

BOOKS FROM TAIWAN



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FROM THE EDITOR

And so time continues on and the second edition of *Books from Taiwan* is here. Last winter, we introduced a range of fiction and non-fiction titles as rich and diverse as the island itself, and this issue is no different. It is this breadth of concerns, styles and even languages that makes the literature coming from Taiwan so vital.

It is with this in mind that we have named our publication, and the website that goes with it, *Books from Taiwan*. Because books are products of individual imaginations, reacting to and creating the world around them, both real and fictional. There is no such thing as any national literature, words and stories are not bound by the borders between countries, nor do they reflect the fundamental essence of a people. National identity itself is a multi-faceted concept, ever-changing and complex, this especially being the case for the inhabitants of Taiwan. Translation is a statement of intent, to challenge the lines that can divide us by nation or language, to find the commonalities that make us human. Stories belong to all of us.

Featured in this issue, we have reportage that takes up this question directly, as well as fiction that deals with it more obliquely. A noticeable trend in contemporary literature in Taiwan is a reimagining of history for all ages, and indeed the very kinds of knowledge that make up our historical record. History is not just a matter of incidents or facts to be remembered, although this is important indeed, but also folk wisdom, collective memory and even interactions with the occult. The prevalence of ghost stories and magic in these pages is striking. Added to the growing number of sci-fi, fantasy and mystery novels, there has been a marked diversification in the kinds of literature making Taiwan's best-seller lists in recent years.

Again, we would like to thank the Ministry of Culture of Taiwan for continuing to make *Books from Taiwan* possible, and also for running the programme of translation grants open to foreign publishers and translators from any language. Applications will be open as of September 2015, and information will be available soon via the *Books from Taiwan* website. All titles featured here are eligible, as well as the many others published every year in Taiwan.

Which only leaves me to say, I hope you enjoy our latest selection!



Anna Holmwood
Editor-in-chief



BOOKS FROM TAIWAN

SWALLOW DANCE

燕子

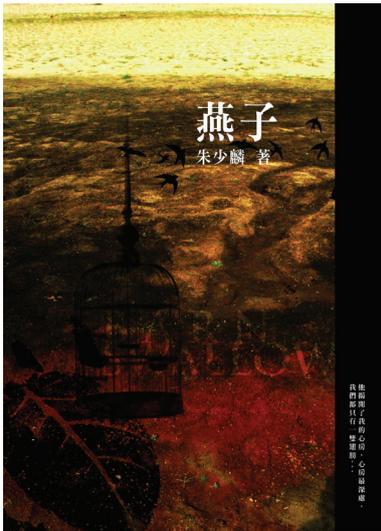


CHU SHAO-LIN

朱少麟

- Category: Literary Fiction
 - Publisher: Chiu Ko
 - Date: 8/2005
 - Rights contact:
Lucienne Chuang (Chiu Ko)
light@chiuko.com.tw
 - Pages: 352pp
 - Length: 250,000 characters
(approx. 160,000 words in
English)
-

Born in 1966, Chu Shao-Lin is a cult figure in literary circles in Taiwan. Her first novel, *Café Triste*, made its quiet debut in 1996 but quickly became a word-of-mouth sensation on Taiwan's university campuses and Internet forums, selling over half a million copies. Her third novel, *Three Hundred Thousand Feet Below the Earth's Surface*, was also a best-seller, achieving sales of over one hundred thousand copies. Known for the philosophical nature of her work, Chu Shao-Lin has been consistently voted a reader's favourite. She is famously media-shy and has retreated into quiet introspection in recent years. Her fans still eagerly await the possibility of a fourth novel.



Twenty-eight year old dancer Fang has reached a turning point in her life. For years now, she has been walking the tightrope between pursuing her dreams and the more mundane pressures of everyday life. By day she works in a political PR firm, and by night as a dancer, without achieving much success in either. But she has just heard that the esteemed dancer and professor Ms Chuo is organising one last major production before her retirement. On the recommendation of Fang's dance teacher, Fang is invited to take part.

Fang decides she must take this, her big chance, and quits her job. But when she arrives at Ms Chuo's studio, she discovers her limits as a dancer. Even the deaf boy can feel the music better than her. Faced with her childhood hero's bad temper and the talents of dancers younger than her, Fang must ask herself, what is she doing here? And more importantly, why does she dance?

Chu Shao-Lin's second book, *Swallow Dance*, was a sensation when it first came out in 1999, reaching sales of over one hundred thousand copies, a remarkable figure for a literary novel. A meditation on self-respect and aesthetics, *Swallow Dance* is a touching yet power exploration of the determination needed to make art. Reissued in an anniversary edition, this is a story that has proven itself against the test of time to become one of Taiwan's most memorable literary novels.

SWALLOW DANCE

By Chu Shao-Lin. Translated by Eleanor Goodman.

As we drove swiftly north, a mass of ominous clouds rose ahead of us, darkening the sky layer by layer. We knew it would be an unusually violent rainstorm, and would interfere with our trip back to the city.

Leaving the highway that skirted the mountains, we drove down a sloped, meandering road. Just as we reached the seaside cliffs, a bolt of lightning split the sky's canopy. The heavy rain turned to mist on the sea. All at once everything turned dark and murky. Def grinned as a burst of thunder shook our car.

He opened the door and the wind and rain forced their way inside, scattering our things and whipping up my long hair. Clive turned around to grab hold of Def, but he tore away and tumbled out of the car. He was soaked through immediately, and the pounding rain delineated his body through his thin clothing. The lines of his muscles were like intricate patterns etched in frost.

Clive turned off the engine and crammed himself into the backseat, pushing us out of the way. He switched on the portable stereo and cranked up the volume. We started to shriek at him, faces contorted around me, but the sound was somehow far away. It was as though I'd suddenly lost my hearing, the blare of the speakers subsumed by the cacophony of the thunder and rain and the ocean.

Only Def said nothing, moving blurrily through the watery curtain of the car window

like a scene in a black and white silent movie. Ignoring the mud, he walked to the very edge of the cliff, where he caught sight of a white skiff being tossed about on the ocean's turbulence. He turned around to give us a wave and, at that moment, the rain let up. I'd never seen a storm come and go so quickly.

Sunlight filtered down onto the water, and even the wind was now meek. We had grown quiet too, and as we emerged from the car, we had a strange feeling of mistrust for the cloudless sky overhead now so clear it was nearly azure. Clive switched the CD and the serene music of a clay flute floated out over the ocean, drifting away on the breeze. We stared out at the sea to where the white skiff was bobbing against the endless blue of the sky. Our eyes were fixed on it as we followed its course out into the distance.

As though floating away ourselves, we began to remember, and the more we remembered, the farther the music withdrew from our ears until it disappeared into an undefined space out of earshot. In the silence, our thoughts returned to a warm, calm place, and we recalled Professor Chuo.

That day marked the six month anniversary of our acquaintance.

In fact, I had known about Professor Chuo since I was a child, and like a little girl worshipping her teenage idol, I had a deep but timid admiration for her. As I got older, I gradually learned that the most far-reaching

change can come from distant and unexpected places. I don't think Professor Chuo ever knew what an influence she had on me.

The ocean breezes brought back memories. The first time I saw Professor Chuo, she was approaching sixty, past the age of retirement. Still, she had made a new career for herself. She had just returned to Taiwan at the peak of her prestige and popularity and had taken immediate command of the national dance circles. She was even still dancing herself. The summer she came back was particularly dry. I was sixteen and had spent half a day on the train to get to Taipei. I whiled away the afternoon hanging out in front of the newly-built National Theatre, and only when people began to line up at dusk did I realise that in my excitement, I hadn't had anything to drink all day. Sitting in the darkness all I could feel was my insides burning. I was so dehydrated I felt mummified, but when the music began from the stage and a silver spotlight shone down on Professor Chuo's black-clad body as she began to dance joyfully the part of the swallow, I began to cry. My restless soul finally burst through its constraints, and the swallow flew into my heart's depths to nest. That was the first performance Professor Chuo gave after she returned. To me, she was a legend.

I desperately wanted to dance as freely as she did.

Everything I knew about Professor Chuo came from superficial media reports. The year she announced she would stop dancing, I had just been accepted by the Foreign Languages Department at my university. Professor Chuo packed up that famous black costume and the swallow in my heart went into hibernation. It was my dream to take courses in English and French, but I knew deep down that there was something missing in my life, a black hole more substantial than any material object that I tried as hard as I could to fill. When I wasn't in class,

I was practicing with the modern dance troupe, and even as I listened to my teachers lecture, my spirit was still dancing. As I rehearsed dance steps, I would recite French conjugations. In my memory, college was like a violent storm.

Over those few years, I made the effort to sit in on Professor Chuo's classes, an introduction to choreography. Her classes were infamous. As she taught, she would hold a cup of coffee in one hand and a cigarette in the other. If she called on someone who couldn't give her an intelligent answer, she would glare, and then bend her still-lit cigarette into a V and toss it directly at the student's head. Nobody could escape her ruthless ferocity, so the students would fight for a seat in the last row, and those who had come to listen in stood crammed in the back, leaving the front two rows oddly empty.

Now that I think of it, it was just as well she threw only her cigarettes, and not the coffee.

After Professor Chuo gave up dancing, she started to put on weight, which lent her a misleading air of kindness. Though she'd stopped performing herself, she was directing several dance troupes and still held a powerful position in the dance world. With an iron will that held sway over countless young minds, she choreographed, wrote dance criticism, and introduced the newest concepts in dance from abroad. She was a tyrant who lived up to the word. When she directed students, she seemed impatient like a dancer performing with furious speed against a slow accompaniment. Even in the art world, very few people could stand to be around her for long.

So when I learned that I had been given the chance to go see her, I was more anxious than pleased. I'd spent my entire life dancing, but Professor Chuo's opinion was the only one that counted. Dancing for her would be more valuable than one thousand performances for anyone else. But what if she didn't like me? Or didn't even notice me? Or launched a cigarette

butt into the middle of my fouetté jeté?

If I were able to manoeuvre my way into Professor Chuo's dance troupe, it would be an incomparable honour, but also an incredible strain. Many dancers before me had been sent packing. My dance coach mulled the issue for a long time before finally recommending that I go see her. Professor Chuo had gathered a considerable sum of money to stage a piece called *The Road to Heaven*, which had been advertised in the papers for weeks. Although I thought well of my abilities, I didn't hold much hope to be cast, since Professor Chuo would choose only the best dancers among her many excellent pupils. My main competitors must have already made it through the door. Preparing for the performances would be no small feat either. The salaried dancers would have to rehearse for six months, and more performances kept being added. Professor Chuo was leading rehearsals personally and everyone said that this was going to be the culmination of her career.

I stood outside Professor Chuo's dance studio. It was a place I had revered for many years and yet it was smaller than I'd imagined, a diminutive building stuck at the end of an alley. The freshly painted mahogany door had been left open, revealing a large *wutong* tree in the middle of the courtyard, silently shedding its withered leaves onto the few scooters parked under its limbs. There was no sign for the studio and the tranquil courtyard felt like a forbidden palace.

The late evening sunlight gilded the roof, and the breeze quietly stirred up the dried leaves. All was quiet. The colours of dusk swept over the earth like an ebbing tide until all that could be seen was the silent studio.

I've tried to remember, but I still have no idea how I managed to cross Professor Chuo's small courtyard in that high summer dusk. Although I do recall the crisp peal of the bell.

The chimes rang as I pushed open the folding

door, and in my surprise I almost reached out to stop the sound. Everyone in the studio glanced up at me, but before I could say hello, they'd lost interest and returned to their positions. The setting sun elongated my shadow on the floor and someone passed through it quietly. Golden specks of dust floated through the slanted light, as someone chatted somewhere. I suddenly felt like an interloper again, which was how I felt at every new stage in life. I was too hesitant, I made decisions too late, my actions were too ambivalent. I played the role of the outsider, always at the edges.

It had gotten dark and a few dancers were practicing in the middle of the spacious studio floor, dancing separately without music. One was warming up, another was crouching down panting, while a few others were sitting by the wall-length mirror eating takeout. I changed into my practice shoes in the vestibule, and as I quickly pulled my hair away from my face, I began to feel something strange.

I can't describe it. It wasn't a sound, though each person there was creating minute sound waves; it wasn't a vision, although the setting sun and the lights wove together in dizzying patterns; and it wasn't a smell. It was a deeper kind of perception. I looked around and saw a bare-chested young dancer with his leg up against the wall. It was something I had seen many times before, but there was an oddly compelling stillness to his movements. When I'd pushed open the door to the jingling chimes, he was the only one who hadn't turned to look.

Stretching like that was torture even for someone experienced, so it is common for dancers to scrunch up their eyes in pain, but the boy had his eyes closed in a peaceful expression. There really is some hidden talent here, I thought. His body showed a stunning symmetry, flexibility and strength—he had too much muscle for a dancer, yet his movements were still nimble

and clean, as though his entire body had been worked into sinew. His long legs should have been a detriment, but with its wonderful gracefulness, his body appeared to be a gift from God, a pure instrument of dance.

Watching him stretch, I remembered why I had come, so I crossed the studio to find Professor Chuo's office. Clutching my dance portfolio, I wavered in front of the frosted glass door. Overcome both by excitement and an impulse to retreat, I was on another edge, and if I continued, I didn't know where I would end up. Just as I was about to knock, a sonorous voice from inside the office commanded, *'Come in!'*

As I opened the door, I was overwhelmed by the prospect of seeing one of my heroes. Smoke curled out of the room and a spotlight shone directly at me, the bright light filling my eyes. This is what heaven must be like, I thought, holding my breath as I resisted the urge to cough.

The three people in the office swung around to look at me as the smoke wound around them, each with the same annoyed expression on their faces. I could tell that the one smoking was Professor Chuo, and she took a drag on her cigarette as she sized me up. I thought that she had put on weight, but now I saw that she was disturbingly thin.

'My name is Chang Mu-Fang. Mr Pan told me to come to see you, Professor.'

'You're sixteen days late.'

How had Professor Chuo gotten so gaunt? Her cheeks were thin and her eyes sunken, and when she opened her mouth, the muscles and tendons in her neck stood out in sharp relief.

'I'm sorry, Mr Pan... Mr Pan only told me a few days ago, I mean, a day or two ago, that I should come.' Although I tried to speak clearly, my words tangled together.

Still, I was telling her the truth. Since Mr Pan had conveyed the news urgently to me, I had spent a day and a half battling my fear, then half

a day gathering up my courage and requesting a day off. After that, I had hurried straight to the studio.

'Well, we're in a meeting at the moment. Go outside and wait.' She turned before she had finished her sentence.

I shut the door again, feeling annoyed at myself. The graceful entrance and exit I had practiced on my way over had devolved to awkwardness in the face of her severity. The smoke around me began to dissipate, and I was just a bit of ash flicked out from its thick cloud. I clutched my portfolio, unsure if I should take advantage of the time to warm up. But I was reluctant to get myself sweaty and out of breath, so instead I just perched on the windowsill by the office.

Once again I watched the serene boy practicing with a few other dancers. There was still no music; the only sound came from the reverberation of feet hitting the floor. They were practicing a simple step, but I knew that it was in the most straightforward moves that a dancer's true talent could be recognised. After watching for a while, sweat began to bead down my temples.

They bowed down together, and although the boy was taller than all of the others, he could bend the lowest, as though he were about to dive into the floor. When they reached up, the boy stretched the highest, making the other straining bodied seem like weeds. He was a lotus freeing itself from the water, as still and taut as a stalk.

His short hair was damp, and when he spun, sweat dripped onto his face making him squint. The good-looking boys I knew were either boring or mean, as though to balance out their looks. But this boy was clearly different, since for all his beauty, he carried himself with elegance.

SO HOT, SO COLD

那麼熱，那麼冷



Born in Lukang in 1955, Wang now lives in Taichung. He started writing at the age of seventeen, and from eighteen his short stories began winning prizes all over the island, including the *China Times* and *Unitas* awards. He has worked in fields as diverse as building design, surveying and advertising. His early writings were love songs to nature and youth, but in his twenties he took a distinctly more politically conscious turn, mixing reportage and commentary with novels about the downtrodden in society. He stopped writing for many years while he built up his own company, until 2003, when he returned to widespread acclaim with a series of books including *So Hot, So Cold* and his most recent collection, *Who Blinked in the Dark*.

WANG TING-KUO 王定國

- Category: Literary Fiction, Short Stories
 - Publisher: Ink
 - Date: 10/2013
 - Rights contact:
Chen Chien-Yu (Ink)
jedefish0221@gmail.com
 - Pages: 280pp
 - Length: 95,000 characters
(approx. 60,000 words in English)
-
- Winner of the 2013 China Times Open Book Award
 - Winner of the 2014 Taipei Book Fair Award
 - Winner of the 2014 Golden Tripod Award



While the short story form is held in high esteem in Taiwan, there are few published collections that have attracted the kind of attention Wang Ting-Kuo's *So Hot, So Cold* has, with awards coming fast and steady over 2013 and 2014. Not only was this a result of Wang's standing in literary circles, but also because of the stories themselves, hewn from the solemn weight of emotion contained within them, yet forged with the lightest, most elegant prose.

Wang's characters embark on extramarital affairs, buckle under intense peer pressure, bear grudges against their fathers, and deal with illness and marital breakdown across five intense stories of Taiwanese families in crisis. These are the stories of the everyday, written with an extraordinary poetry, the emotional tempests beneath the calm exteriors of every family.

Compared to Wang's earlier, more politically conscious work, *So Hot, So Cold* sees him turn to the human heart, to explore the battle between passion and detachment and the gulf between ambition and disappointment that exists inside all of us. It is this breadth that makes Wang Ting-Kuo such a crucial figure in Taiwanese literature.

SO HOT, SO COLD

By Wang Ting-Kuo. Translated by Jeremy Tiang.

In an alleyway lined by seven households, the intercom suddenly chomped into the afternoon chirping of insects. Tsai Ou-Yang Ching-Mei, at that moment feeding the cat, went still as her body tensed. After a few seconds, another buzz; the mechanism pressing down on the throat of the wires. She knew this was probably a short circuit caused by the previous night's thunderstorm, but even so, it felt like an ill omen. She batted the cat away and hesitated, knowing very well this was the old Monkey returning home after twenty years. In the end it might be better to hold on a little longer, hoping he'd rub his nose and leave to continue his solitary walk through the world.

But Tsai Kung-Wan wasn't giving up; if he were the sort to do that, he wouldn't have steeled himself to show up here. The brim of his malt-coloured cap pressed down between his eyebrows, a cloth bag hung diagonally across his chest, and in his hand was what might as well be the very same simple bundle of possessions he'd left with, back when he'd run off into the night. He pressed the buzzer three times, unleashing his anger onto the intercom. Every household cried back to him, some humming in a low tone, others asking who on earth he was looking for? Wouldn't that be Tsai Ou-Yang Ching-Mei? Rather than call her name, being certain she was listening, he could only clear his throat and

say: 'It's... me.' He didn't expect that burst of noise, nor that everyone would hang up on him, whether they ought to or not.

Tsai Ou-Yang Ching-Mei held back half an hour before finally pressing the button to open the gate. Several months later, she would continue to ponder whether, in that blank space of waiting, he'd gone to find a telegraph pole to piss against, or if he really did just stand by the gate the whole time, gambling that she'd eventually surrender. Only the security gate had prevented him from barging in.

This house had been a grand gesture on the part of her son, Tsai Tzu-Shi, after he'd made his fortune. Not only did it possess front and back yards, even the side wall had a parade of plum and cherry blossom lined up before it, a spectacle that the old Monkey had never seen before, not even in his dreams. Sure enough, as soon as he entered he was stunned by it. Their reunion after so many years had drifted lightly past, but now she couldn't look directly at him, and he too was compelled to keep his eyes averted. They had nothing to say, and just released two more puffs of air into the air around them. She glared as the old leather suitcase came to rest beneath the table, and seeing the rucksack in his other hand descend towards the coffee table, quickly gestured for it to be diverted to the corridor floor. She might as well let him see how territorial she'd

become over the last few years, and anyway it wasn't clear how long he'd be staying, for which month or year his departure was fixed.

Tsai Kung-Wan, a self-acknowledged troublemaker, walked briskly from the front porch to the back garden, trying to dispel the homesickness of arriving under someone else's roof, hoping to create a belated sense of familial closeness. The pomegranate flowers at the rear were a spray of bright red, as if echoing the white roses out front. Impossible to believe this was the religious practice of Tsai Ou-Yang Ching-Mei, arising out of nowhere. Finishing his inspection of the perimeter, he folded his arms and began walking slowly around, glancing at the picture frames atop the cupboard, examining the little lamps on the side tables, always maintaining his own humble posture while sampling these little offerings. After a while, he noticed his wife was no longer in his field of vision, and began to roughly handle some ornaments he'd never seen before.

After five, the clank of metal against metal suggested cooking sounds, and he finally thawed a little. Yet when he came to the dining table, there were only a few sad plates of leftovers—she'd carried her own food upstairs, leaving him to quietly gobble down his pitiable evening meal.

When the living room grew dark, Tsai Kung-Wan grabbed his luggage and headed up. Unable to find the staircase light switch, he could only rely on the glow spilling from somewhere above. The door to the upstairs room had a pair of slippers before it, but did that mean she was inside with bare feet, or was it a hint that he should put them on before entering the room? She was obviously still in a temper and he couldn't risk guessing wrong, so he proceeded up to the third storey, his suitcase not touching the floor, taking each step on the balls of his feet. But with immaculately bad timing, just as he reached a bend in the stairs, he looked up to

see the bathroom door swing open beneath the ceiling light and out she walked, still pulling up her knickers, unable to cover her upper half in time, swaying into full view like a bare tree, all dead leaves and broken branches.

Each time he remembered that moment, Tsai Kung-Wan had to suppress a shudder—her wide-mouthed shriek, her voice strangely absent, like an echo dropping out of mid-air. When he finally made it to the top floor, Tsai Kung-Wan could only find an old sofa to lie on, and with hands pillowing his head as he stared up at the ceiling, he reflected that it was only natural that he'd have to suffer a scolding. Yet, given the circumstances, was it really necessary for her to be in such a rage? That pair of old tits had begun drooping long ago, like a couple of sunflowers in their last days.

