

Gerelchimeg Blackcrane

CBBY Candidate for 2024 Hans Christian Andersen Award

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1

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Gerelchimeg Blackcrane



Gerelchimeg Blackcrane was born in Daqing City, Heilongjiang Province in 1975. When he was young, the doctor advised him to play outside and live in a place with good air because he was frail and sick. Therefore, at the age of 4, his parents sent him to his grandmother's home in the Inner Mongolia grassland.

For Blackcrane, the grassland is his kindergarten. His grandmother and two uncles who live by hunting led him to live on the grassland. Blackcrane lived on the grassland for four years, accompanied by two milky white Mongolian shepherd dogs. He was fortunate enough to experience the last nomadic era of the grassland. He gets to experience and understand the hunting culture.

At the age of 8, Blackcrane returned to the city, and then went to study and work. Influenced by his mother, Blackcrane has read a large number of excellent literary works since childhood and loved writing.

Since 2005, Blackcrane has published more than 110 works, such as *Black Flame*, *The Ghost Hound*, *The Kingdom of Reindeer*, *Black Dogs: Hala, Nohai*, *The Blood Horse*, *The Child of the Wolf Valley*, *Fenrir the Wolf and I* and *Hold the Wolf*. He has won the Five



One Project Award by The Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, the Chinese Outstanding Children's Literature Award, the Poetry under the Banyan Tree Award, the "People's Literature" Writer of the Year, Mao Dun Literary Newcomer Award, Chen Bochui International Children's Literature Award, Bianchi International Book Award, Freeman Book Awards Children's Literature Honorable Mention, Original Picture Book Award of Image of the Book, Aesop Accolades and so on. His works have been translated into more than ten languages all around the world.

In 2010, Blackcrane became a full-time writer, returned to the grassland of Inner Mongolia, and established his own writing camp in Hulunbuir. Currently, he lives in a camp in Hulunbuir with his forty bulldogs and a group of Mongolian horses. Every year, he will take two months to go deep into the grassland pastures and Daxing'anling woodland to conduct field investigations and enrich his writing materials; he will also spend two months on campus and in libraries to communicate with young readers. He will guide them with his stories, words and pictures. They will go deep into the grasslands, walk through the bushes, get close to animals, and feel the nature.

Blackcrane's works take Hulunbuir grassland and Daxing'anling woodland in northern China as the geographical background. Through field investigation, he understands the regional changes, cultural heritage, life style and group consciousness of northern minorities. His works are mainly based on the customs, wild animals and natural environment of northern minorities such as Mongolian, Ewenki and Oroqen. Through novels, essays, picture books, photographs and other forms, he reconstructs the ancient culture of northern minorities (the reindeer culture of Ewenki people, the nomadic culture of Mongolian people, the hunting culture of Oroqen people, etc.), and seeking the possibility of peaceful coexistence between human beings and nature.

In the process of urbanization, children are getting farther and farther away from nature, and people's senses have become insensitive. Blackcrane hopes to enrich the life experience of more urban children through his works, and break through the original life boundary and life experience of young readers. With deep concern for the natural ecology, his deep affection for the boundless grasslands and the vast forests and the people living in them, he shows the nature, wilderness, ethnicity, and traditions to the children through literature, and establishes a new view on nature and life for them.



2

CONTRIBUTION TO LITERATURE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Achievements in Children's Literature

Gerelchimeg Blackcrane is a contemporary Chinese animal literature writer and is known as the "son of nature". Nature, for Blackcrane, it is not only a place for cultivation, but also a broad and profound doctrine. For a long time, he insisted on a solid writing practice, went deep into the grassland, walked through the bushes, got close to animals, and felt the nature. He has collected on the spot, thus created a series of excellent animal literature works, and formed a distinctive writing style.

Blackcrane's writing is based on careful and detailed observation. Those detached writings have a strong realistic tendency, but the admiration of nature, the praise of the wilderness, and the cherishment of wildness in the text give readers a romantic reading experience. He describes the life and death fate of wild animals in grassland by recalling the fading wilderness culture and his persistent love for natural beings. His works are permeated with the wilderness of the North and the respect, gaze and care for life.

Patricia Aldana, former President of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), believes: "*Black Flame* is an outstanding natural literary work that inherits the tradition of Jack London. The protagonist in the book, Black Flame, is presented in a convincing way. It is very difficult for a writer to convince the reader that he sees the world through the eyes of an animal.



What's more difficult is to make the reader think that every move of the animal is reasonable and necessary. Of course, the most difficult thing is to write the story persuasively, while also exciting and attractive to young readers. Blackcrane knows what kind of story he is telling. His life experience in Inner Mongolia and his experiences of keeping large bulldogs in his camp for local herders have provided rich materials and powerful help for his writing. He is a rare and outstanding natural literature writer. His works truly embody and surpass the subject of animal literature. His language is also very good. He is a true master."

The Hans Christian Andersen Award winner, famous children's literature writer, and professor of the Chinese Department of Peking University, Cao Wenxuan commented: "Blackcrane's language is full of poetic, dynamic and strong narrative style, crisp and neat, and never procrastinated. Blackcrane's sense is very keen. He can always find the most appropriate and unexpected descriptions of light and shadow, tone, sound, and everything in the world. In his works, you will get to enjoy the rich texture and exquisite descriptions."

Blackcrane has his stable and solid view of nature, respecting the vast jungle and the natural law of survival of the fittest. In the face of these cruel laws, Blackcrane often shows his compassion uncontrollably. The implementation of the laws of nature is, inevitably, a tragic process. Blackcrane understands this, so his animal novels are heavier and more profound than ordinary animal novels.



Blackcrane emphasizes the authenticity and scientificity of animal novels, and does not approve of the so-called fiction that is separated from the actual situation of animals. He focuses on observation, similar to the observation of the zoologist Lorenz: animal novels must be based on observation, and knowledge about animals must not be violated. He opposes writing animal novels as fairy tales, legends, or myths. From his animal novels, readers can read knowledge about animals, plants, religion and customs.

Blackcrane is a writer full of humanistic care. His works use the emotional world of animals to reflect the emotional world of human beings, and the moral ethics of animals to reflect the moral ethics of human beings. He calls for the dignity of life in the reflections of the two worlds. The reverence for nature and life reflects his broad humanistic feelings... the kind of humanistic care that Blackcrane presents in his literary works has received positive responses from young readers. In Blackcrane's animal literature, they not only see the attention, experience, and cognition of life, but also regrets and thoughts about life and dignity.

Blackcrane is a symbol representing the original Chinese animal literature. In China, to write an animal literature is difficult, with few authors and products. However, spiritual products in this field are indispensable. The relationship between humans and animals directly reflects the coexistence of humans and nature. Animal literature works are of great significance in shaping the spiritual thinking and emotional world of young readers. Blackcrane's works have the healing power of the soul for general readers, especially the modern urbanites who have lost their sensitivity and awe of nature.

Zhu Ziqiang, professor at the Faculty of Literature and Journalism, Ocean University of China and director of the Institute of Children's Literature, said: "Blackcrane's creation is not to approach nature in order to express nature, but because he loves nature with all his heart, he can't help but sing to nature. We can see this similar writing attitude in Thoreau, Burroughs, Seaton and others."

Xu Lu, children's literature writer and critic, believes: "Blackcrane is like Jack London. He challenges nature and a society where the weak are the prey of the strong. He tells the weak how to survive in this cruel world, which is the deepest philosophy of life, taught to him by a life of hardship, suffering and mediocrity."

Children’s literature critic Tang Rui said: “Blackcrane is a writer belonging to forests and grasslands. He has lived on this grassland for a long time. He knows better than other writers and loves his homeland. Thus, his books can be regarded as a ‘little encyclopedia’ of the northern grasslands, forests, and animal worlds. His works have a wealth of knowledge of nature, which is also a beautiful tradition of Russian and American nature literature writers. We read their works not only for the literary touch, but also the enjoyment of the scientific understanding of nature, because they wrote about the beauty, richness and magic of nature.”

Alain Serres, general manager of Rue du Monde in France, thinks: “Gerelchimeg Blackcrane never falls into an easy sentimentality and he succeeds in moving the young readers without offending their young age, while hiding nothing of the hardness of life and the passing of time. This beautiful balance is maintained, because Blackcrane is an authentic writer and not only an author of children's books! Blackcrane is a genuine writer, who has chosen to live on the Hulunbeir prairie with his dogs, cats, horses and a few other animals. He lives in nature and draws his inspiration from it, without neglecting the cultural heritage of the humans living in this northeastern part of China.”

Nicola T. Stuart, CEO of Verlagshaus Jacoby & Stuart in Germany, said: “His literary commitment to the care and preservation of nature in its inherent wildness, as well as the protection of the animals that belong there, is quite really unique. And through his tender description of the people who live in the wilderness, for example, of the indigenous people of the Ewenki, he is able to transfer his readers into other cultures completely. I am always

impressed by the originality and mighty vigor in Blackcrane's works which sharpens and refreshes people's feelings and senses. Though his writing is profound and sober, it never lacks compassion and sympathy. Readers from young to old can resonate with his stories.”

Tin Eriksson, the president of Vombat Förlag in Sweden, believes: “Gerelchimeg Blackcrane's writing is a great contribution to modern man and in particular the children and their ability to see themselves as unique individuals with responsibility and with opportunities for creative development. The author's realistic storytelling becomes a playful and exciting tool in a child's development.”

At present, Blackcrane has published picture book such as *The Moose of Ewenki*, novels for example *Black Dogs: Hala, Nohai, Black Flame* and *The Blood Horse*, short fiction collections *The River of Wolverine, The Child of the Wolf Valley, Nighthawk at Dusk, The Kingdom of Reindeer*, etc., prose collections *Mongolian Shepherd Dog - King's Bloodline, Seasons of Life – Blackcrane’s Twenty-four Solar Terms of Natural Observation Notes* and many other works, which have been translated into English, French, German, Korean, Arabic, Vietnamese and other languages. In 2019, *Black Flame* won the 3rd Bianchi International Literature Award. In 2020, *The Moose of Ewenki* has been selected into IBBY honor list. In 2021, *The Moose of Ewenki* and Blackcrane's Animal Literature Series was awarded the Original Picture Book Award of Image of the Book in Russia. In 2022, Blackcrane became the Nominee for Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award for the first time.



3

APPRECIATIVE ESSAYS, INTERVIEWS

Interpreting Blackcrane's Animal Fiction

Cao Wenxuan

Author, 2016 Hans Christian Andersen Award Winner,
Professor of Peking University

Blackcrane is a unique writer, iconic in the world of children's literature. His writing is distinct from popular and worldly writing. He takes his own perspectives from both nature and literature. Just as the snowfields and grasslands are very far away from us, so is his writing at a great distance from our ordinary writing. And it seems as if he enjoys this distance. In his heart, he strongly desires to be far from crowds, far from popular literary writing trends. Quietness is his first choice for survival, as well as his first choice for literature.

He once described his feelings for forests and grasslands like this: "In forests and grasslands, we can obtain a kind of physical quietness. When I came back down from the mountain this time, I explained this quietness to friends: on the mountain, I just need to turn my head, and the two earrings on my left ear will make a loud noise when they collide."



For him, this quietness is a realm and an aesthetic itself. In his writings, we see countless examples of his poetic experience and descriptions of quietness. Distance and the divergence it brings have made Blackcrane.

The site of our seminar today on Blackcrane is also very interesting.

I hope we can talk about some views that deviate from mainstream literary discourse, here in this small northern city far from the cultural centre.

The topics that I cover below are several of the thoughts I had after reading Blackcrane's work. They're not in any particular order, and they have no logical connections. I prefer to view them as a dictionary for Blackcrane's works.

Romanticism

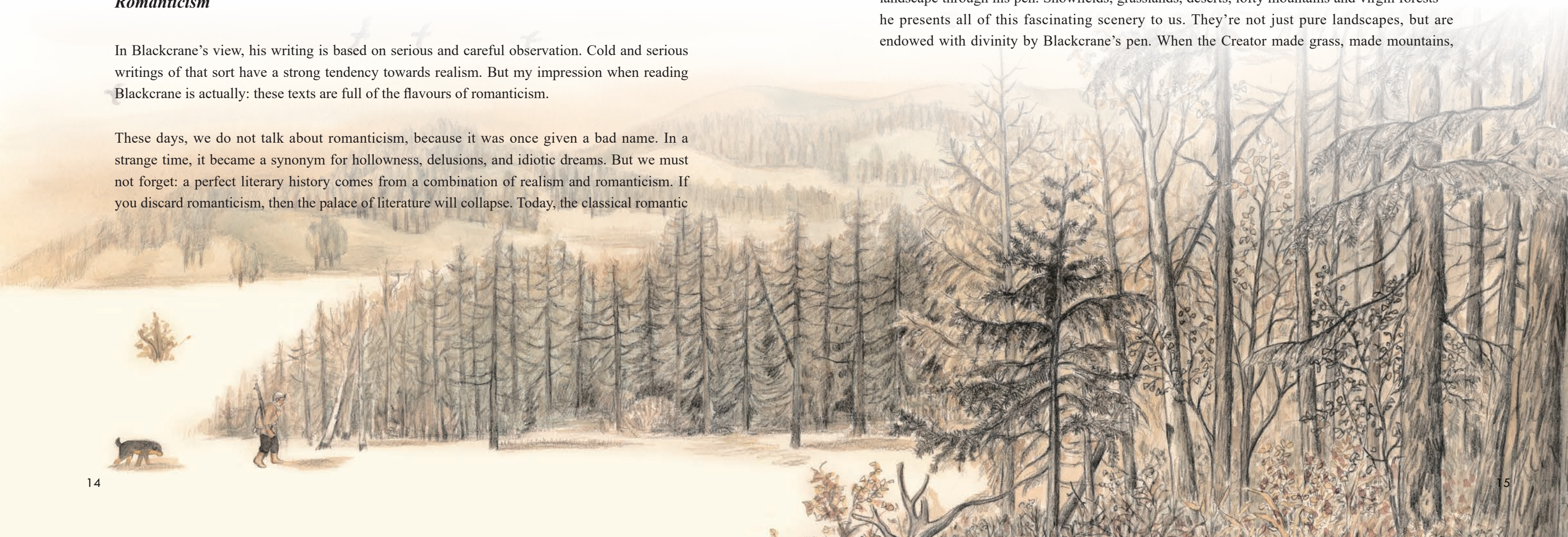
In Blackcrane's view, his writing is based on serious and careful observation. Cold and serious writings of that sort have a strong tendency towards realism. But my impression when reading Blackcrane is actually: these texts are full of the flavours of romanticism.

