

The 11th Mao Dun Literature Prize Winners: Narrating Chinese Stories from Different Perspectives

By Qu Jingfan

After a rigorous and relatively lengthy judging process, the eagerly awaited 11th Mao Dun Literature Prize announced its five winning works on August 11th, 2023: Yang Zhijun's *Snow Mountains and the Earth* (《雪山大地》) (published by Writers Publishing House in December 2022), Qiao Ye's *Baoshui Village* (《宝水》) (published by Beijing October Arts and Literature Publishing House in November 2022), Liu Liangcheng's *Bomba* (《本巴》) (published by Yilin Press in January 2022), Sun Ganlu's *The Vast Land* (《千里江山图》) (published by Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House in April 2022), and Dong Xi's *Echo* (《回响》) (published by People's Literature Publishing House in June 2021). The five works are selected by the judging committee among a total of 238 works.

Yang Zhijun

was born in May 1955 in Xining, Qinghai, with ancestral roots in Mengjin, Henan. He is currently residing in Qingdao. His notable works include novels such as *The Collapse Around the Lake* (《环湖崩溃》), *The Falling Tide without a Sound* (《潮退无声》), *Compassion Original* (《大悲原》), and *The Tibetan Mastiff* (《藏獒》). His works have received numerous prestigious awards.

Exploration of "humanity" is a recurring theme in almost all of Yang Zhijun's works. *The Snow Mountains and the Earth* pursues the quality of "humanity" and, along with the protagonist, this book tells the experiences of maintaining the excellent qualities bestowed by the earth amidst human conflicts.

In recent years, Yang Zhijun has completed works such as *The Falling Tide without a Sound* and *The Last Migrant Workers* set against the backdrop of his adopted city, Qingdao. Now, he has returned to Qinghai, where he was born and brought up. He has witnessed dramatic changes over the past few decades. His upcoming work will portray the profound transformations on the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau. It will focus on three generations of builders, represented by "fathers and mothers", who have toiled and dedicated themselves to this land day and night.

Yang Zhijun stated that his future creative efforts will continue to revolve around Xizang, depicting the current reality and history of the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau. He emphasized, "This is my homeland, and the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau is a vast place with incredibly rich lives, yet very little of it has been written about it." Life itself is ever-changing, flowing like a river, so continuous exploration, observation, and gaining new insights are necessary to generate fresh ideas and new works.



Qiao Ye

was born in October 1972 in Xiuwu, Henan. Some of her representative works include novels like *Confession* (《认罪书》), *Demolition* (《拆楼记》), and *Hide a Pearl* (《藏珠记》). Her works have been recognized with many literary awards. Malaysian writer Li Zishu has praised her as "a writer who possesses both talent and patience".

Qiao Ye mentioned that it took her seven to eight years from breeding the idea to completing her novel *Baoshui Village*. She stated that before starting to write, she conducted research and immersed herself both emotionally and rationally. She has participated in field research organized by the China Writers Association and visited 20 villages



across the country. She also immersed herself in villages by living in rural areas for observation and experience. After careful consideration, she selected two villages as long-term observation spots and delved deep into their communities to find what she was looking for. Ultimately, she chose Baoshui as the subject, as it represented a rapidly developing and universally representative new rural area.

As she moved increasingly farther away from her rural hometown, her fiction writing has also been returning to two aspects: the rural life and the feminism. In recent years, there is an increasing focus on women's writing, and she has received much appreciation and attention as a result. "In *Baoshui Village*, I wrote about many women. In my heart, villages like Baoshui and Futianzhuang are also female. Women are like water. In this era, their sparkle shines not only on themselves. Perhaps for many female writers, writing from a feminine perspective is the most natural and normal choice. For me, it is a destined journey of return," she said.

Liu Liangcheng

was born in Xinjiang in 1962, his notable works include poetry collections such as *The Sun on the Yellow Sand Ridge* (《晒晒黄沙梁的太阳》), essay collections like *The Village of One's Own* (《一个人的村庄》), and novels including *Visional Earth* (《虚土》), *Soft Earth* (《凿空》), *The Message Deliverer* (《捎话》). He is renowned as the "last prose writer of 20th-century China" and a "rural philosopher." He explained that *Bomba* is written against the backdrop of the Mongolian epic of *Jangar* (《江格尔》). Liu Liangcheng had been reading the *Jangar* for over two decades. Many years later, the novel *Benba* began to sprout and grow in his mind.

Through three games controlled by dreams, *Bomba* portrays the infinite fear and wonder of pursuit and being pursued, hiding and seeking, dreams and awakening. It ultimately connects dreams with distant ancestors and the not-so-distant real world. Liu Liangcheng mentioned that he often has nightmares of being chased. In the dreams he tries to shout, but no sound comes out, and he wakes up in extreme fear. Therefore, the core of the novel *Bomba* is to resolve the dangers of dreams within the dreams themselves.

Currently residing in the countryside, his daily routine involves either gardening or writing.



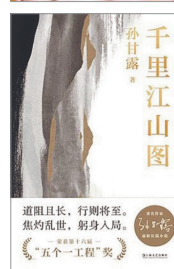
Sun Ganlu

was born in Shanghai in July 1959 and is known for his works like *Visiting the Dreamland* (《访问梦境》), *Teenage Bachus* (《我是少年酒坛子》), and *The Messenger's Letter* (《信使之函》). He is a prominent representative of the avant-garde movement in Chinese literature. *The Vast Land* is a significant work in the genre of revolutionary historical literature. Set in Shanghai during the 1930s, it uncovers hidden yet

momentous historical events, conveying profound ideals through the stories.

To create this work, Sun Ganlu has conducted extensive research, focusing on authentic materials such as city maps, newspaper articles, and social customs records from the 1930s. This allowed him to vividly recreate Shanghai of the 1930s. The novel captivates readers with its thrilling plot, precise depiction of societal norms and human character, and its deep exploration of hidden aspects of human nature. It establishes a spiritual connection between reality and history.

Sun Ganlu has served as the chief planner for the Shanghai International Literary Week for ten times. He is delighted to see that the Literary Week has become a prominent public cultural space centered around book clubs and academic activities.



Dong Xi

was born in April 1966 in Tian'e, Guangxi. He is a postgraduate tutor at Guangxi Minzu University. His representative works include the novel *A Loud Slap* (《耳光响亮》), short story collections *Life Without Words* (《没有语言的生活》), and *Painful Match* (《痛苦比赛》).

In *Echo*, the author employs a detective story format as an entry point. However, once getting into the story, its content is exceptionally rich and expansive. Detective Ran Dongdong is relentlessly pursuing a murderer, searching not only for the truth in the case but also in the truths of love and life. The novel delves into themes of trust between spouses, parents and children, and extends to the trust among individuals in society. He also explores human desires, materialism, and the subconscious realms of the human psyche in this book. Dong Xi places individuals in the context of real-life relationships to explore our spiritual world, investigating our losses, hopes, ideals, and pursuits. The novel touches on contemporary human souls and sensitive points, broadening our understanding of people and human nature. It contains metaphors for life itself. The closer people get to the truth, the closer they come to the essence of life and the world. Critics have referred to Dong Xi as a "philosopher in novelists", as he blends concrete descriptions with philosophical contemplation.

Recently, *Echo* was adapted into a web series with the same name on the iQiyi platform. When discussing the synergy between literature and television, he mentioned that in July of this year, the China Writers Association launched the "Migration Plan", hoping that more literary works can be adapted into TV series.