A dark shadow he was unable to dispel danced before his eyes. He thought of the photographs, all different sizes, on display in the living room. Apart from a few solo portraits, the family shots never featured more than four people: Tsai Ou-Yang Ching-Mei, Tsai Tzu-Shi, Tsai Mo, and sometimes his daughter-in-law Tsai Se-Fen. Even the young outsider who'd married into the family had the surname Tsai, claiming her space in the family tree, three generations of only children. The one person missing in all this was him, the true head of the household. Every face in those pictures was smiling coldly at him. No one was waving, and even the smallest crack that he might have squeezed into had been filled. It was too late. So this was to be his icy reception. It was the small hours of the morning and he still couldn't sleep. If he'd known what was in store, he would never have pressed the damned buzzer.

*

He'd been tricked. The ritual for welcoming him home was originally supposed to go like this: Tsai

Tzu-Shi would meet him at the train station, his daughter-in-law would be in charge of their reunion dinner, and even his grandson Tsai Mo, finding someone else to take his shift, would hurry over to join them. The negotiations had been filled with a suspicious amount of filial love, one phone call after another urging him to come, until in the end he had grown worried that this burst of sincerity might be withdrawn. Having agreed to come, he decided to make matters clear.

But will your old mother agree to this?

Why wouldn't she? When she heard you wanted to come back, she couldn't stop smiling, she was so happy.

The son he hadn't seen in so many years had grown up treacherous and crafty, he was forced to admit to himself. Of course, after he'd been back half a year, they managed to carve out an accommodation like the old married couple they were, leaving behind the vengeance and rage of that initial encounter. He slept on the second floor, behind the door with the slippers. She moved to the third floor, where the room next to hers was given over to devotions, so the whole level became her kingdom where she could begin chanting scripture first thing in the morning, the mystical sounds travelling out through the balcony and landing in the flower groves below, causing the petals and dewdrops to tremble. Breakfast was at eight, with Tsai Kung-Wan in charge of the freshly-squeezed fruit juice, one glass each, after which they helped themselves to whole wheat toast, two mouths chewing on their own loneliness, moving at different speeds, their only common ground the silence they shared.

Each day's beginning resembled its end. Tsai Kung-Wan once tried rising early, following her as she knelt on the prayer cushion, and while he didn't understand the Buddhist scripture that squirmed into his ears, he knew the importance of repentance. Yet even before his knees touched

the ground, she'd already said her prayers three times and was already crawling away as if making her escape. That morning he faced the Buddha alone, finding himself in the position of chief worshipper rather than a bystander as he'd planned. His hands met, hovering in mid-air, but he didn't know what to say. Not a single word would come.

Remembering the night he left—although it was hurried, husband and wife still clung close to each other, she helping him lift his bag, her other hand hooked into the cuff of his sleeve, not tightly but still unwilling to let go, like a sad film playing out in the living room where they didn't dare turn the lights on. Who could have known that everything would be entirely different so many years later. Now that he had returned, they were living in a silent movie.

When the fuss dies down, you must hurry back. I'm afraid...

Afraid of what? I'm only going away for a little while, do you think I want to travel round the world?

Apparently, by the next morning, several swarthy thugs were already camped out at the shop entrance, flinging eggs and splashing buckets of urine, waves of red paint colouring the brick wall. If he hadn't escaped when he did in the middle of the night, he'd have ended up either in hospital or in prison.

From this one incident, he at least understood that there was no such thing as normal human existence. Before sunset, he was still hanging around, but as soon as dinner ended he was hurriedly packing a bag. All this because of money. The stationery shop had been doing worse year after year, and only after they starting selling number forecasts for the Mark Six lottery did some money start coming in. The sweet taste of cash, and the urgings of those around him, finally led him to become bookmaker.

That afternoon happened to be when

the typhoon departed. While the wind was still gusting, the streets and alleyways were unnaturally quiet. He heard a miracle had arrived in the small town, and those who reacted quickly had already gathered on a muddy riverbed in the western suburbs. Tsai Kung-Wan, arriving late, had no sooner got his bicycle onto the bridge when he looked up to see the banks to both sides were impassable. All he could do for the time being was lean against the railing as if listening to a joke, a cigarette clamped between his lips, shrieks of excitement from those searching for floating numbers on the stony beach filling the air.

And it was at this moment, from his vantage point, that Tsai Kung-Wan saw the hand of God.

From where he was standing, he noticed a glowing patch of water that no one else had paid attention to. In the light, he could clearly make out distinct numbers made of heaped pebbles. God had arrived and waited a long time by the empty riverside. Then, after the hordes showed up, he left one final hint at the end of the shoreline just for the fifty-year-old Tsai Kung-Wan, a man who'd been cheerless since childhood. Unable to squeeze down the little path beneath the bridge, he burrowed through the waves of wild grass to the right, awkwardly carving out a winding track, until he stepped onto the untenanted stone beach on a stretch of water flowing the other way.

An excavator was rumbling on the riverbed, carrying out some kind of water-cleaning operation. Lacking any better ideas, and with the sudden courage of inspiration, he started negotiating with the driver in his hard hat. It took all the cash he had on him, but in an instant he was climbing into the monstrous hand of its bucket. The engine started and he rose in the air like a passenger alone in a Ferris wheel.

Finally, he was able to catch sight of those mystic numbers. Even from a different angle, the intent of God remained firm. No matter how

nakedly sincere the fools on the shore were, he alone was permitted a glimpse of the divine. There was no doubting those numbers. They were a moment of true teaching, and if he didn't accept the lesson into his heart, he could give up any hope of a better life.

At that moment, the sky suddenly unleashed a light shower. Tsai Kung-Wan returned to the shop, shook awake the drowsing Tsai Ou-Yang Ching-Mei, and began blocking off the numbers he'd seen so no one else could play them. Feeling that wasn't enough, he phoned round to place bets with other gambling outfits, then greedily swallowed a pile of punters' stakes. And so, in the final second of the First Division draw, Tsai Kung-Wan finally received the moment of good luck he'd been waiting half a lifetime for: his ticket to sudden riches.

Twenty years later, he could still recall the number on the riverbank that day. Stone, mud and infinite mystery, creating two circles that barely touched, an eight laid down on its side, a large pair of intelligent eyes loaded with emotion and staring straight at him.

This was definitely the mark of God. Yet, somehow, it would transform into a demonic shadow.

A TRAVELER'S GUIDE TO RIDE-SHARING

鐵道共乘旅遊手冊



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TSOU YUNG-SHAN
鄒永珊

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-

Tsou Yung-Shan graduated from National Taiwan University before moving to Germany in 2001 to pursue a graduate degree in art, where she now lives and works as an artist. Her work is characterised by the dialogue between image and language, between content and the process of writing. She has also drawn inspiration from the gulf between the German language and her mother tongue, using its more precise grammar to stretch the subtleties of Chinese.



Berlin to Munich, ten hours, four changes. Four strangers meet to ride together, a special discount ticket, and so begins a journey both carefully planned and fully unexpected.

Chiang Chang-Ching has been living in Germany for nine years, the eternal student. He is the one to place the original advert, a search for companions, a young man meticulous in his consideration of all options. Christine is a retired music teacher who never puts down her book, the whole journey. She prefers to read words, rather than exchange them with others. Michael hails from the former East Germany, his heart as big as his rotund form, retired from mending the minds of others. Stony silence is not part of his plan for this trip. Anna-Marie is a local university student. No news is bigger than the updates posted by friends on social media.

Conversation comes and goes. Things are said that make some roll their eyes. But by the time the train glides into their final station, four strangers are reluctant to part ways. What happened on that train ride to change an arrangement of convenience into a lasting bond?

After hearing a friend describe just such an experience of ride-sharing with strangers, Tsou Yung-Shan's interest was piqued. The idea wouldn't leave her, and so she turned her characteristically precise and restrained prose to one of life's small moments, the seemingly insignificant situations we can all find ourselves in that has the power to change our lives. Designing every detail in the book's production, from the words to the binding and cover, this is not just a novel, but an artwork that makes physical the sometimes mysterious movings of the human heart.

A TRAVELER'S GUIDE TO RIDE-SHARING

By Tsou Yung-Shan. Translated by Michelle M. Wu.

They meet on the train, shake hands and introduce themselves to each other. Together, they embark upon their journey.

On October 27, Chiang Chang-Ching made a telephone call to confirm a meeting in Munich for November 6—he planned to travel to Munich from Berlin. He sat at his desk chewing the tip of his pencil and swiveling his chair as he scrutinised various airline websites on his computer screen.

His travel plans were made in a hurry, the appointment being only ten days away. Flights to Munich were already too expensive. He could still manage to get train tickets at a discount though, and traveling by train was more pleasant than taking the long-distance bus. Chiang Chang-Ching clicked his mouse to access Deutsche Bahn's website.

After some browsing, he discovered that all the discounted direct express tickets for November 6 were sold out. He would have to leave a day earlier. But November 5 was a Monday, and the cheaper weekend deals wouldn't be available. He would have to choose a different kind.

The Deutsche Bahn had started to offer a type of discounted ticket during weekdays called

the Das Quer-durchs-Land-Ticket. At a price of 44 euros, the holder of the ticket could enjoy one-day unlimited travel on regional trains to any destination in Germany from Monday to Friday. The ticket permits ride-sharing of up to five people, with each additional passenger paying a supplement of 6 euros.

Chiang Chang-Ching had never purchased this type of ticket before, so he read the terms and conditions carefully. The Deutsche Bahn website posted a list detailing the amount each had to pay; if five people shared the ticket, then each would only have to pay 13 euros and 60 cents. This discount convinced Chiang Chang-Ching to find four people to share the cost—it occurred to him that he could try Germany's popular ride-sharing website. Who knows, he might be able to find groups looking for passengers, and that would save him the trouble of buying the ticket along with all the associated hassles. He typed 'Mitfahrgelegenheit' into his search engine and entered the first site that came up. A bunch of pop-up advertisements appeared on the screen, each blasting its own music. Chiang Chang-Ching clicked away the ads one by one, and stood up to go to the restroom, failing to notice that a pop-up advertisement for

weight-loss with no sound effects was still open under the main window.

Returning to his desk, Chiang Chang-Ching lit a cigarette, holding it in his left hand as he continued to surf the Internet. A pop-up advertisement for a dating website appeared on the screen. Chiang Chang-Ching clicked it away without a second glance, as if playing Whac-A-Mole, and concentrated on the ride-sharing website.

Chiang Chang-Ching noticed that after the Das Quer-durchs-Land-Ticket was launched, many classified ads looking for ride-sharing travel companions were posted, yet none met his requirements. He decided he would post his own in order to find four people quickly and purchase the ticket.

First, he had to figure out how to place his ad on the website. He realised that he had to register. Glancing at the blanks that had to be filled, he deliberated, placed his cigarette into the ashtray by the monitor, took out his passport and studied it, his head bent.

His name on the passport was Chiang, Chang-Ching. An English spelling of the Chinese characters. Written out like that, all three words sounded so similar. He figured that no one would suspect anything if he omitted the 'Chang' from his name. People might have an easier time pronouncing his name.

He typed out his username: Chiang, Ching. It looked authentic in every way. Chiang Chang-Ching grinned at the monitor. However, when it came to filling out his email address and telephone number, he did so honestly.

After completing the registration, Chiang Chang-Ching logged in again and posted the train number, cost of the ticket per person, contact details and a deadline for answering the ad. He double-checked to make sure that there were no mistakes, and posted it. He checked

the time. It was three-fifty in the afternoon. He still had time to get ready for the trip ahead. He remembered the cigarette that he had just been smoking, and discovered that it was already burnt out. He took a deep breath. Then he checked his email, replied to some, and logged in to Facebook to see if there were any interesting postings. After watching a video clip shared by a friend, he checked the time again, and it was already twenty-eight minutes past five. He closed the window and saw the weight-loss ad hiding underneath it. He clicked it away.

He put on his coat and shoes and went to the university library to do some research.

Chiang Chang-Ching thought he would have to wait a few days to get replies, but the day after he posted the ad, a message arrived in formal German from a woman informing him that she was interested in ride-sharing, signed Christine. Since she was the first to respond, he thought this was a good omen and decided to count her in as a travel mate without further consideration.

Three days passed, and no one else contacted Chiang Chang-Ching. But on the evening of November 1 several email and cellphone messages arrived, taking the number of candidates over three. Chiang Chang-Ching was relieved. Yet despite being happy that there were people available to share the cost of the ticket, he also started to worry about which three to pick.

He first filtered out those who didn't seem to be very sure and had just asked him a few questions. Then he went about confirming with those he selected. In order to make sure that nothing went wrong, even if the other person didn't reply, he would send them a letter to thank them for responding to his ad. He also double checked with those whom he considered candidates for ride-sharing.

Other than Christine, the first to reply, the three others Chiang Chang-Ching selected were a man whose son responded on his behalf and

two other women. One was called Anna-Marie. She contacted him via a casual, rather informal, SMS. She too was quick to reply, confirming all the details in two or three messages, asking whether there were any kids in tow. The other woman seemed to be from an English-speaking country, because her name was spelled Catherine. She contacted him via email. In her first contact she used very formal German, but in the messages to follow she wrote in English. From the details in her letters Chiang Chang-Ching surmised that she was American.

Chiang Chang-Ching was especially curious about Catherine. Not only because she was the only person who communicated with him in English, but also because she kept asking him where they were going to meet, how they were going to recognise and identify each other, and how they were going to pay for the ticket. Chiang Chang-Ching wasn't very confident about his English, but he did his best to respond to her inquiries, detailing how they were to meet up and to pay for the ticket, even describing his looks and what he was going to wear. After replying to Catherine's email, he sent messages to the other three passengers and asked them for a final confirmation. Then he asked the man for his name.

Chiang Chang-Ching waited to hear back from his four travel companions. Anna-Marie sent him a message again on the afternoon of November 2, not to confirm the arrangement, but to ask him whether he would allow her to sign her name on the ticket, to make her the main passenger. Her travel destination was Passau, and she was to continue eastward from Munich. This type of ticket could not be transferred, hence the special request. Chiang Chang-Ching wanted to hold on to the ticket for accounting purposes, yet Anna-Marie kept texting him. Chiang Chang-Ching didn't want to complicate things, so he agreed.

Later Christine and Catherine both replied and confirmed. The man also sent a message to Chiang Chang-Ching, giving his name as Michael Schmidt. So it was finally settled, a party of five.

Now with all five on board, Chiang Chang-Ching initially planned to book the ticket on the Internet, to get the whole thing over and done with. But he realised that many restrictions applied to Internet booking—apart from ID verification, the ticket wasn't as flexible as claimed in the advertising. In order to make it possible for Anna-Marie to hold on to the ticket as she traveled onwards, Chiang Chang-Ching would have to purchase it at the train station. Since he didn't want to be in too much of a hurry on the day of departure, he went that day to the nearest train station.

Chiang Chang-Ching located the Traveler's Service Centre at the train station. There were automatic vending machines inside and outside. There were also a number of people pacing back and forth close to the vending machines. Chiang Chang-Ching walked in, and saw two dark-skinned men with scraps of paper in their hands looking around. He bypassed them, stopped before a vending machine behind them, and started to operate the machine. Just as he selected the departure date, he heard the man behind him say in accented German that it was for tomorrow, and he could feel the two men leave.

He continued with his errand, paying no attention to the two men, when a young German girl came up to him and asked politely whether he was going to Stuttgart. Chiang Chang-Ching shook his head and the girl thanked him and left quietly.

Chiang Chang-Ching put the newly purchased ticket away carefully into his wallet. Then, just as he was about to leave, a middle-aged man approached the vending machine next to his. The young girl approached the man and

asked the same question. The man shook his head and the girl left.

On the evening of November 4, another message arrived asking if there were any available seats. Chiang Chang-Ching said no and once more checked with the others: they were to leave tomorrow on November 5; the train was scheduled to leave at nine thirty-two in the morning. Chiang Chang-Ching asked his travel companions to meet him at the railway platform at the main Berlin Railway Station at nine o'clock.

Prior to departure, Chiang Chang-Ching found many things to be in a mess. He played music from his computer as he packed for Munich, and quickly lost track of time. At one in the morning his telephone started ringing. Chiang Chang-Ching picked up the phone. Once he put down the receiver again, he found himself to be a very foul mood and didn't feel like packing anymore. He tidied up the documents on his desk, washed up and fell into bed.

A while later he woke up freezing cold. He got out of bed, turned up the heat to maximum, then adjusted it down again. Back in bed, he tried to fall asleep but couldn't; he tossed and turned, got up, and stared at his computer. His friends in Taiwan had started to update their Facebook statuses, posting pictures of food, newborn babies and the latest happenings in their lives. His user name was tagged in a wedding picture of one of his elementary school classmates. Uninterested, Chiang Chang-Ching started to nod off, so he climbed back into bed. Before turning off his computer he noted the time. It was already five in the morning.

The alarm clock rang at seven thirty. Chiang Chang-Ching struggled to open his eyes. He hurt all over. There were rumours all over the Internet claiming that the world was going to end that year. To him, mornings after a terrible night of insomnia were just such apocalyptic events. They

had just switched back to winter time, and he felt particularly tired. He fell back into bed, just to get a few minutes of shut-eye, but actually fell asleep. He flexed his shin muscles subconsciously and suddenly felt sharp cramps. The pain woke him up properly now. He fumbled around to find his eyeglasses, checked his cellphone for the time and discovered that it was already seven fifty-three. He jumped out of bed with his right leg still hurting and his mind confused. He sat on his bed for a moment to get his bearings. When the pain subsided he limped into the bathroom.

It was a good thing that Chiang Chang-Ching had already laid out his clothes and packed the night before. He still had a little time to make his sleep-deprived self appear presentable. In the bathroom he put on a black shirt. Wearing only boxer shorts, his exposed bare legs looked pathetic under the florescent light. The cold made Chiang Chang-Ching sneeze, and goose bumps appeared on his legs. He quickly pulled on his trousers. Then with his hips pressing against the sink, he leaned towards the mirror and tried to put on his contact lenses. His eyes were very dry after the long night and he had a hard time making the contact lens fit on his eye. The friction caused him to tear up, and his vision became a blur. It took him a while to see clearly again.

WITCH WAY

巫旅



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BADAI

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-

Badai was born in 1962 in the town of Beinan, south of Taitung and belongs to the Puyuma minority. He spent over twenty years in the army before going back to his first love, writing, and reflecting on the predicament facing many of Taiwan's indigenous peoples and their cultures. He started with reportage, but soon discovered this was not enough, and after his retirement in 2006, began on a plan to write some thirty novels with a true army discipline. He hopes his writing can introduce Puyuma culture, and in particular its traditions of witchcraft, to a wider audience. He has been awarded Golden Tripod for Best New Writer and the Indigenous Writers Literature Award, among others.



Mei-Wan was born into a family steeped in witchcraft. Her father, Mr Ha-Wu, always has his nose buried in books about sorcery. But Mei-Wan is just like any other teenager, her thoughts confined to exams, having fun with her friends and the latest object of her affections. She is distinctly not interested in the family history and her father's esoteric research.

But just as her final exams are drawing to a close, she begins to see and hear things. Is she going mad? But after talking to her father and her Taoist-trained headmaster, she comes to a most shocking conclusion: she is beginning to wake up to her own magical powers! A most unusual occurrence for a girl of her age.

In order to prevent a disaster of mega proportions, Mr Ha-Wu decides to try to harness and guide his daughter's newly developing powers. But she is soon performing beyond her father's capabilities, not only communicating with ghosts, but learning tricks such as transcending space and time and mediating in disputes between tree spirits. Then, one day, her time travel goes wrong and she ends up going back to 1636, where she becomes witness to a mysterious event in her ancestral village...

Witch Way is the first in a series of novels which take witchcraft as its central theme. Badai rewrites ancient legends and folklore in a fluent and confident prose, mixing tension, adventure and tradition in a thoroughly modern way.

WITCH WAY

By Badai. Translated by James Laughton-Smith.

Excerpt from chapter 8: A Voyage across Realms

For the past month, Mei-Wan had been busy with exam revision. But whenever she had a spare moment, her thoughts would turn to the mystery of Yigule. She had come up with a few different methods for solving it, from trying to jog Yigule's memory, to asking for information on past students from the Academic Affairs Office, to searching reports on microfilm at the municipal library, but none of them had borne fruit. In the end, she realised she would have to use witchcraft. But there had been a problem. Nothing in Ha-Wu's research mentioned the possibility of using witchcraft to journey to a different time and place. In fact, Ha-Wu insisted that it was an impossible feat according to today's science, and even taking into account metaphysical possibilities such as religious belief, there was probably no way to transcend the laws of time and space.

'So why do deceased ancestors visit us seeking out inheritors? If it's impossible to traverse time and space, then there would be no way for a spirit medium to pass on her skills to another generation, and it would also be impossible for

these spirits to exercise their powers here,' Mei-Wan said, one day deciding to challenge her father's beliefs.

'That's not the same! Ancestors don't appear in physical form; they manifest as spirits, or sometimes as a feeling or vision,' Ha-Wu explained.

'Pa, whether they appear as spirits, visions or feelings, they still possess power. With that kind of awesome power, what difference does it make whether they have physical form or not? What's more, as long as they can travel to their desired time and place to gather knowledge of the things they want to know, then they only need to manifest as visions or feelings!' Mei-Wan was struck by the strength of her conviction and unusual clarity of thought.

'Hang on, why have you been thinking about all this? Shouldn't you have been preparing for your exams?' Ha-Wu regarded Mei-Wan for a moment. There is something to what she says, he thought to himself. If ancestral spirits can voyage across several generations to the present day to seek out a relative, then it would appear that these visions or feelings aren't bound by time and space.

'What you're saying does make some sense,

but I don't know how it would be done. I've only heard tell of tribal witches travelling this way in legends. I've never heard of anyone who actually knows how it's done. At least, in my research I haven't come across any clues that this might be the case!

'Well Pa, maybe your research hasn't been thorough enough!'

'Wait a moment, are you making fun of me? Okay, you put some more effort in to discovering how it's done and let me know when you've found the answer!' Ha-Wu said, sounding a little injured.

'Pa, are you upset?'

'No!'

'Yes you are!'

'No, you just hurt my feelings a little, that's all!'

'Pa, you're a top witchcraft researcher. But some of the problems I've been thinking about are related to long-lost witchcraft lore. It isn't any wonder that there's no information about it. I'm winding you up on purpose!'

'You're right. Some phenomena I still haven't been able to explain fully. That's why witchcraft is such an intriguing subject for research. If spirit ancestors can visit us, then it must be possible for them to traverse time and space. But the question is, in what form do they make the journey? Perhaps it could be through dreams.'

'Dreams?' Mei-Wan felt like she had just had a sudden epiphany, but she was unsure of how much she understood just yet.