These days, we do not talk about romanticism, because it was once given a bad name. In a strange time, it became a synonym for hollowness, delusions, and idiotic dreams. But we must not forget: a perfect literary history comes from a combination of realism and romanticism. If you discard romanticism, then the palace of literature will collapse. Today, the classical romantic

works that we still mention, from time to time, and we still read, from time to time, have always been accompanying mankind.

Today, worldly writings have become the fashion and main trend. Romanticism isn't even a topic for discussion any longer. No matter whether you speak of adult or children's literature, they have all distanced themselves from romanticism. Zhang Chengzhi is the last romantic in modern Chinese literature. Now, on encountering Blackcrane, we're given a chance to revisit the characteristics of romanticism, such as advocating nature.

Blackcrane once said: "I like to go off alone and I choose the northern grasslands and forests. For me, that is a life full of extravagance." Almost all of his writing is about nature or man and nature. If we gather all of his works together, we can admire countless descriptions of natural scenery. In this era where we have lost this scenery, it is a form of fortuity that we can see the landscape through his pen. Snowfields, grasslands, deserts, lofty mountains and virgin forests—he presents all of this fascinating scenery to us. They're not just pure landscapes, but are endowed with divinity by Blackcrane's pen. When the Creator made grass, made mountains,



made wolves and made dogs, he was not just making grass, mountains, wolves or dogs. They were created as meaningful enlightenment objects given to mankind by the Creator. They are books, great books, and Upanishads. They transmit the Creator's intentions to us and teach us important meanings about survival and life. In Blackcrane's writings, we don't just see him advocating for nature, but also his respect for nature. Animism—he uses his writing to tell us that we urbanites have already lost our sensitivity to nature and, moreover, we have lost our reverence for nature.

While reading Blackcrane's work, I happened to think of Chekhov's *Grassland*. *Grassland* isn't at all an animal story—it tells the story of a young boy who wants to go to a faraway place to study. One day, he sets off on a horse cart—and the horse cart drives across the grassland. The novel is full of meaning: the child goes to study, and, from the moment that his horse cart's wheel starts to bounce along the grassland, the school's gates open—nature is his first school. The grassland, the sky above the grassland, and the bird flying in the sky...everything in nature is describing the way and the method of survival to the young child.

For Blackcrane, nature isn't just a place for cultivation, but also a wide-ranging and profound creed.

Another example is his recognition of primitive states. The scenery that classical romanticism most looks down on is man-made scenery. They have never been interested in farmland that reaches as-far-as-the-eye-can-see or golden wheat in uniform fields. What they like and revere is nature still in its original state, untouched by man, unchanged by man. Grasslands, deserts, although wastelands, are still the places where their aesthetic interests reside.



But what about Blackcrane? What about Blackcrane's works? He and his writing similarly hold a very different view of scenery made by man and not by gods (the Creator). He opposes man's self-righteous upkeep and transformation of nature, and he opposes the manipulation of nature. This attitude reaches to encompass his view of cities and modern civilisation. Dogs and people are all the prisoners of cities. They long for boundless wilderness, as manifested in his words, and also manifested in his works. Praise for wilderness and the cherishing of wild nature are, in him, one and the same. The tall and fierce dog in *Black Flame*, as beautiful as a black flame, appeared in his writings because this fierce dog (he sometimes uses the quantifier 'head') will never lose its wild nature, it will break its chains and with a new lease of life, rush to the grasslands and rush to the wilderness. He is dismissive of all domesticated animals that have lost their wild streak—whether they be wolves or bears or dogs. A little bear sent to a zoo away from the mountain and kept in a deep pit, after a long time, almost completely loses its bearishness, and rolls about begging for food from humans every day. Glishk, a character in his works, heard that the little bear had already become good-for-nothing, and thought to himself: I knew this a long time ago, it would have been better to shoot him with a single shot right at the outset. Blackcrane sneers at the uncontrolled reproduction of Tibetan mastiffs for money, and regards those so-called Tibetan mastiffs, manipulated and bred by humans, as worthless monsters.

Another example is his gazing into the distance. I forget how many times Blackcrane writes 'horizon' in his works. His gazing into the distance isn't just a model, but moreover a form of disclosure of desire. He and his characters like far off places. They're without end—after reaching the endpoint, the endpoint quickly becomes the starting point. This yearning for a life on the move doesn't just manifest on his own body, but moreover on the body of images that he portrays. He often writes about a wolf, a wolf that came from over





there—Mongolia. The wolf's fur is slightly heavier. From time to time and from place to place, there was always a distance, a boundless distance. The horizon is constantly receding, so no matter how far he goes, the gaze into the distance remains a constant posture.

Passion, sadness, poetry and loneliness, they are all characteristics of classical romanticism. Now we can't clearly discern if the desert, the wild, the snowfields and the grasslands created his tendency towards romanticism, or if his tendency towards romanticism led to his deep love for the desert, the wild, the snowfields and the grasslands.

The Laws of Nature

Blackcrane has a consistent and solid view of nature. Without hearing Blackcrane's own explanation, it's hard to judge if these actually came from his own life experience or from reading, or if they come from a combination of the two.

But one thing's for sure: he's not an animal protectionist. Because for animal protectionists, views on nature are extremely simple, even mechanical. Their ideas are evident at a glance, seemingly sacred and irrefutable, but actually presented on an extremely obvious level. For Blackcrane, it's not so: Blackcrane's views on nature are comparatively complicated, comparatively confused, and, of course, comparatively mature. He never generalises in discussing nature and man's vital concerns, and never superficially expresses pity or sympathy for animals, and even doesn't lightly express an urge to save animals on the verge of extinction. What he reflects on are the laws of nature.

The laws are set by the Creator—and since they are set by the Creator, they cannot be changed.



Natural Selection is one law of nature. When we read in his writings about a person who ruthlessly discards the weakest puppies, our psychological bottomline, rooted in regular humanism, is torn open, and we feel we can't accept it. But for Blackcrane—or at least for his characters—that's merely a very normal occurrence. Blackcrane has used a lot of ink to describe the fight for survival and the fight for life in dangerous environments. He both emotionally and intellectually inclines towards valiant and strong creatures. Because, in his view, only these creatures have the grounds for survival—or to put it more accurately, it's not that he thinks that only these creatures have the grounds for survival, but that he has seen the laws of nature: in the vast forest, it's the survival of the fittest. Only through having this kind of natural law, can you preserve this world, and make it grow and multiply without end. Here we meet a grave problem: should we bemoan the state of the universe and pity their fate on a shallow level and in the end cause a species' extinction, or should we bemoan the state of the universe and pity their fate on a deep level and enable the species to survive? Here, there are two forms of humanism: the former is a worldly humanism, and the latter a rational humanism. Blackcrane chooses the latter, and, because of this, in his work we often read about sad and difficult-to-bear natural selection. This is a very different feeling to that generated by ordinary literature. In ordinary literature, we always stand on the side of the weak, but in Blackcrane's work, we stand on the side of the strong—even if it's weak, it must be weak right now, but strong in future, or, to put



it another way, it seems weak, but at its centre it must be strong beyond compare. Blackcrane hasn't simply transferred human society's ethics to the animal world. There's a big difference between society and nature.

In the novel *The Child of the Wolf Valley*, there is a passage about hunting and killing wolf packs: while the car is chasing the wolves, it chases them until their urine and faeces splash around, and the car wheel ruthlessly crushes them—crushes them again and again. “Every

time the car collides with these desperate wolves, Tala let out long howls, and Narisu was also infected by this cry. He would also bark when the vehicle hit a wolf that already couldn't run or the car crushed a wolf's body again and again, he would always bark”. They didn't even let one mother wolf go. We might find reading this kind of description very hard to accept. Blackcrane's works don't lack beautiful and moving passages, but also don't lack cruel passages. But, maybe we need to learn how to accept them, perhaps reason is on his side. In his view, man can't go beyond this world, and is a species of animal, and also participates in this field of competition restricted by the laws of nature. If we don't kill the wolves, these wolves could kill our sheep flock, our dogs, and even ourselves; and if our sheep flocks were not to exist, our survival would be in jeopardy. Therefore, we must kill them, ruthlessly.

Blackcrane often writes about hand-to-hand fights, butchering and massacres. Many passages are soaked in bloodbaths.

There's nothing to be done, this is the law.

But this natural world restricted by this law at the same time produces great feelings in us. As for mother wolves and dogs, when they've been torn to pieces or stabbed in the mud by a sharp staff, beneath their bodies we'll still see their offspring safe and sound.

When Blackcrane is faced with these cruel laws, he uncontrollably reveals his compassion. Narisu, in his writings—a handsome and valiant youth on the grasslands--cannot bear one sound: the mournful cry of a lamb after it's been driven away by a mother wolf. “If there's something in the world that he can't bear, it would be the mournful cry of a helpless lamb. Every time he hears that noise, he feels as if a bit of his own heart's strength is slipping away, and feels he is more and more powerless.”

Blackcrane says: “Due to my life habits, I need a large amount of meat and milk products.” And to have enough meat and milk products, you need the grasslands, and their flocks of sheep and herds of cows. And for sheep and cows to survive, they need to receive the protection of Tibetan mastiffs and Mongolian sheepdogs, and of man. Raising fierce dogs and killing ravenous wolves becomes a necessity.

No matter whether it's Blackcrane or his characters, their need for meat and milk products and the pleasure that this food gives their lives cannot be hidden. But there is always confusion. This is a tragedy—the deepest tragedy, they come from opposing sides, but both desires collide in rational contradictions.

The implementation of nature's laws is inevitably a tragic process. Blackcrane knows this intuitively, and because of this, his animal stories are more profound and deep than the average animal story.

Awareness of Pedigree

This awareness is implicit between the lines in Blackcrane's work. Whether it's about horses, camels or dogs, Blackcrane always pays special attention to their breeding. And it's not the





same as the Buddhist principle of compassion—in the eyes of a Buddhist practitioner, species aren't divided into the poor and the wealthy, they're all living beings, "they're also a life"—but in Blackcrane's work, species aren't equal, and individuals within a species are also not equal. He makes explicit choices and has explicit preferences. In many places, he brings up species' lineages—for him, lineage is a very important, and even grave, concern. He's even like an animal researcher in how he researches a dog's lineage. If he finds out that an animal's lineage is pure and noble, he can't help but like and admire them. Because he can always be accompanied by dogs of unusual heritage, he feels his life is happy and blessed. And in the end they become source materials and resources for his writing.

He describes the Tibetan mastiff in several places: Its head is big and square, with a broad forehead, a small mouth and a wide nose. Its muscles look like they're ready to burst out of its neck—it's thick, solid, and powerful. You can see it from the few movements where it looks like it's waving a bit of rag just after grabbing a wolf in its mouth. Its four legs are strong, and its thick tail is untidily rolled up on its back like a chrysanthemum. The black fur all over its body is long and dense, and when the setting sun shines brightly, it turns from black to blue.

In his view, this is clearly a purebred Tibetan mastiff—if it wasn't then he wouldn't waste his ink on it. In fact, I've actually seen Tibetan mastiffs a few times, but I really don't like their appearance. Its whole face is a blur. But I know, it's a purebred Tibetan mastiff. In Blackcrane's eyes, because it's purebred, everything changes.

In several places, he ridicules and speaks sarcastically about so-called Tibetan mastiffs that aren't of pure breeding. These Tibetan mastiffs are the result of muddled mating. The Tibetan mastiffs that have been born from mating with fat dog breeds are so fat that they're deformed. They're completely useless and are just rubbish—that's all.



He has a special fondness for the ancient Mongolian sheepdog. In his works, he mentions many times "the golden spots above both their eyes". In Blackcrane's eyes, they're nothing other than spirit dogs.

And the mixed breed dogs that roam Lhasa's streets also receive their fair share of ridicule.

As for camels, especially male camels, when they're written about, the descriptions are equally elegant. These descriptions make me think of Aitmatov (Chinghiz Aitmatov is a Kyrgyz author). He isn't a writer of animal stories, but he also writes about the grasslands, and writes about fine horses—and he writes most brilliantly about the awe-inspiring male camel. I recently remembered my feelings upon reading his novel called *The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years*. The camel, a noble species in Aitmatov's eyes, was written as coming in a roar, with a majestic wind sweeping the earth and the world toppling over because of it.

The production of the awareness of breeding perhaps bears relation to the writer's appreciation of aesthetic boundaries like "purity", "vicissitudes" and "vigour". Is it related to Darwin's theory of evolution? I don't know. But perhaps it also bears relation to his concern for the body and the spirit? He likes the strong, and doesn't like the weak, and, at the very least, it's his work.

Knowledge

Acquiring knowledge—this is an experience that I haven't had in reading any other novels. Knowledge about animals, plants, religion, customs and emotions. Some of this knowledge appears directly in the narrative of the main text, but some appears as an appendix, and some is presented in the form of notes. To my memory, this is the work with the most notes of any work I've read, and the knowledge is very specialised, and also easy to understand. Every time I reach a note, I always stop reading and have a look. Reading the note is like listening to a voice-over. Because animal novels should have knowledge to impart, when I read these notes, it feels very natural and fitting. You seem to think that there are a few types of novel in this world that deserve notations. When reading stories, reading about scenery, reading about the human condition, reading about innate nature, reading about the vicissitudes of life in the animal world and the vicissitudes of human and animal life, you occasionally obtain knowledge that you wouldn't normally pay attention to, and think that the reading has a special appeal.

