

# Chinese Literature between Diffusion and Identity

Frank Kraushaar Innsbruck / Riga

# Qu Yuan 屈原 340-278

Re-imagination of Qu Yuan by Chen Hongshou – painted portrait of the 17<sup>th</sup> century close to the Ming-Qing transition of power.

Compare to the poet's countenance as described originally in chapter 漁父:

屈原既放，遊於江潭，行吟澤畔，顏色憔悴，形容枯槁。





Chen Hongshou 陳洪綬  
(1598-1652)

A sketch of the Lord of the Clouds 雲中君 - figure of the Nine Songs 九歌 in the Songs of Chu.

己未春

洪綬



Lee Hwai-min's "Lord of the Clouds"  
performed by the modern dance group  
"Cloud Gate" 雲門舞集 since the 1990s

Taiwan,

after the abolition of martial law in 1986  
and during the dissolution of KMT party-dictatorship  
experienced a flourishing of modern arts and  
rediscovered ancient myths as expressions  
of regional autonomy and individual freedom.





# Hou Hsiao-hsien's 刺客聶隱娘 "The Assassin" 2015



# 文明

civilization  
(*wenming*)

1937: „spiritual, eastern (chin.) civilization“ versus „materialistic-utalitarian civil.“

1987: „material civilisation“ versus „spiritual civilisation“

2002: „political civilization“

2012 ... „new shape of human civilization“ ... „xi-vilization“ (Global Times 2023)

# Wang Hui 汪暉 continues the narrative of a „literary revolution“

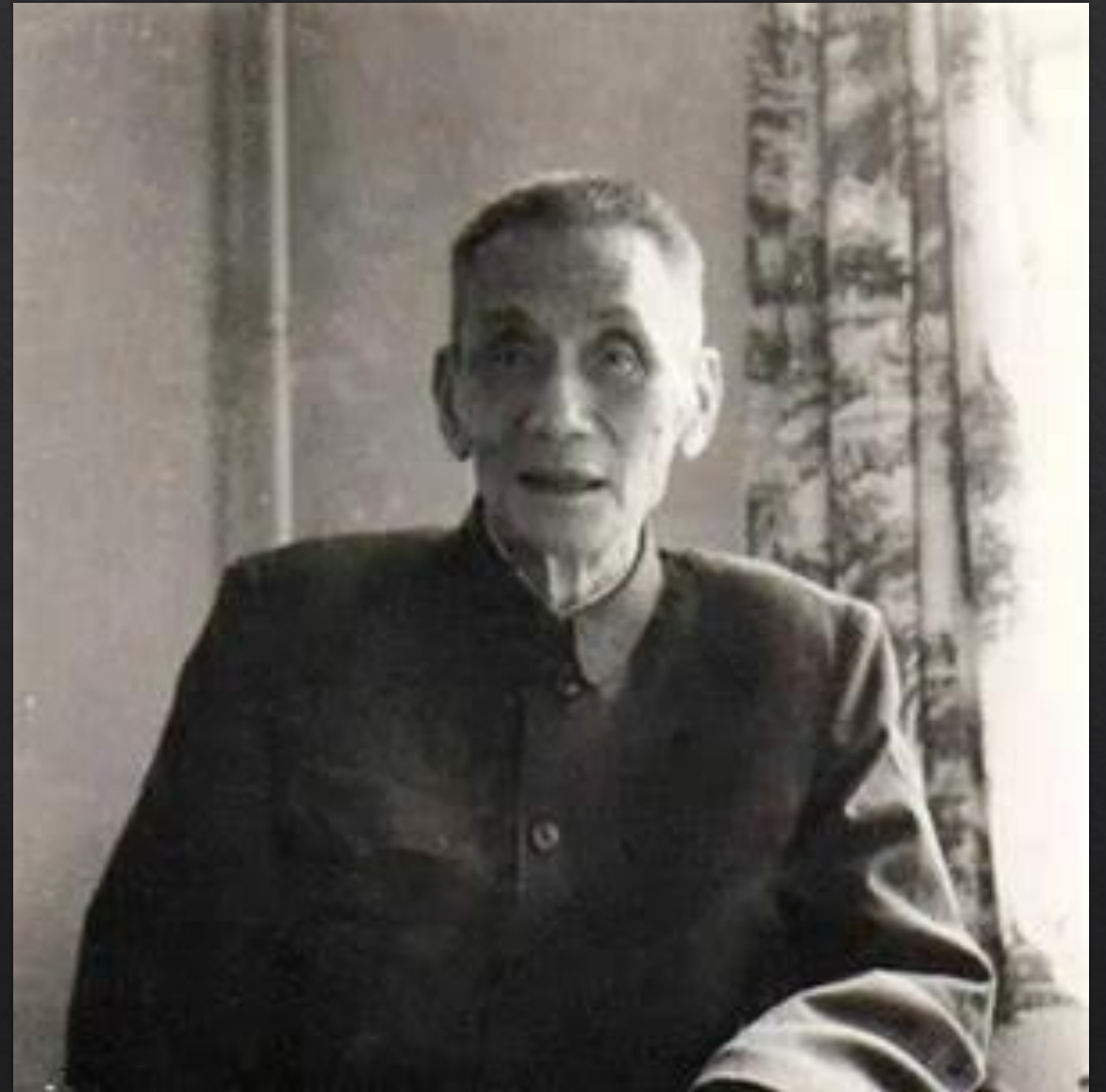
- ◆ *The idea of modern [Chinese] literature is to establish an independent literary field on the one hand, but to be exclusive on the other hand. It has excluded a large number of literary practices by establishing binary oppositions between the modern and the traditional, between the new and the old. During this process the Chinese language experienced fundamental changes. The structure and even the vocabulary of traditional language were replaced by a new structure and a new vocabulary.*