'Yes! There are many modern theories explaining the science of dreams, how they are formed, how we dream et cetera, but in essence they are self-contained worlds where we feel real emotions of joy, sadness and fear. They have special rules. They can affect reality but at the same time they are removed from reality. Dreams are a crossing point between coexisting worlds, through which we move between sleep and

wakefulness. It's via these crossing points that time and space can be traversed, and through which spirits are able to come and go, or even linger. There must be rules to how it works. It's just nobody has discovered them yet. I admit, my knowledge in this area is lacking. It's going to be up to you to figure out these mysteries!' Ha-Wu smiled suddenly.

'Me? Okay, I will figure it out and I'll tell you what I discover. But why are you smiling? You shouldn't look so smug considering you are pushing me into this difficult area of research,' Mei-Wan said.

She felt a little at a loss, but Ha-Wu had given her some ideas.

The boundary between our world and the dream world lies between sleep and wakefulness. A careless person could accidentally slip between them. Suppose the ancestors live in a realm parallel to our own? During a witchcraft ritual, the boundaries between the two worlds form a sacred space where spirit mediums and spirits can exchange thoughts and mortals can make contact with spirits.

'So,' said Mei-Wan, recalling something she'd read in Ha-Wu's research paper, 'the ritual becomes a junction, or tear, between the two worlds. Spirits can be summoned into the space created by the ritual allowing beings from either side to pass into the other.'

'Yes! That makes sense. You really are my daughter. I suspect you've become too involved in my research and have been neglecting your revision.' Ha-Wu looked at Mei-Wan with a disguised smile. He felt very proud of her.

'Hey, here I am helping you to write your conclusion and you're picking on me. You never give your daughter encouragement,' Mei-Wan snapped.

'Alright, alright, you've done very well! In theory, when witches use their powers to summon spirits, they are traversing time and space. But

this is just us letting the spirits enter our world and time. I've never heard of any instances of humans entering their world,' Ha-Wu said.

'Ah, I understand now!' Mei-Wan nodded.

In fact, Mei-Wan was really guessing more than she understood. She had been gaining more experience of actual witchcraft practices over the past few months. She knew the spirit medium's role and spells, and that they had the ability to bridge different worlds. As for people alive today entering other spaces, her gut was telling her it was possible. She had once taken part in a soul-calling ritual conducted by her grandmother A-Wu and had experienced her own soul crossing over a body of water and a mountain range before it had been called back. She had experienced the perils and extreme weather of the voyage as if it had really happened. In the past month, she had even summoned the spirit of her shaman grandmother as a power source while practising soul calling herself. Therefore, she reasoned, it should be possible to journey to particular times and places in soul form. The key would be whether she could use spells and rituals to keep her soul under control by maintaining force of will and power equivalent to that of her physical body, like summoned ancestors. Ha-Wu didn't have any experience of this particular practice, and Mei-Wan didn't want to explain her theory to him before she had made a successful attempt.

The next day, when opportunity arose, Mei-Wan wrote a spell. Then, with Yigule watching over her, she began practicing daily, urging her soul to leave her body while carrying her consciousness with it. One weekend Mei-Wan succeeded. It was evening and she had told her family she was tired so that she might go lie down in bed, that she might leave her body on a shamanic voyage. In an instant, she was transported to the disused toilet at school, making Yigule panic and shoot back into the drainage

pipe, where she had hid first of all.

'What's wrong, Yigule?' asked Mei-Wan.

'You scared me!' the sound of Yigule's voice echoed from inside the drain pipe.

'How did I scare you?'

'There's a chill in the air about you. Just like the spirits that used to linger around you.' Yigule's voice held a slight tremble. Then she said, 'Wait, you're not Mei-Wan!'

'I'm not Mei-Wan? Am I a ghost? Were that the case, I'd be a most lovely one, and you wouldn't need to be afraid. Come out and have a look for yourself.' Mei-Wan bent forward and peered into the drain pipe. 'I won't hurt you.'

As soon as Mei-Wan finished her last sentence, Yigule's fist-sized head popped out. Eyeing Mei-Wan, she said, 'I believe you, but what's happened to you?'

'What do you mean?' Mei-Wan inquired, staring back at Yigule.

'You feel like a spirit or a ghost. You're not the regular Mei-Wan!'

'Of course I'm not! The regular me is still at home, fast asleep. The Mei-Wan you can see now is the form my spirit has taken. But I look the same, don't I?'

'Spirit? So... you've found a way to transport yourself through space?' Yigule still seemed somewhat sceptical.

'I'm not sure. But I'm here aren't I! If it's true, that I'm a spirit or a ghost as you feel, that means it's worked. I can transport my spirit across time!' Mei-Wan looked at Yigule and smiled excitedly.

'Really?' Yigule spoke with a passive tone, and a look of fear started to creep across her face.

'You don't believe me? Or does my spirit form make you uncomfortable? You know, you did this once before! That's why I didn't let you leave. I was afraid you'd hurt someone. Do you understand now?'

‘Um...’ Yigule was momentarily tongue-tied, but smiled reluctantly.

‘You don’t believe me. Come on. Come with me back to my house. You can live with me there!’

‘How? Your house is protected by your grandmother’s witchcraft. How can I go there?’

‘What? You’ve been to my house before without me knowing?’

‘Yes! I went on the first day the perimeter wall of the school was demolished. But as soon as I got within a metre of the wall around your house I was impeded by a magical force cast by your grandmother. It felt just like a strong electrical current, except it was many times stronger than the spell at the school. I almost fainted. It took a long time for me to recover my strength and get back to the school.’

‘Really?’ Mei-Wan asked, craning her necked, eyes wide.

A ray of evening sun shone through the window and reflected off Mei-Wan’s eyes, making her look most strange. Anxious that Mei-Wan didn’t believe her, Yigule hastened to add, ‘I’m telling the truth. I’m not lying. After I came back my whole body hurt so much I had no energy to move at all. It took me three days to recover properly. It was dreadful.’

‘You mean that you were able to move about freely before?’

‘I thought you already knew?’

‘But spirits and ghosts are always restricted to one specific place, unless they are summoned by a shaman or sorcerer using witchcraft or a spell. Then they can appear instantly at another location. It’s over twenty kilometres from Kangshan to Kaohsiung, but you can move instantly between the two places? Just like I did?’ Mei-Wan was speaking louder now.

‘Yes. I’ve always been able to do that. I haven’t tried since your grandmother placed a seal around the school’s perimeter wall. Let me tell you something, I’m not like the other ghosts

on the school campus or those wandering souls. I don’t know how I do it. But it’s true that I can.’

‘Oh my, why didn’t you say so before? Then you should be able to go back to the time of your accident and see who your family were. You’ll have a place to go to!’

‘I... Oh, I hadn’t thought of that. After you started turning up, thoughts of finding my family seemed to fade away. Even if I found them, what would I do? What’s more, I started to realise that I’m not really a ghost, or even some kind of fairy. Don’t you think so too?’ Yigule gazed forlornly at Mei-Wan as she spoke.

‘I do! I don’t know exactly what you are either, Yigule! But I’ve been racking my brains recently trying to figure it out. I just thought that by going back to the past you would be able to know more about what happened to you, and it would help you be reunited with your family. That’s why I’ve been spending so much time researching voyaging between realms!’

‘Thank you so much, and sorry, Mei-Wan!’

‘There’s no need to be sorry. If it wasn’t for you, I wouldn’t have stumbled upon this long-lost witchcraft. Perhaps in the future I might discover its other powers! I might be able to work out what you are exactly sooner than you think. All right, come back with me now to my house. You can live with me and keep me company until we clear this all up! You’re Yigule remember, the little tag-along!’

‘Can I really? What about the protective spell on your house? How can I pass through it?’

‘You’re not a ghost, remember! Also, I’ve already removed the negative *qi* from the ghosts that clung to you. The spell won’t harm you unless you have malicious intent.’

‘Really?’

‘Really!’ Mei-Wan had hardly finished the word when she began to shrink back into the empty space behind her. She just had time to grab Yigule’s hand and they disappeared together.

PHANTOM HARBOUR

幻之港



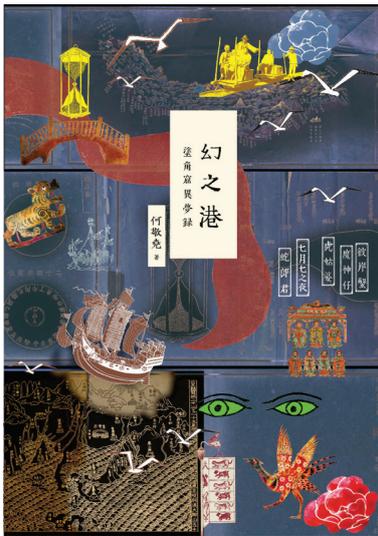
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HO CHING-YAO

何敬堯

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Born in Taichung in 1985, Ho Ching-Yao graduated in foreign languages from National Taiwan University and is a PhD candidate in Taiwanese Literature at National Tsing Hua University. He is currently collecting and editing a collection of Taiwanese literature of the uncanny alongside his own creative writing. He has won numerous literary prizes, including the Global Youth Chinese Literary Award and the Ministry of Culture of Taiwan's Young Talent Award.



By the late nineteenth century, the once quiet coastal town of Thaw-kat-khut had grown into a teeming harbour to rival the larger, more well-known ports of Lukang and the old Dutch-built Fort Zeelandia. That was, until a flood of cataclysmic proportions came running down the Dadu Mountains, swallowing the trading centre and erasing it from the island's maps forever.

And so became the Phantom Harbour.

Only for Ho Ching-Yao to rediscover and resurrect it over a century later, lifting Taiwan's very own Atlantis out of the water. Arranged into five stories spanning different periods in the town's history, we encounter merchant families, migrants from across the straits and lovers united and divided across social class, culminating in the story of the disaster that was to sink the people of Thaw-kat-khut and their home forever.

Making use of the riches of local folklore, ghost stories and uncanny happenings, *Phantom Harbour* bursts from the page, demanding to be read and never forgotten.

PHANTOM HARBOUR

By Ho Ching-Yao. Translated by Gigi Chang.

**Excerpt from the chapter:
Demon Mō-sîn-á**

The people of Min were great believers in ghosts and spirits, especially in Changchow and Chinchew. Commoners toiled all their life, making barely enough for subsistence or death rites, yet they often spent half of what little they made on offerings and sacrifices to the gods. When they were ill, they prayed to the gods for cures; at burial, they prayed to the gods for land; to the point that on any occasion that did not go as hoped, they turned to the gods.

—Yao Ying, *Supplementary Collection on the Eastern Chinese Sea*, Volume 4

1.

Thunder drummed in the distant sky, a cold wind stole in from the sea. The light moisture in the air acted as an invisible herald, whispering the approach of the rainy season.

Wu A-Lu walked along the Dadu River, water chattering loudly. A flash of brilliant white slashed across his vision.

White feathers and a black beak circled, swooped and croaked. A-Lu ducked quickly, dodging the night heron's sharp bill.

It was the season when night herons raised their chicks after mating. Strongly territorial, they protected their offspring jealously; anything that came close to their nests was a threat. Of

all waterfowl, the night heron's call was the most discordant and shrill. A-Lu vaguely recalled that the reeds in the swamps near the mouth of the river had always been their preferred nesting place.

Tutting and shaking his head, A-Lu adjusted the bamboo basket in his left hand.

This side of the Dadu River by the ox cart road was deserted, out of the way. But he knew that, once upon a time, there were settlements along this bank. After the waterway was re-routed, the site had lost its appeal.

The wind whistled more aggressively as A-Lu walked from Pientzutou village to the port of Thaw-kat-khut. He squinted into the distance. Ripples shimmered where the river joined the sea. Further out, clusters of large junks dotted the water's surface, the setting sun filling their sails with gusts of red and gold, obscuring the ships' names.

Ships have difficulty entering the harbour after dark. They must have just left Thaw-kat-khut to cross the strait. For Amoy? Taku? Maybe, Hanchiang?

As the harbour of Wuci silted during the Taokuang period (1820 to 1850), Thaw-kat-khut—situated where the Dadu River flows into the sea—emerged as the only viable harbour in central Formosa. The volume of goods and cargo coming through its waters expanded year after year. So much so that, in terms of trade value, it grew comparable to Lok-kang in the south.

A-Lu recalled what the village elders had once told him: Thaw-kat-khut was a different place decades ago; a small fishing village that doubled as a secret port for pirates and smugglers. The trafficking of illegal firearms brought wealth and a burgeoning population. But that soon brought the Ching court and their administrative offices too, pushing the blackened pirate ships out of sight.

Today, traders vied on the streets of Thaw-kat-khut. Since Hsienfeng's reign (1850 to 1861), merchants had gathered here in unprecedented numbers. The harbour, which could hold more than two hundred junks, had grown busier than ever. With so many comings and goings, ships queuing to enter the harbour sometimes crashed.

Thinking about this bustling trade always made A-Lu happy. The efforts he had personally put into the port in the last few years hadn't gone to waste.

Tomorrow was Sister's big day. This thought lifted his spirits even higher.

In the large woven bamboo lacquer basket he was carrying were pineapples, ponkans, jujubes and other fruit offerings. Each perfectly formed, vibrant and competing with the red silk lining of the basket. A-Lu checked the sky as he walked. Fearing that it might rain, he quickened his pace, nearly upsetting the basket. That would have ruined the fruits from Siluo. It had taken some effort to source them in trading houses in Pientzutou.

It was dusk. The market shops and stalls along the harbour had long since closed for the day. But the crowd grew bigger as A-Lu walked down the waterfront's South Street. Chattering voices mingled with gongs and drums. Red lanterns lined the streets. *Ba-li-ba-la*—the Teochew shawm trumpeted; its fanfare bounced down alleyways, among houses, punctuating greetings between excited neighbours.

'The Tsai family is welcoming their Chinchew daughter-in-law tomorrow. They've got a puppet

troupe performing tonight. Are you coming?'

A-Lu could hear percussionists playing music in accompaniment to the ceremonial plays for the immortals that preceded the main performance—*The Three Immortals* and *Blessings from the God of Fortune*.

'I think I'll make it.'

The music from the *naoting* ceremony—making noise in the hall—had just begun, blessing the performance and signaling its start.

I should be able to present the fruits at the altar the Tsai family has set up for the Heavenly Grandfather.

Local traditions required the groom's family to set up an incense altar to pay homage to the deities, the Heavenly Grandfather, the Officials of Three Realms and the Lords of the Southern and Northern Dippers; as well as to hire a puppet troupe to give thanks to the deities for watching over their son, who they had bestowed with good health and a suitable bride. The puppet troupe named Peaceful Spring Pavilion from Lok-kang had been introduced to the Tsai family by A-Lu to celebrate the 'ritual of fulfilling marriage vows' on the eve of the wedding day. The marionette master, A-Jung, was a childhood friend of A-Lu. They had got back in touch in recent years.

The people of Thaw-kat-khut worshipped gods and spirits fervently, fearing local legends about M \hat{o} -s \hat{i} n- \acute{a} : mountain ghosts who haunted the Dadu Mountains just outside the township were said to morph into this demon, M \hat{o} -s \hat{i} n- \acute{a} , to hunt children.

Missing children supposedly ended up in M \hat{o} -s \hat{i} n- \acute{a} 's belly.

But then some said that M \hat{o} -s \hat{i} n- \acute{a} was actually a ghost, transformed from the spirit left behind after a person's death.

Or, that M \hat{o} -s \hat{i} n- \acute{a} was an accumulation of grievances that could not be undone, transfigured into something formless that roamed amongst men.

No one explanation could ever be proved

definitively though.

Yet, the collective fear of M^ô-s^{în}-á wasn't only founded on legend.

About a decade or so ago, children began to disappear in Thaw-kat-khut. The town was gripped in fear of the demon and worship grew more elaborate.

This was why, in local custom, the ritual of fulfilling marriage vows was commonly performed, to give thanks to the deities for protecting young males in the family from M^ô-s^{în}-á.

Today, the ritual was organised by the Tsai family. Their son was marrying the daughter of the Wu family, A-Lu's sister. He was only helping out because the puppet troupe had made a pig's ear of it.

The troupe was responsible for providing sacrificial offerings. Master A-Jung had set up the altar outside the main hall of the Tsai family mansion. He had arranged five tables of offerings in front of the three-tiered seat for the Heavenly Grandfather, which was made out of coloured paper. He had reverentially placed the offerings—red tortoise cake, betel nut, red *tangyuan* glutinous rice balls, *malao* sesame puffed rice cakes, sweet *kuo* rice cakes and the three meats—in the correct order.

A-Jung scratched his head in disbelief, 'Fie, I forgot the four fruits!' He immediately asked for the missing items to be purchased.

Frowning, A-Lu crossed his arms and began to scold A-Jung. But half way through his lecture, he sighed and volunteered to go to the fruit traders himself. After all, he had recommended the troupe to the Tsai family in the first place. The last thing he wanted now was to let his future family down on the eve of his sister's wedding.

'Master Wu? Congratulations! Family Tsai are blessed to marry your sister!'

As A-Lu walked through the market, many bowed and made gestures of respect

and congratulations—it was clear that A-Lu commanded influence over the town. The infectious laughter and excitement of those heading to the puppet performance lightened his heart a little. Even the stiff muscles around his lips responded, turning up the corners of his usually stern mouth.

Aside from paying homage to the Heavenly Grandfather, the performance also announced the imminent wedding to the neighbours, attracting more people—and thus more joy—to the celebrations. Needless to say, A-Lu was happy about his sister Jung-Fang's impending nuptials. But he could not stop thinking about their conversation of the previous night. It cast a shadow, visible on his brow. Had Jung spoken to Pa about it yet?

'Jung can also see ghosts. And she's seen M^ô-s^{în}-á at home...'

Thunder rumbled, faraway. A-Lu prayed that the rain would hold off—hold until three *keng* at least, hold until the ritual was over.

He turned into a lane and arrived at the square in front of the Tsai mansion. A boxy bamboo theatre had been erected for the occasion.

He looked around and saw Jung-Fang and his father standing side-by-side at one corner of the stage.

Silk of different sizes hung from the bamboo scaffold. This formed the temporary stage, one *chih* in height, framed by red fabric. The Eight Immortals and the troupe's name, Peaceful Spring Pavilion, were embroidered on the curtain. White sugarcanes and red lanterns adorned the stage. A sea breeze from the harbour had wormed its way through the lanes and alleyways, making the lanterns sway and the silk whip audibly. On one side of the stage was a bamboo stand. More than a dozen marionettes hung there, their heads bobbing in the wind—the gallant *sheng*, the beautiful *tan*, the aged *laosheng* and the black-faced Marshal Tien Tu. Every

stock character. At the far end, a marionette of a child; its face painted white, hair tied up.

Compared to the others, the child was gaunt. Tiny nose, tiny eyes, white face, wearing pastel clothes under a red bib. Its arms fell stiffly by its side. Its expression was lifelike, but it was impossible to tell whether it was a boy or a girl.

Catching sight of this androgynous marionette child, A-Lu's demeanour changed. He pursed his lips. He had to place the fruits on the altar. And to reach the altar, he had to walk past the marionette.

Exhaling, he walked quickly.

He brushed past the marionette. He felt the gaze from its white face. On his arm.

It numbed his upper body.

If it was up to him, he would never have anything to do with puppet troupes. But this time, he had no choice, Old Master Tsai—his sister's future father-in-law—had asked him with such grace. Reluctantly, he had reached out to Master A-Jung, with whom he had not exchanged words with for years. In fact, he had long made up his mind: when it's my turn, I won't hire any theatre troupes.

He set down the fruits and walked round to the other side of the scaffold. In front of the stage a Red Head Taoist priest, joss sticks in hand, led Master A-Jung and the whole Tsai family to pay homage to Heaven and the deities—a mandatory ritual before the start of a performance. The priest, wrapped in black ceremonial robes, an embroidered thunder cap on his head, muttered incantations.

'... Unto the Heavenly Grandfather and the Earth Lord, we give thanks. For you have bestowed blessings on Yu-Wen, son of the Tsai clan. With your blessings, he has grown strong. And with your blessings, he is now to be married. To all gods and deities, we humbly extend this invitation: be masters of this evening. May the Heavenly Grandfather grace this household with his presence. May he bestow upon us his

blessings! We stand humbled, before your image, and offer incense. Grant us mercy and absolution! With fresh flowers and other offerings, we prostrate ourselves, giving thanks unto Heaven and the Jade Emperor, the Earth Lord, the Lords of the Three Realms, the Lord of the Southern Dipper and the Lord of the Northern Dipper. Grant us mercy and absolution!'

The priest made three deep bows, then threw the *poe* blocks—two half moon shaped pieces of bamboo—seeking divine guidance on what the theatre troupe's first play should be. After a pause, answer came. 'To give thanks, we shall perform *The Principal Graduate's Homecoming*.'

'Prayers ascend amid wafting fragrance, golden flutters leap from burning incense. From golden cup into golden cup flows the sacrificial wine. The gods propose a toast, your student humbly accepts. Success and prosperity to all, we bow to you Marshal Tien Tu!'

MOTOKO SMILES

山城畫蹤



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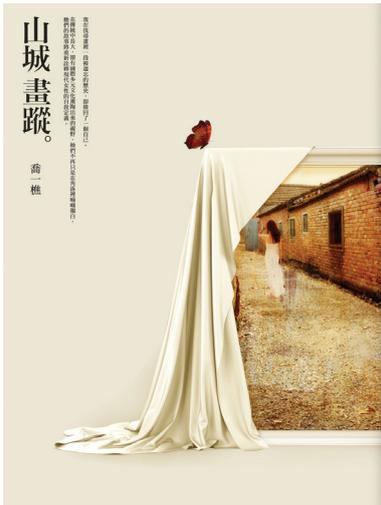
JOY CHAUNG

喬一樵

-
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grayhawk@grayhawk-agency.com
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-

- Winner of the 2011 Cross Straits Literary Competition

Writer, translator, art dealer and traveller. Joy Chaung is a wandering soul, who calls no country and every country her home. She graduated with a Master of Philosophy from University of Paris 8, and has worked in galleries and as an art dealer alongside her writing. *Motoko Smiles* was selected out of over one thousand entries as the winner of the Cross Straits Literary Competition in 2011. She has published three novels and translated numerous more into Chinese.



Her discovery of a lost da Vinci makes Amelie an overnight star in the international art scene, but failure to find a buyer before the deadline takes fame away equally fast. Broke and disgraced, she flees Europe to her hometown—a mountain city in Taiwan—to attend her grandmother’s funeral, but also to nurse her wounds.

