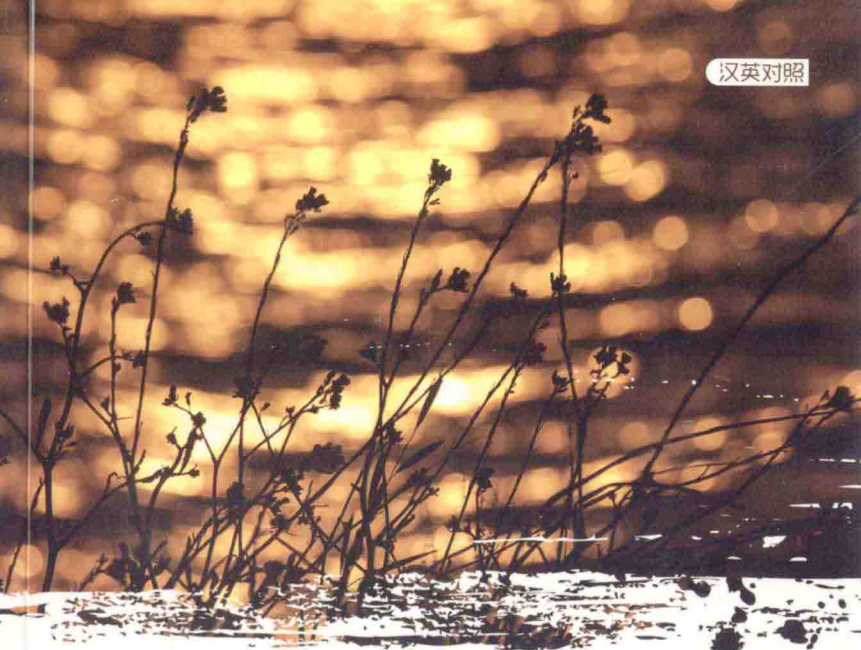


汉英对照



刘昕蓉 著 Liu Xinrong

Whenever I Ask,
Whatever You Answer

好像曾经问过你

影响，感知者谁，惊动者谁，在乎者谁，但求刻下痕迹
行旅的轨迹，记录者谁，感同者谁，后来者谁，仅需做足停留

国内罕见**双语**原创作品，优秀摄影人**梓地**倾情配图

天津社会科学院出版社



刘昕蓉 著 Liu Xinrong

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Whatever You Answer

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**With Grateful Thanks and
Deep Appreciation
to**

Zidi, the photographic artist

Pangpeng, the assistant translator

Ann Robertson, the chief reviser



叩响人性门环的声音

——刘昕蓉作品集《好像曾经问过你》序

秦岭

文学作者，是刘昕蓉文化面貌的另一个侧影。

一直以为，才女刘昕蓉以英语教授、文化学者、外语节目主持人、编导的身份，在天津外国语大学那梧桐婆娑的校园里怡然自在，然而，当有一天她把厚厚一摞汉英双语散文体小说《好像曾经问过你》递到我眼前时，我还是倏然一惊，眼前这个高挑、优雅的女人，还有多少不为人知的才情，像蝴蝶一样正在同样不为人知的疆域轻轻扇动着羽翼？评价写作者刘昕蓉，已不能够轻易沿用文学圈里的落俗定义，亦不能用文学体制内的概念套路。文学的刘昕蓉与刘昕蓉的文学，相互靠近，早已水乳交融。这样，我观察到了一位知性女子对文学纯粹的理解。文学是海，小说是海中之海，散文体的小说属什么，我无意从理论层面诠释，我只想说，刘昕蓉其实不经意间已经选择了文学的难度。她幸而没有受到当下文坛的约束和影响，她只顾一根筋地从心灵出发，一浆下去，反而驶出了老远。

