

# Thinkingdom Foreign Rights Catalogue

Spring 2022

## Authors and Titles

### Fiction

Chen Chungheng 陈春成  
SUBMARINES IN THE NIGHT  
《夜晚的潜水艇》  
Fiction / Short Stories

### Non-Fiction

Li Juan 李娟  
WINTER PASTURE  
《冬牧场》  
Narrative Non-Fiction

Dong Lai 东来  
YEAR OF WONDERS  
《奇迹之年》  
Fiction / Short Stories

### Poetry

Yu Xiuhua 余秀华  
MOONLIGHT RESTS ON MY LEFT PALM  
《月光落在左手上》  
Poetry

Wang Xiaobo 王小波  
GOLDEN AGE  
《黄金时代》  
Fiction / Novel

Yu Hua 余华  
WEN CHENG  
《文城》  
Fiction / Novel

# SUBMARINES IN THE NIGHT

## 《夜晚的潜水艇》

Genre: Fiction / Short Stories

Original Language and Publisher: Chinese, Imaginist

Publication Date: September 2020

Pages: 224 pages

English sample available.

### Rights Sold:

- Japanese (Astra House Japan)

PageOne Literary Award, Spring 2021

One Way Street Bookstore Book Award, 2020

Asia Weekly 10 Best Fiction Books of 2020

Douban Best Books of 2020, Best Chinese Fictions of 2020

Blancpain-Imaginist Literary Prize, 2021



## 陈春成

### CHEN CHUNCHENG

Chen Chuncheng was born in Ningde in 1990. He was working as a landscape engineer when he began to publish fiction online in 2017. His short story "The Musicians" was listed as one of the 10 best short stories in 2019 by the prestigious Chinese literary magazine *Harvest*. His debut short story collection *Submarines in the Night* (2020) has been a critical success, garnering the inaugural PageOne Literary Award and the Blancpain-Imaginist Literary Prize in 2021.

**"Perhaps everything, I reckon, connects with one another in ways unknown to us."**

A collection of nine short stories delving into the unbearable weight of norms, the excess of imagination, and the fierceness of art, interweaving the speculative genre with Chinese folklore.

These stories turn the spotlight on characters who throw themselves into the suicidal beauty of art-making and becoming. A young painter-to-be, caught by a daydreaming compulsion, pictures his bedroom as a submarine every night. A group of Buddhist monks are convinced that the best way to save a splendid calligraphic work from the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution, is to keep it out of sight once and for all. After three thousand years of slumber, a man wakes up to find that the entire universe will be at stake if he loses memories about a canonical novel. After serving at the Office of Music Censorship in Leningrad for decades, an officer finds himself deeply attracted to the illicit music submitted by a mysterious author, the revelation of whose identity will forever change the officer's life.

Effortlessly swinging from ruminations on craftsmanship to satires about efficiency and stability, these stories remind any reader of the sheer pleasure of encountering a lyrical language and genuinely inventive narratives. Elegantly summoned and revived, the sensibility of classical Chinese literature seeps through these pages, gesturing toward how alternative ways of being can be radically imagined and lived.

Chen Chuncheng writes in a clear and elegant way rarely found among the younger generation of writers. These stories bring about a happy marriage between world literature and the classical canon. His writing feels neat and tidy, and yet it relentlessly probes into all kinds of crises: totalitarianism, paranoia, the end of history, memory loss, distressing evenings, uncanny dreams, and the ever-deferred redemption.

— David Wang, Professor of Chinese Literature, Harvard University

Chen Chuncheng is a surprise. What makes his writing stand out is how it strikes the balance between lightness and rigorousness - highly imaginative, yet rigorous in engaging with the reality.

— Yu Hua, writer

# YEAR OF WONDERS

## 《奇迹之年》

Genre: Fiction / Short Stories

Original Language and Publisher: Chinese, Shanghai 99 Readers

Publication Date: April 2021

Pages: 260 pages

English sample available soon.

PageOne Literary Award, Fall 2021



## 东来 DONG LAI

Dong Lai (b. 1990, Jingdezhen, China) received the First Prize of the Douban Writing Contest for her novel *Escaping the Heat Island* in 2019. She is the author of the short story collections *Deep in the River* (2019) and *Year of Wonders* (2021). *Year of Wonders* won the PageOne Literary Award in 2021. Prior to becoming a freelance writer, Dong Lai worked in journalism and advertisement.

**“On December 21st, 2012, the day everyone knows too well, the world has already ended.”**

In this kaleidoscopic survey of life in contemporary China, Dong Lai interrogates the everyday till it shatters into magical fragments. She is representative of a new generation of writing that refuses to paint away individual struggles with dislocation, loss, and anxiety during the nation's high-growth period.

