

# **WOMEN AND WORDS IN MODERN CHINESE LITERATURE**

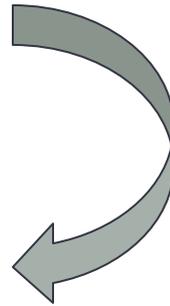
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University of Hawai'i Summer Infusion Institute  
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**Pre-modern era**



*Dividing line: 1919*

**Modern era**

**Women**  **Words**

## the written language 文

- high prestige of the script
- intimate link between fine writing and moral/political concerns

# Basic outline for today

- **Pre-modern**
  - example: Li Qingzhao (1084-1155)
- **Modern**
  - example: Qiu Jin (1875-1907)
- **Contemporary**
  - example: Wang Anyi (1954-)

Who is speaking ...

“His other women envy my moth  
eyebrows;

Gossiping, slandering, they say I love  
wicked ways.”

“A white dew forms on jade stairs,  
As night draws on, it penetrates silk stockings.  
But she lets down the crystal curtain;  
It tingles and sparkles as she gazes at the  
autumn moon.”

... and the answer is

Qu Yuan

屈原

(340-278

BCE)

君不見黃河之水天上來奔流  
到海不復回君不見高堂明鏡  
悲白髮朝如青絲暮成雪人老  
意添喜欲笑莫使金樽空對月  
天生我材必有用千金散盡還來  
取且樂生前日為樂會須三  
百杯本天子身在玉樽邊  
傳與歡曲請君為我醉且醉  
鐘鼓饒玉不足貴但使長醉  
不後醒古來聖賢皆寂寞惟有  
飲者留其名陳王昔時宴平樂  
斗酒十千恣歡娛主人何為  
言少錢徑須沽酒飲君不見  
馬千金裘呼兒將出沽美酒  
換美酒何須沽古詩  
李白飲酒詩一首  
李白詩一首  
李白詩一首



Li Bo 李白  
(701-762)



李清照

Li Qingzhao

(1084-1155)

- High literati-official background
- Legendary marriage
- Poet and poetry theorist

## Li Qingzhao: To the Tune “A Lone Gosling”

A wicker couch, a paper screen - I wake from morning slumber  
To an unhappiness I can't explain.

Incense, heavy, stops and starts; the jade burner cold,  
Keeps company to my river of feeling.

The sound of a flute playing ‘Fallen Plum Blossoms’  
Breaks the hearts of plum buds  
So much spring sentiment.

A light wind sends the thin rain soughing to the ground  
Calling down a thousand lines of tears.

The piper is gone, the jade tower stands empty;  
With whom shall I lean with my heartbreak?

I break off a branch -

In heaven above or the world of men  
There's no one fit to offer it to.

## 李清照：孤雁兒

籐床紙帳朝眠起  
說不盡  
無佳思  
沉香煙斷玉爐寒  
伴我情懷如水  
笛聲三弄  
梅心驚破  
多少春情意

小風疏雨蕭蕭地  
又催下  
千行淚。  
吹簫人去玉樓空，  
腸斷與誰同倚？  
一枝折得，  
人間天上，  
沒個人堪寄。

## The poet's preface to the above poem:

“When people write poems on the plum blossom, they easily fall into mediocrity. I have tried to write one myself, and have thus discovered these words to be true.”

## Li: To the tune “Resenting the Young Prince”

Wind rises on the lake, a vast expanse of waves;  
Autumn nears its end,  
Flowers are scarce, fragrance rare.  
Mountain light and water’s hue are my intimates --  
Words can’t convey this  
Inexhaustible wonder.

The lotus seed ripens, its leaves are old;  
Clear dew washes  
Duckweed blooms and shore grasses  
Waterbirds dozing on the banks don’t give a backward  
glance --  
As if they, too, resent  
One’s early return.