While going through her grandmother’s effects, Amelie finds an entry in one of her grandfather’s notebooks that hints at a hitherto unknown masterpiece by Zhao Bo, a famous painter who was killed in a political uprising half a century previously. The painting was apparently a gift to her late grandfather and would be worth millions if discovered. It would also be her ticket back to the art world.

Amelie’s treasure hunt soon becomes a journey of self-discovery as she navigates the complicated relationships between Zhao’s heirs and her own family, her hometown’s tragic history and Zhao’s mysterious lover, Motoko. The key to the lost painting seems to be with Jiang Zen, the Japanese sculptor who came to Taiwan to guard Zhao’s artistic legacy, and the man Amelie is destined to fall in love with. Based on a true story, *Motoko Smiles* is upmarket women’s fiction at its best, seamlessly blending art, mystery, family secrets and searing romance.

MOTOKO SMILES

By Joy Chaung. Translated by Canaan Morse.

Prologue: Through the Storm

On the first weekend after Christmas, Europe was hit by an unexpected snowstorm. Sixty percent of flights out of the major Western European airports were cancelled, and the remaining forty delayed indefinitely. Hundreds of thousands of passengers trapped at airports searched desperately for hotel rooms in which to weather the storm and wait for their flights to resume.

Amelie sat in the lobby of a five-star hotel and watched angrily as travelers streamed through the doors and clamored at the front desk for reservations. Though these frustrated tourists ought to have been company for her own misery, the sight of them didn't comfort her at all. She looked on with loathing as they rushed from the airport to the city centre in hopes of finding a room at a five-star establishment. They were either too naïve, or just desperate.

And yet Amelie was the most desperate of them all. Unlike them, she had planned to stay at this hotel, and as a result had procured by far the most comfortable accommodation: the Presidential Suite. Nevertheless, she faced not

only the inexorable feeling of being trapped, but also the brutal reality waiting behind the weather. He too had been unable to board the flight that would have taken him to her.

Watching the mobs of tourists going insane trying to find a room drove her mood into the gutter. She had given up so much for this date, including four thousand euros a night for the room. And while she would no doubt be able to find someone in this lobby willing to pay twice that much, she couldn't very well sleep on the street. Even as she sat on a soft Louis XVI sofa in the luxurious lobby, a perfectly made margarita in one hand, the thought of having hemorrhaged so much money on a broken date made her depressed. Perhaps it was fitting that the lowest point of her life should be juxtaposed with such a bitterly absurd scene.

'There's no way for me to get there, sweetheart,' he had explained only moments ago over the phone. 'The airport is closed, and none of the flights tomorrow or the next day are confirmed. It looks like we'll have to reschedule.'

His tone didn't seem the slightest bit regretful. That was to be expected. At that very moment, he was sitting in a comfortable apartment in Manhattan's Upper East Side, while an army of

secretaries arranged everything for him. He was not a man to allow himself to end up stuck at a check-in desk or in a hotel, praying for a miracle. Amelie was sure his people had already reworked his schedule: it wasn't hard to imagine how many extra meetings he could set up with North American art dealers, mistresses, and mistresses-cum-art-dealers by canceling a trip to Europe.

Self-confidence had been her biggest mistake. Thinking that having exclusive representation of the painting was a golden ticket, she had carried herself with the utmost dignity throughout the early stages of their relationship, staying in five-star hotels, eating at Michelin-starred restaurants, and frequenting other such common meeting places of the upper classes. And while the persona did help catch his attention, it depleted her savings at a lightning pace.

Her current financial dilemma was all the Russian's fault. When he never paid up she had to compromise by recouping only half the piece's value, and then sell off a Kandinsky in wonderful condition for a bargain price. After that, her bank account took a nose dive. Any of the veterans in the game would have said it was a common enough event; if you play the game long enough, eventually you'll lose. The art market was famous for incredible profit margins, but the risks were also proportionally great.

It wasn't that she didn't understand that, but rather that luck had always been on her side. Before her interaction with the Russian, she hadn't had any real problems. Just be careful and she wouldn't lose, that's what she'd always believed. Sure, it would be especially difficult for an Asian woman to succeed in the art world's highest circles, so she had worked even harder and done her deals even more carefully than everyone else. To her, there was no such thing as an impossible task, only incompetent people.

And her self-confidence was derived as much from street smarts as it was from hard expertise.

Most importantly, she knew that to Westerners she possessed a fatal charm, and anything she committed herself to, she could accomplish.

Six months ago, the portrait of the young noblewoman, supposedly of the Dusseldorf school, was sitting quietly in her inbox, waiting to be discovered. She saw immediately that it was exceptional. The woman's serious expression and crystal-clear eyes sent an unmistakable signal to Amelie, quickening her pulse as her imagination began to run wild. She calmed herself and, with shivering hand, contacted the seller, a castle owner who was eager to get rid of it. As soon as the call went through, she demanded that he allow her in to see the painting herself.

It was too late in the evening to catch a last-minute train or flight, so she decided to drive, from Paris all the way to Lausanne, by the shores of Lac Léman in Switzerland. For seven hours she tore over the road like a madwoman, praying that no one else would get there first and confirm what she suspected.

She arrived just as dawn was breaking. Though she should have been exhausted, it was with a brimming vigor that she got out and pushed the broken-down bell at the castle gate.

The castle owner surprised her with the announcement that she was the only dealer to contact him. He'd bought the painting ten years ago at Christie's in London for eleven thousand pounds, then tossed it in a drawer and forgotten about it. He hadn't even bought a frame for it, let alone restored it. Now, the economic crisis was forcing him to sell the castle, meaning that all the furniture and collectables inside had to go as well. Put another way, it was a giant fire sale.

Blowing off the dust and seeing the yellow-ochre surface of the painting for herself confirmed her initial doubts: this painting was not of the Dusseldorf school. Its shadows were thicker than those of paintings from the same period, and close observation of their fullness

and purity made it obvious that this came from a much earlier era.

But it was that unmistakable, left-handed technique that made her so excited. It had been her thesis topic for her master's in art history, there was no way she could be wrong. This portrait was the work of a left-handed Renaissance master who liked to use watercolor over chalk.

Of course, the appraisal from Christie's gave her pause. Unless it were an incredibly high-quality fake, it represented the greatest mistake in the auction house's history.

Holding back the urge to say what she was thinking, she suggested to the seller that he send the painting to Lumiere Technology for digital imaging and verification. Meanwhile, she herself took high-resolution photographs to send to her thesis advisor, now curator at the Louvre in Paris, for his opinion. A detailed lab report and official certification took five months to get, during which time she also got a positive response from her advisor. Now she could tell people with confidence: this was a da Vinci.

In order to keep himself in shoe leather, Leonardo da Vinci used to paint portraits of members of the nobility. It was believed that his portraits of young women were commissioned by aristocratic families looking to arrange marriages for their daughters who remained hidden out of sight in the boudoir. Thus there were left behind a whole series of portraits of young Milanese women, of which *La Belle Ferronière*, now hanging in the Louvre, was an example.

The young lady in this portrait did bear some similarities in demeanor to *La Belle Ferronière*. Da Vinci believed the eyes were the windows to the soul, and therefore paid special attention to detail in his expression of them—another reason why alarm bells had sounded in Amelie's head when she noticed those glittering pupils.

Moreover, the Lausanne seller's portrait

might be even more valuable than the *Ferronière*, because the subject was painted in half-profile, which was rare among da Vinci's portraits. This may very well have been why it escaped the auction house appraiser's eye, and was wrongly classified as a nineteenth-century work by an anonymous artist of the Dusseldorf school.

Verifying the painting as a da Vinci was an incredible discovery, but, from a practical standpoint, the seller was not about to relinquish his newfound opportunity, nor would he be so stupid as to stand by his initial asking price. Instead, he agreed to give Amelie exclusive rights to represent the work for one month only, as recompense for her contribution; he also stipulated a minimum sales price of sixty million euros.

Now, as she sat in the lobby thinking back on the events of the past six months, she couldn't help but feel another surge of regret: her first day in Lausanne, the seller had offered to sell her the painting for two hundred thousand euros. Only two hundred thousand euros! What was so embarrassing was that after the Russian had gotten to her, she didn't even have that much, and representation was her only option.

Thinking of the castle owner's arrogant expression made her clench her jaw with rage. 'I'm giving you this month out of gratitude for having such a sharp eye!'

It wasn't long before the top art dealers in the world came swarming in. She knew that her window was narrow, and instead of wasting a month dealing with all comers, she would be better off picking a few major targets and going after them directly. There were not more than ten collectors in the whole world with the taste and money, and she needed to find someone strong enough to stand against Christie's. There was only one collector one collector with with enough money, taste, and guts for that: New York's Marvin Lynch.

Seduction, though not very original, was the first tactic that came to mind. It would be the quickest way to get his attention and secure a spot in his packed itinerary. He had already made overtures to her before in past deals (most of which were for small sums); for a collector of his standing to stoop to doing business with a freelance dealer like her obviously had more to do with personal rather than professional interest.

Chemistry wasn't the hard part. Her reputation for success had already earned her industry-wide respect and approval. They went to parties together at the Cartier Foundation, and all of Paris watched with envy as she went arm-in-arm with the most important collector in the world. She knew they were waiting to see her fail.

Of course, Marvin was no fool. He would have heard about the da Vinci long ago from other dealers. He was merely enjoying her company while he waited for her to mention it. After three weeks of preparation, her month finally ticked down to its final weekend; she planned to take advantage of his business trip to Brussels to host him at this luxury suite, away from the turf wars of the art world. She was sure she could persuade him to buy the painting.

She was ready to quote him the minimum price the seller was demanding, plus a five million commission. An offer of sixty-five million euros for a piece easily worth two hundred million seemed completely reasonable. She knew how merciless Paris art dealers could be: they'd never open with anything less than a hundred million. But inflating prices wasn't her style and never had been, which was one of the reasons she was able to carve a place for herself in the industry. Her prices were transparent. The client would pay the seller's minimum price, then the two would negotiate her commission according to their relationship and the quality of her services.

She had already prepared herself for the

possibility that they'd talk her down from five million to four, or even to three. That thought had been enough at first to make her ill; but she never imagined she would come away with nothing.

She could, of course, tell him about the painting over the phone; yet she didn't believe that this was the medium to communicate with the kind of force necessary to persuade him to spend sixty million euros on a 'legendary' painting.

She was so confident, so sure he would be interested, she had even bought tickets to Lausanne for the following day. The mere thought of the congratulatory handshake with Marvin Lynch in front of the avaricious castle owner was enough to send her into the clouds.

Now, it was all gone, and no matter what, she couldn't bring it up with him over the phone. The deal could be broken; Marvin Lynch's trust could not. He couldn't be allowed to know that she had merely been using him from start to finish.

Marvin Lynch must never know that to Amelie, this whole fairy tale was never anything more than business.

VIRTUA STREET

虛擬街頭漂流記



©Luke Huang

MR PETS

寵物先生

-
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-

- Winner of the inaugural Soji Shimada Mystery Award

Mr Pets, pen name of Wang Chien-Min, previously worked as a software engineer. After reading the classic works of Japanese mystery writers Kyotaro Nishimura and Akimitsu Takagi while at university, he decided that he would dedicate himself to writing crime fiction that could sit alongside his heroes. Now a member of the Mystery Writers of Taiwan, he continues to write criticism, as well as produce his own works of fiction, bringing in elements from fantasy, science fiction and horror to reinvigorate the genre.



2014. Taipei's once bustling shopping district Ximending has been destroyed in a devastating earthquake, and as the years pass, it never recovers.

2020. Ximending is now a byword for government failure. Desperate to overturn its fortune, the government entrusts the task of regenerating the area to a private company. But rather than the usual new shopping malls or public art, they suggest a more radical solution. Resurrect the area in virtual reality. And so they go about building an exact replica of Ximending in its glory days of 2008. Every detail is the same, every street and shop. But this time, you wander the streets in a specially constructed room, with a conveyor belt floor.

This is Virtua Street.

But just as the developer Da-Shan and his colleague Lu-Hua are about to launch, they discover a technical problem. They enter the system to investigate, only to find... a dead body! A police investigation reveals the victim to have been struck on the back of the head. The body belongs to a man discovered dead in the real world, alone in a room locked from the inside, with no murder weapon in sight.

And the only people who know about Virtua Street and its technical workings are the team of developers, Da-Shan and Lu-Hua...

By mixing science fiction and crime, the conventions of both genres are overturned in original and surprising ways. Soji Shimada, the giant of Japanese mystery writing himself, has said that *Virtua Street* may well set the new standard for Asian crime writing in the twenty-first century.

VIRTUA STREET

By Mr Pets. Translated by Malachi McGee.

Prologue: Umbilical Cord

‘I’m your mother.’

The woman standing in front of me smiled, paused for a moment, then blurted out this statement to me. I instantly thought of a scene from a movie I’d seen once, *Fly Away Home*. It left the deepest impression on me; the abandoned goose eggs, their rescue, the girl who makes sure they hatch, her artist/inventor father, the awful game warden guiding the geese south for the winter, the light aircraft the girl pilots to lead them there... I was completely in love with this movie at the time, but the plot has since become muddled in my memory. Afterwards, all I could think was, ‘I would love to fly,’ rather than offering heartfelt encouragement to my own father. The part that came back to me clearest was the hatching of the geese. In that scene the young girl watches intently, her eyes full of wonder and love. It was only later I learned that the first thing young birds see after hatching they believe to be their mother. I did a little research, it’s called ‘imprinting,’ one of the main themes of the movie. But this wasn’t what was happening to me now. The geese taking the girl for their

mother came naturally to them, not because she announced, ‘I’m your mother.’

Needless to say, I’m not a bird. More importantly, the girl in the movie didn’t just raise the chicks, she learned how to pilot an aircraft so that she could teach them to fly and fulfill her duty as ‘mother goose’. The woman standing before me was a stranger, I couldn’t possibly expect that kind of noble sacrifice from her. The whole thing was absurd; her abrupt declaration of motherhood, the scenes from the movie flashing through my mind. So I laughed.

The woman frowned. ‘Why are you laughing? That’s rude!’ she said.

‘I’m sorry,’ I said, covering my mouth. ‘You just look more like a big sister, that’s all.’

‘The world is full of mothers and daughters that look like sisters.’

‘You mean you’re as old as the mothers that look like their daughter’s older sister? Already in your mid-thirties, almost forty?’

‘I happen to be thirty, thank you.’ Her eyes were as wide as meatballs, and her anger was rising. I had to find a way out of the hole I’d just dug for myself.

‘Ah! So you want to adopt me, then?’ I asked.

‘That’s my plan.’ The woman’s expression

gradually relaxed.

‘But isn’t that a kinda weird, I mean from a legal and social point of view? You know, that we’re too close in age, or whatever,’ I asked. She proceeded to count off on her fingers all of the formal restrictions on adoption and the social reasoning behind them. Having come full circle, she sighed.

‘So, actually what I’m saying is, I would like you to come *live* with me,’ she concluded. I raised my eyebrows at this and was silent for a while. She seemed to interpret this as indecision on my part. ‘You don’t need to give me an answer right away. I know it’s sudden, but I’m not just saying this. I made up my mind to ask you, knowing you might turn me down, but I want you to seriously consider it...’

I felt I should cut in here, but what I said next kind of came out of nowhere. ‘You’re skipping a big part of the process!’

‘Huh?’

‘Yeah... like the whole giving birth, raising the child, you know?’

‘It doesn’t matter that I didn’t give birth to you. And as for raising you, I’m going to start now.’

It is often said that parents don’t always develop a deep familial attachment on first contact with their newborn baby. Mothers gain that through nine long months of pregnancy, or seeing their child grow up after all you’ve been through together. Otherwise it’s just regular compassion. It’s having a child or raising a child, one or the other, that forms the bond between parent and offspring. I don’t necessarily believe that, it’s just what popped into my head after being reminded of the girl who hatched the eggs in *Fly Away Home*. I pointed at the woman’s stomach and used my finger to draw an imaginary line in the air from hers to mine.

‘Do we have, you know, *this* between us?’ I asked.

‘You mean an umbilical cord?’

‘No...’ I couldn’t think of what I wanted to say and it bugged me. ‘That thing all mothers share with their children...’

‘You mean a *bond*?’ she asked, putting her hand to her forehead. She looked up at the ceiling, as if the answer was written there. ‘I think we do... No, I know we do, though I can’t really say why. Obviously we’re not related by blood, and I haven’t known you for very long, but I plan to treat you like a daughter. I can’t put the reason for that into words. But please believe me, I wouldn’t say the words ‘I’m your mother,’ lightly...’

‘What if you’re the only one who thinks we have a bond?’ I interrupted.

‘The bond between parent and child has always been unilateral. Just look at the way society works, it’s the parents who get to choose whether or not to have children. Children can’t choose their parents.’

‘Yeah, you’re right!’ I admitted, the intonation on the last word rising slightly, because although the woman’s decision to become my mother sounded arbitrary, I felt happy about it. The woman’s feisty attitude reminded me of the girl who hatched the geese. Maybe in the future she could teach me to fly, and we could get far, far away from this place? I closed my eyes for a second. When I opened them back up, I lowered my head and bowed to her.

‘I hope you’ll be patient with me, Ma.’

The woman went outside and turned to face me, her expression happy yet with a trace of embarrassment.

‘I know I asked you to call me ‘ma,’ but in the future do you think you could only call me that in private?’ she asked. So that’s what the coy look was for.

‘But I think I should practice, to convince myself that’s who you are,’ I said.

‘If you call me that in front of other people

they'll look at us strange!

'You think they'll assume you had me when you were a teenager? Or will they think you're just really good at hiding your age?'

'It might be worth getting excited over if it were the latter,' she sighed with relief. I may have mistaken her motives, but as long as she didn't mind it would be okay. And just like that, I got another mother at eighteen, and she was only twelve years my senior. I hadn't meant to say the word earlier, but when I looked up at her I was surprised and yet also elated, because I imagined a fleshy red cord swinging in the air between us. An umbilical cord. I felt just like a newly-hatched goose, imprinting.

Chapter 1 : Thirty Years Old and Homesick

For someone who didn't sleep well, walking from the dark of the hallway into the bright light of the interview room was almost more than my eyes could handle.

'Yo!' Two sofas sat facing each other in the middle of the room, one occupied by a man who jumped up and raised his hand in greeting as soon as I walked in.

'I knew it'd be you.' He had a smug look on his face.

'I had a feeling it'd be you, too. At least we can leave out the introductions and business cards.'

'You don't look very happy to be here,' he said.

'It has nothing to do with you. I wasn't originally the one coming in for this.' I pulled some cold coffee from the fridge and poured half a glass for both the man and myself. When I set the glass on the table, I remembered the apologetic look on Da-Shan's face when he asked me to fill in. There may have been some sudden system error he had to take care of, and I may

have been willing to come and be interviewed, but I couldn't help sulking at always being thrown the hot potato like that.

'I'm assuming Mr Chen of *Fashion Waves* magazine has graced us with his humble presence to ask about Virtua Street?'

'Luva, when did you start sounding so officious?' he asked, taking a sip of his coffee.

'I thought the register fit for the occasion.' I stared at the man across from me, my old college classmate and ex-boyfriend. His name was Chen Yang-Yu, but we called him Shao-Pi. He still talked in the same carefree way that he had when I first met him. It was a disarming trait for a forgetful and overly cautious person like me, but also something I envied him for. It was especially aggravating since interpersonal relationships had always caused me huge amounts of stress, while my boyfriend innocently wondered aloud what could be so hard about it? As far as I was concerned, he was just a friend who happened to be a journalist, and I shouldn't get angry. 'If calling you Mr Chen makes you uncomfortable, I could call you Shao-Pi, but could you *please* not call me Luva? I have a Chinese name, you know, and you said yourself that Luva is just slang for lover, something that you are no longer allowed to call me.' He scratched his head and looked positively baffled at this.

'I'm so used to calling you that, though...'

'My name is Yen Lu-Hua, but you can call me Lu-Hua, just make sure you pronounce it clearly,' I said.

'Alright, then!'

Shao-Pi forced a smile and reached into his shirt pocket for his recorder. 'You're right. The magazine wants to do a whole series of stories on the city's 'Business District Virtual Reality Reconstruction Project.' Of course the first step is interviewing all the big heads in the company. They're just the ones behind the wheel, though. The public knows the main purpose of the

project, to make a virtual model of a gradually fading business district and start conducting all transactions within that virtual model. We've already done a piece on that before.' He coughed and reached for the papers the front desk had given him before he came into the interview room.

'So the plan this time is to focus on the near-finished virtual Ximending model that has entered the testing phase, the so-called Virtua Street,' he said pointing out words on his papers as he read. 'I'd like to start by talking about 'virtual reality' technology, and then move onto the team working on it, their backgrounds, the process of creating the model, and the motivations behind working with the government on this. These points will all be in the final article.' Shao-Pi turned on his recorder and kept right on talking. He wanted to record the entire interview and this was his opening. But I'd already spaced out by the time he'd said the words 'gradually fading business district.' I hadn't heard anything he said after that.

Gradually fading...

I was facing him, but actually looking out the window. It was two o'clock on a Saturday afternoon. It was the weekend, but you couldn't tell by looking out at the street. It looked like any other, with only about one person passing by the window per second. It wasn't a wasteland exactly, but it did feel kind of dead, only made worse by the dark shadows cast by the surrounding high-rises. This was Ximending in 2020, that once prospering hub of business and activity.

After the 2014 Turtle Mountain earthquake in Taoyuan County, reconstruction started all over the north of the island. Wanhua district was the closest to the epicenter, and naturally suffered the worst damage in Taipei City. Wanhua was scarred wherever you looked, and shops, department stores, movie theaters, all had to close temporarily. Similar scenes could be found

all over Taipei, and the people who returned were the scabs, slowly healing the wounds. Taipei's population had been gradually moving east since the end of the previous century, and the people in the eastern districts had begun to outnumber those in the west. As such, east Taipei was healing quicker, while west Taipei just kept right on bleeding.

When Ximending finally started to wake from its post-earthquake coma, it was no longer 'happening.' It was just another business district that could barely manage to draw in customers. There had been a slow period in the 1980s, but the city government had responded by pedestrianising, building a movie theatre, and appealing to the youth, all of which sustained the area for some time. Post-earthquake Ximending of 2014 hadn't been so fortunate, and even the government finally gave up on the stumbling, aging district. It went through one rebuilding phrase, introducing more residential housing. And now, the government wanted to rebuild the old Ximending, virtually. They weren't going to bring it back to its former glory, but instead rely on a virtual 'fantasy' to resurrect it, which was really quite ironic.