## Nie Gannu 聶紺弩 (1903–86) in a letter to a friend looking back

---

All my life I had laughed at Lu [Xun], Guo [Moruo], Mao [Dun], [Yu] Da [fu], and so on, because they denounced Literary Chinese on the one hand but composed classical-style poetry on the other hand. I prided myself for having never been conflicted like they were. I had not expected that, when I lived to sixty years of age, I would have started writing [classical-style poetry] myself, and indeed more intensely than they did. . . . 平生每笑魯、郭、茅、達. . . . 一面反對文言一面作舊詩，自詡平生未如此矛盾，不料活到六十歲時，自己也作了，比他們更作得厲害了。(Tian: Nie Gannu and Modern Chinese Poetry, 2018).





*Xiaofei Tian, in 2008 called for a re-writing of the history of modern Chinese poetry, because:*

*[...] to write old-style poetry in modern times, in light of the changed circumstances, is to self-consciously cultivate a separate space and, as new-style poetry establishes itself as the official modern Chinese poetry, to engage in an increasingly intensified private and personal undertaking that is entirely severed from the traditionally public realm.*

*(Tian 2008, 9)*

Xiaofei Tian doubts the revolutionary plot, replaces evolution in time by correlation in space

◇ *Just as new-style poetry is produced and articulated against old-style poetry, old-style poetry in modern times is a reaction against new-style poetry. Old-style and new-style poetry are thus closely intertwined, each existing and struggling in the other's shadow, so much so that it is virtually impossible to give a fair analysis of the landscape of modern Chinese literature without taking both—and their complex interrelationship—into consideration.*



Pandemics, no. 1

Screen-touch – snow blowing, cherry-blossoms everywhere.  
Pale houses, darkening lights, and sighs so deep and long.  
Constraints, broken alone by spring, mighty and vast –  
Speech, hoarded well, forlorn one sits by midnight, dull and strung.  
An orphaned city, poisoned prey, ails between life and death,  
Remains – burn all the books! – a place of grief and song.  
The warning written stays, although the whistling trails off:  
Rely only on daily notes, keep reading-well Fang Fang.

大疫 其一

觸屏櫻雪漫飛颺, 白屋青燈太息長. 限足全違春浩蕩, 噤言獨坐夜蒼茫. 孤城楚  
毒死生劫, 終古秦灰歌哭場. 訓誡書存哨音杳, 聊憑日記讀方方.