# 怨王孫

湖上風來波浩渺  
秋已暮  
紅稀香少  
水光山色與人親  
說不盡、無窮好

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蓮子已成荷葉老  
青露洗  
蘋花汀草  
眠沙鷗鷺不回頭  
似也恨、人歸早

**feminine persona**

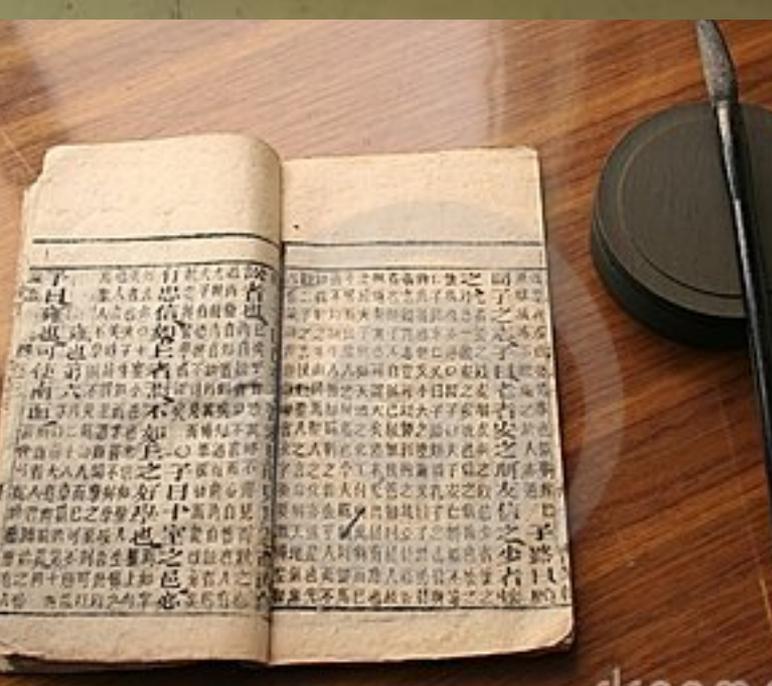
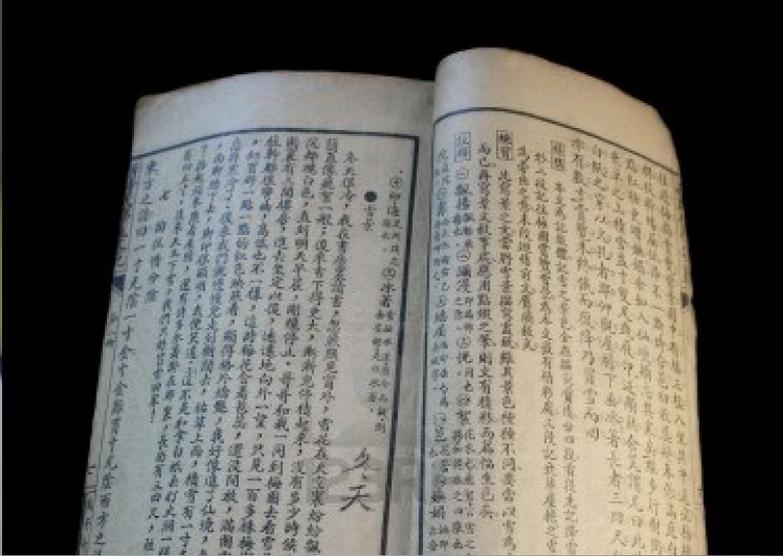
*versus*

**female voice**

Spring rain and spring cold --  
plum blossom fall,  
for several nights defenceless  
against the urgings of spring breeze.  
In the quiet garden

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I gather up petals  
from broken blossoms --  
I will use them  
to wash the faces of my children.