'Will o' the wisp.' The strange word suddenly popped out of my mouth.

'You mean a ghost light?'

'An imagined target. A castle in the sky. I didn't think that the plan would work at first,' I said.

'Why not?' Shao-Pi asked.

THE MOONLIGHT TRILOGY

月光三部曲



CHANG CHIA-HUA

張嘉驊

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-

Chang Chia-Hua studied Chinese and children's literature both in Taiwan and Mainland China, before going on to work as a magazine editor, journalist, teacher and textbook editor. He has also acted as judge on the Hong Kong Biennial Awards for Chinese Literature. Chang is always innovating and trying new styles in his writing, mixing a deceptively light prose with considerable research. His is always curious and resists growing comfortable in his approach to creative work. He has published over thirty books for young readers, including the Moonlight Trilogy and *Strange Books*, and he has been published in traditional and simplified Chinese, as well as Korean. Awards include the prestigious China Times Open Book Award, as well as a special recommendation by the Taiwanese Pavilion at the Frankfurt Book Fair.



The Moonlight Trilogy, Chang Chia-Hua's latest series for middle grade readers, brings to life Taiwan's northern port town in three different periods of history. Mixing magic, folklore and historical fact, the Moonlight Trilogy uncovers the tragedies of three kinds of colonisation and war wrought on the locals, opening up questions of forgiveness and how we deal with the scars on our past.

The Tamsui Witch and Her Magic Map:

Chi-Hua Moon has received a letter from his aunt, begging for his help. The only thing is, the cloth on which it was written is over a hundred years old, and is no longer in production. Just then, he discovers a most precious and fantastic family heirloom; a deer skin map with magical powers to transport its owner through time and space. Before he knows it, Chi-Hua is back in the Tamsui of one hundred years ago and in perilous danger. Only then does he realise his aunt has been captured by a Galicean spell caster, because he wants to harness aunt and nephew to help him turn present-day Tamsui back to the Spanish...

The Prince and the Enchantress of Japan:

Aunt Moon and her nephew Chi-Hua are on a mission, to use the deer skin map to travel back to 1945 when Taiwan was still occupied by the Japanese and find a piece of black jade that went missing during the 1937 Nanking Massacre in China. But this is also a time of chaos, as war is drawing to a close across the globe and people are fleeing for safety. No one knows who is friend and who is foe, and somehow in the confusion, the spirit of the Japanese Prince Kitashirakawa Yoshihisa is disturbed after fifty years of rest. The Prince's return, along with the help of a Japanese shrine maiden, has the power to change the course of history. If aunt and nephew don't do something thick to stop them, millions could end up losing their lives...

***The Boy Who Remembers and
the Spirit Who Forgets:***

A nameless spirit that has been lying at the bottom of the Tamsui River bed has awoken in a state of amnesia. What happened? How did he end up there? A boy, somehow young in age but with the silver-white hair of a man many years his senior, is trying to find out what happened to the father he lost in 1947. Taiwan had just been taken over by KMT military government from China. When the Taiwanese couldn't stand the corrupt new government and the locals rebelled against them, bloodshed was widespread. A chance meeting with Aunt Moon and Chi-Hua results in a sudden chance to go back in time and solve the two mysteries. But can the aunt and nephew team heal scars now over sixty-five years old?

THE BOY WHO REMEMBERS AND THE SPIRIT WHO FORGETS

By Chang Chia-Hua. Translated by Darryl Sterk.

Late one night, when Aunt Moon and her nephew Chi-Hua Moon were fast asleep in their rooms, the filing cabinet in the Moon household started rattling again.

To be precise, the sound was coming from a book of magic banging about inside the cabinet. The tome was the life's work of the necromancer Acevedo, who was born in northwestern Spain into a priestly family in the 1880s and spent most of his life learning the dark arts. Acevedo used his native tongue, the ancient Spanish dialect of Galician, to record charms, spells, and enchantments. He even visited Formosa, as Taiwan was called in those days, and dedicated a volume to the magic of the Basay aborigines. Aunt Moon had chanced upon this volume while living in Europe many years before. Poring over it, she had solved the mystery of the deer hide map that had been in her family for generations.

After moving back to Taiwan, Aunt Moon had locked the magic book away. She knew it contained many supernatural arts, but neither she nor her nephew ever touched it out of the conviction that greater power brings only greater ambition.

For that, they thought, had been the cause of Acevedo's corruption, and the reason for his

downfall. Once a kindly priest, Acevedo had died a necromancer, a master of the arts of death, because he had become too powerful, and too ambitious.

Aunt and nephew knew that they possessed a gift, and that the best way to cultivate it was to maintain a healthy respect for the supernatural, and to prevent ambition from getting out of hand.

The filing cabinet in which the book was locked was almost rusted shut, so long had it been since Aunt Moon or Chi-Hua Moon had opened it. But then, one night, it started to shudder, emanating an emerald light.

The source of that emerald light was Acevedo's magic book, out of which a spirit now slowly peeked his head. Soon, like a puff of wind, the spirit squeezed out of the crack in the door of the cabinet and floated around in the living room.

Before long, the spirit had left through the window, and glided off towards the old street in Tamsui Town.

As the night was inky black, and everyone was fast asleep, nobody knew that a spirit was out and about. But even in the middle of the day, who could have seen him? He was a spectral

being, after all, without form or shadow. Nor could anyone hear anything he might say, excepting of course powerful psychics like the Moons.

The spirit drifted down to the riverside where the ferryboats were moored, alighting on the roof of a store. Looking down, he seemed to recall the scene from that strange day, February 28, when he had woken up at the bottom of Tamsui River.

‘Why would I have gone to bed in a river? How long had I lain there?’

By that time his skeleton must have completely disintegrated. He had been sleeping there unnoticed by anyone for who knows how many years. And so he might have stayed for all eternity, had not the blare of a *suona* and the clang of brass bells called him out of his watery slumber.

Hearing that dreadful music, he sat up in his river bed, burst out of the water and glided towards a temple, where a crowd of people was watching some kind of ceremony.

A young person in the garb of a Daoist priest was waving a ragged banner. ‘Did he summon me with the spirit summoning flag?’ the spirit asked aloud, but the only answer he got was a gust of wind and rain.

The spirit found a place in the crowd. He had no idea why they were gathered, and was beginning to feel a bit bored when a girl by the priest’s side started to sing a familiar song. Somehow the spirit knew the song was entitled *Hope*. Like iron to a magnet, he was captivated by her voice, rising and falling despite himself with the modulation of the melody.

‘Ah!’ he cried. He had heard the song before; it was the first thing he was sure of since he had woken up in the river. In fact, he knew it so well that he could sing along.

But when had he heard it? What did it have to do with him? Who was the girl? And why was she singing such a familiar song?

Looking around, he recognised nobody: the people in the crowd were strangers all. But during his survey he was delighted to discover a middle-aged woman with a faint aura.

She was glowing with a kind of fluorescent light that spirits find irresistible and which only they can see. He couldn’t resist approaching her and standing by her side, under the umbrella she was sharing with a young man.

‘Who is this woman? And why is she glowing like a firefly?’ The spirit decided to follow her.

Just then he discovered someone else out of the ordinary, on the other side of the crowd. A young man with white hair staring his way with a look of astonishment on his face. Before the spirit knew it, the white-haired youth had slipped away from the crowd and was gone.

Two young men, a middle-aged woman and a girl. Eventually the spirit came to know all of their names, despite never finding out his own. He was a spirit with a bad case of amnesia. Aside from the song Shao-Ting, for that was the name of the girl, had sung, the only other thing he remembered were the circumstances of his own demise: he had been shot to death, executed at the Mound, at the place where the Tamsui River pours into the Pacific Ocean.

Visiting the beach at the Mound had become a daily ritual for the spirit. He went there every morning at dawn in the hopes of finding clues in his fragmented memory of who he used to be.

The seaside wind would whine and whine, and the rise and fall of the tide was a faint sigh. At the dawning of every day, the spirit would fall upon the beach in a replay of his execution, in an attempt to jog his memory.

He remembered being driven to the beach in a black sedan. The car lights went out, the engine died, and the world went dark. Two men in Chinese tunic suits got out of the car—one

from the front seat, one from the rear—and each unhipped a Browning HP. One of them grunted at him to get out of the car. The other escorted him to the sea.

Hands bound behind his back, he stumbled barefoot across the beach, almost tripping on a stone. The farther they went, the more keenly he felt the chill of the nighttime breeze, as cold and brutal as the uncaring world itself.

He caught a whiff of faintly bitter light, and looked up to see a yellow moon hanging sourly in the sky.

The two men brought him by the water and ordered him to kneel.

He remembered the bitter words he had spoken that night. ‘I never thought you two would send me to my grave. You may have won in this lifetime, but I’ll get even in the next!’

He also recalled the mocking tones of the reply: ‘I’ve killed a lot of criminals, and I thought I’d heard it all. Fine! Come and haunt me, if you can. I’ll be waiting for you.’

At that, the man fired three shots into his back: *Bang! Bang! Bang!* Three bullets passed clear through his torso, exiting through his left breast. He died instantly, and was never heard from again.

The spirit was certain they’d dumped his body into the sea, and that he’d drifted inland with the tide and sunk to the bottom of Tamsui River, where he had lain for who knows how long.

The spirit stood on the beach by the Mound probing the three bullet wounds, still clearly visible, on his left breast. It was as if he was holding a memorial for himself.

Everything was shrouded in darkness, even now as dawn drew nigh.

So many problems and no solution!

He still didn’t know who he was or why he had died.

‘What kind of person was I? Why was I

executed on the beach at the Mound? Was I a victim of the 228 Incident? Did I die on February 28, 1947? If not, then when and why? Is it because my memories are so traumatic that I can’t remember them even after death?’ The spirit tried hard, but aside from that song and the scene that night at the Mound, he couldn’t remember a thing.

It wasn’t easy for him to find answers. After all, given the division between the human and spirit worlds, how was he supposed to ask anyone? Even if someone did know something about his death, they’d have no way to tell him, or even know of his existence.

Actually, his investigation had not been completely unsuccessful. The spirit was thankful that he’d been lucky enough to meet Shao-Ting, Aunt Moon and her nephew Chi-Hua Moon, through whom he’d gotten some leads. In fact, in pursuing them, he’d even come to suspect they might be relatives or friends. The spirit was sure meeting them had been no accident, that some kind of otherworldly power was arranging everything. ‘Maybe Heaven above has taken pity on a lonesome ghost, and plans to let him find the way home,’ he thought.

The spirit had started following Shao-Ting, Aunt Moon and Chi-Hua Moon around to find out more about himself, and here he was, still following them two weeks later. In the interim he had discovered many secrets. The Moons were such an amazing family! To think that an ordinary looking apartment would contain such a formidable magic book and a deer hide map with the power to teleport people through space and time!

THE NOWHERE TRILOGY

找不到國小三部曲



(Bei Lynn; Tsen Peng-Wei)

© Luke Huang

TSEN PENG-WEI

岑澎維 / Author

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- [Nominee of the 2009 Golden Tripod Award](#)
- [Recommended reading by the Taiwan Government Information Office](#)

Having graduated from National Taitung University's Graduate Institute of Children's Literature, Tsen Peng-Wei now works as a primary school teacher. Her favourite pastime is sitting on a comfortable chair and waiting for the stories to come to her, where she can catch them. While she often has to battle with her prey, she was soon addicted to the unpredictable nature of it, and now she can't live without her writing. She has won numerous awards, including the Dawushan prize for Literature twice, and the 2004 Council for Cultural Affairs' prize for children's literature. She has published novels, picture books, and essays to great acclaim.

Bei Lynn has loved drawing since she was a child. She studied Art at university, concentrating on children's book illustration at graduate school. She published her first picture book, *To Be a Fish*, in 1999, and has continued to write and draw picture books ever since, including *Gus the Dinosaur Bus*, *Kata Kata Kata* etc, winning her many prizes and a special recommendation at the Taiwan Pavilion during the Bologna Book Fair.

BEI LYNN

林小杯 / Illustrator



A primary school teacher by profession, Tseng Peng-wei has turned her everyday into an imaginary playground full of wonder and delight. Filled with humour and accompanied by Bei Lynn's evocative illustrations, these are stories to entertain those big and small.

The Nowhere School:

The Nowhere School sits on top of the Nowhere Mountains. Outsiders often get lost in the meandering pathways and the permanent mist, so it is rare for those who don't know where to look to find this special place. But if you ever get the chance, you will find many wonders: the Ferris wheel library, the Wood-Tub Flying Ship, the Wave Slide, not to mention the people! Mr Slowly Does It, and Mrs No Change who mans the tuck shop... Going to school has never been such fun!

The Nowhere Mountains:

High up in the Nowhere Mountains, deep in the mist and fog, is the hidden No Way In Lane. And if you're lucky enough to find your way in, you just might come across Mr Priceless Treasures who keeps secrets, or buy a pair of ice glasses from the spectacles shop which have the power to make everything clear again. Or you could go to the hundred-year-old medicine shop and buy yourself some Ba-la-ba-la-wu-jee-lee-ga herbs to give you confidence. Or, of course, you could choose to go to the Scarier Than Going Down the Mountain at Night By Yourself hairdressers run by Mrs Quick Scissors... If you've managed to survive that, then there's always the Nowhere Mountain's most delicious treat, the Rainbow Tree, dripping with the most delicious sweets you could ever hope to find!

The Nowhere Headmaster:

The Nowhere School has just got itself a new headmaster, but no one knows what he looks like. He's always got new ideas, like Bring Your Pet to School day. But whatever you do, don't go winning the Nowhere School Spelling Bee, because the consequences will be beyond your imagination... But most of all, the Nowhere School's new headmaster is trying to think of the best possible present to send to his pupils for Children's Day. Clearly he doesn't know what a Grapefruit Giant, a Whispering Chicken, or a Bag of Oolong Leaves are! Honestly!

THE NOWHERE SCHOOL

Text by Tsen Peng-Wei, illustrated by Bei Lynn.

Translated by Helen Wang.

Chapter 1: The Nowhere School, is there really such a place?

Yes, there really is a place called the Nowhere School, and it's in the Nowhere Mountains, which are covered all year round in mist and cloud.

To get there, you have to follow the twisting, turning mountain roads and find a way through the thick, white cloud. When you come to the secret village with the red-tiled rooftops, look up, and you'll see a heavy wooden gate. That's the entrance to the Nowhere School.

People hear about the Nowhere School and come looking for it. But it's not easy to find. That's not because the sign on the gate is so old and faded that you can't read it any more. And it's not because it's a small school with only a few students. And it's certainly not because it's not marked clearly on the map or because the signposts have blown over in the wind.

The reason why it's so difficult to find the Nowhere School is because it's easy to get lost on the way, to go down the wrong track. The little road to the school is a bit like a snake—as soon as it sees a human being it makes itself

scarce, disappearing without a trace. In fact, it's quite an achievement even finding the Nowhere Mountains. And although there are a dozen mountain roads that all look exactly the same, only one of them will lead you to the Nowhere School.

Most people are excited to find their first road, and are convinced it's the right one. But that road leads to the Know-where School, which is so much easier to find. Of course, the Know-where School has a lot of visitors, most of whom are delighted, thinking they have found the Nowhere School.

To get to the Nowhere School, you have to go to the foot of the Nowhere Mountains, and head south on the road that runs due north, turn left at the sixth turning on the right, and then take the first turning on the left.

Then take the following turnings in sequence: left left right right, right left left; then right right left left, left right right.

'That sounds easy enough!'

The problem is that, as the cloud thickens, more often than not people miss the turnings. Everything seems to be lost in the mist, and even the school bell seems to clang heavily: 'Clunk! Clunk! Clunk!'

People hear the bell and think they must be near the Nowhere School. But they are still a long way away. The mountain paths twist and turn, and run all over the Nowhere Mountains. Those who are in a hurry to get to the Nowhere School rarely find it. But those who are not in a hurry often come across it by chance.

Is it called the Nowhere School because people can't find it? Or was it called the Nowhere School so that people wouldn't be able to find it? No one knows the answer, because the old records are nowhere to be found.

The local people have no trouble finding the Nowhere School. They can find it with their eyes closed! The name of the school annoys them. For them the school is right there, and it's a nuisance always having to write that unnecessary seven-letter word.

But, it's not so irritating that they want to change it. Deep down, they rather like its unusual name. After all, the Nowhere School does have an air of mystery about it, and, some might say, a certain magnificence.

There is only one way to get to the Nowhere School, and that is to go there slowly and not to rush. Learn the turnings sequence by heart, and then, when you're in the mist and the cloud, slow down and take pleasure in the lush pines and old trees by the side of the road. Sooner or later you'll find yourself at the tiny little school.

Many people come to the Nowhere Mountains specifically to see the school. They want to know what's so special about it. And why people are so intrigued by it. But only the people

who have been to the Nowhere School can tell you that.

Only a few people have ever been to the Nowhere School. And when they leave again, they all miss this unique place. They hold it dear in their hearts, and long to go and see it again.

But the cloud is so thick, and the path so difficult to find... that most people have to be content with hearing tales about this beautiful and extraordinary place.

Chapter 2: **Adam's journey to the** **Nowhere School**

As the new day dawns in the Nowhere Mountains, Adam, who's eleven, and a fifth-grader at the Nowhere School, is getting ready for school.

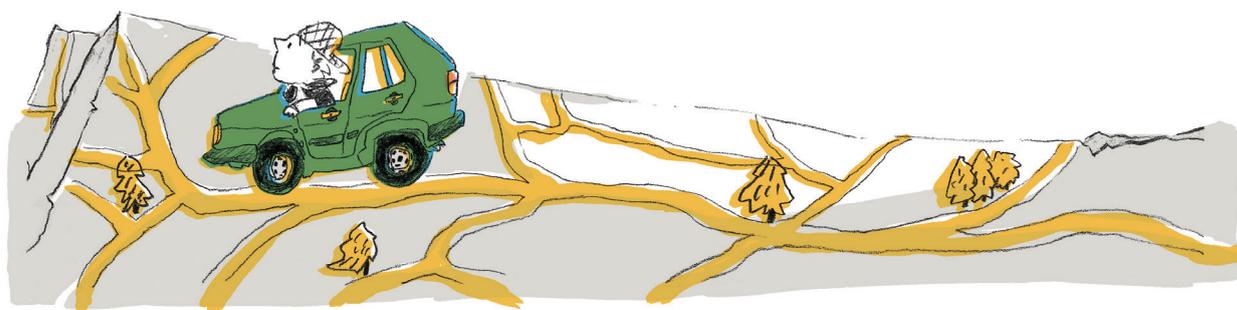
The sun knows where Adam is going, and gently wakes the still-sleepy sunbeams, so they can light up the path for him. But the cloud is too thick for the sun to illuminate sky in this way.

Adam slings his schoolbag onto his back, and sets off for the little river on his way to school.

'Adam! Wait for me!' Adam doesn't need to look around. He knows it's Kevin.

Kevin catches up with him, and together they walk along the river. The water gushes from the source at the top of the Nowhere Mountains, then streams downhill to where it flows beside them.

There is a quicker way to get to school, but



Adam likes to come this way and catch a ride in Uncle Joe's boat.

He knocks on Uncle Joe's door, and an old man with a long beard answers immediately, pops his cap on his head, and says:

'Let's go!'

Uncle Joe slides his Wood-Tub Flying Ship into the water. It will take the boys to school. The river flows this way and that. It takes longer than walking but is much more convenient when you have things to carry.

'No standing up!' says Uncle Joe as he unties the mooring rope. He says this every time.

Adam knows this, because the reason he rises with the sun every morning is to catch a ride in Uncle Joe's Wood-Tub Flying Ship.

Uncle Joe made the Wood-Tub Flying Ship with his own hands, fastening the heavy pieces of wood together to create the big, round wooden tub. It's big enough to take a bath in, but Uncle Joe won't have anyone calling it a bathtub!

Uncle Joe fixed three big, fat tyres full of air around the outside of the tub, so that when the Wood-Tub Flying Ship bumps against the rocks it bounces off them and spins leisurely around.

'Like a spinning top.'

Adam loves the sensation of spinning round and round in the Wood-Tub Flying Ship on the water.

'It's like we're aliens in a flying saucer,' says Kevin, reaching out his hand to catch the drops of water that keep splashing them.

'Make sure you pay attention in class, Adam,'

says Uncle Joe, drawing the paddle through the water.

Adam isn't listening. He's only interested in how much water is splashing into the boat. 'It's not so much fun today, Uncle Joe. I wish the stream was a bit fuller and the current a bit stronger.'

'The water's perfect today. Too much water and it's dangerous. Work hard at school and then one day you can be the head of the village.' Uncle Joe carries on saying these things, and Adam carries on ignoring them.

The most exciting part of the ride is when the Wood-Tub Flying Ship comes to the steps. There's a natural slope that the river has to go down, and once, when the river was dry, Uncle Joe built a series of wide steps, so the little boat might descend more gently, one step at a time.

On each step the water catches the boat, carries it along, and then drops it over the edge... and every time the boat goes over the edge to the next step, the two boys scream 'Arrghh!'

After six screams, there is a bend in the river, and three more classmates jump into the boat.

It's better with more people. The Wooden Tub Flying Ship goes racing down the river.

'Faster, Uncle Joe! Faster!'

'You're scaring all the squirrels away,' says Uncle Joe, shaking his head at them.



TRISTES FRONTIÈRES

憂鬱的邊界



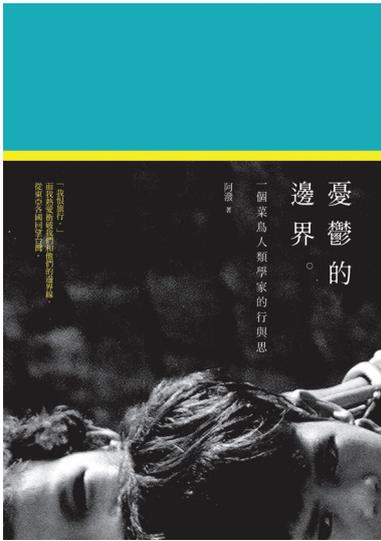
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ANNPO HUANG

阿潑

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-

Annpo is the pen name of Huang Yi-Ying. Trained in Anthropology and journalism, she has worked in international development and as a journalist, before concentrating on her writing full time. Anthropological methods shape the very way she sees the world, every day life is fieldwork. She also takes a deep interest in cultural topics and learning Asia's many different languages. Annpo is hungry to know the world, she loves to travel, to talk to locals, and judges the success of a trip by how many times she is invited to eat with strangers and new friends. She has previously published *Unseen Beijing* and writes a blog entitled *Hello, Malinowski*.



