



PEN for Freedom

A Quarterly Journal of Literary Translations

No. 12

Independent Chinese PEN Center

Winter 2012

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This issue is edited in cooperation with Sydney PEN Center

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ICPC Statement on Mo Yan Awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature

The Swedish Academy has awarded the 2012 Nobel Prize in Literature to the Chinese Writer Mr. Mo Yan after awarding the 2000 prize to the first Chinese writer Mr. Gao Xingjian, a French citizen. Independent Chinese PEN Centre (ICPC) congratulates Mr. Mo Yan on the fact that he is first Chinese writer residing in China who has been awarded this highest honor of international literary world, thus becoming the second Chinese citizen as a Nobel Prize Laureate, following Dr. Liu Xiaobo, ICPC's former and honorary President, who won the peace prize in 2010. It has been reported that Mr. Mo said at a press conference held in his hometown after the announcement of the award that he hoped that Mr. Liu Xiaobo, now serving his sentence of 11 years imprisonment, would be free as soon as possible. For this, ICPC expresses sincere gratitude to Mr. Mo and hopes that Mr. Mo, a vice chairman of the official Chinese Writers' Association as well as a vice-president of China PEN Center, can join force with all members of PEN International to uphold PEN's mission and tradition on defending freedom of expression and be more concerned about the current situation of freedom of speech and freedom to write in China, particularly about fellow Chinese writers, including Liu Xiaobo, who are persecuted for their words, and help them to regain their freedom as soon as possible.

As an organization of promoting literature, ICPC has always been aware of Mr. Mo's long-term contributions to Chinese literature. Mr. Mo is a renowned contemporary novelist, as the Swedish Academy recognized in its press release, "who with hallucinatory realism merges folk tales, history and the contemporary". He has published a large number of short stories, novella and novels, including *Red Sorghum Family*, *Song of Heaven Garlic Sprout*, *Wine Country*, *Plump Breast and Fleshy Buttock*, *Sandalwood Penalty*, *Fatigue of Life and Death*, and *Frog*. His works have become well recognized both in China and abroad and so received several literary awards in Hong Kong, Taiwan and other countries. Mr. Mo's novels, with its unique style of realism under contemporary China's authoritarianism, told the stories of the tragic lives, sufferings and struggles of the ordinary people. It is noteworthy that Mr. Mo Yan successfully introduced the style of magic realism, which was developed in other authoritarian countries, into the literary tradition of authoritarian China. With the domestic and international honors, he becomes the second official writer of the Communist Party who won the Nobel Prize in Literature after Mikhail Aleksandrovich Sholokhov, chairman of the former Soviet Writers Association and the laureate in 1965. Apparently, it is the realist spirit and literary attainment of Mr. Mo's works for the Swedish Academy to have awarded him.

As a human rights organization for writers, on the other hand, ICPC also noted with regret that Mr. Mo Yan has long neglected PEN's mission to defend the freedom of expression for others.

There is a huge contradiction between the realist tendency in his literary works and his political character as an official writer of the Communist Party, which has caused widespread controversy over his awarding of the Nobel prize. In recent years, Mr. Mo's words and deeds in international events like the Frankfurt Book Fair in Germany in 2009 and the London Book Fair this year attracted many criticisms. This year, he participated as one of 100 writers and artists in an activity organized by the Chinese authority for the celebration of 70th anniversary by transcribing Mao Zedong's Talks at Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art, the infamous guidance of Chinese Communist Party which has damaged Chinese literature and art for 70 years. These actions, contrary to the identity of a PEN member, have been disappointing. Therefore, ICPC would like to call on Mr. Mo to pay attention to these flaws in order to be truly unregretful to the demand expressed in Mr. Nobel's will for the honor "to the person who shall have produced in the field of literature the most outstanding work in an ideal direction".

At the same time, ICPC hopes that Mr. Mo Yan and his supporters remember an old Chinese saying: "The misfortune of the nation leads to the fortune of its poets", and urges them to pay attention to the following facts: China is still a country with little freedom of expression and press; The censorship of news and publication has greatly restricted citizens' freedom of expression and seriously damaged the writers' freedom of creation. A lot of talented writers have lost their freedom, creation environments, particularly the opportunities to publish in mainland China.

According to the information of PEN, there are still more than 30 Chinese writers and journalists in prison for their words, and a much larger number of writers suffering from violating their human rights for their works. Among them are many of PEN members and honorary members, including the literary critic and poet Liu Xiaobo serving his 11-year imprisonment, and his wife and poet Liu Xia held under house arrest for two years since Liu Xiaobo awarded to Noble Peace Prize; Zhu Yufu, a writer sentenced this year to seven years imprisonment mainly for a poem he wrote after his release from a 9-year imprisonment; Yang Tongyan (aka Yang Tianshui), a novelist and poet serving his 12-year sentence in jail after a previous 10-year imprisonment; Shi Tao, a journalist and poet serving his 10-year imprisonment; Nurmuhemmet Yasin, an Uighur novelist and poet serving his 10-year imprisonment; Hada, a Mongolian writer whose whereabouts is unknown after 15-year imprisonment; Yu Jie, an author forced to take asylum in the United States this year after he was silenced by brutal beatings and tortures over one year for his book; Liao Yiwu, a poet and author forced into exile in Germany last year; Jiao Guobiao, released on bail after detention for two weeks recently; Ma Jian, a London-based novelist, and Bei Ling, a Germany-based poet and publisher, both of whom have been denied entry to China.

ICPC urges the Chinese authorities to be aware of the trend of world civilization, to restore Liu Xia's freedom, and immediately and unconditionally release Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu

Xiaobo, PEN members Shi Tao, Yang Tongyan, Zhu Yufu and others imprisoned for their words. ICPC hopes that Mr. Mo Yan and member of other PEN Centers in China to join us, not only to promote Chinese literature but also defend civil rights of freedom of expression which China's Constitution has guaranteed.

PEN International is the oldest human rights organization and international literary organization. The Independent Chinese PEN Centre is among its 145 member centers and aims to defend writers' freedom of expression and freedom to write worldwide and advocates for the rights of writers and journalists who are imprisoned, threatened, persecuted or harassed in China particularly.

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Nobel Prize in Literature and Mo Yan

By LIU Miao



Ever since October, speculations about Mo Yan going to win Nobel Prize in Literature have been everywhere, in every ordinary street and lane. So as to show off my excellence of predicting in future, I wrote an article as follows and sent over to my friends:

Mo Yan NOT to win Nobel Prize in Literature

There have been so many arguments over the internet regarding Mo Yan going to win Nobel Prize in Literature, which resulted from a betting company placing lower odds on Mo Yan and Haruki Murakami.

Firstly, a betting company has no possible merits in the field of literature. We can see this from Ladbrokes, the mentioned betting company, for its predictions in the recent five years:

In 2007, its most favorite three writers were Claudio Magris, Les Murray and Phillip Roth. However, the prize finally went to British writer Doris Lessing;

In 2008, its most favorite three writers were Claudio Magris, Adonis and Amos Oz. However, the final winner was French writer Jean Marie Gustave Le Clézio;

In 2009, it predicted the first three favorite writers were Amos Oz, Assia Djebar and Luis Goytisola, but the prize ultimately went to Herta Müller;

In 2010, the first three writers were Tomas Tranströmer, Adam Zagajewski and Ko Un, but the winner was Mario Vargas Llosa;

In 2011, the three favorite writers were Adonis, Tomas Tranströmer and Thomas Pynchon. And this time the betting company finally got a go. The second writer on its list received the prize.

We can see from the above that predicting a Nobel Prize winner in Literature according to the Ladbrokes list is quite the same as a mere guess. A stopped clock can be right at least twice a day. Mo Yan was listed as the second favorite writer. This could be the strategy of the betting company to attract money from the rich but foolish Chinese.

Secondly, many people think Mo Yan is the best writer in China, who satisfies the requirements of the Prize. However, this is the typical symptom of big-nation ethology of hysteria. Lots of Chinese people still keep the China-centred thinking, believing that China is the centre of the world and the whole world has the responsibility to understand China. How much do the Chinese people

know of the writers listed above? There should be a contemporary Indian writer who has a similar literary position as Mo Yan, but who knows the name of such an Indian writer?

A friend of mine sent me over today an obituary published in New York Times about the death of Vietnamese poet Nguyen Chi Thien. There are also some people thinking that Nguyen Chi Thien should be awarded Nobel Prize in Literature. The translator of his poems said that 70 up to 100 out of his 700 poems are absolutely masterpieces. I googled his name but found only two pieces of news about him. We don't know Nguyen Chi Thien, just as people outside of China don't know Mo Yan.

Finally, looking through all the winners of Nobel Prize in Literature, we can see that even the winners didn't possess rebelling spirits under totalitarian politics like Herta Müller, they would at least remain independent in the democratic system like Tomas Tranströmer. However, Mo Yan has neither of both. Someone might feel it unfair for that, saying that it is sufficient to be qualified to Nobel Prize in Literature as long as their works meet aesthetic requirements. However, it is the most essential aesthetic criteria that a writer possesses the spirits of independence or not.

Looking from its history, Nobel Prize in Literature promotes humanitarian spirits besides literature itself. From this view, Mo Yan would never be possible to win Nobel Prize in Literature unless he suddenly possesses a sense of independence.

