

Asian Studies, Department of English
Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, & Library and Technology Services

Understanding Viral Media through Chinese Poetry

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The last 20 years of Chinese contemporary poetry have been overwhelmingly digital. Poets post pre-print poems online, reproduce the poems of others, and angrily dispute the nature of poetry in conflagrations whose nature is recognizable to anyone who has ever read an online comments section. What has happened to Chinese poetry during its digital transition reveals some of the elemental forces that generate, shape, and circulate viral texts and images. This talk will look at the afterlife of a famous poem by Gu Cheng to discuss what is deleted or lost when a poem becomes a viral text; then it will discuss the furor around a poem by Zhao Lihua to talk about viral reproduction as an irony-free practice that is always participatory and transformative. It will then use these concepts to reread Anglophone viral media, including the Star Wars Kid viral video and the Twitter bio phrase "RT is not endorsement."



Nick Admussen is an associate professor of Chinese Literature and Culture at Cornell University. His publications include the monograph *Recite and Refuse: Contemporary Chinese Prose Poetry*, the poetry collection *Stand Back, Don't Fear the Change* and the translation of poet Ya Shi's collection *Floral Mutter*. He is currently the faculty board chair of the Cornell East Asia Series; his next book project is on literary stricture.