帆影樓紀事敘

病卧帆影樓展讀寒崖先生來札有民國二月廿三日論吳文卿良賚臣兩烈士供事其論曰夫啁噍之至也微卵猶然孺子之泣也行傷之親故不失老孔之教陷井下石盜跖不敬續一語足之曰求吾心之所安不敢汨吾所以引南朝答謝茂文書有寧犯當世之不韙求吾心之所安語 雅公引新安注謂天理也不敢汨吾所天云者猶言以臂然一立

秋之岸見忌清庭下平卷擊辨之命吾友羨國來羨德女士論列此事謂而蘇宗門有靈魂不死天國禁華之可憐而未日判斷將使不平者盡平故為義者常有以自樹而不屈芝瑛病榻哀鳴而起此片附呈表者所錄讓畫故事以見外于生平不負人若此願我

有言責者以公理判斷之則不平者自平而芝瑛所寫此冊者亦贅矣謹啟

秋風曲

秋風起發百草黃秋風之性勁且  
剛能使羣花皆縮首助他秋菊  
傲秋霜秋菊枝々本黃種重樓  
疊瓣風雲涼秋月如鏡照江明  
一脈清秋搖動昨夜風々雨々秋  
秋霜秋露盡含愁青々有葉  
畏搖落枝頭胡鳥不勝愁祇有  
秋來最蕭瑟漢塞唐關秋  
思發塞外秋高馬正肥將軍  
連索黃金甲披上金甲戰胡狗  
胡騎百萬抱頭走將軍大笑呼  
漢兒飲黃龍自由酒

書感

生切書自漢檣  
昔世人喚作  
此檣志即古  
北地之書也  
江心如海付  
同潛解曰家  
吉也其行  
到自志  
黃庭堅詞  
曉雲

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# Calligraphy – Words as life energy in rhythmic motion

- **Prestigious art form, but also a practice widely shared and routinized**
- **quintessential literati art, playing a major role in sustaining social cohesiveness of the literati class**
- **women artists central in forming and transmitting the tradition from its inception**

# Late Qing Timeline

- 1840, First Opium War
- 1860, Second Opium War
- 1850-64, Taiping Rebellion
- 1898, Sino-Japanese War
- 1900, Boxer Uprising
- 1911, Fall of the Qing Empire, Founding of the Republic of China



# Qiu Jin 秋瑾 (1875-1907)

- 1875 Born into a literati family in the Yangtze Delta
- 1902-04 Beijing
- 1904-06 Japan
- 1907 beheaded for involvement in military uprising

## Qiu: To the tune Full River Red

Recently I've come to the capital,  
And already it is again the fine Festival of Mid-Autumn.  
Chrysanthemums are in full bloom below the hedge,  
The countenance of autumn is as clean as if just dusted.  
With songs being sung all around them, Chu finally met  
defeat,  
My experiences of these eight years all a hopeless yearning  
for Zhejiang.  
Alas, they sent me off by force to be mere 'rouge and  
powder,'  
How I despise it!

Cont.

My body will not allow me  
To mingle with the men,  
But my heart is far braver  
Than that of a man.

All my life, has not my liver and gall  
Burned for others?

But how could they with their vulgar minds  
understand me?

In adversity the hero must suffer troubles and woes  
Where in this endless world of red dust can I find a  
true friend?

My blue gown is soaked with tears.

# 滿江紅

小住京華，  
早又是中秋佳節。  
為籬下黃花開遍，  
秋容如拭。

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四面歌殘終破楚，  
八年風味徒思浙。  
苦將儂強派作蛾眉，  
殊未屑！

身不得  
男兒列，  
心卻比，  
男兒烈！

---

算平生肝膽，  
因人常熱。  
俗子胸襟誰識我？  
英雄末路當折磨。  
莽紅塵何處覓知音？  
青衫濕！



## Qiu: Self-inscription on a Photograph, Dressed as Man

Who could this person be, looking so sternly ahead?

The martial bones I bring from a former existence regret the flesh that covers them.

