

me, we have our ways.” Well, I think we probably saw those ways with the destruction of the pipeline. It’s not proved. The story that the investigative journalist Seymour Hersh has put out is very credible, and it has not been knocked down in any substantive way.

Q: Is all the provocation of late evidence of the last desperate throes of US hegemony?

A: Well, look, the US is not and cannot be the global hegemon, meaning it can’t be the country that runs the world. The US is 4 percent of the world.

There’s a lot of talent, creativity and desire for sovereignty and for a say in world affairs all over the world. So the US is not the world hegemon, but it needs at the political level to get its head around that reality, to have a foreign policy not based on arrogance or illusion, but based on ... an interconnected world and the need for cooperation and peace.

And I think it’s possible to have that. The US can be quite successful in such a world. What can’t occur is the US running the world. That’s not going to happen. And if the US persists in trying that, it’s going to face more and more conflicts around the world with other nations.

So I think this is a question of the US accepting the principle that we have a multipolar world and that we should make it work properly.



This is an abridged version of the interview, but you can also watch the full video.



— Hellorf

Love is a many-splintered thing in the Chinese language

Wan Lixin

A friend from Singapore observed that when her English name Eve became easily confused with the Chinese for *yifu* (clothes), she asked to be addressed as Wang Taitai (Mrs Wang) instead.

Then she was reminded that addressing her as Wang Taitai could give others the impression that she is pompous and aloof, “like an old-moneyed woman sitting on a mighty throne.”

When I reflected on her predicament, I thought how Chinese mainlanders do seem to lack proper forms of address for spouses or even sweethearts

Taitai (wife) also implies a wealthy woman who doesn’t work, and other titles carry subtleties: *laopo* is familiar but slightly disrespectful; *qizi* is too formal. The term *furen* is also a bit pompous.

The standard address for my parents’ generation was *jiashu* (family member), which could refer to husband, to wife

or to children. It still appears to be the most acceptable of all alternatives and is my own favorite.

The Chinese have a complicated etymological history with what to call loving relationships.

One term much in vogue for my parents’ generation and still sometime heard today is *airen*. It is sometimes misleadingly translated into “lover.” To my mind, this term is slightly evocative of the stirring years of Chinese revolution, when dedicated underground couples would often address each other that way.

As a matter of fact, *airen* as a form of address is a Western import, probably from Sweetheart Abbey (according to one investigation), founded in 1273 by Lady Dervorguilla of Galloway to honor her late husband John Balliol’s memory — at least this is what I came across online when I tried to trace the origin of *airen*.

In Chinese, *airen* in the “sweetheart” context is

strictly confined to the legally married, whereas in English, it can simply be a term of endearment or a reference to someone who is loved or loveable.

In Chinese, the term *duixiang* refers to a “boyfriend” or “girlfriend” in a steady relationship, serious enough to be headed for marriage. But the term is neutral and utterly devoid of any romantic association, which may reflect the fact that most Chinese are very undemonstrative when it comes to love.

Chinese television programs and movies often show passionate lovers or couples exclaiming “I love you!” But that may be appropriated from Western manners. I have never seen that happen in real life.

In fact, the character *ai* (love) itself, when used in term of romantic relationship, is a fairly late development in Chinese etymology.

According to the interpretation in “Shuowen Jiezi,” the first Chinese dictionary, the word *ai* originally meant “an

act of benefiting others.” In the first chapter of Confucius’ “Analects,” the word *airen* has been translated as “love for men.”

According to the translation by James Legge, it reads: “To rule a country of a thousand chariots, there must be reverent attention to business, and sincerity; economy in expenditures, and love for men ...”

The husband-wife relationship is deemed the most fundamental of the five types of human interactions, which include ruler and subject, father and son, brothers and friends. However, the husband-wife relationship has always been placed in an intricate network of other relations. Thus, when a husband introduces his wife to others, he often says something that translates roughly as “this is your aunt.”

And this “aunt,” depending on the specific web of relations, can refer to any number of familial relations.

No wonder kinship terms so often befuddle English translators.