In Dong Lai's empire of words, any attempt to separate fiction from history, fantasy from reality, is simply doomed to fail. Amid the feverish pursuit of psychic powers in the 1980s, a child finds himself in possession of an unexpected talent of bending metal cutlery by staring at it. A millionaire writes an epic play for a lover who never reads it. Two veterinarians, while wandering around to perform pet euthanasia, gradually lose the ability to recognize human faces. A mesmerizing fictional city looms on the horizon as a young couple goes for a long walk. When a high schooler turns his back on a potentially bright future with a senseless act of violence, everyone desperately strives to understand what lies beneath his impulsive murder of the only person that could have empathized with him.

Each story in this collection confronts readers with a definite sense of disenchantment in a unique, unforgettable way. With incredibly rich sensual details and surprisingly diverse narrating voices, Dong Lai calls back, in a timely and powerful manner, a world that was once full of wonders and magic, and yet vanished without a trace before anyone could fully grasp its profound implications.

A plurality of temporalities operates in her language ... A young writer with multiple selves, who opens herself up for suspension, leaps forward to the possibility of language, and pays homage to the vanishing.

— Hu Sang, poet

Borderless writing ... Capturing the collective memories that have once existed with such sharpness but faded away into the mist too soon.

— Committee of the PageOne Literary Award

# GOLDEN AGE

## 《黄金时代》

Genre: Fiction / Novel

Original Language and Publisher: Chinese, Thinkingdom

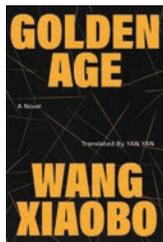
Publication Date: June 2021 (first published in 1992)

Pages: 244 pages

Full English translation available.

### Rights Sold:

- English (Astra House)
- Hebrew (Modan)
- Korean (Changbi)
- German (Matthes & Seitz)
- Spanish (Galaxia Gutenberg)
- Danish (Korridor)
- Polish (P.I.W.)
- Japanese (Bensei Publishing Inc.)



**Like Gary Shteyngart or Michel Houellebecq, Wang Xiaobo is a Chinese literary icon whose satire forces us to reconsider the ironies of history.**

*Golden Age* chronicles the vicissitudes and the sexual awakening of Wang Er, a young, educated man who, like millions of Chinese youths during the Cultural Revolution, was sent to the rural province of Yunnan for his reeducation. There he tediously spends his days, between the dull tasks of taking the buffalo out to graze, and the quarrels and foolish accusations among his colleagues in the production team. When he meets the young nurse Chen Qingyang, sex becomes Wang Er's way out from tedium and humiliation, and his profound resistance to authority.

Accused of adultery, Chen and Wang are arrested by the local authorities and forced to write a confession for their crimes but instead, Wang takes it upon himself to write a modernist literary tract, exposing the absurdity and arbitrariness of the system. Twenty years later, when Wang and Chen run into each other in Beijing by chance, both reckon that, despite all the sufferings and the painful epiphany of the banality of their existence, those years in Yunnan were indeed their Golden Age.

What makes this novel both hilarious and important is Xiaobo's use of the awkwardness of sex as a metaphor for all that occurred during the Cultural Revolution. This achievement was revolutionary and places *Golden Age* in the great pantheon of novels that highlight the freedom and authenticity of human nature.



## 王小波

### WANG XIAOBO

Wang Xiaobo was born in Beijing in 1952. During the Cultural Revolution, as millions of urban youths, he was sent to Yunnan province to learn from the farmers and then to Shandong province, where he served as a community teacher. He pursued an undergraduate degree at Renmin University of China in Beijing in 1978. In 1984, he moved to the U.S. and received a master's degree from University of Pittsburgh. Coming back to China in 1988, he worked as a lecturer until 1992 when he resigned to become a full-time writer. He died in 1997 at the age of 45.

A leading literary icon in the 90s China, Wang Xiaobo's cerebral and sarcastic narratives are regarded as a vivid reflection on the failures of individuals, as well as the enormous political, social, and personal changes in 20th century China.

*Golden Age*, long admired in many circles, may prove a revelation to readers outside China. Wang Xiaobo steeped himself in the literatures of East and West, and the blending of influences – including Proust and Twain – makes for a searingly funny and fearless narration full of brilliant headlong riffs on sex, time, history and the terrifying absurdities of the Cultural Revolution. Bawdy, earthy, cerebral, outrageous, bleakly hilarious and off-handedly brave, this novel is like nothing else.

