

Handwritten Entertainment Fiction: Excerpt From Zhang Yang's Autobiography

My companions liked to tell all sorts of stories. Most of the stories coming out from their mouths were boring and vulgar, but every now and then there were refined and very attractive ones. Some of these stories were events that had taken place in society over the past three years [during my term in jail], some they had listened to on foreign broadcasting stations, and some were various sorts of folksongs and doggerels, and [stories] from *shouchaoben* such as 'A Pair of Embroidered Shoes', 'The Heart of a Young Maiden' or 'Manna's Reminiscences'. I listened to them attentively and found everything new and interesting, because I knew nothing of such matters. With some stories [I realized] instantly that they were fabricated not only quite nonsensically, but also of lousy skill. Such as The Plum Blossom Party which claimed that Li Zongren's wife Guo Dejie and Liu Shaoqi's wife Wang Guangmei both were members of the secret service 'Plum Blossom Party', [relating] how the two women both wore plum blossom rings, how they would get in contact through secret signals etc., it was virtually nothing but nonsense!

'In the fall of 1959 in Beijing[...]', one night, an educated youth surnamed Du started to tell a story. He seemed to only have attended primary school, he was bulky and rough, and had a reputation for his street fights. Once in 1967 he carried a pistol to a fight and suffered serious injury with his intestines coming out. Allegedly, when the doctors performed surgery on him, they found his 'lean flesh' was several inches thick at the moment they started to work with the scalpel, which led them cry out in astonishment. After the wound had healed his health worsened and he never regained his former strength. So he returned to the village, appointed himself as a 'person wounded at war', and never went out to work but fooling around every day – What stories could he tell?

'That afternoon, at dawn, a car drove into a small hutong off Qianmen Avenue. The car stopped. A white-haired professor opened the door of the car, and got off the car with a leather suitcase. His name was Su Guanlan[...]'

As Du who had always had a crude air told this story, he suddenly began to talk in a fine voice. He used vivid tones to depict the role, his facial expressions and movements became very gentle, as though he was this professor himself, who had just stepped off the car and now was looking around him[...]

'What did you just say?' I was startled.

Heavens! Su Guanlan was the male protagonist in 'The Return' which I had written. And wasn't this the scene of the beginning of [my] novel that Du was telling in a captivating manner?

'What 'what'?' Du threw a glance at me. He was just entering into the 'role' with relish and was displeased with me interrupting his flow of words.

'You just talked about this professor[...]', I stammered.

'Didn't I say it: his name was Su Guanlan!'

'Good, good, you go on, you go on, I am listening, listening ---' I was shaking my head and at the same time nodding my head.

He continued to tell the story, continued until well into the small hours of the night, until he finally reached the end of the story. When he had finished, he held his knees, without a word as though he were still immersed within the atmosphere he had just created and could not liberate himself from it. He wasn't particularly cultured, nor was he particularly good at telling stories, in particular such a story taking place among a host of scientists; but I could discern clearly, amid all his stammering he suddenly finished the story, and did so without abbreviations or important gaps.

I looked around me, everyone listened steadily, deeply possessed. After it was finished, nobody said anything, as though everyone was still immersed within the aura of the story. The campfire had gone out already[...]

Finally, everyone started talking about it.

'I have heard this story[...]', one person said.

'I haven't heard it, but have read it, a *shouchaoben*, entitled 'The Return[...]', someone else said.

'Right, I have also heard about it, it's entitled 'The Return'!'

'I read it when I was doing subsidiary production in Jiangxi, the story was very interesting, but the book's title was 'Mother of the Hydrogen Bomb[...]

'The one I read was entitled 'The Pride of the Generation'!'

'So many people know this story, I have heard that it relates a real story[...]

'It was written by an American!'

'No, by a Hongkongese, he's over sixty years[...]

'No! It is written by neither an American, nor a Hongkongese, but by the son of a high cadre, he is familiar with internal affairs.'

'It is not a novel, but an autobiography, originating from the pen of a scientist, exactly that Su Guanlan from inside the book!'

[...]

Only I remained silent. But, in fact, I was the most 'immersed', in a nervous state all along, with my heart beating heavily, breathlessly. I listened carefully, anxious not to miss a single word.