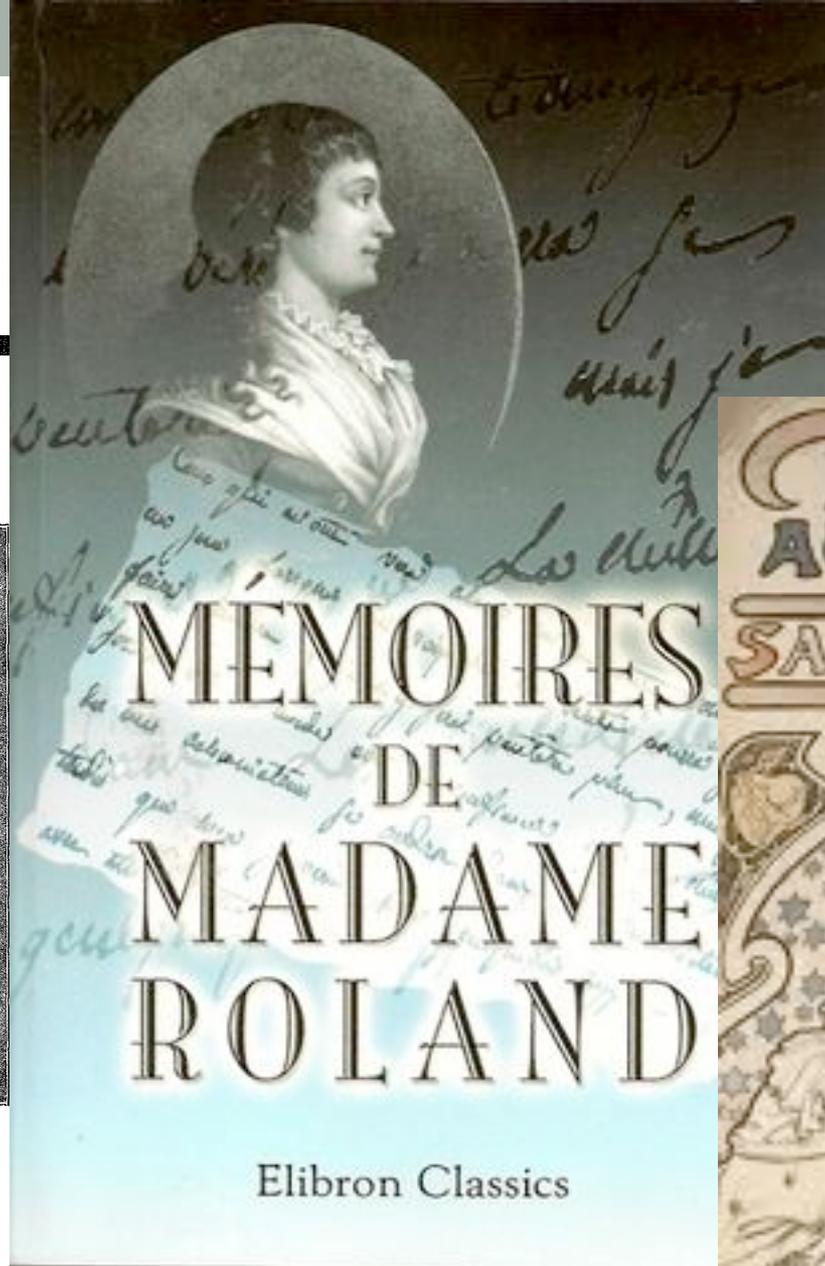
The physical form that I now inhabit is but a phantom,  
But the world that has not yet emerged, that might be real.

To my regret I met you late – our feelings are so intense;  
As I look up and sigh over our times, my energy is stirred.  
Some day when you see my friends from the old days  
Tell them I've scrubbed off all that old dirt.



SOPHIA PEROVSKAYA

She was hanged in her twenties, but her name is as immortal as the eternal sun..