The writer's care for knowledge perhaps originates in the definition of his dedication to animal fiction. Blackcrane harbours very clear views on animal fiction in his heart. He emphasises truth and science, and doesn't approve of so-called imagination that deviates from animals' reality, nor so-called poetic licence. He emphasises observation—similar to the observations of the zoologist Lorenz—and that animal fiction must be founded on observation and must have



knowledge about animals—and cannot violate that knowledge. Lorenz, who wrote *King Solomon's Ring*, once did his utmost to attack writers who arbitrarily gave form to animals and who had “free creative” prerogatives. He said that these people completely mess up other people's understanding of animals. From Blackcrane's opinions and texts, you can see that he seems to hold the same views as Lorenz to a certain degree.

I remember Blackcrane once saying: a dog, whether a Tibetan mastiff or Central Asian sheepdog, could never bite a bear to death, unless it was a young bear.

He opposes writing animal novels as children's fairytales, fantasy or myths. He hopes that reading animal stories can help readers to grasp ideas from the natural sciences.

From this analysis, it seems easy to understand Blackcrane's preference for knowledge.

Literariness

To take it to extremes, in animal fiction, what is written is not about animals, but fiction, writing about animals is written in the meaning of the fiction. Animals are just the subject matter, like magic in fantasy novels, or the ocean in ocean literature, or science fiction in science fiction literature. When all is said and done, they are literature, and nothing else.

Blackcrane is a writer, and not a zoologist. He is very clear about his own position. Because of this, in his works, we see his literariness displayed from beginning to end.



Take his language, it's very poetic, it has vigour, its narrative style is powerful, it's direct and efficient, and it's never sloppy.

Take how he paints a scene: when reading Blackcrane's fiction, you might admire imagery that's full of texture and extremely fine. When the handsome youth Narisu seeks shelter with his father, and appears on the horizon riding a horse, the image of him approaching hunched and alone shines vividly in your mind. This is a peregrine falcon, "it has a fusiform body, and its smooth feathers are like beautiful scales on a marine fish, sparkling and resplendent, only birds flying freely in the wilderness have such spotless, beautiful feathers. This handsome bird of prey shines with cold compactness and fearless indifference..." Sometimes, text is better than drawings in painting a scene. We would prefer to read a paragraph like this with such a sense for imagery.

Blackcrane's perceptions are to be admired. His perception for light and shadow, colour, sounds, and all living things on earth is extremely sharp, and he always finds the most appropriate and surprising descriptions to reveal his perceptions to us.

In zoos and on TV, I've heard the growls of tigers, lions, leopards and huge fierce dogs countless times. But I've never been able to find the most accurate description for that sound. Blackcrane's now told me. He said that an angry snow leopard: "arrogantly growls like ice splitting".

I treat this description as if it's the last description of a certain sound.

Blackcrane's writing has already reached a peak, but this peak's arrival might suggest a bottleneck as he is confronted with breakthroughs in subject-matter, images and themes. But we needn't be worried, this is someone who always has the capacity for growth.

Congratulations to Blackcrane.

Congratulations to animal novels.

Labelling and Interpretation

—A Brief Discussion of the Animal Novels of Gerelchimeg Blackcrane

Nie Meng

Literature and Art Newspaper, June 2014

Blackcrane is a good subject for commentary from several points of view. He comes with many areas framed by hypothetical lines for people to stick labels on: nature, animals, borderlands, nomads, and so on. People call him the son of nature, envying his inherent advantage—just writing about himself is enough to make a good story. He has long hair flowing from under the bandana on his head, and a piercing in his left ear. A leather waistcoat, hand-stitched by Ewenki elders, wraps his torso, and he is always accompanied by a large hound. In today's context, his appearance is always surprising and modish, easily attracting attention, labelled, and venerated, including attaching meaning which then makes it more understandable—his being echoes and fulfils all kinds of ideals. But Blackcrane is not arrogant because of this. Rather, his arrogance does not stem from the aforementioned labels and veneration. In the picture, he is sitting on the ground, side by side with his large, beast-like dogs. He is surveying a distant location, a place which is in a different direction from the habitual connotations added to the text used to label him.





Kitsch, or Something Else?

Milan Kundera saw the two “kitsch” teardrops of humankind in the 19th century German Romanticism period. The first teardrop says, “Look at the children running on the lawn! How beautiful!” The second teardrop says, “Seeing children running on the lawn is a moving sight for one and all mankind. How beautiful!” It is the second teardrop that makes kitsch, kitsch. Soon after, this most bewildering and unintelligible category of modern aesthetics spread over us. People afflicted by “bad taste” seem to suffer from an insatiable thirst, randomly drinking all kinds of water in hope of finding a short respite of nourishment and calm amidst the illusion of substitute experiences and the “parody of purification”.

Similarly, it is difficult for animals and the borderlands theme to be separate; they are salt and sugar in water. The thirsty come rushing with aspirations, and, mirroring cup and water, they are as close to beasts as can be. They hold a lively yet solemn introspection and reconstruction of human nature as they record a novel aspect of social customs and conventions through a viewfinder, allowing themselves to display the same characteristics.

Blackcrane’s animal novels easily fulfil such a need. Having spent his childhood in the company of two cream-coloured Mongolian sheepdogs on grasslands and in the village, this Mongolian writer is used to describing his own origins in this way. Today, he works on green fields where his office window looks out onto vast fields and passing peregrine falcons. He spends several months a year travelling through the great expanse of the grasslands and forests of the north, and optimising the breeding of large wolfdogs in camps; he gives the puppies to the herders for free. Whenever puppies are born, he compresses his various businesses into a week and completes them so that he can turn his full attention to their care.



This stubborn writer chose a path that is not very attractive, but one that he feels is right for him. He uses scientific truth to shatter the false beliefs many people have of being able to share a bed with wild animals. He reminds people that when dealing with nature, the ideal course to follow is to never have mutual possession with animals, but to let nature take its course and respect each other. He is always vigilant against made up “facts” and exhibitions which flirt with glorified ideals of animals. He tries to retell the story of fading wilderness from the perspectives of a specific group of people living in a specific environment, and pays tribute to the last of this ancient modus vivendi.

What is True, is True

The themes of confrontation and fighting highlights the power of humans, and the themes of friendship, holding something important, and rediscovery are also explored. There is development in the relation between man and nature, and man and animal, which evolves through the self-development of humans and their partners. However, when we start to fantasise about unconventional closeness with animals, and when animals are widely celebrated as heroes in stories, have humans truly achieved an accurate grasp of relationships, and self-positioning?

On this point, Blackcrane's writing ethics are clear and unquestionable. He repeatedly quotes French writer Jean Cayrol in various autobiographical texts. "If I lie to you, it is because I want to prove to you that what is false is true. In the creation of animal fiction, I have no intention of lying, because what is true, is true." Blackcrane prides himself on being an excellent reader, having read almost all the animal literature published in China, as well as related essays and observation notes. He believes that the material of many of the

current animal novels stem from intrinsic perceptions and legends, lacking proper rational judgment and personal observation of the natural environment. For him, the spirit of science is especially important in writing animal novels. Truly excellent animal literature must be based on factual details, have a theoretical foundation and scientific basis. It should not deviate from the natural order of life in nature, nor distort the basic characteristics of animals. It should not go around legends, fables, fairy tales, myths, and adventure stories, and describe only what one knows. There should be "no more misleading people who already have very little knowledge of nature."

With regards to wild animals, the author warns us not to believe that it is fine to pick up dying wolf pups from the wild and bring them home to raise them (*Lion Boy*), nor to believe that one can see joy in the eyes of a wild animal in captivity (*Black Flame*). From the moment they are captured, what stays with them is no longer freedom, but endless fear. So, please, leave wild animals in their wild habitats. Likewise, human morals and emotions should not be willfully assigned to animals. It is a fairy tale to have a non-speaking creature speak in the human language. It is a farce to explore lost human morals with the mask

of an animal. Kind and loving interactions between humans and animals are not the most natural, nor a true existing relationship, but just our self-righteousness and imagination stemming from ignorant kindness.

As for those creatures who are close to humans, the word "equality" is often mentioned. Respect for each other's dignity is a step further in the interpretation of the abstract concept of equality by Blackcrane. For example, respect implies humility and reverence between dogs. There are also implied levels of pride of individuals, humans and dogs, as well as doting on the other. His once-immature self-esteem experienced an unprecedented challenge when he was followed by his maternal grandmother's black long-haired sheepdog. "The shadow was so large that it made me, a human, seem so insignificant." Spending time with his beloved Roger and Aya, was like having a bit of childhood that could be held in his arms, a dusk that the north wind could not take away, and the last campfire in winter. "They do not herd sheep, and I, am their sheep."

Blackcrane, like an animal behaviorist, takes great pains to provide explanations in his works, but his reverence for the scientific spirit does not in any way diminish the literary nature of his novels. Each of his novels is not a simple copy of a picture, or a description of a scene. The "I" as the narrator uses almost all his senses in following the animals experiences. They walk through the quiet valley, sit facing the horizon, listen to the wind sweeping through the golden grass, and watch the sunset which has not changed since time immemorial.

Blackcrane hopes that his novels speak not only about animals, or showing bravery, freedom, trust, and loyalty, but also to construct the fading wilderness. He hopes to record the once-glorious nomadic culture which flourished on vast pastureland—a specimen to refer to when people want to recover it.

"Gone forever" is a mental image repeatedly mentioned by the author,



and linked to that are eyes seeing yellowed wilting, herders falling from horses like layers of sand collapsing, and the shadows of sheepdogs lying at the top of grassy slopes, never to run back again. It belongs to lost time, and can only be repeated and found through memories. Blackcrane tries his best to avoid the most terrible kind of forgetting—fabrication and flights of fancy. Instead of obsessing over making old swords shine as brightly as before, he tries to restore the patches of rust which have been left by the wear and tear of years.

Usually, people prefer to describe spaces, which makes one think of mobility, but in fact, “location” is the fabric of our identity on which both memory and identity are solidly embroidered. The “pottery drinking cup” in Blackcrane’s memory has a specific place of growth—the grasslands. It begins in the south, with the Buir Lake adjacent to Mongolia, which meanders through the Orshuun Gol, and north to the wilds of the primitive Daxing’anling forest, bordering Russia with the Argun river. This vast land is inhabited by Mongolian tribes, Ewenki, Oroqen, Daur, and other ethnic minorities. The grasslands hold a way of life that is about long-established habits and traditions, simple and hardy, and very close to the heavens. Here, you can get a physical sense of quiet, and hear the subtle breath of all living things.

When the words “in this place” appear, what follows may be either a conventional description by Shen Congwen or Wang Zengqi that displays human nature and takes on the ideals of aesthetic thought. Perhaps it is also the tedious and burdensome accumulation of knowledge for the deliberate brewing of so-called local flavour. Obviously, the latter draws ever further from reverence. Borderland subjects face the same problem. For writers who live in unusual places, or possess rich resources, there are just too many passages and details of the unfamiliar they want to talk about. It is easy to fall into the mundane pattern of showing a collection of views, and attach the usual prescribed ideas to the deep cultural systems of ancient peoples. Blackcrane cuts through this pattern.

“Utopia” is a metaphor for memory, with its passion, dependence, love, and loyalty adhered to real people and their most ordinary lives. Blackcrane’s novel has two pairs of grandparent figures, maternal and paternal, which leave a deep impression on readers. The former are the quiet Zhabu and Qinggele, who polish the silver of the old saddles over and over again, and sew up the wounds of the sheepdogs with huge curved needles. The latter are Wulan Tuoya and Balajieyi, who, with the gentlest hands, leave “me” forever with the scent of the grasslands

on a leather robe smoked with horse dung. There is no specific appearance, gesture, or even character—they can be imagined to be anyone.

The herders have unique beliefs and complex emotions. They are willing to stay up all night to sing songs of persuasion to the ewes which abandon their lambs, and quietly recite, “I was not born to starve, and you were not born to suffer” when they slaughter animals. They refer vaguely to wolves as wild dogs, or tiangou, legendary creatures thought to eat the sun or moon in an eclipse, and hate the devastation these dogs wreak on their livestock. However, they find it difficult to forget nights once-filled with the howls of wolves and barking of dogs. Blackcrane says that if all roads have been tried and all taboos have been broken, the most important thing will be lost. People cannot cut off their shadows and walk alone. His novel is like a long Mongolian melody that drowns out all the sluggish words and noisy silence of the outside world; a broad-minded, open world, a fierce sorrow.

Blackcrane received the 2013 Young Writers Award, and the award speech reads, “Blackcrane’s writing deals with an important theme in China and the world today—the relationship between man and nature. While doing so, he brings a tribal experience of survival in the borderlands into the expression of Chinese literature, and builds a bridge between the adult world and children’s literature.” The award speech is short, with only enough room for the label. But what is certain is that his work can win this and other awards due to the incommensurability and significance of rich interpretations behind the labels.



IRead Foundation Interview

Wang Xinting

IRead Foundation, August 2018

Gerelchimeg Blackcrane (hereinafter referred to as Blackcrane) lived on the grasslands from the age of four to eight. In his opinion, these four years were the most important and precious time in his life. This childhood period spent on the grasslands gave him a constant source of inspiration and material for his later works of literature. For example, the book he wrote years later, titled *A Dog Named Ghost*, is a tribute to the shepherd dogs which accompanied him in his childhood. Blackcrane says that all the ways in which he approaches the world now were learnt during that period. I have never been hit harder by the realisation of how far-reaching the influence of childhood can be on a person until I spoke with Blackcrane.