Three days after that, the Nobel Prize in Literature was officially announced and it WAS Mo Yan. It really disappointed me a lot. I used such a sure tone in my writing before, but it made me lose face all of a sudden at that moment. As a matter of fact, I vaguely felt a little bit unlucky the night before that, as China Central TV reminded the Chinese public to pay attention to Nobel Prize in Literature. As a propaganda machine, China Central TV never has interest in popularizing literary knowledge. If the winner was not a Chinese, the action of CCTV would inevitably be too fancy and even made people feel out of sense. History always repeats. Two years ago, there were also some rumors before Dr. Liu Xiaobo was granted Nobel Prize for Peace.

Right after that, I penned a letter again as follows:

Mo Yan Won Nobel Prize in Literature

First of all, I have to apologize for my prediction that Mo Yan wouldn't be granted Nobel Prize in Literature. I took my own judgment as conclusion, which was a manifestation of arrogance. It might save me some face if I could have been "No Speaking" as the name of newly announced winner of Nobel Prize in Literature Mo Yan means.

For all the time before that, I was so confident and sure that Mo Yan could win Nobel Prize in Literature by no means, because as a writer, Mo Yan took an ambiguous attitude towards censorship. A few months ago, when Mo Yan was interviewed by an editor from Granta, a veteran literary magazine in Great Britain, and was asked what effects China's censor system cast to literary creation. Mo Yan replied that with the existence of censorship, "a writer can inject their own imagination to isolate them from the real world", and therefore he believed "these limitations or censorship is great for literature creation".

(<http://www.granta.com/New-Writing/Granta-Audio-Mo-Yan>)

It's very hard for me to accept views like that. Maybe censorship could really help writers to innovate their ways of expression; however, who can assure that with realistic approach, no excellent works could be written? Just from the angle of probability, if writers adopt all possible approaches to write, I believe the possibility of excellent works would be much greater than that. However, within such a country with a long history of imprisonment due to literary inquisition, lots of people have to shoulder great risks because their writings cover the realities.

*I also believe that if writers can make faithful records of the contemporary China, it would be more powerful than any fancy literary skills. I often take this as an example: in the American movie *The Terminal* starred by Tom Hanks, the main character had to stay at an American airport for good because his country was destroyed. Many years later, Mr. Feng Zhenghu, a Chinese citizen, was allowed to return to his own country and had to stay at a Japanese airport when China is on rise. The American playwright had such a wild imagination that he had to destroy a virtual country to make the story look reasonable. However in China, this kind of Hollywood movies is happening in such a natural manner.*

Simply because there are so many writers like Mo Yan trying to shy away from realities, people are made to be so indifferent to all types of horrible news happened in this country. Personally speaking, I hope there could emerge more honest Chinese writers, not those using so-called magical approaches to escape from realities.

On writing, Raymond Carver once said:

I overheard the writer Geoffrey Wolff say "No cheap tricks" to a group of writing students. That should go on a three-by-five card. I'd amend it a little to "No tricks" Period. I hate tricks. At the first sign of a trick or a gimmick in a piece of fiction, a cheap trick or even an elaborate trick, I tend to look for cover. Tricks are ultimately boring, and I get bored easily, which may go along with my not having much of an attention span.

I agree with Raymond Carver, as in contemporary China exist too many writers playing tricks. My refusal of Mo Yan came from the aesthetic level, and I wrongly believed the judge panel of Nobel Prize in Literature would take the same aesthetic views. Therefore, in full confidence, I announced that “Mo Yan won’t be granted Nobel Prize in Literature”.

Anyway, I am wrong. I would like to make apologies again.

I felt much relieved after finishing this letter. There are so many Chinese writers but just a few prizes to be grabbed. All literary prizes have been in control of the government in Mainland China. Any outspoken writer (if not trying to avoid censorship and make literary creations like Mo Yan) would neither be possible to reach these prizes nor allowed to get their works published. And Chinese literary prizes in Hong Kong and Taiwan are all small-scale, not amount to anything. Other literary prizes in the world mostly have requirement of languages. Only Nobel Prize in Literature puts no limits of language and citizenship on winners, and can bring them great fame and huge profits. This is why Chinese people take so much care about it.

After Mo Yan’s winning, American writer Joseph Epstein wrote in the Wall Street Journal: “You may not know it, but you and I are members of a club whose fellow members include Leo Tolstoy, Henry James, Anton Chekhov, Mark Twain, Henrik Ibsen, Marcel Proust, Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Thomas Hardy, Jorge Luis Borges and Vladimir Nabokov. The club is the Non-Winners of the Nobel Prize in Literature. All these authentically great writers, still alive when the prize, initiated in 1901, was being awarded, didn't win it. Rather better, our little club, than the one composed of those who have won the Nobel Prize for Literature. This club includes among its members Sully Prudhomme, Bjornstjerne Bjornson, Frédéric Mistral, Giosuè Carducci, Paul Heyse, Carl Spitteler, Grazia Deledda, Herta Müller, Tomas Tranströmer.”

Mr. Epstein also added: “although the Nobel Prizes are given only to people who are still alive, winning a Nobel Prize in Literature tends to make its literary recipients a bit posthumous.” In discussing with a German friend about my puzzles to the Nobel Prize Committee’s granting to Mo Yan, I was told that perhaps the Nobel Prize Committee would like to give Mo Yan a chance, providing him with better conditions to write freely, at least he would have no worries for his aged years.

If this prize could make the writer “Mo Yan” (No Speaking) to speak truth, it is not bad enough.
(Translated by CHEN Biao)

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LIU Miao, a writer in Shanghai

Listening to Bald Lao Playing Flute

- To Lao Liao

By Liu Xiaobo



It was never a suitable place for playing flute
But you miraculously
Turned your flesh into the sound of flute
The little restaurant was very simple
But offered extremely delicious grilled steak

Friends were casually chatting
And strangers were taking about Falun Gong
As you presented Yawei your collection of poetry-in-prison
This self-proclaimed happy bookseller became speechless
But his hands were somehow trembling
The suddenly nostalgia aroused the sound of flute

Your eyes were tightly shut
Nixing anything visible
You jittering eyelids and eyelashes
Manifested that life is so fragile
Your lips was not smooth
The rough tones got air solidified

The whole audience became solemn in the sound of flute
And assumed their elegant poses to enjoy music
Closing eyes, holding breathes, and seeming to have realized something
But only me opening my eyes widely and staring at you
For nothing but emptiness

I had thought a musical Instrument must be
Elegantly stroked by the gentle fingers
But your opened fingers held tightly
A red-hot iron bar
The hideousness of your muscles and protrusion of your bone-joints

Such a kind of your intense strength
Made me worried about you
For so delicate an instrument
How to withstand it without crushing

It was the bare hands grabbing the bleeding blade
Strangling a gambler's throat
Nipping into a lover's skin
And the passion looking into the death
Your big bald that had been shiny
Became dim in this sound of flute
As being at the night when you saw the condemned off

Ah, Lao Liao, Lao Liao, Lao Liao
The others heard you playing soul
With a sad and keen heart
But I, like an animal, in the sound of flute
Listened to the struggle of your flesh
It was a flesh that had never given in
Yes, it was the flesh
I am sure
It was the flesh
That had confronted the shackles and electric batons
Dating with bedbugs, louses and death
In prison

At home in Beijing on November 16, 1999

PS: When I was finishing this poem, Lao Liao was again playing his damn flute for me, really with a kinda fucking sentiment.

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LIU Xiaobo, literary critic, politic commentator and human rights activist, Honorary President of Independent Chinese PEN Center and its President in 2003-2007, the recipient of the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize, was held under residential surveillance by Beijing Public Security Bureau since 8 December 2008 and then formally arrested on 23 June 2009, sentenced to 11 years imprisonment on "inciting subversion of the state power" for his participation in drafting Charter 08 and publishing 6 articles on December 25, 2009. He is also an honorary member of German and Sydney PEN Centers.

(Translated by Yu Zhang)

Toxic Life and Others

By SHI Tao



In the supermarkets there were toxic milk powders
No idea whose vicious dogs were provoked
All of them have run into the streets
Biting the legs of the innocent mass
And injecting the toxic saps into them
At night
They also kissed goodbye to
Their good neighbours, good partners and good brothers
And good sisters
The rabies in whole city
Looked like a group of poets in saliva era
The devil angels
Who just put on their night makeup

How do I know that my headache at this moment
Is related to the toxic TV news

2010.4.3.

