



## Modern Chinese Literature Online Book Club – Session 11

'I Deliver Parcels in Beijing' (我在北京送快递)  
by Hu Anyan (胡安焉), translated by Jack Hargreaves

Friday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2026



[Edited Transcript]

KAN, Qian

Welcome, everybody. This is the 4th session of our Modern Chinese Literature Online Book Club, but the first session of this year. So today, we're going to discuss the short story and extract from the book, *I Deliver Parcels in Beijing* by Hu Anyan.

I'm KAN, Qian. I'm the director of the Online Confucius Institute at the Open University. I'm a Senior Lecturer in the School of Languages and Applied Linguistics. Today, as usual, the session will be facilitated by Emily and Nicky. They will first introduce [Paper Republic](#) and then they will lead the interactive discussions and we're delighted the translator of the story, [Jack Hargreaves](#) is here with us. He will talk about the author, and the book.

Jack is a translator of Yorkshire extraction. His literary work, recognised by [English Pen](#) and has appeared in numerous journals, literature hub and reviews. So I'm not going to say every one of them. He's published a lot of novels from Chinese to English including a range of stories, *Winter Pasture* by [Li Juan 李娟](#), *Seeing* by [Chai Jing' 柴静](#), and now, *I Deliver Parcels In Beijing*, which we are going to discuss today, which was published last year, and *Reconstructing the Image of Nanyang* by Chia Joo Ming 谢裕民, another one published this year. And then he's got another book on the horizon, which is coming out in 2027, titled *The Man Under Water*. He has also taught translation at a number of universities like Leeds, Aberdeen, SOAS and Hong Kong Baptist University.

As usual, we have Nicky and Emily, who are founders and trustees of *Paper Republic* who are going to facilitate today's discussion. Both of them are well-known translators of a lot of works from Chinese into English. Okay, so I'm going to hand over to Emily.

## Emily Jones

Thank you. Thank you, Qian. Thank you, Lucy. Thank you, the Open University for having us back. We are delighted. It's, I think, Bookclub number 11 and, as I said, we're really delighted but also honoured to have collaborated with you for so long and to have shared and discussed 11 different brilliant pieces of fiction in translation. As Qian said, Nicky and I are trustees and on the Management Team of Paper Republic. We are a UK-based charity and for those of you who don't know us, we do quite a lot of different things. We don't just run book clubs, although we do really enjoy that aspect of our work. The website itself, [paperrepublic.org](http://paperrepublic.org), has an amazing database on there, which has quite a good list of authors, translators, works, which is hopefully a really useful reference point for people who want to find out a bit more about what's out there in the world of Chinese literature. We do a lot of work with universities. We help organize and judge the [Anthea Bell Prize for Young Translators](#), which is an activity which is happening right now. So we're really enjoying seeing young people's first steps into translation. We also have a newsletter [see website to subscribe]. I'm going to put all of these links in the chat in a minute, but I really wanted to draw your attention to the [Read Paper Republic](#) section of our website, which has heaps of really interesting, completely free to view fiction and literary non-fiction and poems in translation.

So if any of the work that you've come across in these book clubs or indeed in your other reading life has appealed to you, please do feel free to kind of dig back into the archives on our site because we keep everything up there so that it's available to read. So I think Qian, on the next slide, we have a list of links and I'm going to pop them in the chat. But hopefully you will see that we do quite a wide range of things. And I always like to end by saying I know that times are mad and times are tough, but if you can, [please do consider donating](#), you know, every little helps and we put all of the money that we receive towards funding new series of *Read Paper Republic*, those completely free to read translations, we're working on. We've had an open call for submissions at the moment, so hopefully Qian will talk more about our next collaboration at the end. By the time we come back again to do another book club, we'll have some new stories up there for you to enjoy.

So I think what I'm going to do now is hand over to Jack because what we're all here today to talk about is a really interesting writer and a really interesting book, of which I've only read the excerpt and I'm dying to read the full thing. So Jack, over to you as a translator in residence today to introduce the author and the book.

## Jack Hargreaves

Thanks so much, Emily, and thanks, Qian and Oxford for having me back. It was nine months ago that I was involved in my first session with the Bookclub, which was with a piece by the non-fiction writer [Yuan Ling 袁凌](#). *Paper Republic* took a risk on me there and it was nice to share that and go back to that with Bookclub people last time. Now thank you to Oxford and Paper Republic for support, continuing to support and supporting this book and hopefully sharing it with more people. Excuse the background, I am outside my campsite right now. I've told the birds to hush, but they're very rudely not, and they are twittering away in the background, and occasionally a car might drive by, because the best place for connection in the campsite is in the car park, strangely.