Blackcrane began writing due to the influence of his childhood experiences. At first, he wrote to tell his classmates in the city about grassland stories and stories about life on the grasslands. Now, Blackcrane is one of the best children's writers of nature and animal literature. He hopes to build a passage for children to "feel the wind of the wilderness blow from the north." Blackcrane's writing, from his childhood to his present self, all serve to record and share the vast wilderness of the north. He loves that land deeply.

He can be considered a prolific writer, having published dozens of works of literature such as *Black Flame*, *The Blood Horse*, and *Hold the Wolf*. He has received numerous awards for many of his works, and they have been translated and introduced in countries outside of China. His 2017 full-length novel, *Six Seasons of Reindeer*, was included in the "IRead's 100 Children's Books" list. I first picked up *Six Seasons of Reindeer* thanks to this list and was enchanted by his writing after reading the introduction. Blackcrane likes the titles given to him by the media: "Son of Nature" and "Son of the Grasslands". A great longing rises in our being when reading his

books, a longing to go to the forests where the reindeer run, or to the grasslands where the horses gallop, a longing to see the majesty of shepherd dogs capable of killing wolves.

Fortunate are the children who encounter Blackcrane's work.

On growing up:

"I believe that a person can establish one's values and worldview before the age of six. In fact, all the ways in which I approach the world now were learnt during that period."

IRead Foundation: You've mentioned that your childhood was spent on the grasslands and in the village. Could you tell us about your childhood and your growing up years?

Blackcrane: Rilke once said that a poet's true homeland is childhood.

I spent four years of my childhood on the grasslands, from the age of four to eight. I was weak and sickly as a child, so my mother sent me to my grandmother's home on the grasslands, believing that the air and diet would make me strong. I think that was the most important growing up period in my human life. I could even venture to say that it is perfectly possible for humans to establish their values and worldview before the age of six. In fact, all the ways in which I approach the world now are a result of that period.

I returned to school in the city at the age of eight, and often





wanted to tell my classmates about everything I experienced on the grasslands. I had two shepherd dogs, as beautiful as white lions, on the grasslands, and they were able to kill wolves and fetch their carcasses home. I've rescued and raised wolf pups, deer, and hares, helped injured swans and wild geese... But my classmates had never experienced life like that and did not believe me. They thought I was a liar. I could not convince them, and I closed myself up for a while. It was in this time that I discovered that writing was an excellent way to express myself. I guess that was how I started on the path of a writer, to write down the stories of my childhood and tell more children about them. And now, I know that my own writing is, in fact, sometimes a recording of some element that is fading from this world, its tail-end. Pastures like autumn seas are no longer.

Everything exists in those long-ago moments. Back then, the grassland pastures were so rich and lush that they could reach over my head. I rode my pony across the grasslands, and I could touch the tips of the grass with my outstretched hands. At dusk, my grandmother had to stand on high ground to call me home for dinner because she couldn't see me in the grass. That was the last ocean of grass.

IRead Foundation: Can you tell us more about your two beautiful lion-like white shepherd dogs and the dogs you've had?

Blackcrane: My dog is with me in almost all the pictures used to promote me as a writer so far. I spent four years on the grasslands, and now that I look back on these years, I've found that the rugged life I had has benefitted me throughout my life. I used to have two cream-coloured Mongolian shepherd dogs on the grasslands, a mother dog and its offspring, who accompanied me all through that



time. It is because of their companionship that my distant childhood memories are painted with warmth and rich colour. They were fierce hounds which could drive wolves away or even kill them, but they did not herd sheep. I was their sheep.

One of the dogs was called Tsagaan, which means "white" in Mongolian, and the other was called Arslan, which means 'lion'. I failed to take my sheepdogs with me when I left the grasslands, and even now, many years later, I still dream about them once or twice a year. In my dreams, they try again and again to jump on the train at the train station, but the windows don't open and they slip down, again and again. I can hear the vivid sound of their claws scratching the body of the train. I later received news that they walked a long way to the train station daily to wait for me, believing that I would surely come back from where I had left. However, their wait was in vain, and



they eventually died of depression. Years later, I wrote *the Ghost Hound* in memory of them, my childhood shepherd dogs of the grasslands.

When I returned to that grassland as an adult, some elders recognised me.

"Oh, nohaichin! I still remember what you looked like as a child. You used to ride bareback on a little leopard-spotted pony, cantering across the grasslands with two white dogs, big as lions, following you."

White dogs as big as lions.

Nohaichin.

In Mongolian, "nohai" means dog, and "chin" means someone who is more specialised in a certain field. For example, when people describe a horse trainer, they

will use the term “uyachin”. The word “nohaichin” is not in Mongolian. The people of the grasslands just made up the term and gave it to me. I am the one who knows dogs, who understands dogs.

Shortly after I left, my two shepherd dogs died of depression. They waited for me but did not manage to wait for my return. I think that was when my childhood ended. The moment I learned of my dogs’ deaths I knew that some things in my life were gone forever. I lost the grasslands of my childhood, my short nomadic life.

Tsaagan and Arslan, my white lions, belonged henceforth to a time gone by; a future never reached. Later, I kept going into the grasslands, looking for that breed of shepherd dog, but I never saw one with a coat as creamy-white as the layer of milk fat that appears on top of milk left sitting overnight. They were like my once-shining childhood — gone forever.

The famous Dambiiijantsan is mentioned in *Men and Gods in Mongolia* by the Danish writer Henning Haslund-Christensen. It is a book documenting expeditions to the Torghut, a Mongolian clan of the grasslands, in the 1920s and 1930s. This well-known warlord appeared many times in the writings of explorers and scholars who have explored

and studied western China, and always has the honour of being the subject of many special sections of writings. Henning Haslund-Christensen’s writing of his whereabouts is also one of the most moving passages in the book for me.

The end of that passage reads like a fantasy saga of the western Gobi and grasslands — time passes, and the smoke and dust clear.

“It was only around the campfires of the nomads that whispers passed of that aggressive dark horse, the militant lama who streaks like fletching, had already disappeared from the stables before the rout of the castle. They whispered, too, of his beautiful carved silver saddle, and its absence from the spoils of war Baldandorjiin brought back to Kulun. There were also murmurs of a fierce watchdog, often chained in sturdy silver in front of this militant lama’s house, still lurking near the castle, waiting for its master’s return.”

My dogs kept waiting for the return of their young master, but I was too late.

IRead Foundation: You have quite a large frame, but your descriptions and writing give an impression of a very detail-oriented, sensitive person.

Blackcrane: My mother’s only wish for me in my childhood was to be strong and healthy since I was sickly and weak. I think I have finally fulfilled my promise to my mother to grow up into a tall and strong person. I feel that a truly perfect person is one who strives to be as strong mentally as they are physically.

On writing:

“My love for reading comes from my mother. She loves reading and writing, and I think this influenced me. Parents are the earliest educators of children.”

IRead Foundation: When did you start writing?

Blackcrane: If you mean professional writing, I would say that I started at about the age of 17 or 18. If you mean just writing, then it’s probably even earlier, at around 11 or 12, when I started writing some essays and participating in some competitions—I even won some prizes. My writings were published when I was about ten years old.

IRead Foundation: Did you love reading

from a young age?

Blackcrane: My love for reading comes from my mother. She loves reading and writing, and I think this influenced me. Parents are the earliest educators of children.

IRead Foundation: Is Mongolian your first language? Was it challenging when you first started writing in Chinese?

Blackcrane: I was born in a Han Chinese region, spent my childhood in the Mongolian region, then had my schooling and work in the Han Chinese region. I write in Chinese. I can only speak Mongolian but not write it.

IRead Foundation: Did you write about animals from the start of your career?

Blackcrane: I wrote a wide range of literature in the beginning of my career, including novels, poetry, and essays, and I was not too bad at it. I started writing animal novels for fun and wrote one or two occasional short stories about my childhood experiences. I didn’t expect that this type of animal literature would become more and more influential and bring me enough fame to specialise in it. Truthfully, I probably understand animals better than humans.

IRead Foundation: What was your original aim in writing?

Blackcrane: To make my mother proud of me.

IRead Foundation: You must be very close with your mother.

Blackcrane: I think all children are probably close with their mothers. Maybe my mother paid more attention to me because I was weak and sickly as a child. Of course, my becoming a writer is definitely linked to my mother.

When I was a child, the concept of parent-to-child reading did not exist yet, but I was already falling asleep every day with my mother reading to me. I also remember an incident when I was very young, maybe around the age when first memories can be recalled. I was playing on my own outside, when, on a whim, I used a wooden stick to roughly shape a black lump of clay into a cat. I held this lump of clay in cupped hands and ran home in great excitement. I just wanted to tell my mother that this was a little thing that I'd made. I still remember how preciously my mother treated it. She picked the little thing up ever so carefully and placed it delicately in a flowerpot. I knew that she wouldn't be able to tell

that it was a cat without me telling her—it was too abstract, too Picasso, too Dali, and too Munch. It's been too long and I don't remember what she said back then, but I remember that she kissed me and complimented me. Later, the little cat was promptly forgotten and it gradually melted away in the flowerpot. Come to think of it, that was probably my first creation in my life, and most importantly, received encouragement from my mother. Later in my life, people keep asking me why I write. It's simple. I want to write a book that will make my mother proud of me. It's been years, and I've been working hard to write a book like that to give to my mother. I still haven't created a work of literature which I can give to my mother. I'll keep trying.

IRead Foundation: How did you decide to write for children?

Blackcrane: My works are automatically classified as children's literature in China, but are classified as "nature literature" when translated in overseas markets, which opens my work up to both adults and children. I like to be a writer of children's literature because I find that too few adults read in China these days, and I lack the ability to change adults, so it is more meaningful to let more children read my

works. Reading changes China.

IRead Foundation: Which books and authors have had the most influence on your writing?

Blackcrane: Counting just the ones which influenced me in terms of animal novels and nature literature, I think my first view of nature literature was, and still is, influenced by Russian-language writers. Russian author Vitaly Bianki's *Forest Scouts* and *The Secret of Arsaces*... Kyrgyz author Chinghiz Aitmatov's *The White Ship and Death Stand*... Three works of a Chinese minority author, Ureltu, also sparked my interest in the wilderness of northern China; *The Amber Bonfire*, *A Hunter's Plea*, and *The Buck With Seven-Branched Antlers*.

I think my true literary enlightenment is Alejo Carpentier's *The Kingdom of This World*. His work made me realise that novels could be written in this way, and that literature could be like this.

IRead Foundation: When I last saw you at the airport in Bologna, you told me how difficult it was to write full-time. Do you feel that writing is a very difficult thing to do?

Blackcrane: Writing is never difficult for a person who really loves writing. It's a joy, and I'd be willing to do it even if I'm not paid for it. However, if the writing is raised to a level where it becomes a means of earning a living, it is not so easy anymore and requires a process of having a sufficient number of readers who recognise your work and are receptive to it. If you have the financial means to be comfortable, writing is certainly not a problem.

On *Six Seasons of Reindeer*:

"Sometimes the city is also a forest, and even more cold and detached. Real forests have much more life, and many moments of warmth."

IRead Foundation: Can you tell us how you wrote *Six Seasons of Reindeer*?

Blackcrane: This novel can be considered a summary of myself. I first walked into the camp of the Ewenki people more than ten years ago, when I was still young. The elderly people there called me "Little Mongolian". I lived in one of the largest reindeer camps of the Ewenki people, and there were still some ancient traditions being followed thanks to the elderly

people. Many of the elderly people have passed away now, taking things which were destined to disappear with them. In this novel, the protagonist remains unnamed from beginning to end — he only has the reindeer Ewenki name he used in the forest, Yeying, which means “Nightjar”. He enters the forest and gains acknowledgement, which repairs his confidence in regaining his life. It is a sort of growth and process of self-healing. I like this work of mine.

IRead Foundation: *Six Seasons of Reindeer* is a story of an intruder who’d lost his mother, but was healed by the vast northern forests. You also entered the world of the Ewenki people as an intruder.

Blackcrane: Entering a world that was not known to yourself before is always a sort of intrusion. However, if you go into it humbly, you will not be rejected, and not be an intruder. I was accepted by the Ewenki people the first time I went deep into the northern forests because I was interested in the culture of their people. The minorities of the north have many similar traditional cultures and habits, including food, so I was able to quickly integrate into that way of life and enjoy it.

IRead Foundation: The protagonist is a child who is not yet fourteen, and he went

from a highly developed city to a primitive forest, so he must be very uncomfortable at the start of this change. However, this discomfort is not really seen in the book. He is at home in the forest, and the animals and nature bring him solace, touching moments, and growth, which he cannot find easily in the city.

Blackcrane: Sometimes the city is also a forest, and even more cold and detached. Real forests have much more life, and many moments of warmth. The old reindeer Ewenki man, Qiuniao, is the link between this child and the forest, and the child is able to enter the forest from another perspective because of this old man.

IRead Foundation: From what I know, in August 2003, the Ewenki hunters of China’s north, from the Aoluguya ethnic township in primeval forests of the Daxing’anling, moved out of the mountain forest where they have lived for generations and settled in another area. Later, some Ewenki people who did not adapt to city life returned to the mountain forests. Can you tell us about the current life of the Ewenki people?

Blackcrane: I’m referring to the Ewenki people who herd reindeer in the forests, who are historically called reindeer Tungus

or deer Tungus. According to historical records, this group of Ewenki people first lived in the tundra areas along the northeast tributaries of the Lena River, in the Transbaikal Mountains along the Vitim River. They moved to the Daxing’anling area on the right bank of the Argun river in the early 19th century to escape from war, and harassment from Russian immigrants. In 1973, the Chinese government established the Aoluguya ethnic township in Mangui. In August 2003, the hunters of the Aoluguya ethnic township left the forest and moved to the new Aoluguya township, a permanent settlement in Genhe City, Inner Mongolia, but a few of the reindeer Ewenki people still herd reindeer in the camps on the mountain and maintain the original lifestyle of the reindeer Ewenki people. The new generation of reindeer Ewenki adapt better to modern life, but it does take a long time to find a balance between tradition and modernity.