The Prison at Rainy Night

This is the wall that the tenderness of singing affection
Old but unbroken, is touching behind the sound of
Raining. Independent on each other
Those ears respectively and secretly listen
To the dust-like happiness

This is the night when the sadness of female voices of crying
Hoarse and unforgettable, is hiding in the plane
Crashing. Is separation in life and death
In prophecy the colour of burnt leaves
Still hanging in a high place – reasonless

Floating? This is the Rilke reopened
After a long absence. In the heavy luggage
Packed already, collected is
"Vergers" of his inspiration, the lonely childhood
Form which we in common exclude "Happiness"

2010.4.11

Somewhere Deeply in Crowd

A mine disaster was following the footsteps of
A grand party, mixed with debates and gossips
Of the entertainment news.
They were in deep underground of several hundred meters
Drinking the water invisible, and raising their heads
To look up toward the world at the invisible top

This is similar to our lonely despair.
Shutting the eyes, the crowd at no distance from us
Is moved thousands of kilometers away -
How far can a heretical idea travel?
We are drinking invisible water, and speaking
Inaudible words. We are going too far -

We have gone too far. The coal gas and
Underground flood have sieged us deeply
In crowd, with a deep mysterious feeling of being cast aside

In Deshan, 2010.4.11

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***SHI Tao**, a journalist, writer and poet, was sentenced to imprisonment for 10 years in 2005 for releasing a document of the Communist Party to an overseas Chinese democracy site after Yahoo! China provided his personal details to the Chinese government.*

(Translated by Yu Zhang)

Talking (I)

By WANG Jianhui



— *Talking, plain and natural, is a communication closest to truth.*

I. No-Commandment

The phone rang when I was still in bed. Picked up the phone in drowsiness and answered, I found it was Old Qiu. He was making the call to me at the side of highway beside Golden Elephant Gardens. With so many cars on the road roaring away, I could hardly hear his voice. I cheered myself up to try to catch his words coming over from the phone.

“I can’t hear you clearly.”

“.....”

“Please say it again,” I shouted in a loud voice.

“I will dial to you again.” But this time I could hear clearly and talked back in a hurry: “All right. It’s OK now. I can hear you...” The call went off before I finished my talking. Less than five seconds after, my phone rang again. I pressed the key to receive, and heard him saying: “It’s so sunny today. Please come out for tea.”

“OK. When will you come over?”

“I will be coming over after having a bowl of noodles.”

“All right.”

After getting out of bed and washing, I went out to the tea shops at the side of the Sandy River. There were already lots of people sitting in the tea shops along the river. The sun shined upon my face, and upon others’ faces as well. “Good mood with good weather” is not the same case for all people. However, for tea drinkers, they shared one thing in common, that is having enough time. The saying “you can have everything but not illness” tells us that having time should be a kind of possession of wealth as well.

Getting a seat to sit down and ordering a cup of tea, I made a call to Old Qiu. He replied: “Come in soon.” Just before hanging up, a hasty voice came over from the phone: “I can see you now.”

Looking over to the bridge which was resting across the Sandy River, I saw him walking to the middle of the bridge and waving to me. I waved back to him, telling him that I had seen as well. I turned back to the tea shop keeper and said: "Please bring over another cup of tea."

"Still the same?" the shopkeeper asked pointing to my cup.

"Plain tea please," I answered with determination.

Ever since Chinese people started to pay attention to health preservation, someone declared that green tea was more beneficial to health than flower tea. Following that, people in Chengdu began to change their habits from drinking flower tea to drinking green tea. As there is no flowers in green tea, tea drinkers in Chengdu called all green tea as plain tea.

When the shopkeeper prepared plain tea and brought over, Old Qiu was already seated. Then we started to drink and talk. After a short while, Old Qiu's friends called him and he replied: "I am drinking tea now." They asked to join in. "Just come over."

They soon came over. Three strong men, each with fatty head and big ears. Especially the leader of the three, he was much rounder and oilier. He had a round head, a round face and smooth tender skin, just like a watermelon dropping into an oil bucket. The other two followed him like servants. They both followed social rules and said nothing, like two meat pillars standing over there.

Right after sitting down, we started to talk about Buddhism without any reason. If really wanting to look for a reason, it could be that the three strong men looked like Arhats. The leader-looking man said that he took a monk at Zhaojue Temple as his master. As a matter of fact, the master wanted to take him as disciple, saying he had affinity with Buddha. But he refused the master straight away, saying: "I can't have no sex". He meant to threaten the master away and take him no disciple. Unexpectedly the master made a compromise: "it's hard, very hard, harder than getting into the sky for contemporary people to keep away from sex."

Since there was such an open-minded master, why not believe in Buddhism? As the saying goes, having one more friend equals to having one more way, and what's more, he was a living Buddha.

Sure. He believes it of course.

As if the door and road between heaven and hell are opened up. The master gave him a Dharma

name, No-Commandment. Perhaps it was the first practice to the promise the master made. The condition was to go to the temple once a month to offer incenses. That's easy, same as having a walk over there to relieve boredom. Change an environment, and change a mood.

Leafy and quiet ancient trees, light-smell incenses, and wet air could calm down impetuous minds.

No-Commandment said: "Actually I was just talking with the master when I was at the temple. He talked and I listened. The old master liked to talk so much, which gave me a feeling that the only problem for monks was loneliness and they need to find disciples to talk."

"The master was sitting on a praying matt, motionless... oh, more exactly, seriously talking to me his story."

II. No-Commandment Told of the Master's Stories

The master was over seventy years old, whose thinking was a wooly mass like the wrinkles on his face, hard to disentangle. If really wanting to sort out, you could get only a short piece. My communications with the master were just connections of these short pieces all together. Without wearing a cassock, the master was just an ordinary old man. However, as a monk with that soil-yellow patchwork and a pale aged face, the master would be thought as a man of depth if you are thinking towards the depth.

The master never talked about sutras to me, but just about some of his past stories. I believe this was because he needed to find a place to pour out his talking which were stuck in his mind for long...

That was the year when I was nearly twenty. I am sure that I was nineteen that year. Because it was that year, on the first day of the lunar new year of 1959, when my parents and elder sister all died, died of starvation.

Why didn't I die of starvation either?

Because at that time I was at a temple, not far away from home. At the beginning of 1950, the temple was already desolate. Looking from far away, it was pale and grey like the face of the dead. Nobody dared to go there, because of fears of dying!

At the end of the year 1958, there was nothing left at home to eat. My mum tried to search

everywhere for tree barks and wild herbs. I still remembered that day, about in the middle of November. It was not so cold. As we talk today, it was a warm winter. Maybe because of burning steel-making furnaces everywhere, the air was burned to be hot. As no rain at all, the air was very dry and the soil in the fields became solid blocks, growing nothing. At about afternoon-time, I went out of the house in drowsiness to the temple to catch fish and tortoises which were released by Buddhists before 1949. The water within the animal-releasing pond disappeared and only a bit of wet dirt was left in the middle. In a big pit, all fish died, leaving fish bones over there as tidy as combs and as dry as dead tree branches. Only tortoises were still living. Thanks to these long-life livings. They stayed in the pit, motionless as if being dead. Some tortoises stuck together the solid mud, like a mud bubble. But I knew they were still alive. I pissed on the mud bubble. After a few minutes, with the warm piss the tortoise quietly began to move. Just like a growing plant, sprouting out a small bud. Finally, the head of the tortoise stretched out of the hard shell. And then as I could see, it was a tortoise, not a cobblestone.

And then, that tortoise became food in my stomach. Not until midnight, I dared to light a fire and boil a pot of water. I directly put the tortoise into the pot, seeing it shaking its shell several times and stretching out its entire head and four legs. It died, like a shape of the dharma wheel, spinning along with the boiling water in the pot.

I was not so experienced at the beginning that the tortoises were not boiled well enough. I was too hasty. After boiling four tortoises, I had a good mastery of boiling: simmer with slow fire until the sun rises and turned the fire off. Until then, just putting the tortoise into mouth and sucking, the bones and flesh would be separate. What a delicious taste of that!

“How long did the master stay at the temple?”

About three months. I ate up all the tortoises in the dry pond, and thought that it was time to go back home to have a look. I came out of the temple, and on the way saw several dead bodies lying at the side road. All died of starvation. The bodies were all extremely thin, only having skins and bones left. I had a sense of foreboding. My family members could be like this as well, all died. The more I thought, the more I was scared. My feet became soft, hard to stand, let alone walking. I had to sit a while against a dry tree. One crow was sitting at a tree branch not far away, looking at me. I knew that it was waiting for me to fall down. I tried to open my eyes wide to stare at it, thinking that there were several dead bodies behind, why not just go there to eat them up!

“Maybe it saw the master still had some flesh? And the dead bodies had no flesh left at all?”

I thought the same way.

I was sitting there until the early evening. I didn't stand up till the sun went up to the peak of mountains. Seeing me standing up, the crow flew into sky with a loud scream. It was easy to see that the crow was full of energy.

I arrived at home when it was fully dark. As soon as I entered, I saw my parents hugged with my elder sister, all dead. My sister's face was bearing some smiles. My father and sister were both skinny to show bones. Only my mother had a big tummy, looking like having a baby. I knew later that such a big tummy was fully filled with soil.

My sister was already married. As I thought, she maybe knew that she was going to die, and decided to come back to die together with parents.

They were perhaps waiting for me to come back, but failed.

“Master, when you were eating the tortoises, why didn't you think of going back home to share with your parents?”

Firstly, I was afraid that they would be soon eaten up if so many people knew and come to share. Secondly, I was afraid that with more people knowing that, the message that there were tortoises in the temple would be soon spread over. Everybody would get a tiny bit, but at the end nobody would survive.

Of course, they were just excuses I made for myself. Without excuse, people would be contradictory when their inner selves went against their external selves in the society. Human beings are essentially of contradictions. The meaning of existence is just to solve countless contradictions coming up now and then. Convince yourself and make your conscience settle down. If not so, what's the difference between living human beings and animals?

“The master was quite right for that. The utmost meaning of culture is to find a suitable excuse for each of its behaviors!”

It was New Year's eve that day. It must be quite a while after the death of my parents and sister, as the house was full of the smell of corpse. I was so regretful for not coming back to ask my parents to go to the temple to eat tortoises. But it was too late. Time could not fly backwards.