So [Hu Anyan](#) is an author, as you can see there, who was born in Guangzhou at the end of the 70s. And in a sense, is only recently an author, sort of around 2020, 2021, I suppose, is when he might have started viewing himself as one properly because previous to that, straight out of school at the beginning of the millennium, he started a string of gig work and part-time jobs and various other sort of work experiences, numbering nineteen in total by the time he came into the public eye in 2020 after a blog post of his where he'd written about his experiences as a delivery driver in Beijing, that's a delivery driver of parcels as opposed to takeaways. That blog post that he wrote started to get an awful lot of attention really, really quickly. Bearing in mind this was the beginning of the COVID pandemic, lots of people were inside, probably online an awful lot, and, as in the UK here, key workers were all of a sudden a big topic of conversation and also much more clearly, their role, their key role in society became much clearer for many more people. And so this blog post he wrote became really popular. Another blog post he wrote also went viral, and from there, this book slowly took form after some editors approached him. I suppose in that time he averaged a job a year, though not all the jobs lasted a year. He did nineteen jobs up until that post went viral and was still working either job eighteen or job nineteen at the time that the post got tens of thousands of readers and was shared everywhere. That was how I came across the book as it initially built up a following, but as the conversation continued - and it continued for quite a few years up until the publication of this book and then beyond - it was when these blog posts came out as a full book and the conversation was still just going wild on *WeChat* and *Weixin* and a few other places online. That was where it got my attention initially.

Unfortunately I've never had the chance to meet him in person, but we've spoken a few times at events like this in China and elsewhere online and he is every bit the person he makes himself out to be in the book: an incredibly modest and very considerate man, also very sort of tentative and hesitant sometimes, but yeah, a pleasure to have a conversation with, and it's nice to see that this book has really exploded now.

I suppose since I've given a bit of background about his work life - although maybe we can go into that a little bit more about the specifics of the jobs he's done, if people are interested - in terms of his writing life, so after this book came about in 2023, it being a collection of the two blog posts that I mentioned that had become really popular online, and then plus two extra sections, one of which had been published in a print anthology of, I believe, migrant or workers literature and then, for the purpose of this book, was extended and filled out a little bit more. And then a fourth section, which was written exclusively for this book, well, the Chinese version, after the editors, whose interest the book took, had a conversation with him and dug deeper into his work experiences and discovered there was maybe a lot more that could be mined and plumbed there for interesting insights, both into Chinese society and into, I suppose, Hu's psychology and his philosophies of life. So, this is his first book, and then he quite quickly brought out two other ones, which were both non-fiction as well, also talking about his experiences, a bit more about his childhood, a bit more about his philosophies and life, and he has just recently brought out a short story collection. In *I Deliver Parcels In Beijing*, he talks a lot about having given up on writing fiction because he had struggled to find his voice; he just felt he was sort of doing a shoddy emulation of other writers that he admired. I believe in this work of fiction that he's brought out, which is a collection that he wrote at the beginning of this year, he's returned to stories he'd written previously when a little bit younger and over the years that he discusses in *I Deliver Parcels*

*in Beijing*, and he's updated them, refined them, and now they're out there. So his dream has come true.

### **Emily Jones**

To kick the conversation off, and we would love for everyone to kind of get involved and share their thoughts and ideas and reflections on the excerpt that they've read, but perhaps just to get us started, if Jack, you could give us just a minute or so on where this excerpt comes in the book for people.

### **Jack Hargreaves**

Yeah, so this is in Section 2 of the book, where he's specifically talking, it's the eponymous section of the book, *I Deliver Parcels In Beijing*, and the chapter itself discusses that whole experience of a couple of years working with two different courier companies and this excerpt, the two sections come from the very beginning of that chapter, really. There's one more small section for the interview bit where this excerpt begins, but this is subheading two and three of that chapter about his career, work, and yeah, it's about him trying to find a job and then going through the rigmarole and the bureaucratic nightmare of actually starting the job once he's been awarded it.

### **Emily Jones**

Thank you. I'll pause for a second just to see if anyone's got any thoughts that they're dying to get off their chest.

