

Summary

The project aims at describing selected phenomena in contemporary Chinese avant-garde poetry, in which interactions between poetry and other fields of human and non-human creative, cognitive, and communicative activities play a central role. I identify three main areas of interest of Chinese experimental poets: nature, science and technology, and spirituality. In these domains, authors seek alternative languages that not only allow them to *say* but also *see* more, breaking them free from the thought patterns embedded in the language they habitually use. Expanding the boundaries of poetry, they listen to and mimic the languages of animals and plants, which operate on entirely different logic from human, explore intracellular mechanisms to translate them into innovative formal solutions in their texts, borrow metaphors from advanced theoretical physics or mathematics, try to write “superpositionally” according to the principles of quantum mechanics, incorporate code snippets in their texts to break the narrative structure of the poem and give it a performative character, split the spacetime of a poem like in computer games, introduce elements of religious ritual or glossolalia, overcoming linearity and opening the text to a metaphysical dimension, and so forth. Their efforts are frequently viewed by the relatively conservative domestic literary criticism as eccentricity or naivety, misunderstood, and often outright condemned as sacrilege—or, conversely, as idolatry—of poetry. As a consequence, they hardly permeate to the global discourse, where they could be more likely appreciated and become an inspiration for other poets writing in various languages.

In my work, the primary outcome of which will be an English-language monograph titled tentatively *Deliberating Poetry: Chinese Avant-Garde Between Expansion and Expulsion*, I also aim to create an appropriate methodology and literary-theoretical framework, allowing for effective description of these phenomena, which will tap into their full aesthetic and philosophical potential. Similar to poets, I will look for inspiration beyond conventionally understood humanities, mainly (though not exclusively) turning to the natural sciences. The core elements of my proposed innovative model, partly outlined in my previous publications, will be concepts borrowed from physicists: asymptotic freedom, quark (here: poetic) confinement, and symmetry breaking. By employing these ideas, I propose a possibly inclusive view of poetry as a genre and as a social practice, but without detracting from its exclusive nature as a distinctive cultural reality governed by its own specific principles of text circulation and interpretation. This is partly an attempt to address the explicitly voiced concerns of those who believe that if everything is poetry, then nothing is. In the seemingly paradoxical approach I offer, the logic is quite opposite: the less something is poetry, the more it is poetry, which stems from the mechanisms of text functioning in the poetic field that I investigate.

Besides theoretical reflection and close reading of texts, I also plan fieldwork research, mainly consisting of interactions with poets who will be featured in the book, visiting places that are important from the perspective of avant-garde poetry (e.g., the “Ecopoetic City” Qingyuan), and participating in cultural events, particularly thematic poetry meetings and festivals in China.

I hope that in this way, I can bring the lesser-known face of Chinese poetry closer to international audiences and identify areas where research on it can contribute to discoveries with a more universal dimension. It will help answer questions about what poetry is and could be in the era often referred to as posthumanist, where human language increasingly merges with other semiotic systems and practices that either didn’t exist before or remained unreadable to us due to a lack of appropriate insights into non-human forms of life.