IRead Foundation: I’m curious about what the “crucial detail” in *Six Seasons of Reindeer* is.

Blackcrane: Aha, so you’re an earnest reader. You mean the end of that poacher, right? That sort of method is unimaginable. My friend, Mr Tiemuer, gave me this detail, and I put it in my novel with his permission.

On animal novels:

“I spent three and a half years just collecting material when I was writing *The Blood Horse*, my novel on Mongolian horses.”

IRead Foundation: You often emphasise that you write your novels in line with the law of nature. Can you tell us about your understanding of animal novels, and the creative process of writing your own animal novels?

Blackcrane: Animal novels are a type of genre fiction, with animals as the main characters. Fiction is all made up, but one thing which I think is very important is that the details must be true. I prefer to call the works I produce “nature literature”.

My animal novels are all set in the Hulunbuir grasslands and the Daxing’anling forests, and I know this land. I spent three and a half years just collecting material when I was writing *The Blood Horse*, my novel on Mongolian horses. I also visited many horse herders in the Hulunbuir grasslands and gave a pair of riding boots to every herder I interviewed. I can’t remember how many pairs of riding boots



I gave away as gifts. At the end of that, I'd become friends with boots-sellers on the e-commerce site, Taobao. I did that to express my respect for the old shepherds and to thank them for sharing such real and stunning details.

When I create a work of animal literature, all the details will be in line with the natural attributes of the animal. Of course, it's perfectly all right to add some of the author's imagination, so long as it does not go against the natural attributes of animals, otherwise it would become animal fantasy literature, or animal fables. Personally, I prefer the theme of fiction.

IRead Foundation: Your works hold a lot of informative annotations and appendices, which are very interesting for children, and even adults can learn a lot. Was it your idea to add the informative content?

Blackcrane: How should I put it...It was a necessity. In fact, some time ago, an editor of a publisher simply removed the annotations. It might not have been a problem if it were another writer's work, but my mine is more complicated because many animals, as well as objects or specific proper nouns cannot be found outside of my work, not even on the internet search engine giant, Baidu.

Animal novels are works of literature which focuses more attention on the building of the storyline, the unfolding of the story. A rich plot can move the reader and stimulate the reader's interest in reading. This is what animal novels aim to do, and also what I want to convey, relevant knowledge, to children through my works. Children can gain more knowledge through reading, and this is the result I'm hoping for.

IRead Foundation: Most of the animals in your books are related to humans, like mastiffs, horses, and reindeer. The stories you tell are not just those of animals but of people and animals, and the relationship between people and nature.

Blackcrane: Before I answer, it is important to define animal literature. I feel that it is a subset of nature literature, and animal literature itself is further divided into animal novels, animal comics, animal fables, animal observation notes which include the currently popular picture books, animal story picture books, and so on.

Animal novels are just one type of animal literature. Yes, animal novels have animals as the main characters, and the environment the animals live will be the setting of the story, which is generally in nature or the wilderness, far away from the city. When readers start to be concerned about the animals, they actually become interested in the lives of creatures which are not human beings. Paying attention to these lives and will also mean that they are paying attention to the environment they live in, the nature and wilderness which we humans share with them.

Though these animals are just characters, I hope to show the ways of the wilderness

through these characters. In the background of my works, the relationship between humans and nature is a little more intimate, and nature is still demonstrating its power, even now. For example, the last heavy snowfall of spring fell in Hulunbuir when I made my way out of my camp on the Hulunbuir grasslands to attend an event at the end of March this year, and I couldn't get out in my four-wheel drive pickup truck. I had to ride a horse to get out to the main road, and my friends from the city drove over to pick me up. Nature is still displaying its power.

IRead Foundation: The worlds in your books are romantic and beautiful, but are also cruel and follow the law of the jungle. Can you tell us your view on nature?

Blackcrane: A "view on nature" seems like a new term. I remember there being "worldviews" and "systems of values", and mine were formed before I was six. I believe that children's worldviews and values can be established quite firmly before the age of five or six, like mine were. All of my ways of acting in the world now are a continuation from that age. If I must talk about my view on nature, all the animals in my works of literature live in their natural environment, where they should live in the real world, according to

their natural attributes and behaviours. I think this is also the basis of my creation of novels with animals as main characters. The novel is fiction, but the details are not.

IRead Foundation: I feel that work like yours can only be written by someone who loves the northern land very much. Can you talk to us about your connection and relationship with nature?

Blackcrane: First of all, I am not against modernisation, but I am against the barbarous and irrational destruction and exploitation of nature. With enough education on ecology, we will be able to help children understand one thing—humans and nature can live together in harmony.

I like that some members of the media call me the “Son of Nature” and “Son of the Grasslands”. I like these titles, and it is also a kind of approach I have to nature which I learnt as a child, to be humble and respectful. The result I wish for is for children to have a basic view of nature through my work, and recognise that there are other lives in the world other than that of humans, to respect nature and to cherish it.

On children’s literature:

“If, a child finishes my book, closes it, walks to the window, and can imagine that they feel the wild wind of the north on their faces, I think that would be all I can ask for.”

IRead Foundation: Some of your works are not particularly strong in the storytelling aspect. Do you worry if that doesn’t spark interest in children?

Blackcrane: As a writer, I inadvertently choose my readers when I write. Likewise, my readers choose me. A writer actually grows with their readers.

Because an identifier such as “children’s literature” is added to my name as a writer, well, actually, there really are many readers of mine who’d grown up with my work. There are many such readers, so many that when I attend book fairs these days, a person will suddenly come up to me and say, “I read your book when I was a child.” These meetings leave me with a lamentation of the power of time, the relentless march of the years, and also make me realise that my books are growing up with them. And when I discover that

special glow, that strength, in the eyes of these people, I know that I have been successful as a children’s literature author.

In terms of my work, my ultimate hope is to tell children about the fading way of life in the wilderness. I try my best to build themes like freedom, equality, loyalty, and love in my work.

IRead Foundation: What are your thoughts on children’s literature?

Blackcrane: I feel that children’s literature is literature that is created for children at a specific age that can shape their thoughts and character. In fact, as works of literature, their existence is to provide possibilities. When things are so far, so out of reach, reading can take us into a world we look forward to visiting, and let us experience things which can build our self-esteem, experience love, and compassion. This, I think, is the meaning of literature.

IRead Foundation: Do you have a specific age group in mind when you write?

Blackcrane: I’ve never considered that as a factor. First, I have a story, then I write it down, and the final presentation is to the reader. My books are suitable for both children and adults, but in the

case of novels, child readers will need to have a reading ability of at least the 3rd Grade level to read with less difficulty. I do consider the reading difficulty for the younger children, so my publishers also make phonetic and bridging versions of my works. For even younger readers, I’ve also published two picture books, *The Moose of Ewenki* and *Twelve Puppies*, in collaboration with the artist, Ms. Jiu’er.

IRead Foundation: You’ve started writing picture books recently. What do you find are the differences or similarities between the creation of picture books and literature?

Blackcrane: Well, here’s the thing about picture books: my novels are actually only suitable for children with 3rd Grade reading ability and up, though, of course, there are some districts in China with children of higher reading ability. So, as I’ve mentioned, some of the publishers I work with make phonetic and bridging versions of my works, so 1st and 2nd Grade children can read my stories too. It happens that some of my readers have grown up and become parents, and if they want to show my stories to their children, they will need books like these, picture books. I hope to provide this aesthetic of education to children.

IRead Foundation: What do you most hope to bring to children through your writing?

Blackcrane: I hope that a child will be attracted to the cover of my book in a bookstore, pick it up, flip the pages, and be drawn into the story. I'd like for them to be my readers. I hope to convey ideas to them.

If, a child finishes my book, closes it, walks to the window, and can imagine that they feel the wild wind of the north on their faces, I think that would be all I can ask for.

IRead Foundation: Your novels are like a gateway for urbanite children, bringing them into a completely different world and allowing them to have a small connection to nature.

Blackcrane: I think that's the point of literature, to construct such a gateway for children, and to build a connection. From a long-term perspective, it's about conveying ideas.

The final curtain may fall on paper books one day, but books will continue to exist in an electronic reading format. This sort of reading format is quite environmentally friendly, actually.

However, this situation is a reality. Let's think about how a child in Beijing gets to know nature, in a city where people can hardly breathe when haze descends, and when days of blue skies are few. It is a luxury to talk about nature in an environment like that. But this is why there is a need for good works of literature which can teach children about nature. Reading such works enable children to think about why our world has become the way it is now, and what we can do to return it to the way it was.

Isn't there an expression that says we are the children of the earth? Nature is the world that has not been destroyed by humans. The air, the earth, and the water. Let children come to know how to cherish our world. I think this the right world view, and the way to treat our world.

To parents and children:

"Children, my hope is for you to grow up happily."

IRead Foundation: Is there anything you'd like to say to parents and children?

Blackcrane: When I interact with children in activities organised in schools, the

question I'm most afraid to be asked by children is, "What do you think of the current education system?" I have many thoughts on it, and I also feel that there are several aspects of the current education system which can be improved, but all these need time. People who love education and children will have to push for change too, and this will also take time. The children themselves simply cannot fight this system.

So, for parents, the real pressure on them is to act as a cushion to soften the blow to their children, or to act as grease that would ease the friction. At present, there is no way for the average person to get their

child out of the current education system. So, parents need to make it possible for their children to grow up happily, and help them adapt to this education system at the same time. This is not easy, but I think this is what I really want to say to parents.

Children, my hope is for you to grow up happily. Of course, this is fairly difficult to do. It requires society to create a space and environment for them to grow up happily. This hope of mine requires all of us to work together to make it come true. If we do—all of us, everything we do, every day, should be to make this world a better place, so that children can grow up healthy and happy in a better world.



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LIST OF AWARDS

2006	Black Flame	Recommended Books of Knowledge Project
2006	Black Flame	Bing Xin Children's Literature New Work Award
2007	Black Flame	The 1st "Three Hundred" Original Book Publishing Project of the General Administration of Press and Publication
2007	Black Flame	The 7th (2004-2006) National Outstanding Children's Literature Award
2010	The River of Wolverine	Nominated for the 3rd China Outstanding Publication Award
2010	The River of Wolverine	The 8th (2007-2009) National Outstanding Children's Literature Award
2011	Black Dogs: Hala, Nohai	listed in 50 Popular Books in China
2011	Child in Wolf Valley	Bing Xin Children's Book Award
2011	Black Flame	Listed in the 1st 100 Outstanding National Book Recommendations to the country
2011	The River of Wolverine	The 3rd "Three Hundred" Original Publishing Project of the General Administration of Press and Publication
2012	Black Dogs: Hala, Nohai	General Administration of Press and Publication Recommendations of 100 Excellent Books to young people across the country
2012	Black Dogs: Hala, Nohai	Outstanding Works Award of the 12th "Five One Project" by the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee
2012	Black Flame	Recommended Reading Bibliographies in China
2013	The River of Wolverine	Bing Xin Children's Book Award
2013	Black Flame	Outstanding Exported Book Award
2015	The Blood Horse	Chen Bochui International Children's Literature Award
2015	The Camel Tied with a Red Silk	Bing Xin Children's Book Award

2015	The Camel Tied with a Red Silk	Theme Publishing Project
2015	The Camel Tied with a Red Silk	"The 12th Five-Year" National Important Book Publishing Project
2015	The Camel Tied with a Red Silk	selected to China's Literature And Art Original High Quality Publishing Project
2015	The Camel Tied with a Red Silk	selected to Excellent Children's Literature Publishing Project
2015	Hold the Wolf	nominated for the 5th China Outstanding Publications
2015	Hold the Wolf	100 Outstanding Publications to young people across the country in 2015
2015	The Flying Thief	listed into 100 Books that Teachers Love
2016	The Camel Tied with a Red Silk	100 Outstanding Publications to young people across the country in 2016
2017	Black Flame	10 famous children's literature people's recommendations of China's Excellent Children's Books in the New Century
2017	Six Seasons of Reindeer	listed into 50 Popular Books
2018	Black Flame	Sharjah International Children's Book Fair Illustration Exhibition Excellent Works Award
2018	Nighthawk at Dusk	Sharjah International Children's Book Fair Illustration Exhibition Excellent Works Award
2018	The Seasons of Life	Excellent Works Award in the Book Design Invitational Competition between the Mainland and Taiwan
2018	Six Seasons of Reindeer	Chen Bochui International Children's Literature Award
2018	The Moose of Ewenki	WeiBo Mother&Kids #Teach You How To Read Picture Books# Picture Book of the Year
2018	The Moose of Ewenki	200 Original Chinese Picture Books
2018	The Moose of Ewenki	"China Children's Book List" 100 Best Children's Books

2018	The Moose of Ewenki	Top 2 in Original Picture Book List in 2018
2018	The Moose of Ewenki	100 IRead Book List
2018	The Moose of Ewenki	Weibo Children's Book List in 2018
2018	The Moose of Ewenki	Influential Books of the Year
2018	The Moose of Ewenki	Annual Laureate Children's Book (Children's Picture Book)
2018	The Moose of Ewenki	Cross-Strait Book Design Invitational Competition "Ten Most Beautiful Children's Books between the Mainland and Taiwan"
2019	Black Flame	The 3rd "Bianchi International Literature Award" Novel Category
2019	The Forever Guardian	Bing Xin Children's Book Award
2019	The Moose of Ewenki	The 2nd Book Making Award-Children's Picture Book Award
2019	The Moose of Ewenki	The 4th Alice Picture Book Award-Original Category Gold Award
2019	The Moose of Ewenki	The 14th National Library Book Award
2019	The Moose of Ewenki	Outstanding Exported Book Award
2019	The Moose of Ewenki	Freeman Book Awards Children's Literature Honorable Mention
2020	Black Flame	Recommended by The Ministry of Education's Basic Education Curriculum and Textbook Development Center
2020	The Moose of Ewenki	100 Chinese Excellent Picture Books
2020	The Moose of Ewenki	selected into IBBY Honour List
2020	The Moose of Ewenki	Children's Favorite Books TOP 100

