

## Frankfurt Consensus

For too long the specter of Darwinism has haunted the narrative of Chinese literary history. It is told as a story of “evolution,” a triumphant confluence of folk and vernacular literature, along a chain of genre development from dynasty to dynasty. The 1917 New Culture Movement is seen as the teleological end of this evolution. Accordingly, vernacular literature has been taken to represent literary modernity, hence enjoying a monopoly in academic research. Classical-style poetry that continued to be written in the twentieth-century has been almost entirely neglected. Generations of writers produced verse in various classical-styles and genres over the last century. Many poets, known for their vernacular verses, turned to traditional forms and expressions, especially in moments of hardship or distress, to reinvent a voice or to find an emotional outlet. Little of their endeavor, however, has been honored by literary historiography. It is true that the winner writes history. But it is a scholar’s obligation to address selective cultural amnesia.

Therefore we, a group of scholars and students of Chinese poetry, gathered at Goethe University Frankfurt in July 2014, to discuss the issue of classical-style poetry in the modern era and the intellectual transformation in 20th century China. Despite of differences in training, background, and opinion, we reached the following consensus:

First, classical-style verse in the twentieth-century is an integral part of modern Chinese literature and therefore should be included in its historiography. Such an inclusion will enrich the multifaceted voice of Chinese modernism.

Second, the study of modern Chinese literature—or, in effect, of the whole Chinese literary history—must go beyond the teleological narrative of evolutionism. The diversity and historicity of objective facts tell far more complex stories that need to be (re-)written.

Third, we acknowledge that the authors’ choice of classical literary language instead of modern vernacular for their versification was not necessarily due to the inertia of the tradition. It rather reflected a keenly felt need to construct a cultural/aesthetic identity in continuity with the tradition. Therefore, twentieth-century poetry in the classical literary language, including experimental and semi-classical contemporary verses and lyrics, may be regarded as a form of “classicist poetry,” on a par with other styles and schools of modern poetry.

Fourth, the study of this body of modern classicist poetry recognizes a continuity with late Qing and earlier literature, its dialogues with the vernacular, its vitality, and its modernity.

Fifth, we encourage the research of this body of poetry, including (re)editing and (re)publication, and promote interdisciplinary and cross-cultural studies. We hope to open a field of interest to scholars from diverse academic backgrounds and to inspire prolific discussion.

Classicist poetry is a nexus between tradition and modernity and is an entity, just like Walter Benjamin's "Angel of History," that is irresistibly propelled into the future. What we are concerned with is not only to set right the misconception of the deterministic view regarding the development of the Chinese literary tradition, but also to affirm its vitality, continuity, and power of rebirth. Hence we invite all our fellow scholars to join in the project, namely the rewriting of modern Chinese literary history.

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## Appendix: Frankfurt Consensus in Chinese version

## 法蘭克福共識

一個幽靈，達爾文主義的幽靈，在中國文學史敘事中遊蕩。百年來治史者，陳言相因，皆倡文體進化以俗文學為主線之說，而 1917 年後更以“言文一致”之白話文學為正宗。自此說之興，所謂唐詩宋詞元曲明清小說，文體以朝代為界。孜孜以宋元明清詩為業者，固已鮮矣，遑論治 1917 年後尚為洋洋大觀之文言詩詞者哉！縱百年間，文言詩詞，作者輩出，其文學成就與白話詩家相頡頏者有之、擅勝場者有之；以白話文學名家者，艱難潦倒之際，復作文言詩詞以自勵者，歷歷有之；而學俗兩界所共認成一家之詩者，亦如晨星之寥矣！成王兮敗寇，孰能分說；選擇性失憶，莫此為甚！

吾儕四海學人，有鑑於此，乃於西元二零一十四年七月之初，共聚法蘭克福大學，各舉所學，切磋琢磨，求同存異，達成如下共識：

其一，20 世紀以來的文言詩詞寫作，系中國現代文學之固有一部，亟需納入現代文學史敘述之中，以豐富中國現代主義的多維面相。

其二，現代文學、乃至整部中國文學史寫作，亟需擺脫進化論、目的論的思維慣性，以批評之眼光、獨立之精神，採納多元性、歷史性的寫作方式。

其三，我們應當認識到，文言創作並非皆出於傳統之惰性，而往往是作者有意的文體抉擇，以建構與傳統相延續的文化身份。故現代之文言詩詞創作，包括各種在文學傳統內部開出新路的文體實驗，以及當下利用傳統詩學因素、再造具備古典韻味的歌詩創作，當稱為“古典主義詩歌”，與其他主義、流派共立于現當代文學之林。

其四，對現代古典主義詩歌的研究，既需注意其與晚清文學的延續性，亦需注意其與白話文學的對話性，更需注意其生生不息的時代性。

其五，對現代古典主義詩歌的研究，亟需學人裒輯資料、建立範式。我們提倡跨學科、跨文化的理論探究，鼓勵具有多種學科背景的學人參與討論，提高學科的開放度。

微此，則現代之文言詩歌傳統，名不得而正、範式不得而立、學人不得而自信。登高振臂，非必能者為之，蓋勇者、悍者、狂者往往為天下先。吾儕遂勇於自薦，舉百慮之一得，向海內外學界疾呼：毋以固有之敘事，束縛客觀之研究；毋以吾人之未學，疑諸先賢之未能。法蘭克福先賢本雅明氏有言，所謂歷史進步之鏈者，適為連篇之毀滅。吾人之所關注者，則不僅有傳統之毀滅，亦有傳統之連綿與新生。值此中華文化復興、學術再造之際，吾輩誠邀四海學人齊心戮力，共此職事，曰：重寫中國現代文學史。