For the first night, I spent the whole night with the corpses of my family. When I woke up in the next morning, I saw maggots climbing out of their mouths, noses, ears and eyes. I carefully

wiped them clean with a towel. Up till the third day, I was so desperately hungry that I put all of maggots into my mouth to chew. After a while of chewing noises, they were sent into my stomach.

“You were eating the flesh of your father, mother and sister?”

It must be so. However, I didn't realize this at that time, as I was so hungry that my mind was as empty as my stomach. There was only one thought: try to find anything to fill the stomach. Up to the seventh day, maggots began to grow at the skins of the corpses. I thought that I could not stay like this. If I kept on staying, there would be no hope but death. I wanted to leave. Then I swept the maggots beside the corpses into a bowl. They filled a full big bowl. I ate them up with a single breath, and left home.

I went to Fujian Province first, as I heard from other beggars that it was easy to get food by begging. I worked several years in a military factory in Fujian, and saved some money. As you know, people in Guangdong believe in Buddha, and at that time religious beliefs started to recover and people in many areas began to repair the temples destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. I went there to help rebuild. After completion, I felt tired and wanted to have a rest. So I remained there to be a monk.

In Guangdong, local people all speak Cantonese, but I was poor at learning language and found it difficult to communicate with pilgrims. So I had no chance to be promoted. There are ranks as well among monks. And then I started to wander between temples here and there.

Finally, I arrived in Sichuan. At that time I was already at my senior years and could not stand ups and downs any more. So I chose to stay at Zhaojue Temple.

III. I Talked

When No-Commandment talked to this point, one tea-drinker shouted pointing to the Sandy River: “Look, what's that?” I looked over to the direction that person was pointing, and found a tortoise floating over the surface of the river. It stretched out its short head to look around for one moment, and pulled back its head into the shell for another moment.

I said:

That is a set-free tortoise. In this river, people can see very often some set-free tortoises floating from the upper stream. Once I invited friends for a birthday banquet, one Buddhist friend told me: “If you would like to have good luck for your birthday, better to buy a tortoise to set free. Eating

birthday cake, blowing off candles or making wishes is not as efficacious as setting a tortoise free back to the nature.”

For that whole day, that friend and I searched several places but failed to buy any tortoise. I suddenly got an idea later, and said: go to restaurants to have a look, where they definitely might have.

The first restaurant we went in got tortoises. I explained: I am not here to eat tortoises.

“Buy one back home to raise.”

The shopkeeper looked at us strangely. Better sell it to me. I offer 150 yuan. No matter how you sell it, you just sell it for money. Either selling it dead or selling it alive.

It is quite true that tortoises have spiritualities. When I set it free into a river, it even looked back to me as saying goodbye before swimming slowly into the water.

It’s really hard to explain. Soon after that, I received an email from America, from a publisher who wanted to publish my novel *The Map of China*. He asked me of my expectation for writing remunerations. I replied to say: I know there is no market for literary works, and I never thought of making money by writing; if I have to make a living by writing, then the words I write would be covered by rice bowls.

It is hard to say that it was because luck was just going to that turning pointing, or because that tortoise I set free helped me to ask for assistance from the Goddess of Fate.

“Your friend told you that setting tortoises free could bring good luck to people. My master told me so as well. The favorite saying of the master was: giving a way to the tortoises to live is making one more way for you to survive.

“The master would spend lots of time every day standing beside the set-free pond, looking at the tortoises full of the pond as if looking at grains. As long as looking at them, the master would have a peaceful mind and his eyes would be as quiet as the lifeless water in the set-free pond, without any bits of ripples.”

(to be continued)

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WANG Jianhui, ICPC member in Chengdu, and its laureate of Freedom to Writer Award in 2009.

(Translated by Chen Biao)

First Love

By Duoduo



The village was surrounded by large pieces vegetable fields. We children went across ridges, and always left our footprints on the soil. At the end of vegetable fields was our school.

He handed me first time a paper note filled with words, which was the place of dating tonight.

I blushed. Obviously, I was deeply moved because he loved me. He was one grade lower than me; his academic records were not outstanding. However, he was a table tennis player of the school and once champion in a citywide contest. I admired vanity, and I accepted the medal he gave to me.

He said that he got the championship for my sake. I naturally believed it. Besides, the medal was a best beginning for me to become his girlfriend.

He whispered to my ears, not to let Ah Niu know about the dating tonight, because Ah Niu told him that he was fond of me, too. But, Yi was fond of Ah Niu; therefore, Yi was always jealous of me. Each time I saw Yi, I always avoided her sights.

Actually, I too was a little fond of Ah Niu. He was honest, and often took initiatives. I liked boys taking initiatives. I was then rather confused: whom in the end should I choose to be my boyfriend? Yet I got the answer before long. Although, Ah Niu said on purpose that he was going to Canada for school. We did not know whether we had future, but he promised me to come back to marry me when he grew up.

I was deeply moved again. The one who was about to leave homeland yet not gave up his affection on me.

Summer wind was really cool. Wearing red and blue plaid short skirt, I went to rape fields to meet him. The stars in the sky were not very bright, but bright enough to see the ridges. I stood at an end of ridge, he was already there waiting for me. To show my restrain, I stopped walking forward. I was waiting for his coming to me. He started galloping, and suddenly stopped.

“Do you like it?” He asked.

“What do I like? Oh, I do. Congratulate you for the championship. You are great!” I said, while appreciating the face with unclear contour in front of me.

“If only you like it, I would be happy.” He moved one step forward and there was still some distance between us. The wind could cross our fingers, and we both felt cooling.

“Really?” I asked, though I knew the answer.

“Yes. Do you know how I fell in love with you? Do you remember when you were at the reciting contest last winter? I sat at the front line of audience, and I was shocked by your beautiful voice in reading poems! I was fonder and fonder of you while listening. Another time was at the corridor outside of your classroom, I saw you, holding a pile of home works, walked into classroom. Your beautiful skirt went up with the wind. . .” He was like writing a composition.

“I don't believe it!” I pretended to be irritated; actually my heart was filled with sweetness. I believed that he was telling the truth.

“If I lied to you I would be a dog!” He raised both hands gestured above his head.

“Don't boast! Are you as lovable as a dog?” I willingly retreated one step back.

He suddenly grasped my hand, slowly letting me to sit down. The grassland was a little wet. He took out a pack of German made TEMPLE tissues that was most fashionable at the time. He opened one piece of tissue and helped me to lay it on the grassland. At this moment, I smelt a mint fragrance sent out from his eyebrows.

“It smells really good,” I said.

“Yes, it smells as sweet as your hair,” he lightly came over to my hair, and smelt at it.

“No, it is not like that.”

“Yes.”

“No.”

“Yes.”

We both laughed. He buckled his little finger with mine.

He said: "I know I am able to seize you from Ah Niu. He is not so fond of you as I am, nor courageous as me. Isn't it right?!"

"Hum." I was little sad, when he mentioned Ah Niu. After all I was once fond of Ah Niu, though just a little.

Suddenly, a frog jumped into underbrush, and shocked me. He buckled my finger even tighter.

Everything soon was quite. "Tell me, was the frog bugging our talks?"

"I LOVE YOU, MY DEAR! A frog does not understand English, does it?"

"Hee hee. . ."

"You can as well say something like that in English to the frog." He urged me.

"Hey, I'll not tell. It must understand it. It has understood it, and then will tell it to other frogs, and the frogs to the insects, spreading from mouth to mouth. No, no, it is not nice....." I don't want to say "I love you." I think that once saying it I must always love this man, and never change it. But, every time when Ah Niu stood downstairs waiting for me to go to school, his eyes always made me very touched.

"Oh, you have never loved me!" He got angry.

"It's not true. How come? If I didn't like you, I would not have come at all." I got angry too.

"No kidding." He gradually moved towards me, and kissed me at my forehead. Our bodies began to touch together. His arm was very warm.

I think it was the happiest moment of my life. Since, other than that, I never tried any close contact with a sincerely beloved boy, in such a romantic atmosphere. He said:

"I now only kiss your forehead, and, in a few years, I will kiss your face, and afterwards. . . . May I?"

"Oh," I answered shyly.

However, we soon parted. I graduated from sixth grade, and he just promoted to the sixth.

"You must let yourself enter the middle school I read. Otherwise, I'll not have you."

"How dare you, I will....."

"What?" I anxiously asked.

"I'll commit suicide!" He said with a smile.

"Pervert!"

"In fact, the frog is dreaming in the grass." We headed on our arms, looking at the dim stars in the sky. We both felt silent, seemed to be sad about the upcoming parting. The night wind was getting cooler and cooler. It's mid-August, when our new semester would start soon.

"You will marry me, OK?" He drew back his hand and put it into pocket.

"Ah, if I am going to marry the one I like, it must be you." I suddenly broke out of cry. My fear to the future was precisely that one day I would marry a man, turning a girl to a woman, from young to old, and afterwards became a torn worn house wife, like all mothers. But, on the other hand, I felt so sweet, we had the future, we can wait.

I did not know how time slipped away. The sky over the two happy juvenile was getting late.

When he followed me to the door of my home, I found a figure standing there woodenly, but quickly getting away.

And many days after, when Ah Niu's tour to Canada became real, he would go together with his brother. Yi was very sad for Ah Niu not to have any words of fondness to her before his departure. Yi said that she would hate me forever.