2020	The Moose of Ewenki	The 1st Fulanya Picture Book Award "Special Recommendation Award by the Organizing Committee"
2020	The Moose of Ewenki	Silver Award of the 3rd Time of Picture Book Award
2020	The Moose of Ewenki	Aesop Accolades
2020	The Moose of Ewenki	USBBY Outstanding International Books List
2020	The Moose of Ewenki	Junior Library Guild Selections
2021	The Moose of Ewenki	Original Picture Book Award of Image of the Book



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COMPLETE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE BOOKS

2005 **Back to the Grassland** novel
China Children's Press & Publishing Group | China | 2005

2006 **Black Flame** novel
Jieli Publishing House | China | 2006

2008 **The River of Wolverine collection of novellas** novel
Jieli Publishing House | China | 2008

2009 **The Sheepdog on the Grassland** novel
21st Century Press | China | 2009

2011 **The Season of Life-Notes on Nature Observation of Twenty-four Solar Terms**
collection of essays
Jieli Publishing House | China | 2011

The Bloodline of the King-Mongolian Shepherd Dog collection of essays
Jieli Publishing House | China | 2011

Black Dogs: Hala, Nohai novel
Jieli Publishing House | China | 2011

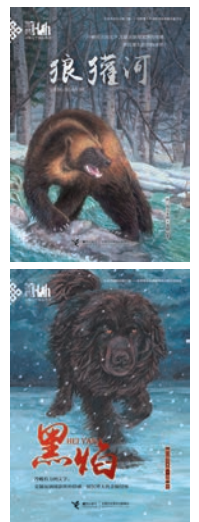
The Child of the Wolf Valley novel
Jieli Publishing House | China | 2011

2013 **The Bear Sleeping on a Mattress** novel
Jilin Publishing Group | China | 2013

The Wolf's Tracks novel
Jilin Publishing Group | China | 2013

2014 **The Blood Horse** novel
Jieli Publishing House | China | 2014

Nighthawk at Dusk novel
Jieli Publishing House | China | 2014



The Camel Tied with a Red Silk novel
Jilin Publishing Group | China | 2015

The Smoke of Wolf Valley novel
Tomorrow Publishing House | China | 2015

The Blood of Wolf novel
Tomorrow Publishing House | China | 2015

The Flying Thief novel
Zhejiang Juvenile & Children's Publishing House | China | 2015

I Come from the Wolf Valley novel
Zhejiang Juvenile & Children's Publishing House | China | 2015

The Giant Moose novel
Zhejiang Juvenile & Children's Publishing House | China | 2015

The Last Herd of Tibetan Antelope collection of novellas
Zhejiang Juvenile & Children's Publishing House | China | 2015

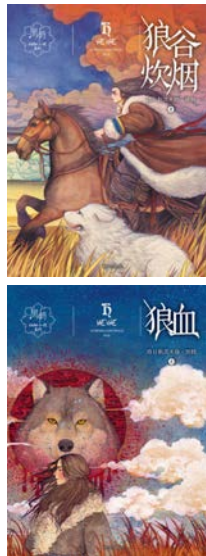
The Wild Cat of Hohunoer novel
Daylight Publishing House | China | 2015

A Colourful Mongolian Cow novel
Aurora Publishing House | China | 2015

The Badger novel
Daylight Publishing House | China | 2015

She-wolf novel
Tomorrow Publishing House | China | 2015

Hold the Wolf novel
China Children's Press & Publishing Group | China | 2015



My Grassland Friends collection of essays
Daylight Publishing House | China | 2016

The Grassland Gray Wolf novel
Qingdao Publishing Group | China | 2016

The Bear on the Roof novel
Qingdao Publishing Group | China | 2016

The Sheepdog from the Grassland novel
Zhejiang Juvenile & Children's Publishing House | China | 2016

Silent Birch Forest novel
Qingdao Publishing Group | China | 2016

The Reindeer Herd novel
Qingdao Publishing Group | China | 2016

The Legend of Wolf Valley novel
Beijing United Publishing Group | China | 2016

From the Forest to the Grassland novel
Beijing United Publishing Group | China | 2016

The Dog Cart novel
Zhejiang Juvenile & Children's Publishing House | China | 2016

The Missing Cub novel
Qingdao Publishing Group | China | 2016

The Dog on the Ski Field novel
Qingdao Publishing Group | China | 2016

The Fierce Dog of Grassland novel
Beijing United Publishing Group | China | 2016



The Brave Sheepdog novel

Daylight Publishing House | China | 2016

The Bear Who Steals Honey novel

Qingdao Publishing Group | China | 2016

The Pig Who Drinks Milk novel

Daylight Publishing House | China | 2016

Granny's Wolf novel

Daylight Publishing House | China | 2016

Wolves by the Ursen River novel

Daylight Publishing House | China | 2016

The Lion Child novel

Tomorrow Publishing House | China | 2016

The King of the Night novel

Beijing United Publishing Group | China | 2016

The Foal Who Crosses the River novel

Qingdao Publishing Group | China | 2016

**Hold the Wolf-like Wind** novel

China Children's Press & Publishing Group | China | 2017

Six Seasons of Reindeer novel

Tomorrow Publishing House | China | 2017

The Swan Ranch novel

Tomorrow Publishing House | China | 2017

The Kingdom of Reindeer novel

Tomorrow Publishing House | China | 2017

The Wild Rabbits Crisis novel

Jilin Publishing Group | China | 2017

Kunjur the Fierce Dog novel

Jilin Publishing Group | China | 2017

The Ghost Hound novel

Tomorrow Publishing House | China | 2017

The Forest Guardian Dog novel

Zhejiang Juvenile & Children's Publishing House | China | 2017

A Colourful Mongolian Cow novel

China Children's Press & Publishing Group | China | 2017

Kelsang the Mastiff novel

China Children's Press & Publishing Group | China | 2017

The Mongolian Ballad novel

China Children's Press & Publishing Group | China | 2017

The Wild Yak novel

China Children's Press & Publishing Group | China | 2017

The Doe novel

Jieli Publishing House | China | 2017

Birds on the Snow Land novel

Jieli Publishing House | China | 2017

The Story of the Bear Tower novel

Jieli Publishing House | China | 2017

The Wolf Who Crosses the Highway novel

Jieli Publishing House | China | 2017

The Foxhound novel

Jieli Publishing House | China | 2017

A Pair of Black Eyes novel

Jieli Publishing House | China | 2017

A Reindeer Named Jeans novel

Zhejiang Juvenile & Children's Publishing House | China | 2017

Under the Ice Lake novel

China Children's Press & Publishing Group | China | 2017

The Mongolian Grayhound and the Wild Cat novel

China Children's Press & Publishing Group | China | 2017

Duribo the Fierce Dog novel

China Children's Press & Publishing Group | China | 2017

**The Fox Who Lived in the Aginai Yurt novel**

China Children's Press & Publishing Group | China | 2017

The Guardian novel

China Children's Press & Publishing Group | China | 2017

My Grassland, My Dog novel

Qingdao Publishing Group | China | 2017

Chase Huhetala the Wolf novel

Qingdao Publishing Group | China | 2017

My First Forest Journey collection of essays

Daylight Publishing House | China | 2018

Twelve Puppies picture book

Guizhou People's Publishing House | China | 2018

Lynx of the Ayassuke River novel

Tomorrow Publishing House | China | 2018

My First Forest Journey video story collection

Daylight Publishing House | China | 2018

My Sheepdog on the Grassland novel

Beijing United Publishing Group | China | 2018

Sled Dogs at the Ski Field novel

Beijing United Publishing Group | China | 2018

A Fox in the Kerren Prairie novel

New Buds Publishing House | China | 2018



The Badger Family novel
New Buds Publishing House | China | 2018

The Son of Wind novel
New Buds Publishing House | China | 2018

The Last Mastiff King novel
Zhejiang Juvenile & Children's Publishing House | China | 2018

The Wolf Cub novel
Zhejiang Juvenile & Children's Publishing House | China | 2018

The Moose of Ewenki
Jieli Publishing House | China | 2018



The Forever Guardian novel
Zhejiang Juvenile & Children's Publishing House | China | 2019

The Mongolian Sheepdog video story collection
Dolphin Press | China | 2019

The Reindeer Angel novel
Chemical Industry Press | China | 2019

The Reindeer and the Flying Horse novel
Chemical Industry Press | China | 2019

The Boy from the Wolf Valley novel
Chemical Industry Press | China | 2019

I Met a Sheepdog novel
Chemical Industry Press | China | 2019

A Bear Sleeping on the Mattress novel
Tomorrow Publishing House | China | 2019

The Wild Kitten's Hound Mother novel
Tomorrow Publishing House | China | 2019

The Smoke of Wold Valley novel
Aurora Publishing House | China | 2019

The Bravery of a Hound novel
Jilin Publishing Group | China | 2019

The Brave Mother Rabbit novel
Tomorrow Publishing House | China | 2019

The Wolf and I video story collection
Dolphin Press | China | 2020

A Hound on the Grassland picture book
Guizhou People's Publishing House | China | 2020

Fenrir the Wolf and I novel
Jieli Publishing House | China | 2020

The Thief of Forest novel
Guizhou People's Publishing House | China | 2020

The Clever Grassland Fox novel
Guizhou People's Publishing House | China | 2020

Secrets on a Frozen Lake novel
Guizhou People's Publishing House | China | 2020



The Sheepdog from My Childhood novel

Guizhou People's Publishing House | China | 2020

My Gold Dog novel

Guizhou People's Publishing House | China | 2020

The Crane and the Boy novel

Guizhou People's Publishing House | China | 2020

The Brave Hullegan novel

Guizhou People's Publishing House | China | 2020

The Child of the Wolf Valley comic book

Guangxi Normal University Press Group | China | 2020

The Ghost Hound comic book

Guangxi Normal University Press Group | China | 2020

The Orphan of a Beautiful World comic book

Guangxi Normal University Press Group | China | 2020

The Kingdom of Reindeer comic book

Guangxi Normal University Press Group | China | 2020

Hold the Wolf comic book

Guangxi Normal University Press Group | China | 2020

The Orphan of a Beautiful World comic book

Guangxi Normal University Press Group | China | 2020

Deep in the Northern Forest novel

Jiangsu Phoenix Literature and Art Publishing | China | 2020

The Wind in Hulunbuir Grassland novel

Modern Press | China | 2020

The Mother Rabbit novel

Daylight Publishing House | China | 2020

The Wolf of the Wind Mountain novel

Daylight Publishing House | China | 2021

Silver Lions in a Blizzard novel

Zhejiang Juvenile & Children's Publishing House | China | 2021

The Hound I Grew up with novel

Zhejiang Juvenile & Children's Publishing House | China | 2021

The Moose Defenders novel

Qingdao Publishing House | China | 2021

Chocolates on the Grassland chapter book

Jieli Publishing House | China | 2022

My Shepherd Dog chapter book

Jieli Publishing House | China | 2022

Reindeer Footprints chapter book

Jieli Publishing House | China | 2022

Sparrows Are My Neighbors chapter book

Jieli Publishing House | China | 2022





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LIST OF TRANSLATED EDITIONS



Black Flame
Novel
French Edition
Philippe Picquier
2011



Black Flame
Novel
English Edition
Groundwood
2013



Black Flame
Novel
German Edition
Verlagshaus Jacoby&Stuart
2013



Black Flame
Novel
Korean Edition
Goindol Publishing
2015



Black Flame
Novel
Vietnamese Edition
KimDong Publishing
2016



Black Flame
Novel
Arabic Edition
Egypt Wisdom House
2017



Black Flame
Novel
Nepalese Edition
Current Publication
2021



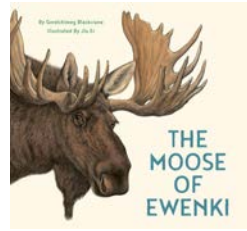
Black Flame
Novel
Russian Edition
Baby Time Publishing House
2022



The Moose of Ewenki
Picture Book
French Edition
Editions Rue du Monde
2019



The Moose of Ewenki
Picture Book
Korean Edition
Goindol Publishing
2019



The Moose of Ewenki

Picture Book
English Edition
Greystone Books
2019



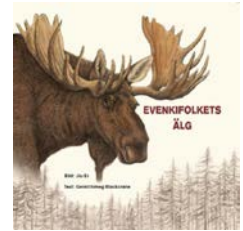
The Moose of Ewenki

Picture Book
German Edition
Verlagshaus Jacoby&Stuart
2020



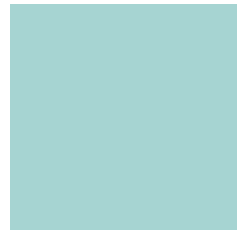
The Moose of Ewenki

Picture Book
Traditional Chinese Edition
Nanmen Bookstore
2020



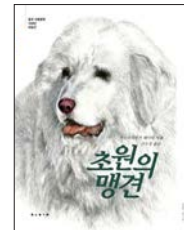
The Moose of Ewenki

Picture Book
Swedish Edition
Vombat Forlag
2021



The Moose of Ewenki

Picture Book
Turkish Edition
Nomos Kitap
2022



The Ghost Hound

Novel
Korean Edition
Borim Press
2015



The Camel Tied with a Red Silk

Novel
Arabic Edition
Egypt Wisdom House
2016



The Camel Tied with a Red Silk

Novel
Mongolian Edition
Good Fortification
2018



The Bear Sleeping on a Mattress

Novel
Mongolian Edition
Good Fortification
2018



The Wolf's Tracks

Novel
Mongolian Edition
Good Fortification
2018



The Blood Horse

Novel
Korean Edition
Publishing Comapany Minsokwon
2022



Mongolian Shepherd Dog

Novel
Jordan
DAR AL MANHAL PUBLISHERS
To be published



Mongolian Shepherd Dog

Novel
Sri Lanka
Sarada Publications
To be published



The Orphan in the Beautiful World

Novel
Jordan
DAR AL MANHAL PUBLISHERS
To be published



The Orphan in the Beautiful World

Novel
Sri Lanka
Sarada Publications
To be published



7

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION TO THE JURY



GREYSTONE BOOKS

October 27, 2022

Gerelchimeg Blackcrane, whom I have had the honour to publish, is an extraordinary literary figure. He writes about the natural world, the animals that live within it, and the traditional people who are embedded in its rhythms as few other writers do in any country.