— Sam Lipsyte, author of *The Ask* and *The Subject Steve*

# WEN CHENG

## 《文城》

Genre: Fiction / Novel

Original Language and Publisher: Chinese, Thinkingdom

Publication Date: March 2021

Pages: 352 pages

Full English translation available.

### Rights Sold:

- Dutch (De Geus)
- French (Actes Sud)
- German (Matthes & Seitz)
- Indonesian (Gramedia)
- Italian (Feltrinelli)
- Korean (Prunsoop)
- Thai (Nanmeebooks)
- Mongolian (Nepko)
- Turkish (Jaguar)
- Vietnamese (Coral Books)
- TV rights



## 余华 YU HUA

Yu Hua is one of the best-known Chinese writers. Born in 1960, he belongs to the generation of avantgarde writers who transformed the landscape of modern Chinese literature after the Cultural Revolution in the 1980s.

He is the author of six novels, several collections of short stories and essays to date. His works have been translated into more than thirty languages. In 2002, he became the first Chinese writer to win the James Joyce Award. His novel *Brothers* was short-listed for the Man Asian Literary Prize and awarded France's Prix Courier International, and the novel *To Live* earned him Italy's Premio Grinzane Cavour.

Lin Xiangfu is a mysterious figure for the locals in a remote southern town called Creek Town. Ten years ago, he showed up unexpectedly on an extraordinary snow-storm day, imploring for milk to feed his daughter in a heavy northern accent. Now, he is the richest landlord with no hint of his past disclosed, except for one thing: he has always been looking for a city named Wen Cheng, a place that no one has ever heard of. For Lin, this is exactly where he is meant to be but doomed to miss, all because of a woman, Xiao Mei.

Years ago, when northern China foreboded abundance and a chance for a new start, Xiao Mei dropped by Lin Xiangfu's mansion on an autumn dusk. To Lin, Xiao Mei was tender and caring, yet utterly elusive. They shared a living together and brought up their child. Life flowed in such tides till one year later when, as unexpectedly as she entered Lin's life, Xiao Mei disappeared. She left Lin with his daughter and only one clue about herself: a place she once whispered, Wen Cheng.

In this account of Lin's unwavering quest for love, a dazzling kaleidoscope of lives in China's darkest historical era, spanning from the collapse of Qing dynasty to the warlord tumults in the 1930s, is brought to life: bandits who kill and save, landlords who enslave and liberate, prostitutes and fortune tellers who trick and help. Through civil wars and bandit assaults, surviving famines and droughts, Lin is determined to find Xiao Mei, at the risk of his own life.

Steeped in the language and traditions of Southern China, interweaving folklore-like stories with a historical narrative, larded with Yu Hua's characteristic deadpan humor, *Wen Cheng* is an epic of a man and a woman's odyssey across mainland China for a different destiny and an unyielding love, a gripping narrative of unrelenting fate and unflinching humanity.

I believe in the possibility of utmost kindness, and thus I embark on narrating the life of a man with such kindness.

— Yu Hua

# WINTER PASTURE:

One Woman's Journey with China's Kazakh Herders

## 《冬牧场》

Genre: Narrative Non-Fiction - Memoir / Nature / Travel

Original Language and Publisher: Chinese, Thinkingdom

Publication Date: November 2018 (first published in June 2012)

Pages: 352 pages

Full English translation available.

### Rights Sold:

- World English (Astra House)

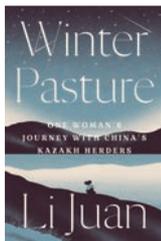
- German (Blessing)

- Japanese (Astra House Japan)

Best Travel Books of 2021, *The Washington Post*

100 Notable Translations of 2021, *World Literature Today*

51 favorite books of 2021, *Washington Independent Review of Books*



Li Juan and her mother own a small convenience store in the Altai Mountains in Northwest China, where she writes about her life among grasslands and snowy peaks. To her neighbors' surprise, Li decides to join a family of Kazakh herders as they take their 30 boisterous camels, 500 sheep and over 100 cattle and horses to pasture for the winter. The so-called "winter pasture" occurs in a remote region that stretches from the Ulungur River to the Heavenly Mountains. As she journeys across the vast, seemingly endless sand dunes, Li helps herd sheep, rides horses, chases after camels, builds an underground home using manure, gathers snow for water, and more.

With a keen eye for the understated elegance of the natural world, and a healthy dose of self-deprecating humor, Li vividly captures both the extraordinary hardships and the ordinary preoccupations of the day-to-day of the men and women struggling to get by in this desolate landscape. Her companions include Cuma, the often drunk but mostly responsible father; his teenage daughter, Kama, who feels the burden of the world on her shoulders and dreams of going to college; his reticent wife, a paragon of decorum against all odds, who is simply known as "sister-in-law."