However, after three years of junior high, Ah Niu and his brother came back to visit relatives. The first thing he did was looking for me, and he also left a very precious gift in my home. At that time, I was in somewhere else.

I always regretted for being unable to meet Ah Niu once more. I wonder how that once handsome boy now looks like.

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Duoduo, a writer and ICPC member.

(Translated by ZHOU Yiyun)

My University

By *BEI Ling*



It was one afternoon in March, 1979. I was reading the big-character posters and newly posted pages of the independent magazines on the Democracy Wall. I was wearing a traditional cotton-padded jacket and a scarf, as a typical intellectual youth during the year of May Fourth Movement. When I turned around, I saw three young men standing by the wall selling magazines. There was a bicycle by their side, with a buck of paste hanging on the bar. It was the magazine *Today*, which I had been reading and touched by. I felt like finding the place where I should belonged to. I introduced myself to them, especially mentioned that I was a university student. We shook hands. Their hands were warm. The warmest ones belonged to a tall and skinny good-looking man, who introduced the other two for me, “My name is Mang Ke, and they are Bei Dao and Big E. Come to our editorial office when you have time. It’s at No.76 Forteen Lane, Dongsì.” I was a bit surprised for the invitation, and didn’t know how to express my feeling.

I went to No.76 not long after. It was a weekend afternoon. I came out from Wangfujing Xinhua bookshop, got on my bicycle, passed National Art Museum of China, turned right into Dongsì, passed Kuan Street, entered Ten Lane in Dongsì, turned at and passed through a few lanes, finally found No.76 Fourteen Lane in Dongsì. The area stilled maintained its layout from ancient Beijing city. The streets and the lanes were clearly located that a real ‘Beijinger’ would hardly get lost. I pushed the door and entered the yard. The traditional quadrangle courtyard has looked like a warren. A girl with bright eyes came to me and asked me gently, “Are you looking for *Today* magazine?” Her beautiful smile caught me. I became nervous, “Right. Yes. Yes.” Mang Ke was walking in and out. He recognized me, and said to the girl, “Look, he does look like Ye Xiaogang.” I didn’t know what he meant by that, but nervously kept repeating myself, “I just passed by. Oh no, no, I especially came to visit.”

Mang Ke’s nickname was ‘Monkey’. He had quick movements, was always cheerful, which made him look like a monkey. Maomao was Mang Ke’s girlfriend. From my views at the time, she was charming and exquisite, a typical sweet southern girl. Later on I came to know her family was from Wuxi, which happened to be my hometown. We felt closer because of that. Mang Ke asked me to stay for a drink. We were sitting beside the table outside the house. After a while, there came out two people. One was tall, and the other was short. Mang Ke told me they were two brothers, named Liu Qing and Liu Nianchun, from *April Fifth Forum* magazine, whose office was in the same place. We said hello to each other. We were drinking and talking, having some

snacks. He suggested me to come to the Today writing workshop held in Zhao Nan's home at No.4 Zhangzizhong Road, Dongcheng District, every month.



Bei Ling (贝岭), Xidan Democracy Wall, in the beginning of 1979 – photographed by Jia Yi

Since then, the Today writing workshops became my initial literature classes. I went to Zhao Nan's home every first Saturday of each month from May 1979 to December 1980.

From then on, I boarded another 'pirate ship'.

I went there almost every month without fail. Every first Saturday morning, I started my journey from the classroom or the dormitory, rode my bicycle to the Democracy Wall, read the posters, rode along Chang'an Avenue and through Tiananmen Square, took a look of Mao's portrait, turned left at Wangfujing Avenue, and read some books in Xinhua bookstore. After a few hours, I went to the Art Museum for one hour or two until it closed, or rode my bike randomly. When the night came, I found a small canteen to buy a bowl of soup and some bread. After that, I went to No.4 Zhangzizhong Road. The building with grey walls had its spectacular style. After crossing the doorsill, turning left, passing the narrow lane, there would be another world in the yard. The bicycles were locked everywhere at random. If it was winter, the snow and ice on the ground would make it slippery. There were bedrooms in each direction of the yard, with some roughly built bungalows. At the rear of the yard, it was Zhao Nan's room, where they discuss the articles for the magazine Today every first Saturday of each month.

Those were my years of practice, through listening and pretending to be mature enough. By discussing the articles with the writers, I came to favor plain narrative writing, and came to understand the modern perception of literature. My very first understanding of literature and reviewing skills were all gained from the writing workshops in Zhao Nan's home. Most of the participants were poets and novelists, older than me. I first met Jiang He there. He had long hair. When I saw him, he was reading his poem - Starting Right Here. Gradually, I became a commenter from a listener. A calling had formed silently in my heart.

Today's writing workshops only discuss the poems or short stories that were not published. No published articles would be discussed, so it was very different than other literature forums for published articles. Normally, the chief editor Mr. Bei Dao would introduce the guest writer who would bring an article. The writer would read it aloud, then the participants would discuss about whether it should be published in *Today*. I found out that when the discussion went over-heated, Bei Dao, whose nick name was 'an old piece of wood' due to his reserved personality, was always the one who would control the situation, and bring the discussion back to the article itself. The workshop would last three to four hours, during which the editors and the participants would review each paragraph and give comments. The participants would normally give opinions without holding back, or even change the article directly. The writer would usually receive the comments humbly, which was highly valued. Other underground writing workshops followed with *Today* used the same methodology, but few of them really helped the writers to polish their articles. In those years, the world of literature was in its beginning. The underground writers and poets were not famous. They didn't even know each other, which made people humble. We seriously discussed a novel or a poem. Those were the good years for literature, because people had not started chasing fame and gain. However, it gradually changed later on, and it is hard to get it back.

From the year 1979 to 1980, No.4 Zhangzizhong Road had become a landmark for underground literature community in Beijing. Zhao Nan's room was large, but we needed to open the door constantly because people were smoking. In winter, it was extremely cold when the door was opened. Thick cotton curtains were hung over the door. A stove was put inside the room. To keep it warm, Zhao Nan kept adding briquettes in the stove. A big kettle was sitting on the stove to boil hot water. The steam from the kettle made the air moist. People added hot water into the cup constantly while listening to the writer. Those were the years without much material enjoyment, but with mentally fulfilling. Literature was able to warm people up. Zhao Nan and I became good friends not long after. Whenever I felt depressed or distressed, I would go to his place for a chat. When he was out, I would wait in front of the gate and read books, or just have a walk around. He wouldn't go too far and normally would come back in half an hour. He appeared with his bicycle, walking into the yard quietly. We smiled to each other, with bitterness.

From the university to the Democracy Wall, and from the Wall to Zhao Nan's home, I almost run into the bus a few times as I was always in a hurry. Luckily I didn't come across any accident. That was my way of literature practicum.

In 1981, the Democracy Wall was suspended, and the *Today's* writing workshop was closed. Zhao Nan's home soon became a place for underground parties, which made it famous for a period of time. Every weekend, the trendy young people, overseas Chinese, foreigners with

different skin colors came to the yard of No.4 Zhangzizhong Road. They found Zhao Nan's previous room at the rear, where the music came from. The lights were dim. The music was soft. Young people were hugging each other.

*They hug each other, tightly
To hug, love was their disease
To love, memory is what was left*

Those were the years of 'bourgeois liberalization', when people need physical touch to warm each other.

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***BEI Ling**, poet, editor, publisher and ICPC founding director in Taiwan and USA.*

(Translated by Angela HU)

Pig Rights and Human Rights

By ZHENG Yi



The world is becoming extremely **humane** indeed.

Even the traditional eatable animals are enjoying increasingly stricter rules under the pressure of ‘animal welfare’ mentality and legislations. Nowadays, more than 100 countries have had legislations regarding to ‘animal welfare’, based on the sympathy and respect towards each life. Animals, which belong to a relatively high level of species, have basic feelings and emotions as our mankind. Consequently, even if they are going to be butchered for human food, they should be given basic living space when being raised, and their pain should be minimised when being killed. For example, they should have a bath beforehand, the killing should be individualised to avoid panic among others, and the cutting should only happen after the electric shock.

Nevertheless, it is a world outside China. To the Chinese people, ‘animal welfare’ seems to be a luxury. It reminds me a piece of news on the internet, introducing a way of barbecuing the donkey alive invented by a villager Mr. Wang.

“A donkey is tied on the tree and burned with fire. The donkey struggles and screams. When the skin is ready, the blood comes out of the skin after half an hour. Mr. Wang then feeds the donkey with a buckle of fluid mixed up with water, salt, pepper and spices powder, and the donkey starts another episode of struggling after drinking the fluid. The barbecued meat releases its smells. The screams of the donkey attracts hundreds of villagers and the people passing by, but nobody cares about it. The fluid that the donkey drinks merges with the blood in the fire until the donkey is burned dead. The whole process is more than an hour. Mr. Wang then peels the meat, making his successful dish of success. It is very rare to see such cruelty. However, it is unbelievably considered as a creative way of Chinese cooking in one of the Cantonese TV stations, and the evidence cruelty is filmed and promoted in the society!”