Perhaps I could start, Jack, I've got a question for you, if I may. I'm not answering any of the questions that you shared to get us started, but I'm dying to know, as the book in its totality progresses, does his mood and feeling change? I would say he's sort of quite, I don't know what the word is, phlegmatic in the excerpt that you shared. He's just kind of getting on with it and being quite, I don't know, yeah, phlegmatic will do. But I wondered if, as this experience progresses and other experiences happen, does he get angry? Does he get sad? Does he get bitter, does he find humour in the situation?

### **Nicky Harman**

Yeah, I was going to ask the same question. So there you go.

### **Jack Hargreaves**

Great minds. All of the above. I'd say throughout he is very stoic in a way and does take things in his stride fairly well, or takes things on his chin fairly well. A lot of rough experiences and unfortunate circumstances that he winds up in. He just gets on with it. And if he's unable to get on with it, he moves on, I suppose. Maybe that's the beauty of being open to the possibility of gig work. You can just shift elsewhere. He's not all that interested in earning a lot of money and he lives very frugally, so he doesn't feel bound or tied to anywhere. Maybe that's partly why he has this just very accepting and understanding and in many ways empathetic approach to life. But he definitely gets angry at points, though, always managing to sort of swallow his anger when customers do him wrong or when... You see a sort of a snippet of it in this excerpt, but also later down the line, when people higher up in the company, so his line managers and whatnot and hiring staff, are just

entirely sort of disrespectful, or they disregard him and his colleagues. He'll get angry at them, but then we'll always sort of, two to three paragraphs later, discover a renewed sense of his accepting life philosophy. Of anyone I've ever read or met, he's the champion of taking things in his stride. But he does also have a sense of humor, which he says helped a lot along the way and definitely helps with this book because as a reader and as a translator, some of the experiences are rough to say the least. And so it helps that he brings a bit of levity to it all. He's very dry in his sense of humor, which maybe resonates for Brits.

### **Emily Jones**

Yes, definitely. Brilliant. Thank you. We've got a question in the chat box from Tom, who says, 'What makes this book worth reading and is there a huge difference between delivery drivers in Europe and delivery drivers in China? Maybe that's two different questions there. Don't know, Jack, if you want to speak to either of those two.'

### **Jack Hargreaves**

Maybe I'll speak to the second one first.

I may be not saying anything remotely profound here, but China's just bigger and there are a hell of a lot more people, and maybe, although I'm not actually sure I believe this as I say it, workers can be pushed a little bit harder with fewer benefits or leeway from employers in terms of employee rights and things. So not necessarily any more exploitative than Amazon workers in the UK, their situation. But delivery drivers, I would assume just the hours and the distances they're covering, the number of other delivery drivers there are, the number of other things you're possibly having to deliver, and the places to which you're having to deliver them, it's just, you know, exponentially, all of those things increase in number and and variety once you are doing the job in China. I mean, now you can have - although this isn't, relevant to his experience because it wasn't quite like that then - but now you can have things delivered to you as you arrive at a train station in China. So a delivery driver will be, if they've done their job properly and been efficient and quick about it, will be waiting for you on the platform to hand over whatever food you've asked for, or delivered, or whatever it is, your coffee, or your boba, so just the demands are more liable to get a little bit out of hand, a little bit over the top. In terms of what makes this book worth reading, I suppose it depends on what you're interested in.

### **Emily Jones**

Maybe what made it worth reading for you? What particularly stuck with you?

### **Jack Hargreaves**

What makes it worth reading for me? It's always interesting reading things from China that make any comment on society or what it's like to be on the ground or to be a person in the street when certain experiences that are being described are less than positive, perhaps, and might reflect on wider society and the quality of life for certain strata of society. Chinese writers have such an art for writing in a way where you as the reader are encouraged to read between the lines. People just speak in allusions and like at a slant. He just has a wonderful way of doing that, and with his sense of humour, it makes for an enjoyable read that gives a very realistic insight into what life is like in China for certain

areas of the population. There's a been, and maybe boom isn't the right word, but this proliferation of literature from either migrant workers or the labouring classes of China recently in maybe the past four to five years: a lot of poetry, also a lot of fiction, quite a lot of non-fiction work. Some of it's done incredibly well, some of it doesn't get a look in and doesn't get to be published and so it only appears online, and this is one of the books that has really reached an awful lot of people and clearly resonated with a lot of people for various reasons. But I think it means that it's a really helpful and important source of stories that don't often get to be told, as this story has been told.

