

Chinese Literary Writers: From Life Experiences to Literary Creation

■ Jin Yixin

In recent years, there have been numerous cases where Chinese literary works have regained popularity due to the success of their adaptations into television dramas. A close reading of these works reveals that these Chinese literary authors excel at drawing inspiration from the minutiae of life, enriching their spiritual world, and enhancing the core of their literary creations. Through sincere language, delicate observations, and straightforward narration, they depict vivid, flesh-and-blood characters against the backdrop of China's vast social changes over the past several decades.

Li Juan

Born in 1979 in the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, originally from Lezhi, Sichuan, Li Juan is a contemporary Chinese author. Her works often explore themes such as nomadic culture, complex family relationships, and life in areas populated by ethnic minorities.



Li Juan moved with her mother and grandmother from Sichuan to Xinjiang during her childhood, relocating from the urban area to the pastoral areas. She quietly dropped out of high school, learned tailoring, followed Kazakh nomads on their seasonal migrations, and worked in Urumqi as a line worker in an underground garment factory and later as a machinist. Finally, she began writing and publishing her work in her spare time.

Her notable works include *Nine Snows* (《九篇雪》), *Corners of Altay* (《阿勒泰的角落》), *My Altay* (《我的阿勒泰》), *Winter Pasture* (《冬牧场》), *Distant Sunflower Fields* (《遥远的向日葵地》) and the essay series *Goat Trails* (《羊道》). She has received numerous awards, including the Maotai Cup People's Literature Award for Non-fiction, the inaugural Mao Dun Literature Newcomer Award, the seventh Lu Xun Literature Award for Essays and Miscellanies, the 2017 China Good Book Award, and the seventh China Excellent Publication Award. She also served as the vice-chair of the ninth presidium of the Xinjiang Writers Association.

In May 2024, thanks to the popularity of the TV series adaptation, the re-release of her book *My Altay* saw sales surpass 600,000 copies within a month, with a peak of 50,000 copies sold in a single day.

Li Xiuwen

Born in 1975 in Zhongxiang, Hubei, Li Xiuwen is currently the chairman of the Hubei Writers Association, vice-chairman of the Film and Television Literature Committee of the China Writers Association, and a part-time professor at Wuhan University.



Li Xiuwen rose to fame with his novels, such as *Tearmark* (《滴泪痣》) and *Bundled Up to Heaven* (《捆绑上天堂》). He has won multiple honors, including the second Chinese Literature Foundation Mao Dun Literature Newcomer Award, the seventh Lu Xun Literature Award for Essays and Miscellanies, the nineteenth Baihua Literature Award for Essays, and the 35th Huading Award for 100 Best Screenplays in Chinese TV Series.

In his youth, Li Xiuwen won several national essay competitions with first prizes and was admitted to university without taking the college entrance exam. After graduation, he worked as a newspaper reporter and literary magazine editor before dedicating himself to liter-

ary creation. He later started screenwriting, film production, and literary planning, and also taught at universities at the same time.

In April of this year, his novel *Tiger Tiger* (《猛虎下山》) was published by The People's Literature Publishing House. It tells the story of a steel factory's restructuring in the late 1990s in Zhenhushan, China. The factory's former glory fades, and the pride and dignity of the furnace worker Liu Fengshou crumble with it. It is not a tale of heroic legend but a grotesque drama of human nature's distortion.

Zhang Chu

Born in 1974 in Tangshan, Hebei, Zhang Chu is currently the vice-chairman of the Tianjin Writers Association. He has published several collections of short stories, including *Cherry Records* (《樱桃记》), *Seven Peacock Feathers* (《七根孔雀羽毛》), *How the Night Turns Black* (《夜是怎样黑下来的》), *Miss Elephant* (《野象小姐》), *Middle-aged Women's Love Stories* (《中年妇女恋爱史》), *Crossing the Xiang River* (《过香河》) and *Domino Boy* (《多米诺男孩》). His works have won numerous awards, such as the Lu Xun Literature Award, Yu Dafu Fiction Award, Sun Li Literature Award, and Lin Jinlan Short Story Award. He has also been named "Youth Writer of the Year" by *People's Literature* and *Southern Cultural Forum*.



Zhang Chu's stories are often set in an ordinary small town on the Eastern Hebei Plain, where the characters lead mundane, trivial lives. They struggle in the sticky mire of life, often to no avail. Zhang Chu looks at these characters' existential predicaments and spiritual anxieties with compassion.

In May of this year, Zhang Chu's first full-length novel, *Cloudfall* (《云落》), was published by Beijing October Literature and Art Publishing House. It focuses on the complex interpersonal networks and "human warmth" in a northern Chinese county town, serving as a microcosm of society.

Can Xue

Born in 1953 in Changsha, Hunan, Can Xue's real name is Deng Xiaohua. She is a representative of Chinese avant-garde literature and one of the most frequently translated Chinese female authors internationally. She has been a perennial contender for the Nobel Prize in Literature. Nobel Prize committee member Ma Yueran referred to her as "China's Kafka", and the famous American writer and critic Susan Sontag praised her as "China's best writer". Japanese translator Naoko Kondo



even established the "Can Xue Research Society" in Tokyo.

In her youth, Can Xue tried various jobs, including machinist, assembler, barefoot doctor, substitute teacher, and seamstress. She began publishing her works at the age of 32 and has since become a prolific writer. In recent years, she moved to Yunnan, where she maintains a regular schedule, dedicating fixed hours each day to reading and writing.

Can Xue describes her narrative style as "soul literature". Her works' vibrant imagination and profound spiritual world have long been the focus of critical attention. Since her first novel was published in 1985, she has written over 7 million words, with notable works including *Barefoot Doctor* (《赤脚医生》), *Water Village* (《水乡》), *Huangni Street* (《黄泥街》), and *Five Spice Street* (《五香街》). Her works have been translated and published in dozens of countries, including Japan, the United States, Sweden, Italy, France, and Germany, and have been used as literary materials in universities such as Harvard, Cornell, and Columbia.

Lü Xin

Lü Xin is one of the leading authors of contemporary Chinese avant-garde literature, alongside Yu Hua and Su Tong, who pioneered a new literary trend. He entered the literary field in 1986 with his first short story, *That Secluded Lake* (《那是个幽幽的湖》), marking the start of his writing career. His unique artistic sensibility, narrative style, and language have set him apart from the traditional literary practices in Shanxi.

Over the past 30 years, Lü Xin has written more than 5 million words across his long, medium, and short fiction. Many of his works draw on childhood memories and impressions, such as the landscapes, tools, seasons, colors, and everyday life of farmers in mountainous regions, which come together to paint vivid pictures of life in rural northern Shanxi.

His major works include the novels *The Touch* (《抚摸》), *Green Grass* (《草青》), and *Becoming the Past* (《成为往事》), the novellas *Southern Records* (《南方遗事》), *My Understanding of Moss* (《我理解的青苔》), and *Chinese Screen* (《中国屏风》), and the short stories *Sunflower* (《葵花》) and *The White Horse in the Mountain* (《山中白马》). He has received awards such as the Lu Xun Literature Award for novellas and the Wu Cheng'en Novel Award.

Writer Li Rui praised him by saying, "Unlike many 'avant-garde' novels, Lü Xin's language is not mechanically rigid like laboratory operations, nor is it passively and timidly driven by theoretical whips. Of course, it is not crudely vulgar, striving to be 'avant-garde' for the sake of being 'avant-garde'. Lü Xin lies quietly in his unpolluted purity, allowing the stream of language to flow away... creating a unique style that is difficult to imitate or obscure."