这样的船舱里，一网打尽了昕蓉对人性世界的感悟和观察。她仿佛站立船头，衣袂飘飘，任凭海风把长发扬起。她讲故事的方式，机巧中弥漫着思维的灵气和诗性，哲思中镶嵌着理性的聪慧和温婉：“留给自己些未知，比让爱人体无完肤来得必要。每个恋爱的潜意识里，都那么渴望突破真实世界的灰暗。可以选择不必知道太多，否则生活又将变得索然无味。”“男人说，女人同时需要三个角色，常相厮守、开心玩伴和激情回味，只有相互巧用，才能达到内心的平衡。女人说，男人需要挑战三种感官，温暖宽厚如母爱，性感炙热若情人，精密理性似机器，统领一个精神，分属不同的时段。”“对爱情，多数女人会追求结果，只有聪明的女人



享受过程，但多数男人会因为惧怕而装作矜持。据说矜持的男人会惹女人心痒，但男人的矜持也许只是女人一个意淫的梦。”……这样的文字，让我们见识了作者笔下婚姻的虚与实、爱情的薄与厚、世相的方与圆。凡此文字，不是一句两句三句，而是妙语连珠，贝壳一样洒满所有叙事的沙滩，而她，像极了沙滩上那个踩着浪花的女人，撩发间，那些“好像曾经问过你”的话，如潮起潮落，一波平了，一波又起，望断天涯，谁来作答？

我顿然明白了昕蓉选择散文体小说叙事的理由。人性的门口，你来与不来，门环，它总是在着。是期待，也是拒绝。它是那么现实，又是那么虚幻，像悬挂在门板上的神话。叩响门环的声音，感知者谁，惊动者谁，在乎者谁，完全取决于那个轻轻举起食指和中指的人。

昕蓉不单要让文本讲故事，还要让影像讲故事，让两种叙事方式同时融入内容，把故事、讲故事的人以及读者全部蛊惑到那个深深庭院里去。文本和影像作品的搭配，完全是新媒体时代的另一种创作与阅读的对接样式。文本分“他们的爱情街”、“欲望的理想家园”、“唯有红豆”、“山顶的故事树”、“理想国”5部分，每一部分又分设10个情感脉络彼此相连的故事，每个故事既发挥着整体叙事的链条作用，同时又独当一面，自成一体，如心灵絮语，如涓涓细流，以微小说的形式缓缓汇入通篇的汪洋。

而嵌入文本内的大量影像作品，气象与意象交织，印象与具象兼容，以记录生命的力量，撑开并放大了探视精神家园的无限空间，直接把读者拽到了人性感悟的现场。当英汉双语与影像一起融入故事的每一寸肌肤，那就不能简单地用图文并茂来概括了，它完全是植根于传统同时又超越传统的，它是另一种形式与内容的默契，它蕴含的时尚、高雅元素，注定了它的坚守、突围与流行。

至此，我想把一个美丽的中国成语掰成两半，作为对这本书的总体评价：一半是赏心，一半是悦目。赏心，是因为心迹斑斓处，毕现人性世界的开阔与幽微；悦目，是因为这样的语境，真的好养眼。

为人作序，我向来不肯轻易愚就。但昕蓉对读者的艺术提供，却总能在“旁门左道”处直抵审美的真实，形成与一般学者、作家迥然有别的路径，也瞬间消解了我婉辞的理由。我为她的另一部英汉双语专著《天津城市民间文化之韵》中写过这样的文字：“刘昕蓉显然谙熟津门

的每一道文化之门，她跨越汉文化对事物的认知门槛，用欧式语境，烩成了这一道适宜在世界视野里共享的天津文化盛宴。”到了《好像曾经问过你》，她完全变成了文学的自己。她用薄如蝉翼般的心弦，感受着人间滚滚红尘。她分明是拎着尺子、圆规、体温表、手术刀的，男主人公公路历程上的每一串脚印，每一个回眸，每一次拥吻，每一段纠结，都被她观察、测量、梳理得如丝似缕，玲珑剔透。这不只是昕蓉在文化意义上的跨栏和越界，也不只是她在散文体小说领域的大胆探索和实践，她跨过汉语、英语表达的文化栅栏，营造了一个属于自己枕边的、英汉双语与影像交融的文学季节。分享这个季节的，可以是闺蜜，也可以是情人，还可以是谁呢？所有“好像曾经问过”的那个你，说不定就是——分享这本书的你。