Back in 2002, Annpo decided to make a trip of a lifetime around East Asia. But she was no ordinary backpacker, she was an anthropologist on ‘fieldwork,’ determined to discover the ways big and small borders are reconstructed by, and reshape, different peoples around the continent. She was there to break bread with the locals, and along the way, she discovered that they were not the strangers of her imagination. Border disputes across East Asia have thrown up similar anxieties to the ones she knows from back home, a country not recognised by the UN, an island in limbo after China’s bitter civil war.

And so she travelled. From Vietnam’s ever heating conflict zone, to the icy cold line that separates Korea north and south at latitude 38 degrees. To Macau, where she stayed not in high rise luxury, but in the shabby wooden shacks that have survived the city’s glossy casino makeover. She took the cheapest bus from China’s border with North Korea down to Beijing, experiencing life for the superpower’s poorest citizens. Next came a visit to a Thai-Burma border town. Daring to go where most tourists don’t and determined to get deeper than the surface most tourists see, Annpo was on a journey across melancholy borders.

Paying homage to Levi-Strauss’ *Tristes Tropiques*, the sixteen essays that make up *Tristes Frontières* are not just a record of Annpo’s adventures across Asia, of the repeated collisions with borders real and imagined, but also a vivid example of what we might call a ‘sensory anthropology.’ This book is a conversation about identity and boundaries. But Annpo shows us, there is a world beyond the boundaries we create for ourselves.

TRISTES FRONTIÈRES

By Annpo Huang. Translated by Yew Leong Lee.

Vietnam: A Misunderstanding at the Border

‘China, oh China’

On an overnight train returning from Lao Cai to Hanoi, my companion and I were just about to go to sleep when all of a sudden there was a knock on our door, chasing away all thought of rest. An officer in a crisp uniform strode in, shouting, ‘Tickets, passports,’ which we immediately produced. Taking the two dark green booklets from us, he proceeded to inspect our documents with a look of amusement on his face, except he didn’t smile. He scrutinised the cover, which bore the text, Republic of China, for words he could recognise. Standing behind the well-built officer was the train conductor in a white uniform, who seemed indifferent to this inspection and kept quiet from start to finish.

The swaying of the train carriages made a clanging noise that disrupted the night; its friction sparked in the four of us—huddled into one of the narrowest compartments in the train—a silent anger. If the air was already heavy from the poor ventilation, it grew even heavier

from the tension. It was hard to breathe.

And then a document covered in Vietnamese words was thrust before our eyes, the police officer indicating that we were to sign it. We didn’t know why we had to sign a document we couldn’t read, and without anyone around who could explain or translate it for us, I pushed the document back to the police officer and shook my head forcefully. The police officer stopped smiling and stared at us. ‘Not China, we are from Taiwan,’ we tried to explain, loudly, in English, but the police officer didn’t seem to understand. A few more back and forths ensued, but neither one of us succeeded in making himself or herself understood—we were trapped in the Tower of Babel.

‘I’m guessing we’re being taken for illegal Chinese immigrants,’ I whispered into my friend’s ear.

This was the summer of 2002, the summer I found out that I had been accepted by a university to study anthropology and was traveling from southern Vietnam to Lao Cai at the country’s northernmost tip. At first glance, you’d be hard-pressed to say how this province differed from the rest—there were the same hawkers carrying small and large bags of goods,

hurrying to the market, the same rickshaw pullers, the same motorbike riders for hire, and the same taxi drivers, all jostling for you to use their services. The only thing that was different about it, perhaps, were the faces belonging to the Chinese and other minority groups occupying both sides of the Sino-Vietnamese border.

The reason for this is Lao Cai's proximity to China, which lies just across the Red River, where it converges with the Yunnan River. The province is an important focal point for Sino-Vietnam relations. In 1979, it was occupied by Chinese forces during the Sino-Vietnam War. After the war ended and the Chinese troops withdrew, it turned from tense military outpost to deserted frontier. Only when relations between the two countries normalised in 1993 and the shore opened up again did the bustle of years past return.

For hundreds, even thousands of years, the border between Vietnam and China has never been well defined. When the Chinese invaded Vietnam, they not only erased the cultural demarcations, but also fudged up their physical ones too. Only when the People's Republic of China was established and Vietnam became independent did the process of delineating borders begin. Unfortunately, both parties were unable to come to an agreement and the resulting war turned the 1350 kilometre-long line into a wound awaiting suture. In 2000, after the Sino-Vietnam Land Border treaty was signed, the gash finally healed. As if dividing up a cake, 113 of the 217 square kilometers of land under dispute went to Vietnam, while the remaining 114 went to China. Peace, at least on the surface, was thus obtained.

Although the border markers now clearly defined their territories, both countries' citizens continue to cross the border daily. After all, quotidian life, which has nothing to do with top-level politics, carries on. On the one hand,

members of the Thai and Yi minority groups from Yunnan carry home agricultural produce from Vietnam; on the other, the Vietnamese walk back their bicycles laden with Chinese clothes and household products. It's through here that the various products from China are exported to the rest of Southeast Asia. Crowds alighting at the bus stop carry boxes bearing Chinese characters—a reminder of China's proximity.

And precisely because of this, it's not unheard of for Chinese illegal immigrants to sneak across the border. The section of land between Lao Cai and Hanoi is thus a crucial one. No wonder the Chinese on board the train are subject to special scrutiny.

All said, we were holders of Taiwanese passports, with visas and train tickets—it should have been clear that we were tourists. Why were we being mistaken for Mainland Chinese, and why should we sign a document we did not understand? Was it because we were occupying the room reserved for the train conductor? No, that was probably not it. Because the situation couldn't be explained away, I was even more frustrated.

At such a deadlock caused by language barriers, and stubbornness on both sides, I devised a detective story in my mind: Who, on this train, is guilty of creating this predicament?

*

I'd long thought that even if the Vietnamese didn't like the Chinese, they didn't hate them. Taiwan's history textbooks start with our 'five thousand years of civilisation,' and that Vietnam has always been a dependent of China—not only did it succumb to our dynastic rule, it has also been positively influenced by Chinese culture. In truth, however, for thousands of years China has been nothing but a menace to its neighbour. Its threat is felt by Vietnam even today.

‘It may be hard for you to conceive it as such, but, in fact, China is actually a menace to us.’ Many years later, in Taipei, I met a Chinese Vietnamese whom I called Luo, and who liked to tell me stories. I was curious how the Vietnamese in him looked upon China, his ancestral home. He alluded to recent developments in the news to express what was a common Vietnamese sentiment: although a lot of Chinese capital has been invested in Southeast Asia—including many public construction projects in Vietnam—the Vietnamese are nonetheless wary of the Chinese. Case in point: Vietnam’s high speed rail project. Although the Vietnamese parliament voted to turn down Japan’s tender because the quoted price was simply too high for them to bear, not one official dared suggest that they turn to the Chinese (who could go as low as a third of Japan’s), because of their misgivings. It would be tantamount to opening one’s doors to a Trojan horse.

This fear of the Chinese also manifests itself in Vietnamese street names. During my travels, I discovered that many of the streets in Vietnam’s cities are named after local heroes, who have often led resistance efforts against the Chinese. For example, Trưng Sisters Road in Ho Chi Minh city commemorates two sisters who mounted resistance to Chinese invasion, while Trần Hưng Đạo and Nguyễn Huệ Avenues recall the commanders who fought off the Mongolians in the thirteenth century. Of course, Vietnam doesn’t only claim China as its enemy—anti-French resistance leader Chiến dịch Nam Kỳ is also memorialised in this way. Although Vietnam’s numerous struggles and resistance efforts can be condensed into a mere section of Vietnamese history in a travel guide, traces of these efforts are also visible in the sights and architecture of Vietnam, as well as on its maps and in its street names. One can’t help being reminded of it with every casual flip of

the page or with every turn of the corner, and so Vietnam’s tumultuous history leaves a deep impression on any visitor.

Seated at the very heart of Hanoi’s city centre, and regarded as the very lung of the city, is Hoàn Kiếm Lake. Today, it’s a place for leisure; in the morning, old people congregate by it to practice Tai chi, and at night, dating couples stroll along its perimeter. Tourists go there too, from time to time. The casual atmosphere belies its menacing name: ‘Lake where the Sword was Returned.’ The name originated in the fifteenth century, during Vietnam’s Lê Dynasty. At that time, the Ming Dynasty court in China dispatched soldiers south to invade Vietnam. Thanks to resistance efforts led by Lê Lợi, Vietnam managed to prevail. After ten years of fighting, Xuande Emperor at last issued an edict to abort the mission, and Vietnam kept its independence. Legend has it that Lê Lợi borrowed a treasured sword from the Heavens, and upon victory, rode a boat to the middle of the lake in Hanoi, and returned the sword to a Turtle God that resided in the waters, giving it its name.

Hoàn Kiếm Lake’s story isn’t the only one in which Vietnam’s ‘resistance against and hate of foreigners’ is recorded. There’s also the Temple of the Jade Mountain, which commemorates Trần Hưng Đạo, another leader who fought off the Mongolians. This important general of the Chen Dynasty led Vietnamese forces in the thirteenth century and successfully defended Vietnam against Mongolian incursion not once, but twice. Celebrated for his victories, he was later known as King Hưng Đạo and even deified. According to legend, you would pray to him if you wanted to get pregnant or, if you were pregnant already, to avert miscarriage.

The defeat of the Mongolians by the Chen Dynasty’s Trần Hưng Đạo and that of the Chinese by Li Dynasty’s Lê Lợi both unfolded in

part at Ha Long Bay, a spectacular formation of limestone pillars not far away from the Chinese border. We had a free slot in our itinerary just before visiting Lao Cai, so we decided to take a bus and visit this famous tourist spot. The name Ha Long means ‘Heavenly Dragon Descended from the Skies.’ According to legend, God in Heaven once commanded all its dragons as well as their descendants to stop the Mongolians from invading by sea. When a heavenly dragon rises up into the sky and thrashes its tail, it causes mountains to collapse and the sea’s waters to rise and fill in the newly formed craters. Ha Long Bay was created by accident but favoured by one of the heavenly dragons, and so was permitted to stay. In Thien Cung Cave, one of the scenic locations of Ha Long Bay, there is a dragon-shaped stalactite. Inside the cave is also a yawning hole in the ground; according to folklore, this is the opening from which the dragon rose.

When we were walking around the limestone cave, a Vietnamese tour guide pointed to a few blurry Chinese characters that had been inscribed into the wall, and explained to us that this place had once been a battleground, and the location of some particularly rousing battle stories. For example, in 1288, Chen Dynasty’s Trần Hưng Đạo had buried a trap made of wooden stakes in nearby Bạch Đằng River. Taking advantage of an imminent low tide, he had lured the Mongolian soldiers in. As planned, once the tide turned the ship, pierced by the wooden stakes, capsized and the Vietnamese won. Not two hundred years had passed when the Ming Dynasty sent their naval forces to Ha Long Bay once more. It was here that Lê Lợi, using the same tactic, also defeated the Ming. The characters the tour guide pointed out were irrefutably in Chinese, damning evidence to those of us who knew the language that the Chinese had once tried to take Vietnam by force.

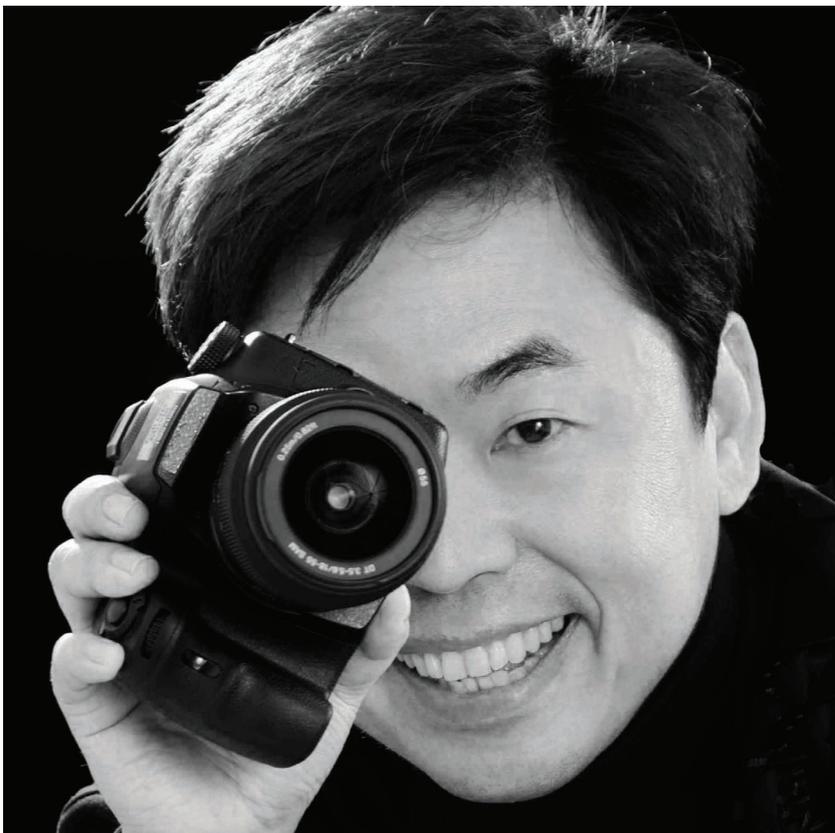
‘In the long course of history, we’ve always

been bullied by China.’ And with this, the tour guide ended his presentation.

The other tourists turned around to look at us—the only East Asians in the group. My companion and I hurriedly shook our heads: ‘We are Taiwanese.’ During this trip, we had been taken for Mainland Chinese many times. Rejecting this presumption was by now a reflex action.

THE CHAPEL BY THE SEA

公東的教堂



NICHOLAS FAN
范毅舜

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-

Nicholas Fan has a master's degree from the Brooks Institute of Photography and has exhibited in Washington D.C., the Leica Gallery Frankfurt, the Alain Couturier Gallery in France, as well as numerous venues all over Taiwan. His photographs have been used by Leica, Sinar, Hasselblad, Ilford and Kodak for exhibitions and promotion, and Sony Taiwan supports him with the equipment he uses from day to day. Hasselblad named him one of the world's one hundred and fifty best photographers and he is the only Chinese photographer to have been included in a Leica exhibition. He has published nearly fifty books in Taiwan.



World renowned photographer Nicholas Fan was invited some years ago to visit the Le Corbusier-designed Le Couvent Sainte-Marie de la Tourette outside Lyon, turning his trip into the book *The Convent on the Hill*. After his return to his native Taiwan, he was surprised to come across a similarly important chapel built sixty years earlier on the east coast, attached to the Kung-Tung Technical Senior High School. The four-storey avant-garde structure was Taiwan's second modernist building, built around the same time as Le Corbusier's masterpiece was gaining fame around the world.

Kung-Tung Technical Senior High School was built under the leadership of Father Hilber Jakob. His intention was not in fact to open a school, but after living in Taiwan for some years he came to the conclusion that education was the most important catalyst for improving people's everyday lives. He imported the German dual education system, with its equal emphasis on theory and practice, and inaugurated a new era in Taiwan's technical education. The school trained many talented carpenters and technicians, laying a solid foundation for Taiwan's furniture industry.

In the past decades, the chapel at Kung-Tung has been a site of pilgrimage for the island's architecture students, though still a hidden treasure among a small select circle. Deciding that it deserved greater attention among the wider public too, Nicholas Fan resolved to document this remarkable building and its story in this book. Consisting of beautiful photographs and immediate and arresting prose, it is a love letter to a part of Taiwan's history that risks being forgotten forever.

THE CHAPEL BY THE SEA

By Nicholas Fan. Translated by James Laughton-Smith.

Preface

Taitung once used to seem as distant as a foreign country to me.

I probably knew more about European history and culture than I did about Taitung and its natural surroundings. I was not alone in this. Many of my friends who received their degrees abroad, knowledgeable about world affairs and professionally accomplished, have never been to Taitung. They know more about the United States, all the way across on the opposite side of the Pacific Ocean, than the largest city on Taiwan's east coast.

I'm ashamed to say that my knowledge of Taitung comes mostly from my study of the Swiss missionaries of the Bethlehem Missionary Society (SBM), who have been serving in Taiwan for the last sixty or so years.

In the summer of 2008, I published a book called *The Swiss Men of the Coastal Mountain Range*. In it, I mention a missionary called Brother Buchel Augustin. He loved trekking and set up the Siangyang Hiking Club. He taught me the best spots to star gaze, dip in outdoor hot springs, enjoy the plum blossoms and even where to watch planes take off and land. The missionaries

would swim every day in an artificial lake right on the coast next to the Pacific. We dubbed it the King of Pools because it was so big.

The SBM missionaries have left their mark all along the east coast. Over the last sixty years, they have built churches, a hospital, a special education centre and even founded a school. Most of them were young men in their late twenties and thirties when they first came to Taiwan. Today, they speak fluent Mandarin, Hokkien and even the languages of the Amis and Bunun tribes. Some have passed away but a few are still alive.

I have spent the last twenty-five years travelling all across the European continent and I lived on the east coast of America for a long period. In contrast, many of the missionaries feel so strongly about Taiwan, their adopted home, that they wished to be buried here even after their passing.

Getting to know these missionaries forced me to reassess my values.

For example, what is success? Is it fame? Or is it having lots of money? Brother Buchel Augustin still sleeps on the same old bed he has slept in for the last forty years, in a tiny, unbearably hot room with no air-conditioning. He still uses a

1960s-style plastic wardrobe that is old enough to be a museum exhibit. Father Gassner Ernst has fewer winter coats than the average woman has designer handbags. And yet they live full and contented lives, especially on Sundays when they run around holding Mass in different locations around town. At his advanced age of eighty-four, I often worry about Father Vonwyl Gottfried and how his congregation, who love him dearly, will cope if, heaven forbid, he passes on.

I felt at the time that my book *The Swiss Men of the Coastal Mountain Range* contained all I had to say on the subject, despite it being a slim volume of only three chapters. I have never liked writing about the people or things I care for, for fear of somehow losing those feelings, that they would no longer belong to me. Moreover, the subjects of my writing may not like what they find in the pages of my books and that would be uncomfortable. But I wrote a second volume about them, in part because their stories are so beautiful and also in part because they gave me the chance to review my own life and values from another perspective.

Life is full of unexpected twists and turns, as they say.

In the second part of *The Swiss Men of the Coastal Mountain Range* I included too many personal secrets and struggles and it brought me to a crossroads in my life. I decided to move to the United States for good, give up my artistic endeavours and find a stable job so that I could put down roots. In 2010, Taitung County government selected my book as part of the international One City, One Book project. They contacted my publishers repeatedly to invite me back to Taiwan to give a speech. Right from the start I had no intention of accepting the offer (not because I thought I was too important, but because I was afraid it would undermine my determination to leave behind my art). However in the end, because I had an early draft I needed

to deliver to my publishers, I decided to combine both tasks and make a brief trip back to Taiwan. It was by accident that during this short trip I happened upon the beautiful chapel in Taitung built by the Bethlehem Missionary Society half a century before on the grounds of Kung-Tung Technical Senior High School.

But as I feared, the building and the story behind it once again took me on a journey into the unknown. And the completion of this book, one I never planned to write.

Missionaries from Afar

‘God sieves slowly, but His sieve is very fine. You can’t afford to confuse diamond and glass.’

Unknown Roman historian

One cold winter’s night, I was chatting with Brother Buchel Augustin at their church in Taitung.

‘Many architecture students come to visit churches built by the Bethlehem Mission Immensee. I’m always surprised that their favourite is the one at Kung-Tung Technical Senior High School.’

‘That’s quite understandable. Didn’t Brother Julius Felder design it?’ I asked off hand.

‘Of course not!’ Brother Augustin exclaimed. ‘It was designed by a professional architect. Brother Felder and I were yet to arrive in Taiwan.’

Brother Augustin has been living on the island for nearly fifty years. It felt like there was a lot left for me to discover about this place, despite all the research I had done for my previous book about the SBM missionaries.

I cycled to Kung-Tung the next morning. The scenery along the way was more or less as I remembered it from my first visit to Taitung City thirty years ago. Taiwan’s decades of

miraculous economic growth made it the envy of the world. But aside from disrupting our collective memories, it made me even sadder to think that perhaps the magnificent coastline, leaning up against the mountains, might one day be buried under fields of concrete, all in the name of progress. Unlike the locals, I was sometimes thankful for the city's slower pace of development.

It was the holidays and the Kung-Tung campus was deserted. As far as I was concerned, at one point it had been a nationally renowned technical senior high and many of Taiwan's future furniture magnates had been students of the school. At that time, students of the school would secure employment even before graduating, such was the school's reputation; employers knew that pupils received a strict yet solid training from the Swiss missionaries.

The first time I went to see the chapel building I was completely staggered by the modern exposed structure so beloved of so many people in Taiwan in the past decade. Just a few years ago I had been a resident artist at Couvent Sainte-Marie de La Tourette, designed by Le Corbusier—the father of Kung-Tung Chapel's architectural style—and I had once made the arduous journey across western France to visit Le Corbusier's Notre Dame du Haut, a classic of modern architecture. My pilgrimage to see the works of Le Corbusier left a deep impression, but now I felt ashamed to have been unaware of a comparable building in my own back yard.

As I stood outside the grey, decrepit building, I felt a rush of emotions. Even in this rapid information era, I knew nothing about it. I thought of the high school's founder, Father Hilber Jakob, who had come to Taitung in 1952. He would likely be a good place to start if I wanted to look for clues.

Moulding the Memories and Emotions of an Era

As I stood inside the beautiful Kung-Tung Chapel, I contemplated the space and an impression indistinct at first became clearer and clearer in my mind.

People told me that even just before he died and as long as his health allowed, Father Hilber Jakob insisted on holding Mass for students in the chapel. They described how many times he had to practically clamber up the steps on all fours to reach the chapel at the top of the building, but he wouldn't accept any help. His nurse was particularly frustrated by his stubborn determination, forced as she was to follow him from behind and push him up.

Perhaps it's hard for us to comprehend the devotion of these missionaries?

