



Reader's Guide



Other books by Can Xue
Dialogues in Paradise (1989)
Old Floating Cloud (1991)
The Embroidered Shoes (1997)
Blue Light in the Sky & Other Stories (2006)
Vertical Motion (2011)
Five Spice Street (2012)
The Last Lover (2014)
Frontier (2017)

Love in the New Millennium Can Xue

Translated by Annelise Finegan Wasmoen

Yale University Press

www.themanbookerprize.com
#FinestFiction #MBI2019

THE
READING
AGENCY

M
Man

The
Booker
Prize
Foundation

About the author	Can Xue was born in Changsha, Hunan, China in May 1953. She is a Chinese avant-garde fiction writer, literary critic, and tailor. Xue began writing in 1983 and published her first short-story in 1985. She has written novels, novellas, and works of literary criticism about the work of Dante, Jorge Luis Borges, and Franz Kafka. Regarded as one of the most experimental writers in the world by some literary scholars and readers, her writing, which consists mostly of short fiction, breaks with the realism of earlier modern Chinese writers. She lives in Beijing, China.
About the translator	Annelise Finegan Wasmoen was born in Philadelphia, USA, in September 1981. She is Academic Director and Clinical Assistant Professor at The Center for Applied Liberal Arts at NYU. Her translations from Chinese into English include Can Xue's novel <i>The Last Lover</i> , which received the Best Translated Book Award from Three Percent and was longlisted for the National Translation Award from the American Literary Translators Association. She lives in Buffalo, NY, USA.
About the book	A group of women inhabits a world of constant surveillance, where informants lurk in the flowerbeds and false reports fly. Conspiracies abound in a community that normalises paranoia and suspicion. Some try to flee—whether to a mysterious gambling bordello or to ancestral homes that can only be reached underground through muddy caves, sewers, and tunnels. Others seek out the refuge of Nest County, where traditional Chinese herbal medicines can reshape or psychologically transport the self. Each life is circumscribed by buried secrets and transcendent delusions. <i>Love In The New Millennium</i> traces love's many guises—satirical, tragic, transient, lasting, nebulous, and fulfilling—against a kaleidoscopic backdrop drawn from East and West of commerce and industry, fraud and exploitation, sex and romance.
What the judges thought	'Jolts the reader from the real to the surreal. A meditative experience that opens up a fever dream of contemporary Chinese writing.'
Discussion points	<p>The book is described, in its foreword, as a "deeply weird novel". How does this fit with your reading experience?</p> <p>Concepts of time, and even of life and death, are played with by Can Xue. How did this impact the narrative?</p> <p>Can Xue is a pseudonym, meaning 'dirty snow', and the author often refers to herself in the third person – does this keep you at a distance as a reader?</p> <p>Each chapter of the book is narrated by different characters – did you feel the various threads were connected throughout the novel?</p> <p>The experimental style of the novel impacts the way the characters speak to each other – discuss the challenges that translator Annelise Finegan Wasmoen may have encountered.</p>
Themed reading	<p><i>Blood Letters: The Untold Story of Lin Zhao, a Martyr in Mao's China</i> by Lian Xi This is the astonishing true story of Lin Zhao, a Chinese poet and journalist arrested by the regime in 1960 and executed eight years later, at the height of the Cultural Revolution. Lin Zhao remained openly opposed to Mao whilst imprisoned, and miraculously, her prison writings survived.</p> <p><i>A Phone Call from Dalian: Selected Poems</i> by Han Dong Han Dong declared that he wrote poetry for nobody, not even himself. He likens the poet to a roofer: "I write poetry for the constitution of poetry, just as a roofer gives no thought to who lives in the house whose roof he is covering..." He believed that poetry's highest purpose is to be without purpose.</p> <p><i>Snow and Shadow</i> by Dorothy Tse This collection of 13 short stories is not for the faint-hearted. Violent and sensual elements abound and limbs, even heads, are lopped off with alarming regularity. Yet scenes are sometimes so outrageous that they make us laugh, and the bold thematic and narrative experiments are alternately beguiling and deeply disturbing.</p> <p><i>White Horse</i> by Yan Ge Yun Yun lives in a small West China town with her widowed father, her uncle, aunt and older cousin live nearby. Her once secure world falls apart when burgeoning adolescence, repressive parents and family secrets reveal themselves in this gripping psychological tale.</p> <p><i>We</i> by Yevgeny Zamyatin This dark and strange dystopian novel was a forerunner to Orwell and Huxley. In a glass-enclosed city of absolute straight lines, ruled over by the all-powerful 'Benefactor', the citizens of a totalitarian society live lives devoid of passion and creativity - until D-503 makes a dangerous discovery: he has an individual soul.</p>
Useful links	<p>Review of <i>Love in the New Millennium</i> in <i>The Arts Fuse</i></p> <p><i>Love in the New Millennium</i> in <i>The Paris Review</i></p> <p>Extract from <i>Love in the New Millennium</i> in <i>Harper's Magazine</i></p> <p>Interview with Can Xue in <i>Asymptote</i></p> <p>The Mysterious Frontiers of Can Xue in <i>The New Yorker</i></p> <p>The Performance of Fiction: An Interview with Can Xue in <i>Words Without Borders</i></p>