It is a piece of civil news published in an unofficial way. Although there was no third party resource to prove, I would rather believe it. Lu Xun said that he never stopped himself from speculating the Chinese people on their worst evilness. I am the contrary. I would rather speculate the Chinese people on their best kindness. However, there was a previous similarity to ‘barbecue donkey alive’. There is a way to cook the turtle when the turtle drinks the ingredients while cooking. Also, somewhere in south Shanxi province, where the donkey is tied and slowly splashed with boiling water to keep the meat tender. I reckon the barbecue donkey is just a combination of these two ways of cooking. It is nothing creative. Another skill of ‘deep fried

fresh fish' is worth saying. The fish is opened and peeled to cut the nerve, and the head is covered with a piece of wet cloth. The body of the fish is deep fried in the oil and served with sauce, while the fish is still breathing. It is incredible. Even the donkey has some space to catch up with.

Chinese people are not always so cruel. When the village vets does a surgery to the animals, they normally pour a bucket of water onto the animals to distract their attention before cutting down. Mr. Wang might be able to feed the donkey with some wine if he was concerned about drugs affecting the taste of the meat. Rice wine is too expensive, but potato wine does it quickly. When I was in the country, there was only potato wine. A big guy would have been drunk after half a bowl. The donkey would be drunk after two bowls, for sure. Maybe it could release pain. Also, if someone would comment on the height of morality, we could explain that the donkey was demented because of the alcohol!

If the TV station believed that the 'barbecue donkey alive' was a creation of the Chinese traditional cooking, others might not have a reliable reason to go against this opinion. Our Chinese people are indeed the leader of cooking skills.

However, the westerners do not recognize the 'art of eating'. They treat the eaten ones seriously, yet they are not necessarily vegetarians. Isn't that a bit over hypocritical? There are international legislations claiming that the 'five freedoms' of animals that need to be protected, which are free from hunger, of comfortable living, from hurt and disease, from sadness and fear, and of expressing nature. Take the pigs for example. A baby pig needs to have breast milk for at least 13 days. The pigsty needs to be covered with straw for comfort and dirt for food storage. The transportation needs to be clean. Feeding needs to be regular. The pigs need to have a 24 hours' rest if it takes more than 8 hours on road. Finally the electric shock needs to be done in certain way as mentioned above.

I think the freedoms granted to the animals are great, but I am not sure about my country fellow's feelings about it. If I would go back to where I spent my youth in the country, how would I be able to introduce a pig's rights to them? I could even see their eyes full of worrying and sympathy: Are you going crazy because of the staying in the US?

Regarding to the human rights, Mr. Roosevelt mentioned about 'four freedoms', which are freedoms of speech, of religion, from want and from fear. If pigs could speak and believe in God, they would prefer to have freedom of speech and religion as well. No matter how many freedoms there are, if the 'primary stage of socialism will last for 100 years, we are still far from it. Have a look. If a baby pig needs to breast feed for at least 13 days, how about our babies? Is there a legislation to make sure those abandoned baby girls to have their 13 days of breast milk? The

pigsty needs to be covered with straw. What about our homes? Can we enjoy the freedom from being pushed by the police force? Pigs have their dirt for food storage. Do people also need their land for food growing? Can we make a better change to the transportation that is making people want to kill themselves? Not to compare the killings of people to those of the pigs. Have a shower before the killing is kidding. As far as I know, those who have been executed at least sacrificed their lives for the government's 'dignity'. Why hurt them repeatedly since they had made the contribution already?

In the old times, the executed criminals were allowed to ask for drinks and meat from the shops along the street. When Ah Q was executed, he even said "In 20 years, another..." which seemed to be an evidence of his health. The writer Wang Zengqi wrote a novel 'A Tale of Big Nur', where a scene was described:

"There were four lines. The horn team was at the front. It was only a battalion of people, but there were 12 horns. When the group went on the street, the horns were blown at the same time. The whole group of soldiers was carrying guns. In the middle of the group escorted the gang leaders. Sometimes there were three or five of them. Sometimes there was just one. They were tied up. It was a perky group. What's interesting was the gang leaders would do the same as the soldiers who would follow the horn and make the same steps. When the group went on the street, the local guards would advise the shops to hide their pet birds, because the gang leaders did not like seeing birds in the cages, which implied the prison." I am not the kind who always stresses on the past, but after reading this, I still feel the past was better than the present.

It is said that a group of pigs from Ukraine were refused by France because they did not rest according to the rules during 60 hours' transportation. It is a violation of the pigs' basic rights. Also, the trunk drivers who accidentally burnt the dogs in the trunk on No.95 freeway in the US were put into jail. It was because the two drivers were trying to protect the dogs' right that they turned on a heater which triggered the fire that burnt 44 dogs and hurt 24 dogs. The two drivers were given 68 cruelty charges. As a Chinese, I always feel sad when hearing these news. The US imports large quantities of Chinese fireworks. I am not sure whether the importers know that in the factories where the fireworks were made, the labors' rights were totally ignored. The working conditions were already bad, and there were explosions from time to time. To protect the rights of pigs and dogs but ignore the rights of human is a kind of implicit racism.

However, I still support protecting animals' rights, because I believe only when the worst criminal's rights are protected, all people's rights are able to be ensured. We may say that only when the animals that have been killed for thousands of years by human are protected by human for their rights, the respect towards human rights is able to be widely recognized.

The Buddha says every life suffers.

We should pay our basic sympathy and respect toward each life.

10 November, 2005

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***ZHENG Yi**, novelist and essayist exiled in USA, ICPC founding vice-chairman, former president and honorary director.*

(Translated by Angela HU)

June Fourth and Literature

By ZHANG Guihua



I.

“June Fourth and Literature”, is this a meaningful topic?

Yes, it should be.

But, it is not such a topic of particular significance, as the one about a particular relevance between two issues, such as June Fourth and politics, June Fourth and economy, June Fourth and culture, etc., which are more meaningful in their particular relevance. This topic is in a lateral perspective.

In a historical perspective, “June Fourth and literature” is not more meaningful than “1949 and literature”, nor than “The Anti-Japanese War and Literature”, even less than the topic of “May Fourth and Literature” raised from another student movement that had also taken place on Tiananmen Square seventy years earlier.

II.

June Fourth, as a political movement, a political event, is something external to literature, not a necessity for literature. Its significance to literature is that of any political movement, of any political event. Whatever significance a political movement, a political event, may have to literature, the topic of June Fourth and literature may also do.

It can also be clarified by making a comparison: whatever significance June Fourth and politics, June Fourth and economy, or June Fourth and culture, may have, the topic of June Fourth and literature may have a similarity; In whatever perspective May Fourth and literature, can be elaborated and interpreted, the topic of June Fourth and literature can also be done. The significance elaborated from May Fourth and literature can also be found in the topic of June Fourth and literature.

This is the significance that “June Fourth and Literature” should and might have.

III.

As a political movement, or a political event external to literature, June Fourth may have an influence on the subject matter but not much on the style of its literary presentation; it may have an influence on the evolution of literary trends but not much on the development of literary schools; it may have an influence on the angle shift but not much on the linguistic choice of literary description, and so on. It is because the latter are the products of more internal elements of literature, on which a political movement, or a political event, including the June Fourth, may have an influence on it, but just indirect and disseminated. It arrives at literature through too many media to distinguish, demonstrate, and identify.

June Fourth is also different from May Fourth. As a simple political movement, or a political event, the influence that June Fourth exerts on literature from within is almost negligible, and while May Fourth is not. For May Fourth is not simply a political movement carried out mainly by students, it is also a movement of ideas and culture that involved broader aspects.

IV.

For the sake of clarity, let us make a definition of “June Fourth”.

If we only view it as a pro-democracy movement, with students as its main parts and various other social groups involved, then June Fourth should have influenced literature positively. If we view it as a political movement, or a political event, including the whole development of a pro-democracy movement with students as its main parts and various social groups as its participants centered in Beijing, focused on the Square, and then spread throughout the country, which started with contending, followed by confrontation, with the authorities, and terminated by a brutal crackdown, then the June Fourth has got both positive and negative influences on literature. Needless to say, the positive influence was mainly produced from the aspects of the movement fighting for democracy and freedom and against official profiteering, while the negative influence was determined by the brutal crackdown, individual strikes and social controls subsequently carried out by the authorities.

The nature of influence on literature can also be roughly divided in a perspective of time with June Fourth as a turning point. Since the movement was brutally repressed by the government, its influence on literature has been mainly negative.

V.

Here, let us start with talking about the negative influence.

In an ordinary country, the negative and positive influences could be put on a par and be given equal attention and analysis, and neither positive nor negative influence could yield immediate reaction, because literary activities is after all not entertainment. A pen's relation to a book is not the same as that of body to dance or throat to song; the former must be achieved through mind and soul.

However, the country we are honored to reside is not ordinary, but highly centralized in great unity, where the government controls almost all social resources, grasps a gigantic state apparatus with greatest physical strike capacity, and owns a top-down tightly administrated mechanism, thus controls and manipulates the politics, economy and culture of the whole society. Furthermore, this powerful Leviathan always overreacts to any action that might endanger it, and always responds with a rapid, keen, overcorrecting and violent reaction.

After June Fourth, such a reaction arrived as anticipated.

First came a direct personal strike against individuals. The strike was not targeting solely at writers and literati, but a considerable number of them were jailed, monitored, or forced into exile. Soon afterwards, through comprehensive control of media, came implementation of meticulous control over public sphere, so that agencies, organizations, and magazines with slightest dissent orientation were purged by removal, closure, and other means. A mandatory gag against any objections was prosecuted in order to maintain a highly consistent public opinion. During the years right after June Fourth, the widespread gloomy depression in literature was a proof of this negative impact, and its scale, depth and endurance.

