer of oral text versus the authorial "I" that construes itself as the author of the written text.

There is the contrast between the authorial "I" that construes itself or poses as being in a concrete dialogue with a certain audience and the authorial "I" that simply expounds things to an uncircumscribed and unfocussed general audience.

There is the contrast between the authorial "I" that poses as the creator versus the author that poses as the transmitter of messages.

There is the contrast between the authorial "I" that poses as a real historical person versus the authorial "I" that poses as an explicitly fictional character;

There is the contrast between the authorial "I" that poses as objective versus the authorial "I" that poses as subjective.

There is the contrast between the authorial "I" that poses as a generic, collective "I/we" versus the authorial "I" that poses as an individualistic "I".

Finally, among many other distinctions along these lines, one might mention the distinction between the authorial "I" as referring to a concrete author versus the abstract philosophical "I" that no longer refers to the individual author at all but to the generalised philosophical notion of the "Self".

I shall not continue in this recitation of relevant contrasts within the conceptual field of the authorial "I". My point is that, unless and until the historical dynamics of the evolution of such contrasting construals of the authorial "I" in early Chinese literature is given proper close attention, unless it is closely reconstructed text by text, chapter by chapter, passage by passage, histories of early Chinese literature will omit a central feature in the evolution of early Chinese literary sensibilities. The study of this important subject, it seems to me, has barely begun.

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V

Rémunérer la défaillance des mots