# Timeline

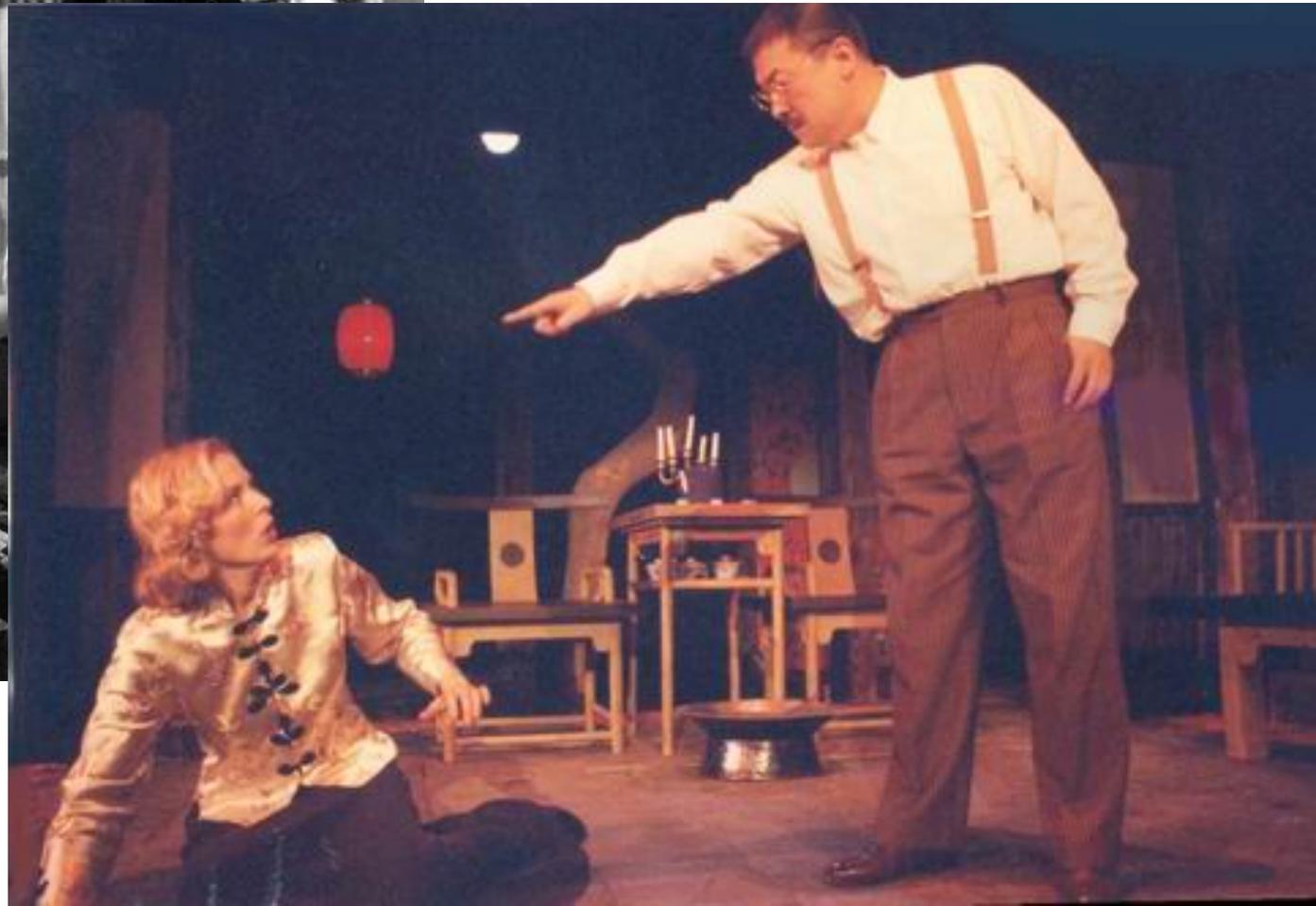
- 1911 Founding of the Republic of China
- 1919 May-Fourth Movement
- 1937-45 Sino-Japanese War
- 1949 Founding of the People's Republic

# The New Culture Movement :

- Critique of Confucianism
- Promotion of individual freedom and women's liberation
- Rise of the vernacular literature



# Ibsen: *A Doll's House*



# The New Woman





丁玲：  
出走又归来的“娜拉”