### **Emily Jones**

Brilliant, thank you. So there's a couple of people lining up to ask questions. Just before we move to Nicky, who's got her hand up first, I think you went first, Nicky, a comment in the chat from Teresa, who says, 'I really enjoyed the honesty and astute observations of the writer and the humour is very understated', which I think supports what you were saying, Jack.

I'm going to hand over to Nicky now for her comment or question.

### **Nicky Harman**

Yeah, it was really to follow up what Jack's been talking about. I wondered, because I haven't been able to read the rest of the book, does it have some kind of conclusion? You talked about his philosophy and the way in which he views life. Does it actually end with an emotional bang or does it just kind of peter out because he goes on to another stage of his life? Is there any overarching feeling that you're left with at the end of the book?

### **Jack Hargreaves**

I think so, to a degree. It's sort of the feeling, the same feeling you get as you read through and he sums it up in a way and it is that him realizing what is a priority to him in life. and how work for him, you know, though it's created moments of hardship and conflict and difficulty, he knows the reason he does it and the reason he approaches it in the way that he approaches it, and it's to give him the freedom to - and he uses that word quite a lot, freedom - the freedom to write, or the freedom to do other things in his life. So doing this gig work, though it's never paid necessarily very well and sometimes the hours are brutal, he feels throughout this long experience of these various jobs, working out what was good about this one and what wasn't so good and how maybe to try and find a better situation next time, or maybe even change his expectations lower than perhaps. He's slowly sort of fine tuning how to arrange a life that to him is satisfying and fulfilling, even if, and though it obviously doesn't involve this now, because he's made a lot, quite a lot of money from these books and is doing quite well for himself, at least for the time being. He says he has money saved up now for a while. So he's not spending, living lavishly all of a sudden. He's trying to maintain a similar lifestyle. But had this book maybe not done quite as well as it has, I think by the end of this book, he has decided how he would have gone forward with his life to stay happy in himself. The book, though, chronologically is strange because the last section is all of his previous jobs. So from his very first job through to the jobs. Just proceeding, like the career job and those of the 2018, 19, 20, 20s time, which is chapter one, two, and three. I suppose it's all written much more in reflection of a more distant memory and a more

distant time and dipping into his diary and things so, it doesn't necessarily build in a linear way. By the end, he's sort of using his new found philosophy to reflect on his younger life.

### **Emily Jones**

Brilliant. Okay. Two people with their hands up. I'm just going to go back to the chat just for a second, because a couple of people have asked a similar question about the process of translating the book. Zhang Qing said, 'When you translate the book, what things do you find tricky?' And then Gregory said, 'Are there any interesting situations that come to mind where you might have wanted to check with the author about what he meant by what he'd written?' Sort of similar theme there about trickiness in translation. I don't know if you've got anything to share there, Jack.

### **Jack Hargreaves**

I definitely found parts of it tricky. I can't think of any specific stories. His voice is very clear, at least it was to me, and how I heard it, so I could imagine an English Hu Anyan quite quickly. Some of the technical descriptions of the things that they're doing in warehouses and whatnot was a little difficult to imagine. Lots of Google imaging pictures of these vast warehouses and how people move around them and where the forklifts come in and stuff and the shape of the concrete platform they're stood on, which though described in the Chinese, it can be helpful to have a visual reference. Maybe the trickiest part was the balancing when the literary references come in. You don't get it in this excerpt, but later in the book, when he starts to talk more and more about his writing, he talks a lot about different writers he admired and things. He has one little section where he references Virginia Woolf writing about someone else's biography, or autobiography, and the translation of the Virginia Woolf writing that he was basing the message that he was trying to impart, that he was basing that on, was wrong when I found the English of the Virginia Woolf, like what had been written. So the Chinese translator had sort of lumped together a few different pieces of information that were actually parsed separately in the English. It wasn't an enormous thing, but it was just like, I need to change around quite a few different details in the Chinese here to make it work. That was only tricky in the sense that me and the editor had to ask Hu if he was happy for us to tweak things a little bit.

### **Emily Jones**

Yeah, yeah. That's always, it's the jigsaw puzzle bit of being a translator, isn't it? Your brain starts to feel a bit tired when you get to things like that, searching and cross-referencing different versions of things.