VI.

Was the negative influence, then, purely negative? Did imprisonment, monitory, banishment, and exile necessarily made writers sink into passiveness, depression, even drowned? Whether there have been people who viewed this strike as nothing, turned their passiveness into activeness, pressure into motivation? Have there been people, who reacted with counterattack against attack, excitement against excitement, and finally achieved excellent results?

There must have been such heroic writers; some of them are just members of our PEN. Imprisonment, monitory, or exile, have no destructive effect on them, even no obviously negative

influence on their literature activities. They recovered soon from the strike, stood up, adjusted their positions, gathered their energy, and restarted their writing activities.

There might be loss here, because some of them stopped engaging in or mainly engaging in literature writing and switched themselves into the politics. This is a loss for literature, but not necessarily a loss for society. In the post June Fourth period or a considerably long period, literature is not an urgent need of our society.

VII.

What made one even more encouraging and pleasing was that, all the physical attack targeting at individual writers, control over public opinions by overall control of resources and media, and temporary chill and bleak, might end up with nothing. Viewed in a perspective of longer period, public opinion control and physical attack may not definitely produce purely negative influence on literature.

I once mentioned in a short essay:

There is a joke, an American one, saying that the abolishment of censorship in the western society (should be civil society?) may not be beneficial for the growth and prosperity of literature. Besides the few examples given repeatedly, such as *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *The Rainbow*, *Ulysses*, and *Lolita*, it is hard to see much harm censorship done to literature. Worse still, there are more counter-examples can be given, the most typical case is found in the 18th and 19th century Russia (definitely non civil society). The Tsar government was keen to strict censorship (of course not comparable with the Soviet period), but exactly in that age, emerged the most outstanding group of talented writers in mankind, who produced one stunning masterpiece after another, it was the most glorious and resplendent period of literature in the history of mankind. The fact is so amazing that one is almost tempted to assume, that a certain degree of suppression and censorship is likely the price for the existence of Pushkin, Turgenev or Chekhov, not to mention Dostoevsky and Tolstoy!

No matter it is unclear in mind, joking or not joking, what I have been saying is just to prove what mentioned above, that literature is not necessarily connected, even less closely related to the society where it resides, no matter it is a civil one or not. Northrop Frye, an American literature critique once said, that in fact, the prosperity of literature could be taking place in any circumstances.

VIII.

Having said so much, the result reached is still uncertain.

Does uncertainty equal to nothing?

It should not be so, for at least we have gained some senses. June Fourth, as mentioned before, is a political movement, or a political event, either of which is external, thus unnecessarily related to literature. Even though in a great unity like ours, where the government controls all the social resources and mass media, so that it is able to carry out physical strike against individual writers, to execute comprehensive control over public opinion, both of which have resulted temporarily depression and bleak of literature. This is definitely true. However, in the long run, it might not be so, because there have been completely opposite examples in the history of literature. Of course, we are unsure about the opposite conclusion that June Fourth leads to prosperity of literature, either. Therefore we must say that the result is uncertain.

If this reasoning is sound, the writers who are interested in great creativity thus might get a little confidence.

IX.

In the following passages we shall examine the literature achievement after June Fourth. Making an overall survey of literature achievement is surely far too ambitious, we shall therefore narrow it into the realm of literature works that related to June Fourth.

How is the achievement in this aspect?

There is naturally nothing visible in the mainland, so that we have no choice but measure it with the works published or written by Chinese writers overseas. In my view, considering the limited number of writers within a short time, the result could be said as pretty good. Among the earlier ones, *Yellow Peril* by Wang Lixiong is a million-word-masterpiece. In the year 2000 there was a selection held by ten famous persons from mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong and elsewhere in the world, and *Yellow Peril* was among the hundred works of the century selected. Lu Xun's *Call to Arms* and *Wandering* were among them too, but Lu Xun was probably the only one whose two works were elected.

Besides, Ma Jian's *The Noodle Maker* has been granted an English award; Liao Yiwu's novels and poems have been highly appraised overseas and been granted awards, too. There are two

works by Gao Xingjian, which I just skimmed, seem to have taken June Fourth as their background. Anyway, so long as Gao is a Nobel laureate his works could not be too bad.

Should these achievements be attributed to the positive effect of June Fourth or writers' individual efforts? Or they but have proved that the prosperity of literature could take place under whatever circumstances? Do as one pleases. When basic principles are made clear, one can talk to whatever directions.

X.

Finally, I would like to contribute some ideas, concerning the evaluation of June Fourth, my standpoint is still literature. I hope I could make myself clear enough.

June Fourth was an important political event at the eve of last century in China. It not only affected literature and culture, but also deeply affected China's political and economic development in the following decades.

In my view, June Fourth had a greatest positive impact on direction of China's social development, and directly pushed the society to the choice of market economy several years after. Its flare-up, participants' devotion, and the extensive and enthusiastic responses, made those in power see the accumulated social discontent and sharp social contradictions, realize the necessity to make a total change in the society, and push China into marketization and globalization, without which there is no alternative way out.

The tragic ending of June Fourth was transferred into enormous power and pressure, eventually pushing the Chinese society onto the correct course. This is precisely the historical significance of June Fourth, and the most appropriate position of June Fourth in the history.

I am not arbitrarily grafting. From the viewpoint of social development in China in the two decades followed, this is a broader account of June Fourth from a distanced perspective.

It can be seen that we should not just limit June Fourth as a political movement, or a political event within the Square. In fact, if a political movement, a political event, failed to cause social change, or failed to accumulate the energy needed for social change, the significance of this political movement, or political event in the history is limited after all. June Fourth was great, because it had shown the way out of China with the costs of young bloods, tears and lives. It was not an isolated political outburst; it was an iconic, pivotal event, indicating the critical moment when China began its turning process. Its occurrence eventually triggered the transformation of

Chinese society so that it was on the road to the development of modern society.

I don't know whether or not the above has been said by others, but I don't dare, either, to keep it in privacy. Therefore, I have brought up it as a reference for literature concerning June Fourth.

25 May, 2012

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ZHANG Huihua, *writer and ICPC member in Shanghai.*

(Translated by ZHOU Yiyun)

Accomplice

by *YEN Minju*



“Anybody home? Can I come in? Have a heart! It’s a veritable blizzard out here.”

“Come in. Any kind of visitor is always welcome here. The door’s never latched, let alone locked. If you really want to come in, you can just push it open.”

“You’re right. Thick and solid as this wooden door looks, it opens very easily. But ... but how come I can only open it this much? I can’t possible squeeze through that narrow gap.”

“Try again. Those who truly wish to come in always manage to do so.”

“I’ve been walking around on this mountain for a long time. The earth is covered with a thick layer of snow, and the stars are blotted out. The trepidation of having lost my way has left me emotionally and physically drained, and I am in dire need of a place that can accommodate and accept me.”

“Take off that expensive coat of yours, and you will find it much easier to achieve your goal.”

“Taking off my coat, I’ll be exposed to the bitter cold. But if I don’t let go of such external things, how can I find genuine contentment to warm my heart? Ah, what to do? What should I do? Oh, well, narrow as this door is, I want to ... have to ... do my best ... to get in ... have to get in...”

“Welcome, welcome. I am Mr. Qin. We are happy to have you join our little circle.”

“My gratitude knows no bounds. It’s certainly worth to suffer some minor abrasions to get through this narrow door: in here, it’s so warm and comfortable. And even though the only window is tightly shut, one can still smell the scent of flowers wafting on a light breeze. How’s that possible?”

“It must be because you’re tired. I can see that you’ve been on the road for many days, travel-stained as you are. Please have a seat. This is Sir, the Master of the House.”

“Sir? Sir who?”

“Oh, he just calls himself ‘Sir.’ Doesn’t have a name. How about you?”

“My last name is Wang. I’m from the North.”

“Mr. Wang, you must be hungry. Please feel free to help yourself to anything on the table. Sir keeps a generous supply of victuals, there’s always more. Maybe you’d care for a tippie? Something strong to warm you up a bit...”

“Yes, thank you. Oh my goodness, what kind of liquor is this? I thought I’d tasted all the best wines and spirits in the whole world, but I’ve never had anything as pure and luscious as this amber liquid.”

“That’s Sir’s most exclusive wine. It speaks to your soul, that’s what makes it special.”

“Speaks to my soul... You mean, this exceptional wine tastes different to everyone who tries it, completely agreeing with the drinker’s character and temperament?”

“That’s right. And the same goes for all these dishes. Please help yourself, Mr. Wang.”

“It would appear that you are quite at home in this place. Do you live here, Mr. Qin? I have to say, though, that this house isn’t exactly big, the walls are uniformly gray, and I don’t see any furniture besides this wooden table and chairs - not even a bed. How can you be comfortable here?”

“Actually, I’m just a temporary guest, like you. Only arrived here a couple of hours before you. Everything in here belongs to Sir.”

“So ... did you also get lost in the mountains and then, upon seeing the faint glow of light from this house, decided to come here, Mr. Qin?”