Furthermore, he is an exception within China as a person from a distinct region and an ethnic minority who celebrates that region's particularities and who is popular, admired immensely and celebrated. He is also active in defending the place, its peoples, animals, and landscapes. The successes of his books and his towering personality have earned him the freedom to do so. Take his novel *Black Flame* as example, it is an outstanding nature novel written in the tradition of Jack London. Our hero *Black Flame* is presented in a very convincing way. It's very hard to write about an animal in such a way that we can believe we are really seeing the world through that animal's eyes. And even harder to make us believe that everything that animal does is reasonable and necessary in that animal's context. Finally, to present a story that is both entirely believable and very exciting and engaging for young readers is perhaps the hardest of all. Gerelchimeg Blackcrane knows what he is talking about. His life among the herders of Inner Mongolia and with the dogs that he is training to support those herders has informed his writing in a powerful way. He is one of the few living nature writers whose work really manages to transcend and yet embody the genre of animal stories. And his prose is excellent.

I was able to visit Blackcrane in his own grasslands of Hulunbuir in Inner Mongolia. There is no question that his literary work and his outstanding kindness and care for the people and animals that live there are very important to other creators that surround him. He is an excellent role model and mentor as a writer who is entirely authentic and who writes with great literary skill. There is nothing "folklorist" about his production despite its being so located in a specific culture and place. I witnessed his interactions with younger artists towards whom he has acted as a supporter, mentor and teacher. He does not want them to become folklorists but rather full artists, as he is, but within their own tradition. Again, this is not easy within the current climate in China.

I recommend Gerelchimeg Blackcrane wholeheartedly for the Hans Christian Andersen Award. He is a master.

Patricia Aldana

Publisher Aldana Libros/Greystone Kids Vancouver (The Moose of Ewenki)
Former publisher Greenwood Books Toronto (Black Flame)



October 25th 2022

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to support the nomination of Gerelchimeg Blackcrane for the Hans Christian Andersen Award. This author is known as the "Son of Nature" in his native Inner Mongolia, People's Republic of China. This nickname suits him well because he knows how to share with children realistic stories that celebrate the greatness of nature and the balance between humans and animals, a key issue today.

Our publishing house had the great pleasure to give to read to the children of France, and the French-speaking world, this excellent album written by Blackcrane: L'élan Ewenki. As soon as I discovered this book, I wished to publish it in French, without delay, because it carries a beautiful reflection on the connivances and the limits of our relation to the wild life, while approaching the complex questions of the survival of the traditions, but also of life and death.

The story of Gree Shek, a hunter who shoots a female elk before discovering that she was accompanied by her cub, shows us how this man will repair his fault towards nature, since he will raise the young animal himself, without ever losing sight of the fact that this little elk, which grows up, belongs first to the forest.

Gerelchimeg Blackcrane never falls into an easy sentimentality and he succeeds in moving the young readers without offending their young age, while hiding nothing of the hardness of life and the passing of time.

This beautiful balance is maintained, because Blackcrane is an authentic writer and not only an author of children's books ! Of course, the images in this album follow just as delicately in the footsteps of his writing.

Blackcrane is a genuine writer, who has chosen to live on the Hulunbeir prairie with his dogs, cats, horses and a few other animals. He lives in nature and draws his inspiration from it, without neglecting the cultural heritage of the humans living in this northeastern part of China, as he did with the Ewenki, the reindeer herders who live in the

Heilongjiang province. The diversity of cultures, like that of the world, fascinates him.

I am proud that our "Rue du monde" has published Gerelchimeg Blackcrane and we look forward to his new projects because in addition to being a talented writer, he is obviously a beautiful figure for the children of the world. I very much hope that the HCA Award will be given to Blackcrane; he deserves it. And world children's literature deserves such an ambassador!

Alain Serres
General manager of Rue du Monde
(Publisher of L'Élan Ewenki, French version)

Verlagshaus Jacoby  Stuart

28th October 2022

I am delighted to recommend Gerelchimeg Blackcrane for the Hans Christian Andersen Award.

Gerelchimeg Blackcrane was raised and settled down in Inner Mongolia and his singular experiences in the grasslands on the one hand and his familiarity with animals on the other hand led to his distinctive writing style. Nature and humanity have become the hallmark of his literature, which has won him awards both at home and abroad.

When I first read the novel Black Flame by Gerelchimeg Blackcrane I was actually amazed by his literary style, as it enables readers not only to grab a sense of the majestic and magnificent natural world he depicts, but also makes one think about the fundamental question what humanity actually means.

His literary commitment to the care and preservation of nature in its inherent wildness, as well as the protection of the animals that belong there, is quite really unique. And through his tender description of the people who live in the wilderness, for example, of the indigenous people of the Ewenki, he is able to transfer his readers into other cultures completely.

I am always impressed by the originality and mighty vigor in Blackcrane's works which sharpens and refreshes people's feelings and senses. Though his writing is profound and sober, it never lacks compassion and sympathy. Readers from young to old can resonate with his stories.

We are very pleased to have published the youth novel Black Flame and the picture book The Moose of Ewenki. Both books truly touched me and a great deal of German readers, young and older alike.

Therefore I cordially recommend Gerelchimeg Blackcrane for the HCA Award. He really deserves it!

Nicola T. Stuart 

CEO of Verlagshaus Jacoby & Stuart GmbH

(German publisher of Black Flame and The Moose of Ewenki)



November 2nd, 2022

Vombat publishing house has had the privilege of publishing the book *The Moose of Ewenki*, which is one of the author's many works that in a profound way shapes the relationship between man, animals and nature. The author creates authenticity in a unique way to the original reality based on the coexistence of all living things on earth. For children, such a storytelling is vivid and important, even indispensable. Gerelchimeg Blackcrane's writing is a great contribution to modern man and in particular the children and their ability to see themselves as unique individuals with responsibility and with opportunities for creative development. The author's realistic storytelling becomes a playful and exciting tool in a child's development. The essence of the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award is "Children have the right to great stories", therefore I, as a publisher, want to give my warmest recommendations for Gerelchimeg

Blackcrane as a candidate for the Hans Christian Andersen Award.

Tin Eriksson

President

Vombat förlag Sweden

12th October 2022

Gerelchimeg Blackcrane is one of the most interesting Chinese writers of books for children and young adults today. Living in Hailar, Hulunbuir, in Inner Mongolia, he has been writing about wildlife and life in the wild for more than 20 years. He started out as a poet in the early 2000s, but soon turned instead to prose, with a focus on literature for the young.

Gerelchimeg Blackcrane was born in the oilfields of Daqing in 1975 and spent his first years on the Mongolian grasslands. Eight years old he moved to the city to study, but continued to return home to spend his holidays outdoors, in the woods and on the grassland. Today, he's the author of more than 60 books for children, young adults and adults.

Animals and nomadic life are the topics of almost all of Gerelchimeg Blackcrane's novels and short stories. Although he's written about virtually all the different species found in Inner Mongolia, his favourites are clearly dogs and horses, as can be seen from novels like 《血驹》 (*The Blood Horse*) and *Black Flame*, translated into English by Anna Holmwood (Groundwood Books, 2013). His descriptions of animal life and the relations between animals and men are quite unsentimental, and although the animals are personalities with needs and feelings, they're seldom anthropomorphized in the way animals often are in Western children's books. Their life is hard and even the humans they love and respect can treat them with a harshness that may be surprising to someone who is used to regarding animals as pets. His novels and short stories are not plain descriptions of animal life, however, there's art to them as well, beautiful writing and interesting plots. During his school years Gerelchimeg Blackcrane lost most of the Mongolian he'd learned as a child, and as an adult he's worked hard to regain his own cultural heritage and to create awareness about the nomadic lifestyle and the dangers it's facing. His efforts aren't focused on Mongolians alone – he's also good friends with some of the last reindeer herding Evenki families in the area close to the Russian border and has written about their lives as well. An example of this is the lovely picture book *Evenkifolkets älg*, illustrated by Jiu Er and translated into Swedish by Marta Östborn (Vombat, 2021). He makes numerous visits to schools and libraries every year, where he talks about his books, about nature and about the importance of preserving the environment. He is a writer who not only creates exciting and interesting stories, but who also cares deeply about the world that his readers will inherit, and does what he can to create a better future.

I wholeheartedly recommend Gerelchimeg Blackcrane for Hans Christian Andersen Award.

Anna Gustafsson Chen, translator

Ringvägen 82

137 31 Västerhaninge

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TEN OF THE MOST IMPORTANT BOOKS



Black Flame



Novel,
Jieli Publishing House,
China, 2006



The River of Wolverine



collection of novellas,
Jieli Publishing House,
China, 2008



Black Dogs: Hala, Nohai



Novel,
Jieli Publishing House,
China, 2011



The Blood Horse



Novel,
Jieli Publishing House,
China, 2014



The Last Herd of Tibetan Antelope



collection of novellas,
Zhejiang Juvenile&Children Publishing House,
China, 2015



Hold the Wolf



Novel,
China Children's Press & Publishing Group,
China, 2015

Hold the Wolf-like Wind



Novel,
China Children's Press & Publishing Group,
China, 2017



Six Seasons of Reindeer



Novel,
Tomorrow Publishing House,
China, 2017

The Moose of Ewenki



Picture Book,
Jieli Publishing House,
China, 2018



Fenrir the Wolf and I



Novel,
Jieli Publishing House,
China, 2020



Black Flame



Novel, Jieli Publishing House, China, 2006

At a snowy night, Mother Mastiff died after fighting against a snow leopard, leaving behind the young Mastiff Kelsang. Kelsang grew up and became a plateau sheepdog, but was sold by his drunken owner. In Lhasa, Kelsang returned to freedom unexpectedly. His innate wild temperament and brave bite defeated all the stray dogs who came to provoke him, but at the same time, he learned the power of guns and the power of humans. The doom came back. The old painter's negligence caused Kelsang to be caught again. In despair, an iron-red old mastiff on a hunger strike awakened his memory of the distant grassland. The turning point came in an instant, and a mad yak accidentally freed him from the fate of being imprisoned. On the wasteland, Kelsang meets Han Ma, a man who saw his collar. What choice will he make?

In an unfamiliar city, Kelsang became a well-known supermarket security dog, experienced a brief and passionate relationship with the German shepherd Susu, and became a warm big dog in the memory of blind children... In the end, he came back to the northern grassland that he has been dreaming about for a long time. There, will he find finally find home?



The River of Wolverine



Collection of novellas, Jieli Publishing House, China, 2008

When the Mongolian boy Manglai was seven years old, he adopted a Mongolian hound born in a cemetery. A respected Mongolian old man named the dog Er Terike, which means "a hound like a bear". Terike grew very fast, had amazing appetite, and gradually showed extraordinary hunting skills — once it tracked a wolf alone until it bit it to death and took it back!

The news spread and attracted the hunter Dezi. Dezi took Terike away, and Terike began a brutal life of hunting in the mountains and forests...

What is hidden in the mysterious wilderness? After years of wandering, why did Terike return to Manglai, and will everything remain the same between them?

This is a heart-shaking, touching story, full of tragic beauty. Through thrilling pictures, the writer explores the meaning of life and praises the life of this heroic hound.



Black Dogs: Hala, Nohai



Novel, Jieli Publishing House, China, 2011

The life-and-death struggle for survival makes Hala and Nohai fierce and paranoid. In order to enjoy food, space, and the caress of their master all by themselves, they fight endlessly. However, they have the same dream-to become a real shepherd dog and continue the noble bloodline of the shepherd dog.

Hara found a true owner and a ranch which belonged to it. It charged at the wolf like black lightning and killed it. It broke the chain and pounced on the conman to save its owner. It saved frozen pedestrians in a snowstorm... It grew into a real shepherd dog and realized its dream.

However, Nohai was sold multiple times. It was starved and beaten in the city, and eventually slaughtered in a slaughterhouse.

The moment Nuohai died, Hala, who was far away in the grassland, felt shaken to its core. Somehow, it heard the call from its faraway brother. Hala was reminded the scenes of them playing, biting, and screaming when they were young. Hala wailed...

How long can the bloodline of the shepherd dog continue on the grassland?



The Blood Horse



Novel, Jieli Publishing House, China, 2014

The blood horse has fur red as blood. The moment it was born, it stood on the land like a miracle. The son of the herdsman, Yundeng, first saw the blood foal when he was only three years old, they instantly clicked. They fell asleep together by the fire... Since then, Yundeng and the blood horse have built an unbreakable bond, and their lives are intertwined with each other till death do them apart. The blood horse is too wild and rebellious by nature to let a herdsman leave a mark of tame on itself. It carried Yundeng to break through the siege of wolves. It is the undefeated king on the race course. It crosses miles of snow for home... When everything is settled, the blood horse finally got old. Just like the way he was born, the old horse stood and died, let the wind take it away, leaving Yundeng on the grassland, all by himself...