Right, let's move on from that swiftly, Audrey, did you want to come off mute and share your thought.

### **Audrey Eileen Kelly**

Yeah, hi, thanks so much for organizing this and for translating this. It's a great book and I really enjoyed it. Going back to labour, I'm curious for your perspective on how much demand there is in China for things to happen like now, now, now. I was reading this having lived in China and experienced how convenient it can be to get things so quickly. And it was good to see the other side of that. But then I'm wondering for your perspective on

having translated this and being like the representation of this book that exposes this to a new English speaking audience, and how often people in Anglophone countries can be like, 'Oh, people in China are exploited', and what's been your perspective in translating this and speaking to the publisher and different representatives and things? How do you bridge that line of different societies? And hopefully my question is somewhat clear.

### **Jack Hargreaves**

Um...It's difficult, really. The only way that I actually do it is through events like this. As for any translator, once the book's out there, you're not washing your hands of it, but it can be quite hands-off potentially, unless you're invited to do nice things like this and talk with readers. In terms of with editors, with the editor and publisher and them picking it up, the agent who acquired this book is very involved with China herself and so she already had the perspective on why this was an important book and why this is an important book and why it's universal as well as Chinese, I think. It is a funny thing. There was - this is potentially very tacky of me - but there was one review that panned the book slightly because it didn't quite get - having read my translation - why the book had done so well in China, and so immediately blamed the translation. But mostly because I think he'd read the book and expected it, having sold sort of millions of copies in China, that it was going to be this great, very obviously literary masterpiece thing, instead of a very rarely seen view of an aspect of Chinese life and society and industry. For Chinese people as well, these stories aren't necessarily stories that are told so widely, and so I think for a lot of Chinese people, it was maybe a welcome surprise to see it published and put out there. I'm not sure whether the fact that this is potentially something very 'novelty' always translates into English readers, because it's the kind of writing that potentially is a dime a dozen over here. It's just the stories are told in different ways.

### **Emily Jones**

There's a comment from Claudia in the chat, 'Since the publishing of this book, have you noticed a trend of more candid real life stories and literature being produced in other countries?' Was China first to the game or was China late to the game?' For me that ties into something that I was thinking about earlier today. I think there's quite a lot of books that I can think of, English kind of 'tell all' exposé books. You know, there's the one about the doctor, [This Is Going To Hurt](#) by [Adam Kay](#), and it was turned into a television programme. And there's another one by a brain surgeon as well. I don't know if it's just me that happens to pick up things that are written by people in the medical profession. But I think there is a kind of exposé 'tell all' thing that happens probably in all languages where shown behind the curtains revealing a hitherto unknown side of an industry or, you know, I remember a French one about the 80s advertising agency, big exposé kind of thing, a bit like [Mad Men](#), but from a French angle. Anyway, my point is, I guess, that tonally, I was thinking about it earlier and I feel like what's interesting about this one, even reading just the excerpt, is there's a class dimension difference as an English language reader now - I'm speaking not as a Chinese translator, but as an English language reader. Some of these exposés that have come out in English, in the English market recently have been like the doctor ones, exposing a sort of thing that's from a very different class, whereas this is really working class, this is really everyday stuff and you don't often hear that voice, or I haven't come across it in English works in this country. So for me, it's quite refreshing to read it, to read Hu Anyan

because it is giving that counterpoint and that balance. Sorry, that's very long, but I don't know if you're following me, Jack.

### **Jack Hargreaves**

No, that was a great point, I really like it. Yeah, I was thinking through other sort of books that have done similar in English as you were saying it. And in terms of maybe some different class, the class dimension there, one that came to mind that is a memoir was American and then was made into a Netflix show, I think, called [Maid](#).

### **Emily Jones**

Oh yeah, that's great.

### **Jack Hargreaves**

There's a similar class dimension there, and this really speaks to the literary convention of the West versus the literary convention of the East, or storytelling convention. There is not a hero arc in a way or even a redemption arc because you didn't do anything wrong, per se. You know, she's been put in a very difficult situation by life and then overcomes her circumstances. There is that very obvious overcoming. That's what I mean by the hero arc. Whereas with this, it's less of that, which is an interesting thing. Maybe that speaks to a realization that things aren't necessarily getting better for a lot of workers in China who are in similar roles. Though obviously they have for Hu now. Yeah, it's interesting. There's definitely a difference there.