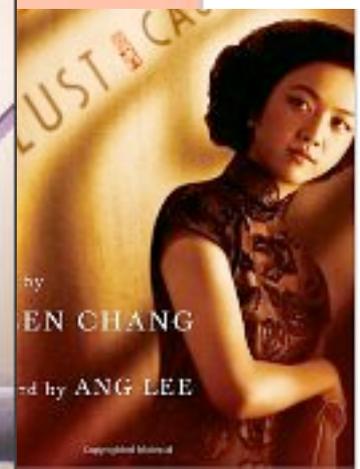
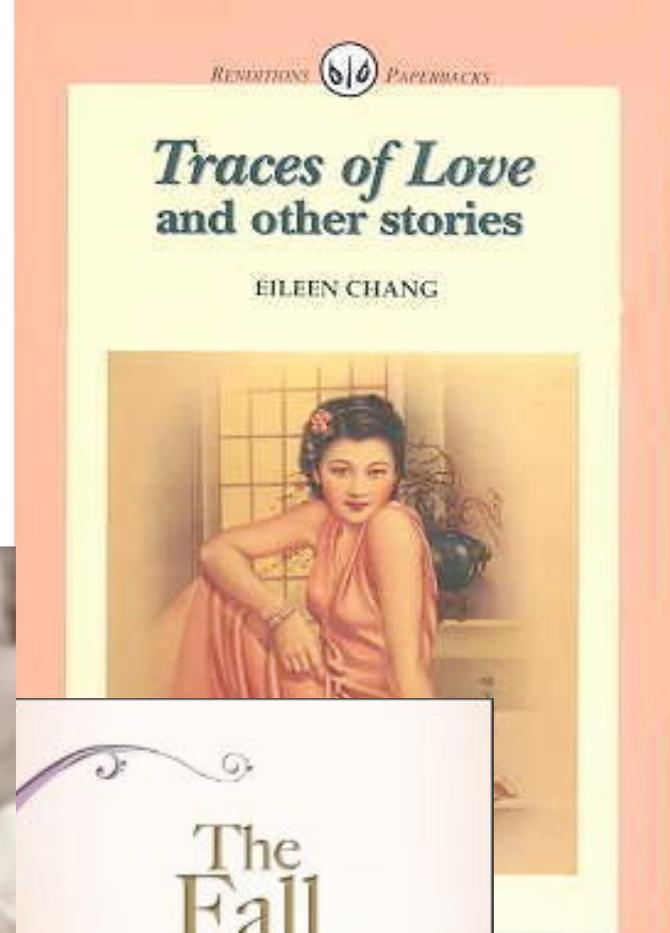
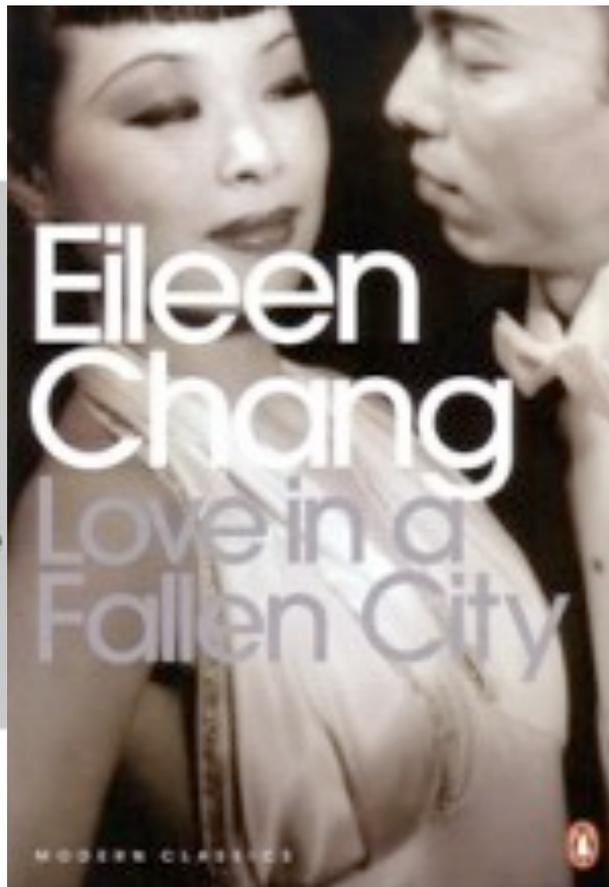
Ding Ling (1904 – 86): “Miss Sophie’s Diary”