Two thousand years ago, the Roman governor of Jerusalem Pontius Pilate was forced to condemn Christ because of protests from the Jewish crowds. In Pilate's mind, he had not committed any crime. However, the Jewish priests and leaders viewed Christ's message of love, equality and the virtue of forgiveness as fundamentally opposed to the mainstream values of the time and they denounced him as subversive. At Passover, the crowds went against all common morality and allowed for an innocent Christ to be condemned while a bandit was set free. Pilate was troubled and asked Jesus why he had come. The carpenter's son answered, 'To testify to the truth.' 'What is the truth?' Pilate asked. But Christ remained silent.

Pilate asked the question all of us want answered.

Father Hilber Jakob, who spent the best part of his life in service to Christ, never answered this question directly. However, in that little room where he lived in the corner of the third floor leading up to the chapel on the fourth, I

seemingly found some clues: his modest little room with its shabby bathroom was unbearably hot in summer and freezing in winter. Jakob chose to live in those poor living conditions so that he could fit in with the apprentices. And just like the monks' rooms in Le Corbusier's La Tourette monastery, his small quarters only had room for a bed, a desk, a cupboard, and nothing else.

Suddenly, I had a realisation about what Christ might have meant when he chose not to answer but to make his point through action: the truth cannot be expressed in words. Only through our deeds are we able to grope our way through the fog of life, and from that we gain strength. Just like the trembling light of the candle, though insignificant, can light the way ahead and bring comfort in the dead of night.

It is often the case that as people age, they turn their backs on the materialistic values that once seemed so alluring in their confused youth. In the ocean of our memories, the people and stories of Kung-Tung Chapel are like the stars that exploded in the night sky hundreds of millions of years ago—although time has passed they still give off a beautiful and moving light.

Even more so, this place resembles a fable: Taiwan has gone from wealth to comfort, from equality in poverty to a rich-poor divide. In just a few decades of this so-called economic miracle, how many of our values have we lost? Just as we reach a stage where we begin to appreciate Kung-Tung Chapel, the building has fallen into disrepair and is even a little unsafe. And the spirit of Father Hilber Jakob and his generation will eventually become like a legend made to be forgotten.

A building at the end of the day is still only a building. Kung-Tung Chapel, however, allows us to keep alive the memories and emotions of an era. Those memories and feelings allow us companionship in the emptiness of our universe;

they are a force that keeps us afloat against the tide of materialism and peer pressure.



BOOKS FROM TAIWAN
BACKLIST HIGHLIGHTS

GROUND ZERO

零地點



EGOYAN
ZHENG
伊格言



Egoyan Zheng holds an MA in Chinese Literature, alongside degrees in psychology and medicine from Taiwan's top universities. He is one of Taiwan's most acclaimed young writers, having been selected for several prestigious short story collections and prizes. He has also won international recognition, having been shortlisted for the Man Asian Literary Prize in 2007 and the Frank O'Connor short story award in 2008.

October 19, 2015. A level seven major accident at Taiwan's No 4 Nuclear Station has devastated northern Taiwan. Patients are flooding Taiwan's hospitals, displaying classic symptoms of serious radiation poisoning. Two weeks later, one of the station's engineers employed to check reports of faulty cooling systems and poor maintenance is found in hospital, suffering from severe memory loss. He appears to have been wandering in the exclusion zone.

April 27, 2017. This very same engineer, Lin Qun-Hao, is still being kept under surveillance and is undergoing a radical new treatment called Dream Image Reconstruction. Dr Li Li-Ching is under instructions to help him piece together what happened. That is, until the machine captures an image from Lin's sleep. Dr Li makes a copy before promptly being told to stop treatment. They must have come across a vital piece of information, and someone wants them to stop digging.

Alternating between the months before the disaster in 2015 and the lead-up to Taiwan's 2017 presidential elections, *Ground Zero* is a suspenseful journey through our notions of 'civilisation' and the lengths to which those in power will justify sacrificing their humanity and even human life for their own gain.

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- Category: Literary Thriller
 - Publisher: Rye Field
 - Date: 8/2013
 - Rights contact: Gray Tan (The Grayhawk Agency), grayhawk@grayhawk-agency.com
 - Pages: 320pp
 - Length: 120,000 characters (approx. 77,000 words in English)

GROUND ZERO

By Egoyan Zheng. Translated by Darryl Sterk.

(Paipaiiiii. Paiiaiaia. Papapaiiii—)

(Screen on)

‘We interrupt the scheduled program to bring you a breaking news story.’ The image is noticeably blurred.

The anchorwoman at the news desk drags a strangely coloured doppelganger behind her. Like a ghost. ‘According to a news release issued earlier today by the North Taiwan Nuclear Accident Response Committee, the Mennonite Christian Hospital in Hualien City reported an incoming patient from the Exclusion Zone. He was ill and incoherent. It was unclear whether he had suffered radiation exposure. An ID check indicated that he was from the Exclusion Zone. Therefore, on the basis of Article Eight of the President’s Emergency Decree, he was committed to hospital.

‘According to official figures, this is the 197th case of failed evacuation since the North Taiwan Nuclear Exclusion Zone Enforceable Evacuation Order was issued and the eleventh case of non-psychiatric medical commitment. After reviewing surveillance camera footage, police suspect that the patient was accompanied to the hospital by a family member who assisted with registration but promptly left without a trace.

‘It seems this patient is no ordinary evacuee. He is thought to have been an engineer working in one of the teams at the Fourth Nuclear Power Plant at the time of the accident. He has been unaccounted for ever since and his name appears on the government’s official list of missing persons. In response to this incident, President Ma has, in his capacity as Chair of the North Taiwan Nuclear Accident Response Committee,

issued another appeal to citizens who remain in the Exclusion Zone to comply with the government’s policy and evacuate immediately. Under no circumstances should anyone stay in the Exclusion Zone.

‘Coming up next: domestic food safety.’ The anchorwoman turns towards another camera. The image is flashing intermittently and now the screen starts filling with snow. ‘It remains impossible to keep livestock products from the Exclusion Zone off the market, or to screen produce and supplies to ensure that no radiation contamination has occurred between farm or factory and shop front. Therefore, the North Taiwan Nuclear Accident Response Committee has reached a resolution on which basis it has issued a recommendation that citizens purchase radiation detectors. At a press conference held at noon today, the Office of the President Spokesman Yin Wei noted that the North Taiwan Nuclear Accident Response Committee has also resolved that the authorities concerned shall be responsible for conducting research into a long-term food safety program. Any further results will immediately be released to the public...’

(Paii. Paiaiaiaipaiiii. Paiaiaiaipaiiiiiipapapppppaiaiaiii—). (The image is flickering constantly now.)

(Fade to black)

THE OFFSHORE ISLAND BIBLE

外島書



HO CHIH-HO
何致和

Born in Taipei in 1967, Ho Chih-Ho earned his MFA degree in Creative Writing from National Dong Hwa University. In 2002, he published his first book, a collection of short stories, *The Evening When the Night was Lost*. Huang Chun-Ming, one of Taiwan's best-regarded writers, gave it an exceptionally positive review. His first novel, *The Melancholy of the White City*, was a finalist for The China Times Open Book Award and earned him the reputation as one of the country's most promising writers. His 2008 novel, *The Offshore Island Bible*, is considered an essential read for all young men about to embark on their compulsory military service. A second printing was issued after ten days, breaking all sales records for Chinese-language novels in Taiwan.



The earth was brown and sky was blue when space was young and time was true. On his breast a sewn on word and in her heart a dream of love deferred.

This is the story of a young man and two islands. He is a conscript sent to serve his mandatory military service on the faraway Tungyin Island, part of the Matsu archipelago. Like many young soldiers, he leaves behind a lover, but those sent offshore are in particularly dire straits because they have to wait many months before they can see their girlfriends again. Many relationships fail along the way. Sent on a mission of national importance and personal drudgery and misery, peacetime conscription is nevertheless somehow invested with spiritual profundity. Though this is a story of disillusionment, it is not a counsel of despair, but rather a contemporary Taiwanese *bildungsroman*, one man's bible through everyman's struggle.

- Category: Literary Fiction
- Publisher: Aquarius
- Date: 9/2008
- Rights contact: Laetitia Chien (Aquarius), yilin.chien@udngroup.com
- Pages: 448pp
- Length: 300,000 characters (approx. 180,000 words in English)

THE OFFSHORE ISLAND BIBLE

By Ho Chih-Ho. Translated by Darryl Sterk.

Chapter 1: The Lottery

The squad leader's attitude had done an about turn. Menacing and merciless for the previous month, now he was Mr Nice Guy. He called me into the company office right after I drew a lot for the offshore islands in the service lottery. He tore open a pack of military-issue Long Life cigarettes and offered me one, dangling another from his lips. We faced each other across the desk but didn't have too much to say to each other. I'd finished the whole cigarette and he was still halfway through his, so I helped myself to another without asking and he gave me a light without comment. I'd smoked another half a cigarette and still there was no conversation. Whatever he had on his mind, I was still thinking about the scene in the mess hall, where the lottery had just been held.

There weren't that many lots this time for the offshore islands, only about half. Sixty-four guys in my lottery, thirty-four lots for bases in Taiwan and thirty lots for the offshore islands. I was standing eighth last in line. Up ahead, a few guys seemed to be having a string of terrible luck. Two out of three were bound for the islands. Like the others, I was looking over at the poster hanging over the podium, which had a chart showing how many lots there were for each region. Instead of clapping or cheering when someone called out a lot for the offshore islands, we would only mentally subtract one bad ticket from the total. Or one good ticket. And when Kuo Cheng-Hsien called out the number forty-two, I knew he was one of the lucky ones. Kuo Cheng-Hsien was from the old neighbourhood,

one of my five best buddies in junior high school. We used to play basketball in the park. He got into the best high school in the country, while I went to a school near the city limits, but we still went to the roller rink in Ximending together to try to pick up chicks. When we took the college entrance examination, he got a very respectable 384, a score that qualified him for a number of prestigious departments. But when we went to turn in our academic preference forms I discovered he'd only filled in eight options, including the Department of Nuclear Engineering at National Tsing Hua University.

'Even eight is too many. And for the last one I'm choosing the university not the department,' he said, with total faith in himself. I lowered my head and looked at my own list. I'd used a 2B pencil to fill in four densely written sheets with the codes for 162 departments. Having barely made the qualifying marks for any university, I couldn't limit my options. Now I had a strange feeling that Kuo Cheng-Hsien wasn't my friend from junior high school anymore. He was a scholastic mutant, created by God to do nothing but study.

'Too risky!' I said. 'Fill in at least twenty.' We got into a fight over it. I don't know what he was trying to prove, or what I was trying to prove. In the end, he penciled in two more. 'I'm only adding these out of respect for your feelings,' he said.

When the names of the successful applicants were published in the newspaper, he was admitted to the last preference on his list: the Department of Transport Management.

THE TREE FORT ON CARNATION LANE

花街樹屋



HO CHIH-HO
何致和

Born in Taipei in 1967, Ho Chih-Ho earned his MFA degree in Creative Writing from National Dong Hwa University. He published his first book, a collection of short stories, in 2002 and his first novel *The Melancholy of the White City* appeared three years later. His 2008 novel, *The Offshore Island Bible*, broke all sales records for Chinese-language novels in Taiwan.



Fang Po-Chun's mid-thirties are marked by the birth of his daughter and the death of a childhood friend. His daughter's birth reminds him of his own boyhood, his friend's suicide of the good times he had with his two best friends back in the old neighborhood.

They were the kids from the wrong side of the temple, kids who grew up in the night market and next to the red light district. Their parents didn't like them visiting the market by themselves and expressly forbade them from going to Carnation Lane. But the appearance of a chained orangutan in a night market spectacle the year the three friends turned twelve convinced them to defy the parental ban. While the adults were away at a protest against Taiwan's endless Martial Law, they stole into the banned zone, released the beast from bondage and led it upstream on a quest to find the fabled Taipei Municipal Menagerie.

It seems to Po-Chun that this memory and his friend's suicide must somehow be connected. A cryptologist by training, he decides to investigate, hoping to solve the mystery of his friend's death and decode the message contained within the memory that has shaped, even warped, their later lives.

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- Category: Literary Fiction
 - Publisher: Aquarius
 - Date: 6/2013
 - Rights contact: Laetitia Chien (Aquarius), yilin.chien@udngroup.com
 - Pages: 304pp
 - Length: 170,000 characters (approx. 100,000 words in English)

THE TREE FORT ON CARNATION LANE

By Ho Chih-Ho. Translated by Darryl Sterk.

1

I have no idea where that hundred-dollar bill came from. They said I stole it, pilfered it out of the pocket of a pair of suit pants my father had left hanging over the bedroom door. I remember they had me surrounded and were shouting at me and that I found myself kneeling before the family altar. It must have been evening, because, as I recall, it was dark outside. The light in the family room was off and the bulbs from the two electric candles on the altar cast a reddish glow on the faces of the adults. Of course maybe their faces were red because they'd seen red. My parents and my dutifully widowed grandmother launched volleys of Mandarin at me, mixed with Taiwanese. I was crying, so was my mother. They were stamping their feet and gesticulating. They all kept pointing at my right hand, which—lo and behold—was clutching a crumpled green one hundred dollar bill. It was like it had grown out of my palm, as if it were part of my own body.

My earliest memory. I'm not proud of it, but I thought of myself as a thief before I had any conception of my own identity or any notion of anything as basic as my gender.

If the scene weren't so shocking I wouldn't have remembered it, or I'd have forgotten it long ago. After all, it happened over thirty years ago when I was all of three years old. A survey of some friends showed that most people's first memories form when they are five or six. One saw his Ma cooking in the kitchen one hazy afternoon, another was sitting bibbed in the yellow school bus and yanking on the braid of the girl sitting beside him, stuff like that.

Nobody's first memory starts with him or her kneeling in front of the family altar.

I remember they were nearly apoplectic, my father, mother and grandmother. They were so enraged that they forgot I was only a child. Though nobody hit me, someone did quite forcefully jab me in the back of the head a couple of times. Judging by the angle of my head and based on their positioning in relation to where I was kneeling, I presume that it was my father, who was standing behind me. I must have spent upwards of an hour kneeling in front of that altar. Of course at that age I had no concept of time, so that upwards of an hour is a mere estimate I've come to as an adult. During that whole hour, if that is how long it was, Grandma and Pa yelled constantly. I'm not sure if they were yelling at me together or whether they took turns. I just remember how oppressive their yells—and my mother's sobs—were, how they formed a high wall around me so close that the slightest gust of wind could not get through. And no matter where I turned to climb that wall to call for help, someone would push me back down.

First I learned that what I had done was steal. Then I learned what it felt like to be powerless.

WHATEVER ANNA WANTS

愛貪小便宜的安娜



Hua Bo-Rong has always been passionate about literature, and despite attempted diversions into other careers, decided at the age of forty to dedicate himself to his writing. *Whatever Anna Wants* was his first novel, and was quickly followed by two more, including the thriller *Shadow Taken Hostage*. He has won three awards for his short fiction, and the *Unitas* award for best new writer in 2007.

HUA BO-RONG

花柏容



As far as Hsin can tell, her mother Anna always gets what she wants. She doesn't mean it in a bad way, but being able to get things out of people is just her mother's way of dulling the pain of being dealt an unlucky hand.

Because Anna was adopted. Her birth mother, a poor country girl from Taiwan's south, was nearly worked into an early grave. Her adoptive mother loved her deeply, but her new father was really only interested in having a son. Her older brother ignored her. When her adoptive mother grew ill and died, she was forced out on her own. A boyfriend followed, but he soon disappeared, leaving her with an illegitimate child...

Life hadn't been easy, but still Anna managed to squeeze advantages out of most situations. She never left a restaurant without a handful of toothpicks or a wedding without a large bag of leftovers. The greatest lesson she taught her daughter was how to sneak into the movies for free. Other people's junk were the precious bricks from which to build her own fortress against the injustices of the world.

Anna is Taiwan's very own Blanche DuBois, brought to life by Hua Bo-Rong's direct, earthy, yet charming prose style. *Whatever Anna Wants* is a down-to-earth entertaining read, refreshing in its lack of pretention.

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- Category: Literary Fiction
 - Publisher: Unitas
 - Date: 4/2011
 - Rights contact: Victor Huang (Unitas), victor.huang@udngroup.com
 - Pages: 320pp
 - Length: 150,000 characters (approx. 100,000 words in English)

WHATEVER ANNA WANTS

By Hua Bo-Rong. Translated by James Friesen & Chen Ying-Che.

I. The Screaming Episode

‘If it weren’t for my hopeless inability to turn down a deal, I would have drowned myself long ago.’

Anna is my mother. Her birth name is Chen Xiao-Lin. She has been alive over forty years now, and just like everyone else that still exists somewhere between life and death, there have been times when she swung in the balance.

Anna has contemplated suicide on many occasions, but each time the impulse nearly overwhelmed her that giggling, penny-pinching propensity stopped her from crossing the line and ending it all.

The first time Anna thought about killing herself was the month before middle school started. It was the summer of 1981 when she received the enrollment notice. She was 13 years old, Princess Diana had just married Charles, and Space Shuttle Columbia had set off on its maiden voyage.

Diana’s married a prince

Columbia went to outer space and back

All I’m doing is going to middle school

And I have to chop off my locks

These were the first words written across a blank page in Anna’s recipe book. A memory of that summer, written six years later when she was nineteen and living at Miss Zhao’s place in New Beitou.

I read somewhere, I forget where exactly, that misery and humour are inseparable friends. I sense a brooding humour hidden in Anna’s words, as if to say, why me? Attached to the notice was a slip of paper explaining the school uniform: clothes, hair, shoes, and even length

and color of stockings were included. The school helpfully included a diagram showing that dresses must fall at the knees, no higher. Hair must be a centimeter above the earlobes, and no longer.

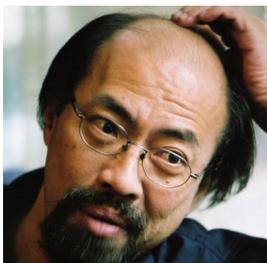
At the time Anna had long, lustrous hair that attracted a lot of compliments, and which her mother, Chen Shu-Nu, would carefully comb every day. As Anna held the dress code in her hands—printed in a blue ink on coarse paper—she saw the long, nightmarish road that lay ahead of her. She thought about the ‘student cut’—one centimeter above the earlobes, the patch of pallid white scalp that would be exposed high on her neck—and the thought of suicide crept into her mind. For the next few days she brooded on it, unable to eat or sleep, feeling like a volcano ready to erupt.

Then the fateful day arrived. Chen Shu-Nu dragged her daughter to the salon where, with the assistance of the hairdresser Li Hsiang, she strapped Anna to a chair. Seeing Li Hsiang approaching with scissors in hand, the blades yawning wide, Anna struggled to get out of the chair as if she were a trapped animal. And then she screamed.

Her scream was so piercing that everyone in the place ran for the door, covering their ears. As a little girl, Anna’s high-pitched screech was her lethal weapon, though this was the last time she’d unleash it; after middle school she never used it again. This one scream in the salon was enough to exhaust her reserves, and thereafter this superpower, once both frightening and irritating, was gone forever.

PRIVATE EYES

私家偵探



CHI WEI-JAN
紀蔚然



- Winner of the 2012 Taipei Book Fair Award
- Winner of the 2011 China Times Open Book Award
- Asia Weekly 2011 Top Ten Chinese Novels of the Year
- Major film to begin shooting in 2015

Chi Wei-Jan holds a PhD in English Literature of University from the Iowa and is currently professor of drama and theatre at National Taiwan University. He is a successful playwright and has written and produced many plays, including *MIT: Mad in Taiwan* and *The Mahjong Game Trilogy*. He has also published several books of essays including *Seriously Playful* and *Misunderstanding Shakespeare*. *Private Eyes* is his first novel.

Private Eyes is a brilliant literary detective novel in which a failed-academic-turned-sleuth tries to make sense of the absurdity of modern city life, just as his own takes an even more absurd turn.

Wu Cheng, a disillusioned playwright and theatre director, quits his job as a college professor and moves to Liuzhangli, a district in Taipei he fondly describes as the ‘Dead Zone’ because of its thriving funeral trade. There Wu sets up shop as the first and only private detective in Taiwan.

Just as Wu is about to settle into his new life, he is arrested by the police and asked to answer for a series of murders. The crimes have been taking place in the very neighbourhood in which he lives and his image has been captured by the ever-present security cameras. Obviously Wu hasn’t committed the crimes. He has no memory of ever even having spoken to the victims, but what about his medical history of depression-turned-neurosis? Wasn’t he displaying signs of mental instability when he jumped onto the table and insulted all his theatre friends?

Wu Cheng needs to prove his innocence and find out who is behind the murders. What creates a serial killer? Why has there never been one in Taiwan, until now? Wu will also need to look deep into himself, because the murderer is someone who knows him so intimately that he or she is able to assume his likeness to frame him for the crimes. Someone from his dark past.

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- Category: Crime Fiction
 - Publisher: Ink
 - Date: 8/2011
 - Rights contact: Gray Tan (The Grayhawk Agency), grayhawk@grayhawk-agency.com
 - Pages: 352pp
 - Length: 160,000 characters (approx. 100,000 words in English)
 - Rights sold: China (Writers); Turkey (Kahve)

PRIVATE EYES

By Chi Wei-Jan. Translated by Anna Holmwood.

After I left my teaching job I faded out of my marriage, which by then existed in name only, and sold the flat in Xindian. I distanced myself from the drama circle where I'd made a sort of name for myself and began refusing invitations to drink and play mahjong with the lecherous pigs I had come to call my friends. Once packed, my meagre belongings were barely enough to fill a small van, and so it was that I passed through the gloomy Xinhai tunnel to set up shop as a private investigator in Wulong Street, a godforsaken place of unmarked graves that not even the birds would deign to shit on.

I hung out a sign and had some business cards printed, one side embossed with my name in Chinese and the other with 'Wu Cheng, Private Investigator' in English. The more I played with them the prouder I felt and before long I'd used up two boxes, not because there was a stream of people requesting them or because I was on the streets handing them out to motorists stopped at traffic lights, but because I'd shuffle them like cards while waiting for clients, or flick them like martial-arts weapons across the room. Otherwise, they were mostly used as toothpicks.

I had let the idea of becoming a private investigator brew for six months before acting on it, much like a prisoner planning his escape. I was waiting for the right moment to tell my friends and family. As expected, the objections came swarming at me like hornets whose nest I had disturbed. I tried in vain to swat them away.

