

## Exposé

### Poetry as Participatory Culture: Postsocialism, Intermediality, and Authenticity in Contemporary Chinese Poetry

China has undertaken drastic changes in politics, economy, culture, and technology since the traumatic date of June 4, 1989. Although the grand narrative of a teleological communism went bankrupt, legacies of socialism have remained in institutional structures as well as social and cultural domains. In 1992, the country embarked on the road of accelerated economic development. By the twenty-first century it has integrated itself firmly into economic globalization. As of the end of 2016, more than half of the Chinese population (731 million) are Internet users and 95% of them access the Internet using mobile devices.

Has poetry died or sold itself to the market, as some critics claim? As a matter of fact, both digital media and the market have enabled more people to participate in poetry creation and circulation, which contribute to the dynamic and heterogeneous cultural landscape in China – and the Sinophone world. This project proposes to investigate this non-elitist, participatory trend of poetry in contemporary China, that is, poetic practices and discourses that acknowledge the agency of ordinary individuals – the every(wo)man – as the creator of poetry, both as the writer and as the participant in non-print based poetry performance. In the past three decades, this poetic trend has been reacting to and interplaying with China's political, economic, cultural, and technological transformations. This project intends to find out: What is new in the form and function of this non-elitist, participatory poetry? What are its concerns and implications in terms of poetics, cultural and political changes, and social engagements?

Combining methods of literary studies and media studies, this project will examine four cases – roughly in the chronological order from 1989 to 2016 – in order to understand non-elitist, participatory poetry in full perspective and depth. The poetry performance of Liao Yiwu 廖亦武 (1958-) constantly harkening back to June 4, 1989 takes place in international contexts. It therefore opens up the possibility of discussing “postsocialism” and “intermediality” in his performance in relation to German and/or Russian poetries as transcultural issues. The intermedial (re)presentations of poems by migrant workers and their translation grapple with globalization on another level. The poetics and politics of workers' voices articulating their world behind the shiny global consumption call for a nuanced analysis beyond moral support. An examination of Yu Xiuhua's 余秀华 (1976-) publication history and her poems foregrounding her sick body intends to bring in the dimensions of gender and the accelerated circulation – and consumption – of cultural products across media. Lastly, two CCTV (China Central Television) media products are analyzed in order to discuss the role of classical poetry in contemporary Chinese life and to what extent non-elitist poetry as a participatory culture can be constrained and assimilated.

In this project, “participatory culture,” “postsocialism,” and “intermediality” are used as *working* analytical categories to explore new poetic practices in the digital era. The claim of and/or search for “authenticity” in these practices are paradoxical in that they are inherently mediated, yet the implication of authenticity as a critique is to be considered. These key terms shall serve as comparative venues to engage this project in dialogue with other projects in the Center by exploring the sameness, differences, and overlapping of their theoretical meanings and applications in various cultural and linguistic contexts. The goal is to make concerted efforts to enrich and refine these theoretical tools that inform many ongoing researches in our fields.