**Zhang Ailing**  
**張愛玲**  
**(Eileen Chang,**  
**1920 – 95)**

# Major works

- *Love in a Fallen City*
- "The Golden Cangue"
- *Written on Water*
- *Red Rose White Rose*



# Basic outline for today

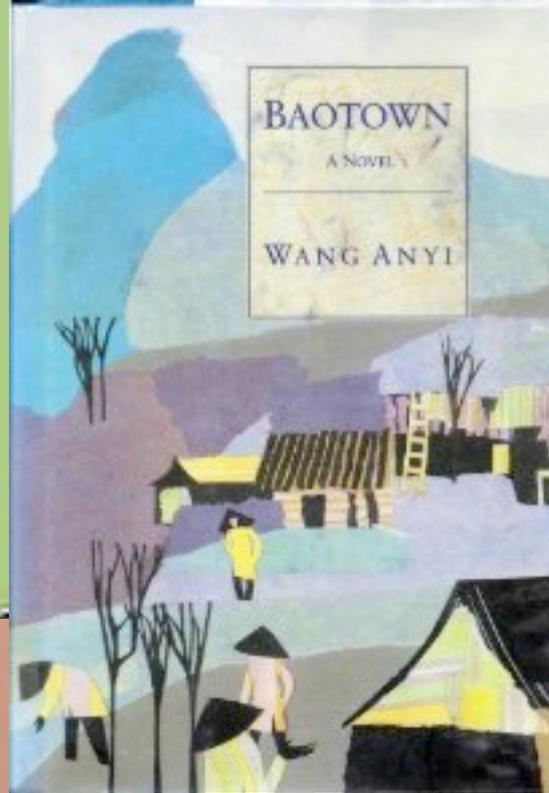
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# Time line

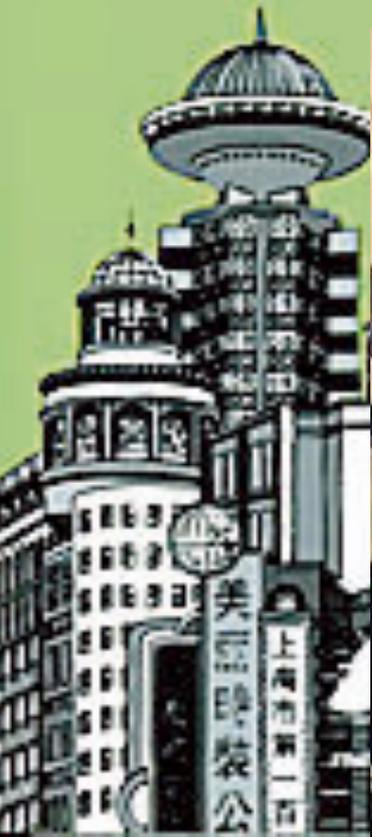
- 1949: Founding of PRC
- 1950: Marriage Law
- 1955: Compulsory elementary education
- 1966-76: Cultural Revolution
- 1978-89: Economic Reform