But I deserved it and anyway, I was used to mass condemnation.

I stood alone in the wilderness, where the moon hung high and bright, my flowing white robe fluttering in the wind, as those philistines crouched in the bushes clutching their swords. When the moment arrived their blades pierced

my heart and there they left me, lying in a pool of my own blood. I'd had no weapon to defend myself, only a puny flashlight.

Okay, that was an exaggeration. I've spent years in the theatre so I'll admit to having a penchant for creating movies in my head, the kind with bloody scenes that take place in majestic landscapes and follow the trials of a bumbling young hero.

This time, however, I was determined to play the hero and play him well: a lonely, cracked boat on a vast ocean letting in more water than it can hold back.

For the most part life is completely mediocre. Scream and howl at tempests, or else retire quietly from the public eye? I'd chosen the latter. Never again would I let myself be suffocated and squeezed so that the blood no longer pumped in my chest. Never again would I wait, so full of expectation, only to end up empty handed, or seesaw back and forth in indecision. I was saying goodbye to the old me, the sissy; I was throwing off the shackles, cutting myself free from the world to live the life I wanted to live.

Drop out. Quit the complex entanglements of life. Was I crazy?

My ageing mother was the last to find out and she took it the worst. You can't resign! You can't take early retirement! Don't be so reckless!

I mumbled my explanations while she, in response, shouted until her throat hurt, all the while beating at her chest. My mother's performances were first rate; my talent for theatrics must have been passed down in the womb. Then the tears arrived. She threatened to drag me to the university president's office and plead for him to take me back. She would have kneeled at his feet if she'd had to.

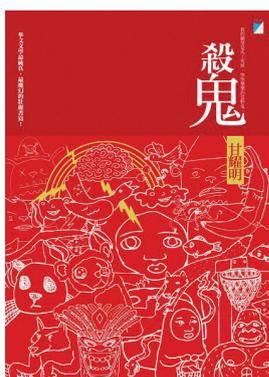
KILLING GHOSTS

殺鬼



KAN
YAO-MING
甘耀明

Kan Yao-Ming is hailed as Taiwan's foremost 'Neo Nativist' writer, successfully mixing farce, tall tales, folk legend and collective memories to create his own uniquely magic realist world. Like a magician of words, he writes with a highly experimental but always accessible style. Kan's reputation was first built on two collections of short stories, *The Mysterious Train* and *The School of the Water Spirit*, and later *Tales at a Funeral*. His short fiction has won numerous awards and is often chosen for 'Best of the Year' anthologies. He is two-time winner of the China Times Open Book Award.



- Winner of the 2009 China Times Open Book Award
- Winner of the 2009 Taipei Book Fair Award

Set in 1940s rural Taiwan during and after Japanese colonial rule, Kan Yao-Ming's epic *Killing Ghosts* was a publishing sensation when it first came out. A dazzling feat of storytelling, it tells the adventures of an unusually tall boy for his age by the name of Pa, a kind of a superman imbued with the spirits of the gods. He hurtles through a magical landscape filled with trains that 'can walk without rails,' boy soldiers who march with their family tombstones on their backs, and a stubborn old man who defies Japanese rule by burying himself alive before turning into a forest. Told in a prose mixing Mandarin, Japanese, Hakka and Taiwanese languages, the novel addresses serious historical and political issues with a fabulist approach that is gleefully irreverent and wildly imaginative.

Killing Ghosts became Taiwan's most talked-about Chinese novel in 2009, selling over 10,000 copies, a huge number for a domestic literary novel. It won both the China Times Open Book Award, the Taipei Book Fair Award, and was chosen as the Chinese Book of the Year by the country's leading online bookstore, Books.com. Mo Yan wrote an enthusiastic blurb for the book, praising it as a story that 'has the power to move heaven and earth.'

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- Category: Literary Fiction
 - Publisher: Aquarius
 - Date: 7/2009
 - Rights contact: Laetitia Chien (Aquarius), yilin.chien@udngroup.com
 - Pages: 448pp
 - Length: 300,000 characters (approx. 190,000 words in English)
 - Rights sold: China (China Friendship); Japan (Hakushuisha)

KILLING GHOSTS

By Kan Yao-Ming. Translated by Sylvia Li-Chun Lin & Howard Goldblatt.

Excerpt from chapter 1: The Boy with a Savage Name

The beast was a giant steel killer with ten legs and four hearts. When it first came to the savage land of Guanniuwo, it pressed down so heavily on the road that water seemed to ooze from the surface, as if a grand ocean liner was sailing down the street. The new world was finally here, and it shook up everything.

When the beast arrived, some people fled while others crowded around for a look. Only Pa planned to stop it. Though still in elementary school, Pa was nearly six feet tall. He was strong and ran so fast that he even left his shadow behind. Those two traits alone earned him the title *choudokyuujin*, meaning those with immeasurable power, or, as you might say today, a superman.

School had just let out for Pa and his friends on that bone-chilling day that the beast first arrived. They were walking on the handcart tracks that had been laid in earlier times, hoping the ice-cold metal would freeze the soles of their feet enough to ease the pain of walking barefoot, even though sometimes their feet got so numb that they did not realise the skin on their toes had broken. Suddenly, Pa knelt down and pressed his ear against the track. He could hear a handcart speeding towards them. Beyond this, still far off in the distance, he heard the coal-crunching roar of the steel beast. Leaping to his feet and donning his Japanese-style military cap, he declared that he would stop it. The other boys, all Pa's followers, put on their own bucket caps and gave them a perfunctory tug; then they spread their arms just as he had, though they had no

idea what they could do to help. Pa was different. His eyes brimmed with excitement as he flexed his muscles and stepped onto the bridgehead, spreading his legs, stiffening his waist and puffing out his chest. He roared. Standing alone, he would single-handedly stop this monstrous power that had changed Guanniuwo.

Now, here was the rumbling beast, spewing smoke into the air, swelling the crest lines of nearby mountains. Turning the corner, its turquoise shell came into view, perched atop ten wheels and four upright cylinders with violently pounding pistons. It was a train that could travel without tracks, preceded by a Jeep and trailed by two trucks and five horses. From the Jeep, a member of the military police shouted at the handcart to get off the tracks, or else it would be crushed into a meat patty. A couple of the more daring kids ran up and yelled in Japanese, 'It's a *densha!* A train!' others yelled, also in Japanese, 'No, it's a *jidousha!* A bus!' The two groups argued back and forth, but the heavy breathing of the beast drowned out their voices.

Suddenly, the villagers' attention was diverted elsewhere. A frightened ox, foaming at the mouth and bleeding from a taut nose ring, charged at Pa, as the empty cart it had been attached to hit a rock and shot into the air. The owner, an old farmer, gave chase, screaming and crying. Seeing this, Pa called upon all his strength. He grabbed a horn with one hand, the nose ring with the other, and, just like that, with the ease of picking up a morsel of food with chopsticks, he had the ox lying quietly in his arms.

THE WAITING ROOM

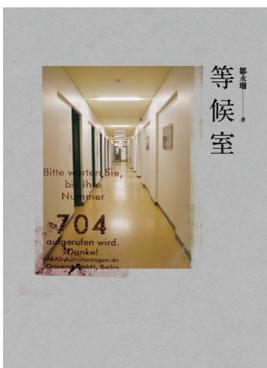
等候室



© Luke Huang

TSOU
YUNG-SHAN
鄒永珊

Tsou Yung-Shan graduated from National Taiwan University before moving to Germany in 2001 to pursue a graduate degree in art, where she now lives and works as an artist. Her work is characterised by the dialogue between image and language, between content and the process of writing. She has also drawn inspiration from the gulf between the German language and her mother tongue, using its more precise grammar to stretch the subtleties of Chinese.



Hsu Ming-Chang followed his wife to Germany and now she's left him, so here he sits, waiting to get a piece of paper that will allow him to stay. They met in college, she was popular and charismatic, he quiet and always buried in books. No one else understood their relationship, but he let things slide, didn't notice that things were changing, until one day she just said she was leaving. Now he waits to hand his documents to Ms Meyer, who will decide if he can stay. To Ms Meyer, who has worked for twenty years in this office, checking documents and verifying information, these people are not people. They are files. She is weary from the endless stream of weary faces which greet her day after weary day. Ming-Chang's landlady, Mrs Nesmeyanova, has come to Berlin from Belarus. Mr Nesmeyanova wants Berlin to be their home, wants his wife to learn German. But she can't feel at home in her new home. Turkish-German artist Christine creates 'Aufzeichnungen' (notes, documents, files).

Tsou's novel plays with repetition, banality and waiting, recalling the classics of existentialism such as Patrick Suesskind's *The Pigeon* or Albert Camus' *L'Étranger*. Economical, clean and gentle, *The Waiting Room* recalls the gestural simplicity and power of a Chinese ink painting, being Chinese more in mood rather than content.

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- Category: Literary Fiction
 - Publisher: Muses
 - Date: 1/2013
 - Rights contact: Gray Tan (The Grayhawk Agency), grayhawk@grayhawk-agency.com
 - Pages: 216pp
 - Length: 73,000 characters (approx. 47,000 words in English)
 - Rights sold: France (Piranha Editions)

THE WAITING ROOM

By Tsou Yung-Shan. Translated by Michelle M. Wu.

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It was 7:30 in the morning. He sat in the waiting room of the *Ausländerbehörde*—The Foreigners' Registration Office—with his head bent. He didn't read anything to kill time, nor did he bother to look around. Now and then people speaking different languages chitchatted around him, but he didn't know what they were talking about most of the time. Once in a while, the sound of Chinese drifted down the corridor. In the past, he used to lift his head to follow the voices, but not any more.

People waiting in the waiting room rarely conversed. Only those who came together talked to each other and they would talk about their common worries. Those who came alone usually sat alone with their own thoughts. Even though they were gathered in this room for the same purpose, they were all too tired to tell the strangers beside them anything about themselves. As the scattered conversations subsided, some closed their eyes for a brief moment of repose.

The sky was still dark when he was waiting in line outside the *Ausländerbehörde*. The quota for reservations had already been filled and those who had failed to make one in advance had to huddle up in a queue outside, in the dark, in minus ten degrees cold, until the guards opened the gate at 6:30. He had been there since 4:30 that morning and was lucky to have gotten a number. Those who had arrived thirty minutes after him were asked to leave because all the tags had been given out.

After a while, the sky slowly lit up. It was a gray and brittle winter morning. The skinny tree branches silhouetted against the window

resembled pencil sketches on coarse, grayish paper. The little holes that punctured it were bird nests perching on branches. Further down the street huge sheets of translucent ice floated on the dark waters of the canal, resembling chunks of white paint showing through under the pencil markings. The cracks and fissures screeched and a lone goose perched on the ice flapped its wings and took flight.

The flashing red number on the screen beeped and the person seated beside him accidentally brushed his elbow when he stood up. The person apologised and he said not to worry. This was his first interaction with another human being in the waiting room. He shifted, cupping his chin with his hand, and tilted his head to count the nests in the tree. A bird had flown into the wrong nest. Finding that it was too small, it flew away. He followed the bird with his gaze, watching it fly over the canal and disappear into the buildings across the water. Inexplicably, his mood dampened.

It had been many years since he left Taiwan, that damp and rainy island. The climate in continental Europe was relatively dry and it didn't rain non-stop like it did over there. When feeling blue, he often remembered the bone-chilling dampness that he experienced back home during the winters. He bowed his head to prevent the rain in his heart from welling up in his eyes. He bent his head low, so low that the pungent smell of the moist earth entered his nostrils, so low that the worms that had hibernated in the ground all winter could crawl up onto his hair. He was waiting and there would be no end to it.

THE DARK BACKWARD

下一個天亮



Hsu Chia-Tse was born in Kaohsiung in 1977. He won first prize in the China Times Literature Award in the short fiction category, first prize in the United Daily News Literature Award in the prose category and first prize in the BenQ Award for Chinese Fiction in 2012. He has published several works of fiction, including *Fraud Family*, *The Debt Collection Cooperation*, *Peeoing*, *The Dark Backward*, and *In the Abyss of Time*.

HSU CHIA-TSE

徐嘉澤



People will forever struggle with the issues of their day and these struggles will forever be mined for narrative themes.

This story of one small family encapsulates the process by which Taiwan has become the country it is today.

The family is not a large and illustrious one, but however few they are in number, they have nonetheless found themselves subject to the very same turning gears of history that would define their era. Their struggles and resistance reveal the transformation of Taiwan over the seven decades since the end of Japanese rule. Theirs is a story that touches upon the February 28 Incident of 1947, the White Terror, the Formosa Magazine Incident, the White Lily student movement and the women's, Aboriginal and immigrant rights movements, as well as the grass roots opposition to construction of the Meinong Reservoir, bullying in schools, the forced removal of the residents of Lesheng Village and the construction of the CPC petrochemical plant. The story demonstrates how individuals, fighting for what is right, have stood up to the government and molded Taiwan into the place it is today.

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THE DARK BACKWARD

By Hsu Chia-Tse. Translated by Jonathan Barnard.

Chapter 13: The Silent Movie

The mother of young Y would often wake up in tears. In her dreams her child had something to say, but every time she tried to hear what it was, the scene would somehow rewind or fast forward, or was obscured by other images. It was as if she was being forced to watch a silent movie. She didn't know what was wrong with the world that it had become so easy for people to inflict harm on others—as easy for them as squashing an ant on a table. What had happened to those boys who had victimised her son? Did they eat well? Did they sleep well? Were they in the least bit shamed by their own actions? Or were they searching for their next victim? Those unanswered questions were like rocks tossed at her from all directions. Yet she still had to get through the day. She may have lost a child, but she still had a family to look after.

Under the stress of their son's death, her husband had gone almost entirely deaf. Yet the couple had developed a deep understanding of each other after living together for decades and so she could still care for him with love and consideration. But who would care for her? She would have liked to have gone blind herself, so that she wouldn't see all that was unjust in the world. She wished she couldn't smell the scent peculiar to her son's room, so that it would no longer cause her such pain. If she were mute then the media wouldn't press her to keep facing the loss of her son. In her dreams she and her husband were removed of all their senses. She watched soundless images projected three-dimensionally around her. It was as if events

her son had related to her had been edited into a film. In it, he tried to run from the other children, who were giants. They scooped him up as if he were an insect and put him down again. He lay on the ground, twitching for a moment, before going still.

Sunrise. A new day had started. She woke her young son who was lazing in bed. Y's bedding was folded up neatly. She never needed to worry about him. The first thing he would do when he got up was fold up his blanket. Her younger son would be more likely to mess up a neatly made bed. Whenever she asked him to follow the example of her older brother, he would reply: 'Don't we have to sleep every day, anyway? If I straighten it up now, it will just get messy tonight.'

She never knew how to answer that. But now she could only wish that Y's bed were a mess. She could imagine Y running home for dinner in the day's last light.

'Mama! Mama! I'm home,' he would shout when he saw her in the distance. The memory of those everyday moments was what hurt the most now. Sometimes she felt weak at the sight of the other children, including her youngest son, coming home. She felt sharp pains of nervous anticipation. She was waiting for him to come back to her.

'Mama! Mama! I'm here!'

Those chirping birds had returned to their nests in the treetops, but Y was gone forever.

So the days passed. One after the next.

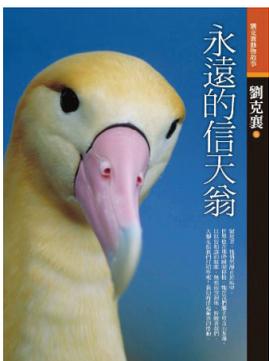
ALBATROSS FOREVER

永遠的信天翁



From an early age, Liu Ka-Shiang has channeled the spirit of the nineteenth century natural historian in his explorations of the world around him, earning him the nickname Birdman among his friends. He brings a poet's eye and a historian's attention to detail to bear on Taiwan's diverse flora, fauna and its people. He has published over forty books to date, including poetry, essays and novels, as well as travel writing, bringing him a slew of the country's top literary awards.

LIU KA-SHIANG
劉克襄



· Winner of the 2009
Taipei Book Fair
Award

The albatross is the largest seabird in the North Pacific. A hundred years ago, the ocean skies would be overcast with clouds of their snow-white wings as they flew overhead. By the 1940s, however, they were on the verge of extinction. Why did these birds that once visited Taiwan every year disappear from view? And how did they establish new colonies on remote islands far away? What this got to do with Taiwan and its development?

The author has written an ingenious animal story infused with the local flavours of Taiwan. Through the characters of a young ornithologist and a short-tailed albatross with an extraordinary ability to fly, Liu Ka-Shiang retraces a period of history gripped by human greed and ignorance, vividly recreating the story of the albatross, while simultaneously exploring the meaning of flying.

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ALBATROSS FOREVER

By Liu Ka-Shiang. Translated by Hsu Wen.

Leaving Torishima

The bad news came

Less than a week after the adults had left, a typhoon was moving fast towards Torishima.

As the young birds stood on Great Slope, they could see in the distance the unusual reddish brown hue of the sky above the southwestern horizon. A large clump of cloud, thick with layers, spreading and rolling, slowly floated northwards. They understood somehow that a terror they had never before experienced was coming their way.

One wonders if they heard from the adults what it meant for an albatross to fly in such weather. On stormy days other seabirds may escape to a safe haven, but albatrosses, being natural-born flyers, will welcome the wind and the rain, exploring in the elements the deepest meaning of flight. If they were adults, or if they had flown over the ocean for some time and had become skilful navigators, the challenge could have been a pleasant one and they might have looked forward to the chance to soar at the edge of the storm.

For an albatross, the day it encounters its first storm is the day it comes of age. For the young still attempting their first flight, this was the worst news possible. Threads of rain cut through the sky and they scrambled back to their nests to hunker down in silence and prepare for the imminent rain. Before the morning was over, the threads had become arrows and the wind blew even stronger. Sand and stones started to whirl and broken branches thrashed around. Strong gales howled, seemingly intent on scalping the

Great Slope. The young could only bury their heads deep in their wing feathers and hug the ground, relinquishing control of their fate to the will of Nature.

The typhoon arrived ahead of schedule and knocked Tanaka, the rest of the crew and I off our course. But there was nothing we could do. The blind was directly below the cliff and not a place to hang around while the typhoon was raging. On the eve before the storm landed, we evacuated amid drizzle and light wind, albeit with reluctance. After returning to the dormitory, we paced the room, praying silently that all the newly fledged albatrosses be spared.

The violence of the storm was horrendous. Beginning in the afternoon and all the way through the following morning, it howled with all its might. Our dormitory's roof was partly lifted, creating a gaping hole. Water seeped into our rooms. Nobody slept. We busied ourselves salvaging documents and materials and protecting computers and other equipment. Only in the afternoon did the force of the wind and rain gradually lessen.

Despite our exhaustion, we were in no mood to rest. We stepped outside tentatively to inspect the surroundings. Several trees in the low gullies of the island had fallen and others stood stripped of their leaves. The storage shacks nearby had lost their metal roofs. The path to the meadow was buried under mud and rocks leaving barely any sign of it once having existed. It would probably be a while until it could be reopened.

WHO AWAITS YOU, ON THAT SPARKLING SILVER PLANE

誰在銀閃閃的地方，等你



JANE JIAN
簡嬪

Jane Jian is a well-known prose writer in Taiwan, with many of her articles having been featured in high school textbooks. Born in 1961 in a rural village in Yilan, she received her BA in Chinese Literature from National Taiwan University. Jian's work has been recognised by the China Times Literary Award in the prose category, the Golden Tripod Award and the National Award for the Arts. Jian is the author of twenty books, including *Question the Waters*, *Moonlight on the Bed*, *Sleepwalking* and *Who Awaits You, on That Sparkling Silver Plane*.



This book is a complete guide for the living, an encyclopedia for the old, a regimen for the ill, a blessing for the departed.

The five sections included within cover life, old age, illness, and death, musing on everything from the flesh, to the mind, economics, disease, healthcare and family to funerals and how to prepare for the inevitable. With a colorful imagination and insightful observations, Jane Jian invites readers into the minds of the elderly to experience the psychological transformations of those who are coming to terms with their own withering away.

'Life and death are both precious and rare, each coming but once, and so as we mourn for a life gone, we must also solemnly face the inevitability of death, a tribute to a life finally concluded.'

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WHO AWAITS YOU, ON THAT SPARKLING SILVER PLANE

By Jane Jian. Translated by Stephen Liu.

Chapter 1: The Non-player Adorned in Spectacular Garb

How do I describe the revelations visited on me that morning? Do I start with the people involved or with an account of where I was going? Should I write on the season or describe the mud spurting out from tiles awash with rainwater?

I don't want to lock such an ordinary morning in place by describing it in flashy words. It was the morning commute, none of which is worth mentioning here; the roaring stream of traffic; the curb under the bus stop home to a row of faces stiffened by restless nights and chronic sleep deprivation; the dog shit, either fresh or leftover from the night before, a window into the state of each individual dog's stomach. I don't want to expand on the red banners advertising grand anniversary deals, nor the recklessly parked scooters—even if I did imagine them to be a row of live prawns that I might shovel into my mouth and chew to pieces.

The autumn light. That was the only part worth recollecting. The sun finally escaping the heat of its midsummer incarnation, an autumn morning like a young lover home after a night by the lakeside, bringing with it a refreshing, cool embrace. Yesterday's raindrops still lingered on the tops of the trees, transformed into spots of dew from which the fragrant smell of osmanthus flowers floated out on the wind. As I headed out the door I spotted in the distance a Chinese rain tree greeting me with unprompted praise in a language punctuated by golden leaves. Autumn,

this most joyous of seasons, is the one that brought me into this world and, fate willing, will be the season to hold me in its caress when the time comes for me to die.

Wrapped up as I was in my joyful admiration of that beautiful, crystalline light, the feeling lasted only until I stepped out onto the street. The cacophony of the city hits you like the pounce of a snarling pack of wolves, rending with sharp teeth the season's young sheep. This is precisely why those poorly parked scooters left me so furious, why my imagination, in an attempt to untie a knot of emotions, had no qualms in stuffing them like live shrimp down my make-believe throat. I had stumbled into the predatory jungle of urban traffic where survival of the fittest rules supreme, where everything is suddenly so onerous and repulsive. I managed to come to my senses in spite of it and subdue those impulses, and with just a few steps back, I had summoned once again that freshness that is an autumn morning. I would, after all, like to remain a person worthy of salvation. As I was caught up in the act of encouraging myself, my feet landed in front of the crosswalk.