I already realized that everything taking place in front of me had to do with my fate, with my future fate.

TITLE

Translation of an Excerpt of The Literary Inquisition of "The Second Handshake" ('dierci woshou' wenziyu 《第二次握手》文字狱)

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Translation Lena Henningsen with Eve Y. Lin

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DESCRIPTION

伙伴们特别爱讲各种各样的故事。出自他们嘴巴的故事多半是无聊而粗俗的，但偶尔也有文雅的和颇具吸引力的。其中有些是过去三年中发生在社会上的事实，有些是从海外电台广播中听来的，还有各种各样的民谣和顺口溜，以及来自篇名叫作《一双绣花鞋》、《少女的心》或《曼娜的回忆》之类的手抄本。我仔细倾听，对什么都感到新鲜有趣，因为都是我所不知道的事。有的故事一听就知道是胡编乱造，而且手法低劣。如《梅花党》，把李宗仁夫人郭德洁和刘少奇夫人王光美都说成特务组织‘梅花党’成员，两个女人怎样都戴着梅花戒指，怎样用暗号接头等等，简直是一派胡言！

‘1959年秋天，在北京……’一天夜里，一个姓杜的知青也讲开了。他好像只读过小学吧，五大三粗，曾经以打架斗殴闻名，1967年带枪参加武斗，负过重伤，肠子都流了出来。据说手市时，一刀下去，‘精肉’竟达几寸厚，使医生们惊叹不已。伤愈后他元气大伤，远不如过去那么健壮；他回到农村，以‘伤员’自居，从不出工干活，每日东游西荡——他能讲出什么来呢？

‘那天下午，黄昏，在前门大街一条小巷口外，开来一辆小轿车。车停住了。一个白头发的教授推开车门，提着一口皮箱下了车。他叫苏冠兰……’

历来粗里粗气的杜某讲着这故事，居然轻言细语起来。他描声绘色，神态和动作都很柔和，好像他就是那位教授，刚跨下轿车，正在随意环顾四周……

‘你说什么？’我大吃一惊。

天哪！苏冠兰是我写的《归来》中的男主人公，而他娓娓讲述的，不正是小说开头的场面吗？

‘什么‘什么’？’杜某瞥瞥我。他正津津有味，进入‘角色’呢，不高兴我打断他的话头。

‘你刚才说的那位教授……’我支支吾吾。

‘不是说了吗，他叫苏冠兰！’

‘好，好，你往下说，往下说，我听着，听着——’我摇摇头，又连连点头。

他接着往下说，往下说，直至深夜，直至终于说完。说完之后，他抱着双膝，沉默不语，好像仍然沉浸在他刚才创造的气氛中，不可自拔。他没有多少文化，也不擅长讲故事，特别是发生在一群科学家之中的这种故事；但我听得出，他咯咯巴巴，居然把故事讲完了，而且讲得还算完整，没有重大遗漏。

我环顾四周，大家都一直在倾听，听得很入神。听完之后，大家也都不说话，好像仍然沉浸在故事的意境中。篝火已经火了 …

终于，大家七嘴八舌，讨论起来。

‘我听过这个故事……’有人说。

‘我不是听过，而是看过，一个手抄本，叫作《归国》……’另一个说。

‘对，我也听说了，就叫《归国》！’

‘我是在江西搞副业时读的，故事没区别，但书名叫作《氢弹之母》……’

‘我读的那本叫《一代天骄》！’

‘好多人都知道这故事，听说写的是真事……’

‘是一个美国人写的！’

‘不，是一个香港人写的，他六十多岁——’

‘不！不是美国人也不是香港人写的，是个高干子弟写的，他了解内情。’

‘这不是小说，而是自传，出自一位科学家手笔，他就是书中那位苏冠兰！’

.....

只有我保持沉默。但其实我最‘投入’，神经一直处于紧张状态，心脏咚咚疾跳，呼吸急促。我认真倾听，唯恐漏掉片言只字。

我已经意识到，眼前的一切关系到我的命运，今后的命运。

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Zhang Yang

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Zhongguo shehui chubanshe

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Zhang Yang. Fair use.

DESCRIPTION