昕蓉多次给我聊到当代小说叙事与影像叙事的关系，在她看来，新媒体时代为文学和其他艺术形式的结合提供了种种可能，这种可能将使文学更加曼妙袅娜、美轮美奂。她之所以用文学的名义选择梓地的摄影作品，是因为她从中发现了饱满的叙事力量。我认同昕蓉的慧眼，当不同的艺术形式合力叩响人性的门环，那声音必然是混声的、丰富的，会让文字的表情千娇百媚起来。

我欣赏这样的文学呈现方式，所谓文学的精神，叙事的质地，在《好像曾经问过你》中显得自由，而且恬静，一如人性门环上的月辉与苍茫。小说问了要问的，其实也答了要答的。问，有由，也无由；答，无关对，与错。红尘往事，昨天如此，今天和明天依然如此。如花园小径中安静的石凳，落座的，离座的，必有重有轻；如酒吧丝窗内琥珀色的红酒，端起的，放下的，无论因果；如古道长亭外洒落的泪滴，涌出的，咽下的，不问咸淡，姑且雨打风吹去。

“好像曾经问过你”，我已不好对昕蓉的文学去向发出诘问。这样灵性的女子，最清醒局限在何处宽，在何处窄。好在，昕蓉早已坐在文学船头，我相信，她手搭凉棚，一定能眺望到不远的彼岸。

2014年12月15日于天津观海庐

（秦岭：国家一级作家，天津市炎黄文化研究会副会长。出版《皇粮钟》、《绣花鞋垫》、《借命时代的家乡》等长篇、小说集8部，主编文集二十多种。）



Knocking on the Door of Human Nature

— A preface for *Whenever I Ask,
Whatever You Answer*

By Qinling

"A lady of letters", that describes another side of Liu Xinrong's profile.

For a long time, Xinrong has impressed me with her identity as an English professor, a cultural messenger, and an English TV programmer. But I felt surprise when she laid her newly finished work in front of me. I wonder how much more of this elegant lady's talent is thirsting to dance like a butterfly in some field she has not yet touched. It is really hard to evaluate her and her work with the common rules within literary circles. Xinrong and her writings have become a seamless whole. If literature is the sea, then fiction is the inland bay. What about essays like Xinrong's? I would not interpret them theoretically but believe that Xinrong has made an uneasy decision about an uneasy start along this way. Fortunately, she has not been negatively affected or restricted by established practices in the present literary world, but has devoted herself to sailing from the harbor of her heart for a faraway dreamland.

Along her journey, standing aloft and windward, Xinrong has a different insight and perception of human nature. It is as if she stands on the bow, sleeves fluttering, hair blowing in the sea wind. That is her way of storytelling: reflecting something in a poetic smartness, and reasoning something through a meditative tenderness. "No matter how dark one's heart is, he will choose to be delighted by a far-way light." "The most balanced love is posed in the most dangerous relationships." "Only the smartest women enjoy loving, but most of them enjoy love." In such words as cited here, we taste a mirage of marriage, a lotus of love and a diamond of life. Such words are not like single sentences strung together; they are like pearls scattered along the coastal beach, waiting for us to pick them up. And Xinrong, the fair lady dancing along the lapping waves, seems to say, "Whenever I ask", and as the tides and the waves



rise and fall, asks into the vanishing distance, "Who will answer?"

Suddenly, I catch the sense of her choosing such a way of writing, because on the threshold of human nature, no matter whether you pass by or not, the knocker is always there. There is either an expectation or a refusal. There is a real story and also a mirage, like the mythology printed on the door. Upon knocking, who will be called? Who will be awakened? Who will be enchanted? It is totally up to the one who raises his or her fingers up to the door.

