

# Identity, Ignorance and the Politics of the Self.

## Chinese Art and Literature in Conversation

May 19<sup>th</sup>, Göttingen

### *Bios of Participating Chinese Writers, Artists and Poets*

#### Chinese Writers & Artists

##### **Yu Hua 余华**

Born in April 1960, Yu Hua is a professor at Beijing Normal University. He began writing in 1983. His major works include *Brothers*, *To Live*, *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant*, *Cries in the Drizzle*, *The Seventh Day*, and *Wencheng*. His works have been translated into over 50 languages and published in more than 50 countries.

He has received numerous international honors, including the Premio Grinzane Cavour (Italy, 1998), the Chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters (France, 2004), the Prix Courier International for Foreign Fiction (France, 2008), the Giuseppe Acerbi Literary International Prize (Italy, 2014), the Ivo Andrić Grand Literary Award (Serbia, 2018), the Premio Bottari Lattes Grinzane (Italy, 2018), and the Yasnaya Polyana Literary Award (Russia, 2022).

##### **Mao Jian 毛尖**

A native of Ningbo, Zhejiang Province, Mao Jian holds a bachelor's degree in foreign languages and a master's in Chinese literature from East China Normal University, and a Ph.D. in Humanities from the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. She is currently a professor at East China Normal University, a renowned writer, and vice president of the Shanghai Film Critics Society. Her research focuses on contemporary Chinese film and urban cultural issues, and she writes columns in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Taipei, and Singapore. A literary critic and writer, Mao Jian is a leading voice in contemporary Chinese literary and film criticism. She is the vice president

of Shanghai Film Critics Society and is known for her incisive cultural commentaries and her deep engagement with both Chinese and global cinema, literature, and urban culture. Her essays and reviews have been published in major Chinese literary journals as well as international academic anthologies. Her *Winter is Coming* was awarded Top Ten Best Books of the Year in 2020 and *There's a Tiger in the Bathroom* won the Essayist Award of Chinese Literature Media Award in 2015. She has been invited to speak at global conferences on contemporary Chinese culture and has contributed to Western discussions on the evolution of Chinese popular culture. Her work bridges the gap between academia and the public sphere, making her an influential figure in both literary and media studies.

### **Ouyang Jianghe 欧阳江河**

A leading figure in avant-garde Chinese poetry, Ouyang Jianghe's work is deeply intellectual, engaging with themes of modernity, history, and language. He has performed at international literary festivals, including events in the U.S. and Germany, where his work has been critically acclaimed. His writing often blends classical Chinese allusions with contemporary concerns, creating a unique poetic language that challenges conventional literary forms. He is also a respected critic and essayist, contributing to the discourse on contemporary Chinese literature. His poetry has been translated into English and published by Zephyr Press, making him one of the few Chinese poets with a strong presence in Western literary circles. In Germany, his poetry collection *Die Glasfabrik* was published as part of the series *Lyrik im Hölderinturm*, and the anthology *Chinesische Akrobatik – Harte Stühle* was published by Konkursbuch Verlag.

### **Xu Bing 徐冰**

A globally renowned contemporary artist, Xu Bing is best known for his conceptual works *Book from the Sky* and *Square Word Calligraphy*, which challenge the nature of language and communication. His works have been exhibited at major institutions such as the British Museum, MoMA, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Victoria and Albert Museum. He has received prestigious international awards, including the MacArthur Fellowship and the Fukuoka Prize for Arts and Culture. Xu's work engages with issues of cultural translation, globalization, and artistic intervention in historical narratives. His influence extends beyond the art world, as his work is frequently discussed in cultural studies and linguistics. Xu Bin's art was also displayed several

times in German Museums: the exhibition “Learn Square Words” (1996) at Marstall, Munich featured Xu Bing's innovative approach to calligraphy; “Xu Bing in Berlin” (2004) at the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst in Berlin featured the first iteration of his "Background Story" series, where Xu Bing recreated traditional ink paintings using unconventional materials to explore the interplay between perception and reality; “Language and Nature” (2018) at Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, presented Xu Bing's "Stone Path Series," showcasing carved stones that reflect his exploration of language and its relationship with nature.

### **Xi Chuan 西川**

Xi Chuan is a poet, essayist, and translator, from Jiangsu Province, and earning a degree in English from Peking University in 1985. He has also been visiting professor of East Asian Studies at New York University (2007), Orion Visiting Artist in the Department of Writing at the University of Victoria (2009), Distinguished Chinese Writer at Hong Kong Baptist University (2022), and editorial board member of the Hsu-Tang Library of Classical Chinese Literature at Oxford University Press. He served as Professor at the Central Academy of Fine Arts School of Humanities in Beijing, also directing its library. He is currently Distinguished Professor at Beijing Normal University's International Writing Center.

His honors include the Lu Xun Literature Prize (2001), the Chinese Book Industry Annual Author Award (2018), the Spring Breeze Poetry Prize (2024), the Wen Yiduo Poetry Prize (2024), the Top Ten of the Weimar International Essay Prize Contest (1999), the Swedish Cikada Prize for Poetry (2018), and the Tokyo Poetry Prize (2018). His widely translated poems and essays have appeared in many anthologies as well as journals across thirty-some countries, including *The Paris Review*, *Harper's Magazine*, *Kenyon Review*, *McSweeney's Internet Tendency*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, and *Lettre International* (Germany). In 2012, New Directions published *Notes on the Mosquito: Xi Chuan/Selected Poems*, which was shortlisted for the 2013 Best Translated Book Award in the U.S. and won the Lucien Stryk Asian Translation Prize from the American Literary Translators Association. In 2019, the Berlin Poetry Festival praised Xi Chuan as “one of the great poets of the present day”.