WANG Anyi

*A la recherche  
de Shanghai*



**Wang Anyi  
(1954 - )**



# Wang Anyi 王安忆

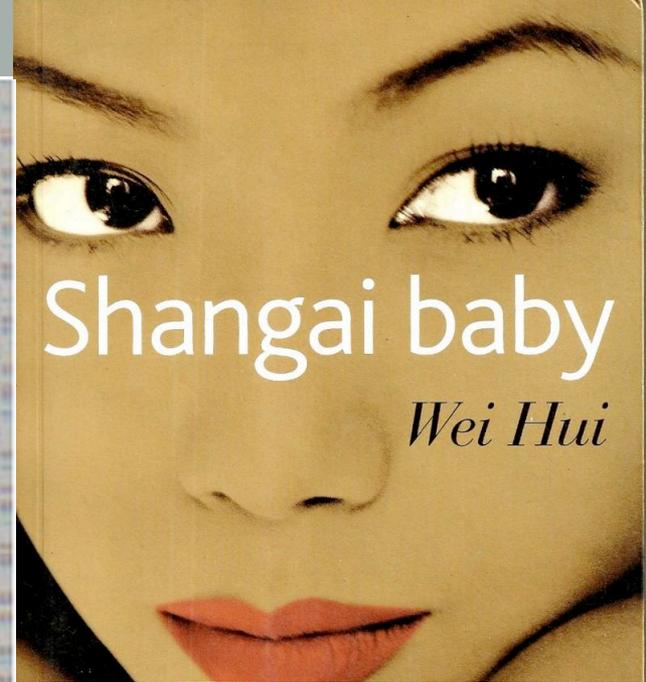
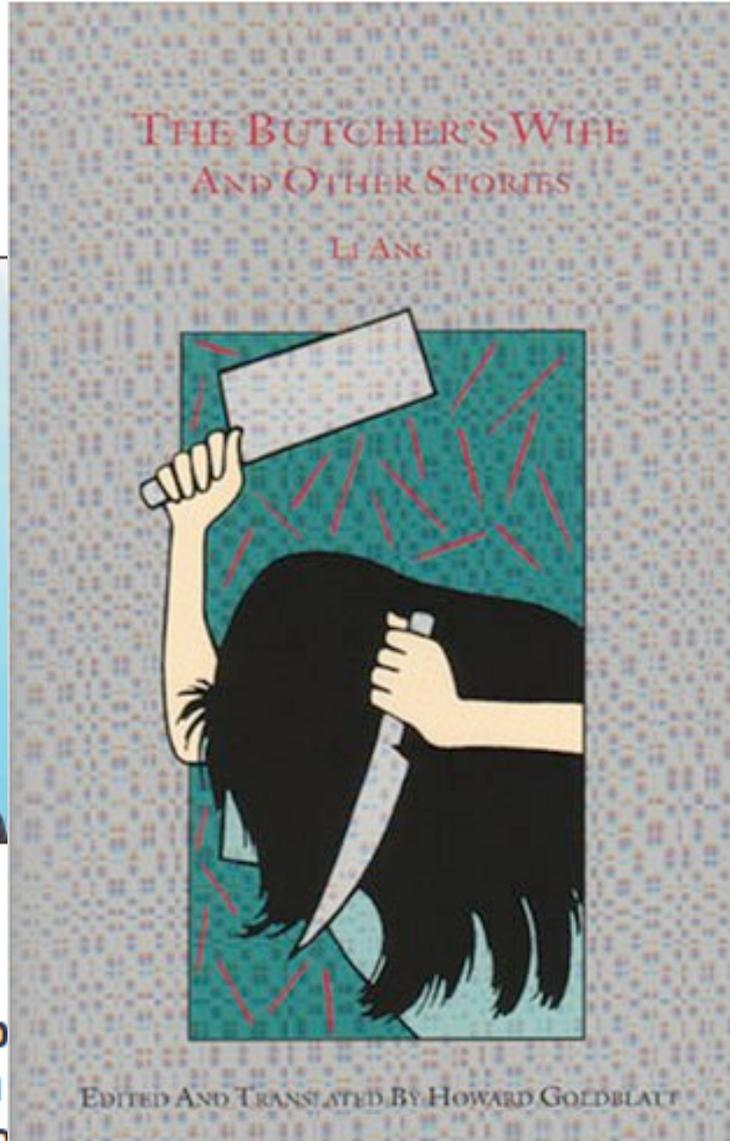
- 1954 born in Shanghai, mother is a noted writer
- 1970-78 sent to the countryside to “learn from the peasants”
- 1981 “The Rain Patters on”
- 1989 *Baotown*
- 1995 *Song of Everlasting Sorrow*
- 2001- Chairperson of the Writers’ Asso. of Shanghai
- 2011 Man Booker International prize finalist

And many more...



Those things that everyone defines as 'barbaric' may well be a kind of civilization that has been lost to us."

CHI ZIJIAN  
AUTHOR OF *RIGHT BANK OF THE ERGUN*



Shangai baby  
*Wei Hui*