Not only the texts but also the images serve the storytelling. This doubled means of narrative crosses into the stories, and the characters, the narrators and the readers are all tempted into that deep courtyard. The combination of texts and images plays a positive and alternative role in the neo-media era for both writing and reading. This book consists of five chapters, with 10 stories tailored to the theme of each chapter. Each story can perform a solo, and the 10 stories can also march as a platoon. Through these mini-stories, the readers seem to be bathing in streams that bring their minds into the deep sea of human nature.

Embedded in the stories' pictures, atmosphere and intent are interwoven, image and reality are synthesized. I discovered the power of life behind them, and they opened and expanded a limitless space for exploring a spiritual homeland, drawing the reader directly into a place of realization about human nature. With the bilingual stories and the photographs so melded together in every word and space, one cannot simply say "both pictures and texts are excellent" to describe their impact; they are both completely rooted in tradition and at the same time surpass tradition; they are a different kind of format tacitly harmonizing content and style, both stylish and elegant, ensuring them lasting impact, breakthrough influence, and popularity.

I could not help splitting a beautiful Chinese idiom in half for the evaluation of this book, "The scenery is pleasing to both the mind and the eye". One half is "pleasing to the mind", for the true state of one's mind fully reveals human nature's tolerance and weakness. The other half is "a feast for one's eyes", for when such colors meet such words, they truly feed the eyes.

I never easily consent to write the preface of a book, but I felt it hard to decline Xinrong, for she takes an alternative way to feed her readers with authentic aestheticism. As I wrote in the preface for one of her academic bi-lingual works, *A Picture of Tianjin City Folk Culture*, "Liu Xinrong is clearly proficient at different ways of cultural expression, so she is able to step over the threshold of Chinese culture and use an appropriate Western context to present this feast of Tianjin city folk culture for international perception." But in *Whenever I Ask, Whatever You Answer*, she has transformed into her true literary self. With a heart as transparent as cicada's wings, she stages the drama of love and hate. Her tools are not

pens but rulers, compasses, thermometers and surgical blades. In the stories, her heroes and heroines are described and measured in vivid but cool detail. In this way, the readers may track their footprints, follow their eye-contacts, witness their hugs and feel their confusion. This is more than trespassing in the cultural dimension, or practicing and probing at innovation in writing. She has forged a season belonging to an intimate moment, reflected both in photographic images and through the magic of the two languages. Who will live in this season? A soul mate? A true love? Who else? It could be whoever asks a question of you, or it might be YOU who are reading this book.

Many times Xinrong has talked with me about the relationship between contemporary fictional narration and photographic narration. In her view, this new media era presents all kinds of fresh possibilities for literature and other forms of artistic expression, possibilities that could render literature more lithe and graceful. The reason that Xinrong, in the name of literature, chose photographer Zidi and his works, was that she found in them a satisfying narrative power. I affirm Xinrong's perceptions. When these artistic forms come together to knock at human nature's door, the voice that answers must be a mixed chorus, a richness of expression that strives toward an acme of beauty and bearing.

I appreciate this literary form. The spirit of literature, the quality of narration, is freely expressed through each story and photo in *Whenever I Ask, Whatever You Answer*, tranquilly and intimately, as if knocking on human nature's door under the indistinct light of the moon. The stories ask the questions that want to be asked, and answer as the ones they want to answer. Here, the questions are asked with or without a reason and answered regardless of right and wrong. The past is called back; just as yesterday was, so today will repeat in the days to follow. As on a garden footpath, there are stone benches; people stay for a moment or continue onward, busy or relaxed. By the amber light at pub windows, people drink a toast, whether there is a reason or not. As at an ancient resting spot, briefly buffeted by wind and rain, people shed or hide their tears.

As to *Whenever I Ask, Whatever You Answer*, I will not ask what I originally thought to ask about Xinrong's literary career. As smart as she is, she knows her limitations and strengths. Fortunately, Xinrong sits at the bow of literary culture's craft, and I am sure that, shading her eyes with her hand, she will search out that not-too-distant shore.