### **Emily Jones**

Yeah. Echo has had their hand up for a really long time. Echo, I'm sorry for the wait, but please do share your thoughts.

### **ECHO**

I have two questions. I'm Chinese, actually it's the first time I have read such a different story, different book. I was wondering, because the writer is a real worker in this industry, he's not a journalist doing research or a researchers present this report, so I think it's very interesting. I'm wondering what kind of a motivation was there for this writer. Did he explain it in this book, in case I missed it, or have you have any chance to talk to the writer because according to the story, his story, the day work, you know, the labour, the workload is very heavy and he's exhausted every day. What motivated him to record everything, you know, almost maybe every day. It's very invaluable, I think. That's my first question.

And then another question is related to the translation. A very small question. I noticed you say he's a delivery driver. I don't know why you choose these words, because if it's the fixed name for this occupation in England or in Western world, because as Chinese, I think I also read in the book, in his book, he spent a lot of words to explain how he cannot get a vehicle, so he has to walk to delivery the parcel. I was wondering why you call him a delivery *driver* because he doesn't have a vehicle for a long period. Yeah, that's my question. Thank you.

### **Jack Hargreaves**

Um... The, oh God, I forgot what the first question was now. I'll quickly answer the second one. I feel like that was a that was a conversation slightly that we had myself and at least the US editor. There are slight differences between British and American English for what couriers are referred to as couriers versus delivery drivers versus a couple of other different names. I suppose it was just a catch-all in a way. We didn't change delivery driver on a technicality. I mean, technically, that was the job that he did get. It was just a failing of the company that he was at, that they didn't give him a vehicle for a long time. So he was a delivery driver who was hamstrung by his company's own uselessness.

Could you remind me of the first question, please? Or just the general gist of it? It'll come back as soon as you say a couple of words.

### **ECHO**

Oh yeah, I just wondering, yeah, I just wondering what kind of motivation, you know, just keep paying to record everything every day, you know, considering the workload is so heavy and he gets exhausted every day. Did you have some talk with the author?

### **Jack Hargreaves**

He does talk about it a little bit more in the book elsewhere. He's just the sort of person who writes. It's sort of a compulsion for him in a way. And it's definitely a place where he can retreat to, is doing writing. Even if sometimes he's sort of wrestling with what he wants to write or how he wants to write or what his voice is or whatever. I think it's just something he can't help but do. And so sometimes, depending on the job he has at different times, he has more time to write, or less time to write. Sometimes he takes a job specifically because he thinks it's going to give him a ton of time to write and the opposite turns out to be true. But it's just a compulsion, as it is for so many writers who make it their life and their career.

### **Emily Jones**

Yeah, brilliant, and Ken in the chat said it also could be a way of unwinding himself after a hard day of work, which is a kind of gentler way of putting your compulsion point. Audrey in the chat said that she is also curious about the word choice of 'trike'. I don't know if you can remember that word choice, and you may not, but if you can, I'd love to hear your thoughts.

### **Jack Hargreaves**

I mean, I think that's what they're driving, isn't it? It's just a three-wheel vehicle. in the same way that a two-wheeled vehicle is a bike, whether it's a motor or a pedal. I think a three-wheel vehicle is a trike, whether it's motor or pedal or otherwise. I'm sure there are other possible translations for it. That one just felt neat. Part of maybe why I made a lot of translation choices in the book, whether this is a misguided approach or otherwise, was speed a little bit. Because this is a comment that people have made to Hu and in various different Interviews for both the Chinese and the English version. A lot of the writing is procedural in a way, in the sense that the form of the writing and how information is presented somewhat mirrors the tediousness or the repetitiveness of the work itself.

And so it's just describing like, 'I did this, I did this, I did this, I did this' sort of thing in different parts. And Hu has said that, you know, that wasn't intentional at all. I was just telling people how it is, writing how it is. That's just how life was. So how the day job was. And I think in Chinese, with the way people, the way that you read Chinese, it doesn't matter so much if there's a bit more of that repetition and procedural language. Whereas in English, you can get bogged down in it and it can become actually genuinely tedious. And so some of the translation process was streamlining things or trying to keep stuff pacey, just to make it not a more enjoyable read, but perhaps just an easier read or a more propulsive read. Yeah.

### **Emily Jones**

Brilliant. Thank you. Qian, your hand is up.