## **Ge Fei 格非**

Born in 1964 in Zhenjiang, Jiangsu Province, Ge Fei was admitted to the Department of Chinese Language and Literature at East China Normal University in 1981. He is currently a professor in the Department of Chinese Language and Literature at Tsinghua University and the director of the Tsinghua University Center for Literary Creation and Research. A key figure in Chinese avant-garde fiction, Ge Fei is known for his experimental narrative techniques and philosophical explorations of history and reality. His novel *The Invisibility Cloak* was published in English by NYRB, earning him international recognition. He has received several literary awards, including the prestigious Mao Dun Literature Prize and Lu Xun Literature Prize, for his contributions to contemporary Chinese fiction. His writing is deeply influenced by both Western modernist literature and classical Chinese narrative traditions, making his work unique in its fusion of styles. Ge Fei's novels and essays are widely discussed in literary studies, both in China and abroad.

## **Li Tuo 李陀**

A literary critic and scholar, Li Tuo is known for his contributions to modern Chinese literary criticism and cultural analysis. He has been affiliated with Columbia University and has played a key role in shaping contemporary debates on literature, ideology, and politics in China. His essays and scholarly works have been published in *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* and other major academic journals. He has been an influential voice in discussions on post-Mao literary developments and the role of intellectuals in Chinese society. His research focuses on how literature interacts with political and social change in modern China.

## **Guo Xiaolu 郭小橧**

Xiaolu Guo has published 12 books with Penguin Random House. Her novels include: *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* (Shortlisted for the Women's Prize), *Village of Stone* (shortlisted for the International Dublin Literary Award), *Twenty Fragments of a Ravenous Youth*, and *I Am China*. Her memoir *Once Upon A Time In The East* won the National Book Critics Circle Award 2017. Her 2020 novel *A Lover's Discourse*, shortlisted for the Goldsmiths Prize. *Radical* was published by Chatto 2023, followed by *My Battle of Hastings*. Her 2025 novel is *Call Me Ishmaelle*, a retelling of Melville's *Moby Dick*. Named as a Granta's Best of

Young British Novelist in 2013, she also directed a dozen films, including *How Is Your Fish Today* (Sundance, Grand Prix of International Women Film Festival France) and *UFO In Her Eyes*. Her feature *She, A Chinese* received the Golden Leopard at the Locarno Festival 2009. She had her film retrospectives at London's Whitechapel Gallery 2019 and Cinematheque Switzerland 2011, and at the Greek Film Archive 2018. Guo has been a visiting professor at Columbia University in New York, and is a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

### **Zhang Hanwen**

Hanwen Zhang is an artist and filmmaker originally from Changchun, China, who has been wandering nomadically across Germany lately. Drawing from artistic research and field studies, his work examines specific landscapes, infrastructures, and mundane activities through images and texts, weaving them within a network of local, personal, transnational, historical, and ideological contexts. Zhang holds an MFA from the School of Visual Arts, New York, and is a German Chancellor Fellow (AvH Foundation, 2024-25).

## **Participating Scholars (Examples)**

### **Dominic Sachsenmaier (University of Göttingen)**

Dominic Sachsenmaier is a professor of Modern China and Global History at the University of Göttingen and one of the foremost scholars in transnational Chinese history. His research focuses on China's global interactions from the early modern period to the present, with books such as *Global Entanglements of a Man Who Never Traveled* (Columbia University Press) and *Global Perspectives on Global History* (Cambridge University Press). In the past, Dominic Sachsenmaier has held professorship appointments at Duke University and the University of California, and he has been a visiting scholar at institutions like Harvard University, Berkeley, and Tsinghua University. He is an elected member of the European Academy and the Göttingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities. He is among the founders of a joint center for advanced studies (together

with Heidelberg, FU Berlin and Würzburg) on “Worldmaking from Global Perspectives: A Dialogue with China” that is sponsored by the German Ministry of Research & Education).

### **Wang Hui (Tsinghua University, Beijing)**

Wang Hui is a professor of History and Literature at Tsinghua University and one of China’s most influential intellectual historians and public intellectuals. He is known for his critical analysis of Chinese modernity, statehood and intellectual traditions, with books such as *China’s New Order*, *China’s Twentieth Century* (London/New York, Verso), and *The Rise of Modern Chinese Thought* (published in English by Harvard University Press) being widely influential on an international level. He was formerly the editor of Dushu (读书), China’s most important intellectual journal, where he played a major role in shaping debates on history, culture, and ideology. Wang Hui has been a visiting scholar at Princeton, Harvard and Stanford, and his work is widely cited in discussions on global intellectual history. In 2024, Wang Hui was elected as a member of the Academia Europaea and in 2008, the U.S. magazine *Foreign Policy* named Wang Hui among the world’s top 100 public intellectuals. In 2013, Wang Hui and Jürgen Habermas were jointly awarded the Luca Pacioli Prize in Venice, and in 2017 the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation awarded Prof. Wang the Anneliese Maier Research Award. Moreover, his conversations with politicians like Helmut Schmidt or Sigmar Gabriel have been published in Germany.

### **Lydia H. Liu (Columbia University, New York)**

Lydia Liu is the Wun Tsun Tam Professor in the Humanities at Columbia University and a leading scholar in translingual studies, literary theory, and postcolonial thought. She has been instrumental in examining cultural and linguistic interactions between China and the West, particularly through the lens of translation and semiotics. Her books, including *Translingual Practice* (Stanford University Press) *The Clash of Empires* (Harvard University Press) and *Tokens of Exchange* (Duke University Press), have significantly influenced studies on imperialism, language, and modernity. She has held visiting professorships at institutions such as Harvard and Tsinghua University and is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Liu is also the founding director of the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society at Columbia, where she fosters interdisciplinary research bridging East Asian studies and global intellectual history.