Written at Guanhai, Tianjin, on December 15, 2014

Qin Ling, a famous national level Chinese writer and vice-chairman of Tianjin Yanhuang Chinese Cultural Studies Association, is the writer of eight collections of novels and editor in chief of more than 20 works.

(Translated by Liu Xinrong and polished by Ann Robertson)

前言

这部作品集，是孕育10年的一个结果。突然在今年面世，我似乎再次经历了孕育生命的奇迹。因为在短短的七月至十月，中英文的提炼，图片的选配，短评的设置，一应俱全。在我感慨一个配合默契的团队力量的同时，我依然如故地希望，这部作品的结束，正在激发下一个作品的开始。

很多朋友在喜欢这个书名的时候，也略感困惑。这个名字取自其中的一个故事，讲述熟悉的人们，为了维系住亲密的感情，彼此刻意保持着一定程度的陌生，以免受到尘俗因素的侵染。“好像曾经问过你”，文字里间歇性地透露出“长久以来的默默陪伴”，和“依然留守的耐心等待”。“亲密关系”这个主题，也是我这本集子的初衷。故事里的男女渴求着温暖，代价也许是孤独、抗争、恐惧或者背叛。于是我将题目译为“Whenever I Ask, Whatever You Answer”（每当我开口问，你尽可随意答）。如果渴望维系一段亲密关系，需要真诚主动的沟通，亦需要宽容无私的理解。只要问了，便是真诚的，因为你愿意去主动了解对方，而不是从自己的视角去猜测，进而判断；不论你何时去问，只要对方回答，不论答案是什么，即便假以沉默，那也是真诚的，因为至少有回答的渴望、思考的努力以及自我的面对。即便在寡言和妄语中，只要你的爱和守候足够耐心，也总会等到面对真诚的机缘。现世的男女，期许和缺少的，都会在这个集子里发现。

这部原创作品集共有五个章节。他们的爱情街，讲述了充满期待却未果的故事；欲望的理想家园，总是把欲望的释放留给了克制与遗憾；唯有红豆，告诉人们，不论情为何物，心中总会留下一个思念的借口；山顶的故事树，每一片树叶都是主人公留给解读的一段回忆，不同的时空在这里交织。

共情；理想国，是最可以突破的禁忌，因为精神的家园必须客随主便。

所有的故事均由中英文两种叙述方式创作，我尽力用最“微言大义”的英文来表达那些同样出自我笔下的“迂回曲折”的中文。每个故事选配的美图，都是梓地的原创之作，心灵的曼妙离不开自然的滋养，最佳的选择便从那两万多张风光图片中脱颖而出。故事中一些题目和一些句子的巧妙翻译，都要感谢庞鹏所倾注的心血。整本文字几经我和美籍专家Ann Robertson修改、润色，却从未就此满足。我们每个参与者都在面对面的探讨中体会到无穷的乐趣，收获了珍贵的友情。无论读者喜欢哪种文字，如何透过语言和图片来解读，相信最为珍贵的，都是每个人透过作品而参悟出的只属于自己的真情实感。

再次感谢我的良师益友和家人们，为我的创作提供灵感 and 空间，不吝贡献出文字和美图，鼓励欣赏着我的潜能，也咀嚼好奇着我的精神世界。我花了很长时间，才学会把一段很长的故事，用一两百个字表述出来。很久以来，中外的朋友们都希望我继续下去，他们更希望有机会把小说变成电影的叙述手法，恰如“纽约，我爱你”“巴黎，我爱你”的短片集合。无论何种尝试，都可以将创作者、读者与角色和故事的精神融合、延续、解读，乃至重生。这，是我的求索。