“Quite the contrary. I grew up in this neighborhood. I know this area like the back of my hand. Know it so well, in fact, that I’m terribly bored by the sunrises and sunsets, the flowering and withering, the cycle of seasons. As time went by, this excessive familiarity became an unbearable burden. I was afraid that my life would drown in a sea of monotony, scared that all my ambitions would be buried under trivial pursuits. Therefore I began to search for something interesting and meaningful, something of lasting value. And today I saw this tiny light in the darkness. I thought how very unlikely it was that anybody would stay in this deserted wilderness, and figured that

this was the challenge I'd been waiting for. I quickened my pace, and the closer I approached the house, the more I felt the irresistible attraction of the light."

"You also had to summon all your strength and determination to make it through the door?"

"Naturally. To get close to the light, one has to enter through that narrow door. And to get through that narrow door, nothing short of a desperate effort will suffice."

"Oh-oh. You have to excuse my rudeness, but this food is just too delicious. I don't even know how it happened, but I've gobbled it all down already."

"That's no problem. Sir has as much as you could want of anything. And he gives it for free."

"Oh ... is that so ... well, thank you. I'm sorry, Mr. Qin, but could you lean over a little and keep your voice down. I'm afraid he'll hear us. I mean, he just picked up the empty plates and bowls and went into the next room -to do what?"

"To get more food."

"But surely there can't be a kitchen in there? This little house is bare and empty, no signs of any equipment or facilities. Not to mention the fact that we're out in the sticks here: where would you buy all the ingredients for those exquisite dishes? Not that I could even say what exactly they were made of... And why doesn't he join our conversation? He just sits there and listens with a smile on his face. Who is he, really?"

"I don't know either, Mr. Wang. What I know is that when I saw him, I immediately decided to make this my new home. Through some unfathomable and utterly mysterious power of his, he has completely soothed my body and my soul. I no longer need to keep on searching."

"He's coming back. The food on the plates is still steaming."

"Have another cup of wine, Mr. Wang. Tell me how you came to walk alone in the mountains and lose your way."

"Ah, that's a sad story. Well, I'll be ... isn't it strange how this earthen jar of wine never seems to get empty? Hmm, where to begin? I used to own a big and fast-growing company, and as far as material things go, I could afford anything I wanted. My only regret in life was that I had no children. My wife and I went to church all the time to pray for offspring, and we tried all scientific and non-scientific methods out there. And then, when I was already 43 years old, our

persistent efforts were rewarded with a daughter. We were beside ourselves with joy. We praised and thanked God from our hearts for his wonderful gift, and we vowed to bring up our child to become an accomplished lady of many talents. We firmly believed that God had given her to us, that she was a jewel among jewels. She had the face of an angel and the softest skin, like a baby's. Her big and intelligent eyes were full of wit and curiosity. By the time she reached puberty, anybody could easily see what an outstanding woman she'd be one day, what great potential she had. She was our pride and joy, and practically all our thoughts and conversations revolved around our one and only daughter, the apple of our eyes. She was the heartbeat of our family, all our best hopes rested with her. But ... but... Mr. Qin, this is too painful for me. I think I would rather just get really drunk, maybe sleep a little. I'm sure that'd make me feel a bit better. The thing is, how come the more I drink of this wine from its inexhaustible jar, the more sober I feel?" "Take your time, Mr. Wang. There's no rush. Sir's wine won't make you drunk, and there's always more of it."

"It happened on an evening not long after her 15th birthday. Our daughter had been at a classmate's house working on some draft for a debate, and she insisted that I needn't drive over to pick her up. It was raining hard that night, and as she was walking along the riverbank, she ran into that animal. He forced her into an abandoned work shed nearby. She was screaming at the top of her voice as he dragged her along, but nobody heard her. Not even he who promised to be with us until the end of time - no sign from him, nothing. When meeting with our daughter's fierce resistance, that animal pulled out a small pocket knife and began to stab her like a madman. Amidst the cracks of thunder and flashes of lightning, he stabbed her 27 times. I implored the medical examiner to let me count the wounds, one by one. Every cut was like a curse, each of them inflicting excruciating pain: 27 cuts! How could she have borne such agony, like being crushed by a million tons of steel? I saw it with my own eyes, all the blood covering her youthful face, the 5-cm deep gash across her throat that had once harbored the voice of a nightingale, the cruel incisions riddling her once radiant skin. Before her twitching, tormented body found release in death, the vile monster inserted his swollen, dirty phallus into her, defiling her purity and innocence. Utterly appalled and grief-stricken, I desperately wanted to know what went through her mind in those last moments when the animal had its triumph. Was it dark and boundless hatred that filled her chest, was it unqualified contempt for the wicked and depraved world of adults that flashed across her brain, or were it images of fragrant yellow roses, planted by her own hand and swaying gently in a mild breeze?"

"I think you should take a short break, Mr. Wang. You need to calm down a bit. I can see you are on the verge of crying, and I feel your pain. I'm more than willing to hear you tell the rest of the story, but first you should take a deep breath and drink a bit more."

“It turned out that that monster was a serial rapist, a psychopath whose mental illness allowed him to dodge the kind of punishment a normal person would receive for such atrocities. He’d only recently been released when my daughter became his next victim. One week after her funeral, my wife committed suicide, unable to overcome the feelings of guilt and bitterness gnawing away at her. After that, I no longer cared about my business, and found it impossible to continue living in the grand mansion that was filled with memories of our sweet family life. So I sold all my material possessions and began to roam in my old age. On my wanderings, there was one question I kept turning over in my mind: what do they mean when they say that God’s omnipotence extends only to his creative powers, that he can only make but not destroy? That His is the supreme power of love, not that of hate and punishment. That was the only thing on my mind, and to this day it is the only question I want an answer to, nothing else matters to me. But so far, nobody has been able to give me a satisfactory answer, to lift my confusion. I have racked my brains to find some solution to this problem, but I just can’t figure it out. Why would God the Almighty give us full freedom and autonomy, why could He give all creatures the ability to act spontaneously and independently, if it means that He cannot interfere with His own creation? On the one hand He is pleased with His masterpieces, life and love, yet His inability to interfere with His creation, once unleashed, means that He has to shoulder the responsibility for conflict and destruction, and even to sacrifice His own children. My pure, innocent daughter was violated and killed: how can I believe that God has absolute power, that His authority outweighs His limitations? Mr. Qin, can you solve this riddle for me?”

“I am truly sorry. Although I can certainly sympathize with you and your suffering, I am but an ordinary man. I have no answer to your question.”

“...”

“...”

“Wait a minute. The wine ... I’m sure this earthen jar cannot hold more than a liter of liquid, yet we’ve been drinking and eating for quite some time now, how come the jar never gets empty? And twice already Sir has gone to the next room and come back with hot, steaming dishes in no time at all. Inexhaustible delicious wine and food ... Is it possible ... can it be that Sir is Him? Can it be that Sir is He who promised to always be by our side? Tell me, Sir, are you Him? Answer me! Say something!”

“Mr. Wang, please calm down. Can’t you see that Sir is nodding his head? ”

“You are Him! So it’s true! You are He who was with my daughter when she was abused and

killed! You are He who tacitly consents to evil, committed in your very own presence! You are He who heard but chose to ignore my daughter's shrill screams of mortal fear, who looked on with a cold eye as my poor, innocent girl was ravished and murdered ... You who did nothing! Nothing! And don't tell me that you couldn't, you hypocrite. You are an accomplice in her death, and I want you to pay for it. I want revenge. Don't just sit there and smile and say nothing! Give me back my daughter! Give me back my family ... give me back ... give me ..."

"Mr. Wang, Mr. Wang, take your hands off him, you're going to choke him. Mr. Wang, please calm down, please stop! Stop! ..."

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***YEN Minju**, writer and ICPC member in Switzerland.*

(Translated by David van der Peet)

A Brief of Independent Chinese PEN Center

Independent Chinese PEN Center (ICPC) is a nongovernmental, nonprofit and nonpartisan organization beyond borders based on free association of those who write, edit, translate, research and publish literature work in Chinese and dedicated to freedom of expression for the workers in Chinese language and literature, including writers, journalists, translators, scholars and publishers over the world. ICPC is a member organization of International PEN, the global association of writers dedicated to freedom of expression and the defence of writers suffering governmental repression. Through the worldwide PEN network and its own membership base in China and abroad, ICPC is able to mobilize international attention to the plight of writers and editors within China attempting to write and publish with a spirit of independence and integrity, regardless of their political views, ideological standpoint or religious beliefs.

ICPC was founded in 2001 by a group of Chinese writers in exile and in China, including its founding President LIU Binyan, a prominent author, journalist and activist who passed away in exile in USA on Dec. 5 2005, Vice-president and author ZHENG Yi, Executive Director and poet BEI Ling and Freedom to Write Committee Coordinator and poet MENG Lang, all of whom have been in exile in USA. In November of same year, ICPC was approved as a chapter of the International PEN at its annual congress in London. Since then, ICPC has made vigorous efforts to promote and defend the freedom of writing and publication and the free flow of information in China, and been deeply concerned about the state of civil society and open discourse there.

In October, 2011, ICPC held its Fifth Internet Congress of the Membership Assembly to have elected 5 Board members and 2 alternates to fill its vacancies, and the President Tienchi MARTIN-LIAO (Germany). The past president Dr. LIU Xiaobo, who has been imprisoned since December 8, 2008, has been its Honorary President since October 2009, and he got Nobel Peace Prize in 2010.