In bringing this faraway world to readers beyond the northwestern tip of China, Li Juan creates an intimate bond with the rugged people, the remote places and the nomadic lifestyle. In the signature style that made her an international sensation, Li transcends the travel memoir genre to deliver an indelible and immersive reading experience on every page.



## 李娟 LI JUAN

Li Juan was born in Xinjiang in 1979 and grew up in Sichuan Province. She spent her youth running a small convenience store with her mother in a town where nomads shopped. She worked in a factory in the city of Urumqi and began to serve in a bureau office in 2003. Prior to becoming a full-time writer in 2008, she began her writing career in 1999 as a columnist for influential newspapers such as *Southern Weekly* and Hong Kong's *Wen Wei Po*. Widely regarded as one of the best narrative non-fiction writers in China today, Li Juan is the winner of numerous prestigious awards including the Mao Dun Literature Award and the Tencent Literature Award. *Winter Pasture* is her most popular and representative work.

Deeply moving... Full of humor, introspection and glimpses into a vanishing lifestyle.

— *The New York Times Book Review*

A seamless blend of memoir, travelogue, and nature writing, Juan's skillful prose paints an extraordinarily vivid picture of a remote world ... This mesmerizing memoir impresses on every page.

— *Publishers Weekly*, starred review

A warm portrait of stark, strenuous lives in remote China... A rare look at a disappearing world.

— *Kirkus Reviews*

## MOONLIGHT RESTS ON MY LEFT PALM 《月光落在左手上》

Genre: Poetry

Original Language and Publisher: Chinese, Thinkingdom;

Publication Date: September 2020 (first published in 2015)

Pages: 255 pages

Full English translation available.

**Rights Sold:**

- **World English (Astra House)**



### 余秀华 YU XIUHUA

Yu Xiuhua (b.1976) grew up in an impoverished family in rural Hubei, China. Born with cerebral palsy, she was unable to attend college or find work. While trapped in an arranged marriage, she began to write poetry in 1998 and gained wide recognition in 2014 when her poem "Crossing Half of China to Fuck You" became an online sensation. Her poetry collection *Moonlight Rests on My Left Palm* (2015) sold over 300,000 copies, breaking the record for Chinese poetry titles in the past two decades. Yu received the Peasant Literature Award in 2016. *Still Tomorrow*, an award-winning documentary film about her life and poetry, was released to critical acclaim the same year. In 2018, she was awarded the Hubei Literary Prize.

In defiance of the stigma attached to her disability, her status as a divorced single mother, and as a peasant in rural China, Yu Xiuhua found her voice in poetry. Starting in the late 90s, writing has become a vehicle for her to explore and share her reflections on homesickness, family and ancestry, as well as the reality of disability in the context of a body's urges and desires.

In 2014, Yu's poem "Crossing Half of China to Fuck You" blew open the doors on the world of contemporary Chinese poetry. She became an Internet sensation, finding a devoted following among young readers who enthusiastically welcomed her fresh, bold, confessional voice into the literary canon.

The rhythm of Yu's writing rises and falls with the seasons, capturing the physical toil of farming, the textures of leaves and grasses, and the light contained in a raindrop or dancing on a rock. Yet, her relationship with the nature goes further than one of admiration, trust, and peace – Yu also reflects on the suffocating impossibility and frustration around her and the limitations of the body.

This collection includes more than fifty poems, sectioned by eight lyrical essays. Thematically organized, these essays and poems are in conversation with each other around subjects that include love, nostalgia, mortality, the natural world, and writing itself.

The ruminative essays, rendered in elegant but somewhat mannered prose, offer context and insight on her life and poetry... The poems, which compress her thoughts into daring and disconcerting forms, are another matter... The multiplicity, therefore, becomes essential, as the poems are rarely frozen in a single feeling. Yu renders her life in a way that is irreducible.

— **Chris Littlewood, *The Washington Post***

The poet's language rises out of the natural, tinged by elemental soil and light.

— **Yusef Komunyakaa, Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry (1994)**

Yu Xiuhua's writing is steeped in the imagination... Many of the poems included in this work are moving precisely because of how they register the limits of the imagination, rather than its transformative capacities... Rejecting the poetics of metaphor, lines like [Yu's] call on us to look closely, listen carefully, and notice the world around us.

— **Rebecca Ruth Gould, *Harrtet Books*, the Poetry Foundation**

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