有人问我，最希望这部集子做成什么样子？我的回答是：一个让人爱不释手的物件，一处流连忘返的桃源，一部多元合作的激情碰撞，一剂自我释放的妙不可言。

最后想说，献给所有懂得去爱，又珍爱自己的人。虽然舒伯特说过：“我们看似彼此了解，实则擦肩而过。”但是即便如此，也请我们勇敢地留住那个亲密的瞬间。

如果你有问題，有故事，有想法，有建议，都請通过互动邮箱haoxiangcengjing@qq.com来联系我们。本书最后的“行摄履迹”中记录了摄影师美图背后的精准地理轨迹，以供读者按图索骥。

刘昕蓉 2015年1月4日

序与前言
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This is a new-born baby, an outcome of 10 years' preparation, and a suddenly accomplished debut. From July to October of this year, everything is in its place so efficiently, thanks to my dear team of co-workers. We polished the stories in Chinese and English over and over again; we selected the most suitable photos from 20,000; we finished 50 short comments for each story in both Chinese and English. Upon the birth of this cute baby, I am ready to pour my love and my passion into the next one, which might have the name, the life circle of this one.

Reading the title, many have questions about it even while they adore it. Whenever I Ask, Whatever You Answer--- as the title suggests, the most exciting theme revealed here is "intimate relationship". Such sentiment could be accompanied by silence, and could be awaited by patience. In spite of the yearning for a warm heart, the characters in the stories are usually trading solitudes, struggles, fears and betrayals for it, because most people safely keep a distance from each other to sustain the so-called intimacy. But according to me, sincere and positive communication is in the first and foremost place, and apart from that, we should try to understand tolerantly and selflessly. By asking, we intend to explore a true person, without self-imagination and subjective perception. By answering, we take the chance to meditate and face ourselves. Whenever I ask, I step forward to accept you, and whatever you answer, you are proved to be the one. In this book, I believe most people may find what they are fond of and what they are short of.

This book consists of five chapters, namely, "Their Love Lane", with 10 stories of longing and sadness; "Paradise for Desire", with 10 stories about restricted regrets; "Somewhere in Your Heart", with 10 stories of seeking and memorizing; "The Tree of Tales", with 10 stories where the plots meet new characters; and "The Ideal Land", with 10 stories of the spirit in revolt.

I have tried to exhibit big ideas in small words in the English version, to mirror the reflective and philosophical style of the Chinese version, which I also wrote.

This book owes its beautiful artistic existence to my friend Zidi, having originally created such stunning photos while travelling along his global trail. In most of my stories, especially the title and the last key sentence of each story, my friend

Pangpeng has greatly assisted in translating in the most subtle way. The English version, in such a book as the present, would be very difficult to polish without Ann Robertson's earnest efforts. Every participant in this work is tied to each other through the happy face-to-face hours we spent discussing it together.

In this bi-lingual edition, we elaborated the most beautiful expressions, photographic art, and every effort for a perfect work. Appreciating the stories, seeing them through the photos, the reader is able to meet the true self of each artist behind this book. And that is what I really loved to create.

Acknowledgement once again is made to my family and friends, who spared me their time and love, shared with me their talents and support, and challenged me with their appreciation and curiosity. It really took me a rather long term to learn how to transfer a long novel into a mini-story. Most of my friends, home and abroad, hope that all the stories could be produced as movies such as "New York, I Love You" and "Paris, I Love You". Come what may, I hope among the readers, characters and authors, if there is any unity in the process of reading, interpreting, and misunderstanding, if there is any intimate relation between what goes before and what comes later, it is necessary that earlier and later sparks should be synthesized in a single book.

When I was asked, "What type of thing do you want to make it into?" my answer goes like this, "I want to make it into something ever in one's hand, someplace ever in one's heart, some work together with a team, and some moments only for oneself."

This book is coming out just when more and more people understand the significance of loving others and themselves. Schubert, the great musician once sighed, "We seem to see through each other, but actually we pass through." But let us just go onward braving everything, including the short memory of intimacy!

Please feel free to contact us at haoxiangcengjing@qq.com with any questions, comments, suggestions and inspirations about the stories and the photos. In "Trails Behind the Photos", the detailed geographic description of the photos is made for the readers. Thank you.

Liu Xinrong (January 4, 2015)



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