### **KAN, Qian**

Yeah, I'm actually really interested in the third question, Jack. Why is it that suddenly all these publishers are interested in getting stories about ordinary workers, because you talked about the bidding war.

### **Jack Hargreave**

I think for China specifically, as with the Chinese readership for this book, I suppose that untold stories, it perhaps feels like - especially China being this sort of for so many people, a sort of land of a fair bit of mystique and, you know, at the forefront developmentally in so many different ways and all of these words that are associated with China right now, like, like meteoric rise and speed and rapidness, and so the people who are telling these stories are very much in the middle of that, or perhaps at the bottom of that. A lot of it also was coming out of COVID. I think there was so much conversation here around key workers. There was a really brilliant memoir written in the UK by [Stu Hennigan](#), who was delivering medicine and food parcels in Leeds during COVID. It's gorgeous and also harrowing, and I wish that book had done as well as this book did in China, because it would be very, very well deserved for him. And there's just stories from all over that have been doing well for a while, and I think then it's interesting to get that perspective then from this place that people are curious about. And just recently, last year, there was [Souleymane's Story](#), I think it was called, which is a film set in Paris with, I believe, a Senegalese man, a Senegalese migrant, who's living there and is being a delivery driver. The film did really well, was critically acclaimed.

### **Emily Jones** 54:29

We're using you a little bit there, Jack. Qian, do we have time for one last comment from Nicky?

### **KAN, Qian**

Yeah, just one last comment then we have to wrap it up.

### **Nicky Harman**

Yeah. Well, very briefly, just to follow on from this bit of the discussion. I mean, there is

another way of looking at it, which is maybe even simpler, that so much media coverage of China, the kind of thing people will have read, is so political and politicized that this kind of book, because it's very personal, it has an attraction precisely because it's very personal. I think UK publishers and US publishers are responding to that. So yeah, that's my take on why it's done so well and why. Publishers wanted it.

### **KAN, Qian**

Thank you. So shall we leave the discussion? I know we can go on for a long time. There are lots of questions and it is a very refreshing sort of different book from the previous stories we discussed. So, I encourage you to read the book after the session and then you could carry on the discussion. What is interesting for me as a language teacher is the language is so simple, because rarely can I find authentic text to recommend to students to read, where the vocabulary is simple, the structure is simple, so they can understand, but this is one of them. So we have actually used it in our module materials in Intermediate Chinese, which is something I'm going to talk about now.

I just want to use this opportunity to tell you about [Open University's Chinese courses](#), Chinese modules. So we have two 30 credit module [Beginners Chinese](#), and [Intermediate Chinese](#), which is a brand new module starting in October and all the registrations for these two modules are already open. So please help us to tell your friends and your contacts who are interested in learning Chinese language.

We also have a [Certificate in Higher Education in Law and Chinese](#) and in [Business and Chinese](#), so they could combine the study of law or business with Chinese.

We also have a range of short courses, costing only about £200 pounds involving about 30-40 hours study. They are short, online and without tutorials. All the other credit modules are supported learning with tutorials and with tutor support.

So, that's about all modules and I also want to make you aware of our forthcoming events and talks.

We have a teacher training day with Lancaster University's Confucius Institute on 29th of May on the topic of [Revisiting the prompt: critical AI literacy for language educators](#). It will be a day of keynote speakers, active learning for interactive sharing practice.

In June and July, we're going to have another round of free online classes. The time will be confirmed and announced in our [events page](#).

On Friday, 25th September, we will have a public talk on the topic: [Between Moon and the Sun: Discovering China's Seasonal Way of Time](#). This is to coincide with the mid-autumn festival.

And on Friday the 23rd of October we have a very interesting talk to be given by Professor Elijah Siegler. He is professor in religious studies at the College of Charleston, USA. So he will talk on [How Ancient Taoist Wisdom Can Help Us Live Our Best life](#). And that event is already visible on the [Eventbrite](#).

And then we are going to welcome Emily and Nicky back again in either November or December to host our 12th session of the bookclub. We'll announce the topic and time later.

So once again, I'd like to thank everybody, thank Emily, Nicky and Jack for this really interesting discussion to introduce us to Hu Anyan and his book, and then to all of you for coming today for your engagement, and we'll see you again at our next event.

Thank you.

Contact: [online-ci@open.ac.uk](mailto:online-ci@open.ac.uk)

[End of transcript]