The Last Herd of Tibetan Antelope



Collection of novellas, Zhejiang Juvenile&Children Publishing House,China, 2015

In a northern mountain village, an old hunter died, leaving behind a pair of precious hunting dogs for his son. They are Mongolian hounds that are about to become extinct in the north, a kind of ancient Chinese native hunting dogs. Two hounds and a litter of puppies all died of infectious diseases, leaving only one silver-gray male puppy.

This male puppy was ill-fated. It was bought by a wealthy hunter-loving businessman and then abandoned. Then, it was rescued by the Ewenki people who kept reindeer in the forest. Under the care of an old lady, it recovered to health and began to guard the camp as a guard dog. It got an Ewenki name-Yima, which means to walk like the wind in the forest. It thought it would live in the reindeer camp forever, but the old lady died a natural death. Yima lay stiff by the old lady's grave for five days, and was taken to the grassland by the old lady's friend, writer Anda. In Anda's camp, Ima began to understand that there is more than just hunting in life. It sees Anda as its new owner and begins to adapt to life in the camp...



When the Mongolian boy Manglai was seven years old, he adopted a Mongolian hound born in a cemetery. A respected Mongolian old man named the dog Er Terike, which means "a hound like a bear". Terike grew very fast, had amazing appetite, and gradually showed extraordinary hunting skills — once it tracked a wolf alone until it bit it to death and took it back!

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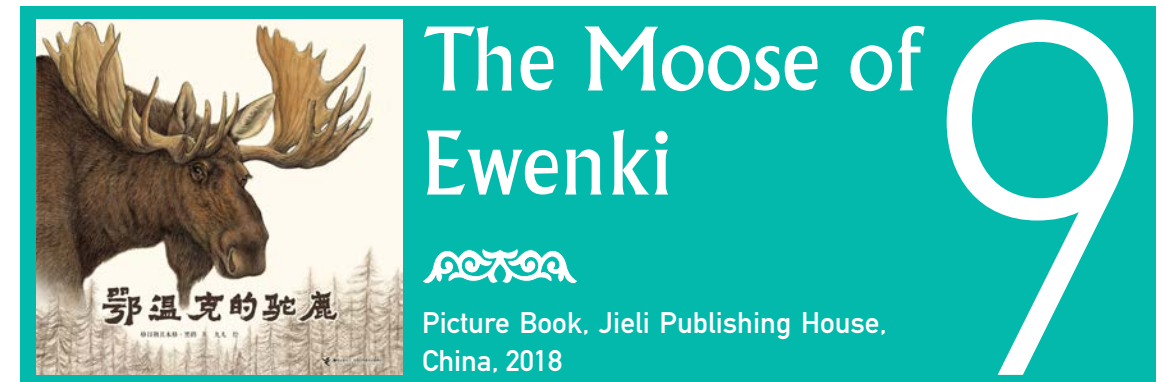


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A teenager from Beijing was heartbroken and mute because his mother was killed in a car accident. He followed his father to the Greater Xing'an Mountains in northern China. By total coincidence, the teenager came across an old Ewenki called Qiuniaio, with whom he experienced six seasons of the Ewenki reindeer people. These people live in the forest and have always used this ancient calendar, The teenager was fortunate to see the last hidden world in the virgin forests of northern China. He can witness the boundless coniferous forest, the reindeer camp of the Ewenki people, the mighty reindeer herd, and the creatures sneaking in the depths of the forest. The teenager who has lived in the city since childhood has never been so close to nature and the forest. He follows the old Ewenki Qiuniaio to learn the wisdom of life in the forest, to respect the creatures in the forest, to live in harmony with nature, and at the same time, the teenager can see the world around him from a new perspective. And he has more inner power. In the end, the boy was finally able to let go of his mother's passing, and finally forgave and reconcile with his father.



The indigenous Ewenki people live in the vast forests of the Greater Khingan Mountains in northern China, and make a living by raising reindeer and hunting. During a hunt, the old hunter Gree Shek accidentally shot and killed a mother moose. Her cub followed him back to the camp. Gree Shek named it Xiao Han (“Little Moose”). Xiao Han grows up day by day, and Gree Shek is getting older and older. It is time for Xiao Han to return to the forest...





Fenrir the Wolf and I



Novel, Jieli Publishing House, China, 2020

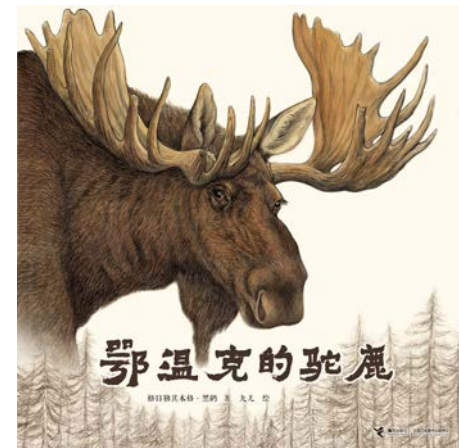
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"I" got a wolf cub captured by two shepherds, and brought it back to my camp. "I" put it in a litter of newborn puppies so the mother sheepdog can feed it. The little wolf grew up and bonded with "me". However, when the mother sheepdog passed away, the little wolf began to alienate the puppies he had grown up with and entered the grassland alone. However, living away from the wilderness since childhood prevented it from becoming a real wolf, nor can it identify itself as a dog. "I" decided to help the little wolf learn the ability to prey and survive. Finally, when a cold winter came, "I" cruelly expelled it into the wild, far away from the camp, and let it return to nature as a true wolf. Later, "I" heard some news about a wolf now and then, but I don't know if it was my wolf.



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LIST OF THE BOOKS SENT TO THE JURY



1. *Black Flame*, Novel, Jieli Publishing House, 2006
2. *Black Dogs:Hala*, Nohai, Novel, Jieli Publishing House, 2011
3. *The Blood Horse*, Novel, Jieli Publishing House, 2014
4. *The Moose of Ewenki*, Picture Book, Jieli Publishing House, 2018
5. *Fenrir the Wolf and I*, Novel, Jieli Publishing House, 2020

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REVIEWS OF THE BOOKS SUBMITTED TO THE JURY



Life in Parallel with Humanity

—A Review of Blackcrane's *Black Flame*

Li Donghua

Children's Literature Author,

Vice President of Lu Xun Literature Institute of China Writers Association

Blackcrane, in my opinion, is one of the most outstanding animal literature writers to have emerged in the Chinese mainland children's literary scene in recent years. The first time I noticed his name was in 2001, when I read his animal novel, *She-wolf*. The novel was brimming with a pure and elegant charm not unlike Ivan Turgenev's *A Sportman's Sketches*. His delicate yet far-reaching writing grants him the ability to meticulously touch wisps of smoke, and present the openness and vastness of the grasslands. These, together with his intimately familiar and flowing portrayal of the animal world, enables his animal novels to come into being with remarkable artistic quality, rendering them unforgettable.

I read another novel of Blackcrane's recently, *Black Flame*, which has a Tibetan mastiff as the main character. It goes without saying that his fine, elegant, and uncompromising style, and his deep understanding of animals, were displayed with an effortless brilliance in this work of literature. Two other popular books in the market, Jiang Rong's *Wolf Totem*, and Yang Zhijun's

Tibetan Mastiff, hold more reflections on the culture and nature of humans compared to *Black Flame*, but *Black Flame* is a pure animal novel. Blackcrane, with his incisive, grave, yet tender-filled language to touch upon the motives of a Tibetan mastiff in its growth.

Kelsang was just a small Tibetan mastiff puppy when its mother passed away after a brave battle with a snow leopard. It gradually grows up and becomes a mature plateau shepherd dog, but is sold by its drunken owner. In Lhasa, after accidentally gaining freedom, Kelsang's wild nature and formidable pounce-and-bite defeated all the stray dogs which challenged it. Bad luck soon struck, and Kelsang was shackled again. It almost despaired of seeing freedom, but an old rust-coloured Tibetan mastiff went on a hunger strike, and this reawakened its yearning for distant meadows. It broke away from its fate of being in captivity once more. In the wilderness, Kelsang meets Han Ma, a volunteer with the Wild Yak Team of the West Work Committee, an environmental group protecting Tibetan antelope herds. Han Ma is a person who truly loves Kelsang, and is the person who saws off the heavy collar around its neck. Later, Kelsang follows Han Ma and Yang Yan back to the city, where it served as supermarket security dog and guide dog for the blind. Han Ma volunteers to work as a teacher in a primary school on the Hulunbuir grasslands, and Kelsang follows, returning at last to the grasslands it yearned for.

The special nature of the subject matter of this novel, and the atmosphere of the wildness of the snowy plateaus that it exudes will make the dulled sense of smell of city folk, trapped in steel and concrete, sharp again. Chinese children's literature, over the years, has almost become synonymous with urban school stories thanks to the increasing move towards heavy urbanisation. The urban school stories repeat, thousands upon thousands of time, and they have dominated the children's literary world for too long. It is at this juncture that Blackcrane, with his Tibetan mastiff in tow, pounces straight at us, sweeping us with a cold yet proud black flame, bringing a sharp, fresh wind from the wilderness to the world of children's literature.

The uniqueness of the subject, however, does not determine the longevity of a literary work's artistic life. Blackcrane does not follow trends, nor relies on the uniqueness of the subject matter to satisfy the curiosity of city dwellers. On the contrary, *Black Flame* expresses reverence throughout for nature's creatures other than human beings. As he said in an interview, "Humans are never alone in the forest. Right by your side are many creatures, and side by side, all creatures share in the world." Blackcrane stands firm on the side of equality for all creatures in

the world. His deep understanding and respect for animals allows many details in the book to convey a breath-taking and unexpected beauty. For example, Kelsang's mother, a Tibetan mastiff which killed a snow leopard, quietly left its master's tent when it was about to die. It is because "a Tibetan mastiff will leave like that once it realizes that it is almost at the end of its life. As long as there is an opportunity to make this choice, the Tibetan mastiff won't let itself die in the camp." The writing is magnificent in the description of the mother mastiff's departure. "Tenzin lifted the felt sheet and saw, in glass-like snow, the mother mastiff walking slowly towards the snowy open mountains—appearing as a blue-green outline in the dawn—in the distance. It was light when the black figure of the mother mastiff disappeared on the horizon." This symbolic scene allows us to see the dignity of an animal. Its steadiness in the face of coming death demonstrates the greatness and pride of living, and makes humans, greedy for life and fearing death, blush with shame.

It is the Tibetan mastiff's nature to run, so the novel has countless scenes of Kelsang running. Kelsang yearned for freedom, and the boundless grasslands is its home. However, this is not the deepest level of the nature of Tibetan mastiffs that Blackcrane has observed and portrayed. Perhaps it is the Tibetan mastiff's nature, or the genes passed down, but it is always looking for a master so it can be put in charge of protecting a flock of sheep—it seems it is most satisfied with this place to return to. And this "master", in fact, is the Tibetan mastiff's search for love. A touching detail in the novel is when Kelsang gave up his most beloved freedom for its beloved. The novel speaks of the relationships between Kelsang and various people, and Kelsang has only hate for those who tried to sell it to make money, "Tall Slim" and "Mean Fatty". The people who inadvertently become its master, and the old painter who did not mistreat nor particularly show affection for it, were treated with fondness, and a distance. Kelsang was loyal to its original owner, Tenzin, but had no strong feelings of love or attachment. Yang Yan, who cared for it and gave it a good life but did not truly understand it earned only a limited respect from Kelsang. It is only to Han Ma, this person who saved it and understood it, that Kelsang shows fierce love. When Han Ma released it, it returned to look for him, and when Han Ma tethered it to a tree and left Tibet, it snapped the tree and dragged the broken tree around with it on its search for Han Ma. This loyalty to humans, this unconditional love for humans, shows us a most beautiful relationship between humans and animals, a sort of parallel, and raw perspective.

Blackcrane's creation of animal literature is honest. He does not create behind closed doors, but

does extensive research. He can write from the standpoint of animals and his animals maintain their “attributes” and dignity, rather than image that was created to carry human thoughts. As he has said, “It is nothing new to have complete faithfulness in writing, but the writing of animal literature must be based on scientific evidence. Wild animals are wild animals, with cruel laws of survival which are very different from those of the human world, and they will never conform to human social norms.” It is the respect for the rules of the animal world that gives the animals Blackcrane writes about realism. For example, when Han Ma asks Kelsang to be a guide dog for blind children in the orphanage, Blackcrane writes honestly that Kelsang did not do it out of love for these children, but because it sees them as its master’s “flock” and them as special “sheep”. It must stay faithful to its duty, and protect these “sheep” according to its master’s orders. These unexpected details give one the impression that Blackcrane has a subtle yet precise grasp of the animal’s way of thinking.

Blackcrane’s animal novels hold a fascinating charm of vivid visualizations of animals and are also about the landscapes he writes about. He is always able to create a vast background, which he calls a “meadow”. The “meadow” is a space where human beings live in counterpart to the city. Perhaps, it carries the dreams of city dwellers who are becoming increasingly cramped in spirit to discover animals, respect animals, and get along amicably with them. With Blackcrane’s writing, it is a way of living.

Perhaps it is because of Blackcrane’s extraordinary beginning that I have always had high expectations of this author. The first half of *Black Flame* did meet my reading expectations — the writing style crisscrosses without losing its subtlety, and has indeed presented the Tibetan plateau clearly and powerfully to me. However, I must say that the details that appear later, of Kelsang catching a thief in the supermarket, and Kelsang saving children in the snow, are to some extent cliché. Perhaps Blackcrane should spend more time with animals — I am reluctant to let urban life restrict and whittle away at a genius animal literature writer’s passion, and reluctant to let some common tropes in films and dramas limit his imagination. Perhaps this sort of requirement is too demanding, but I feel that it is appropriate for a writer like Blackcrane to have such high standards and strict requirements, because his talent, his artistic ability, and his familiarity and understanding of animals gives us reason to expect him to write even greater works of literature.



The Wilderness: Homeland of the Spirit

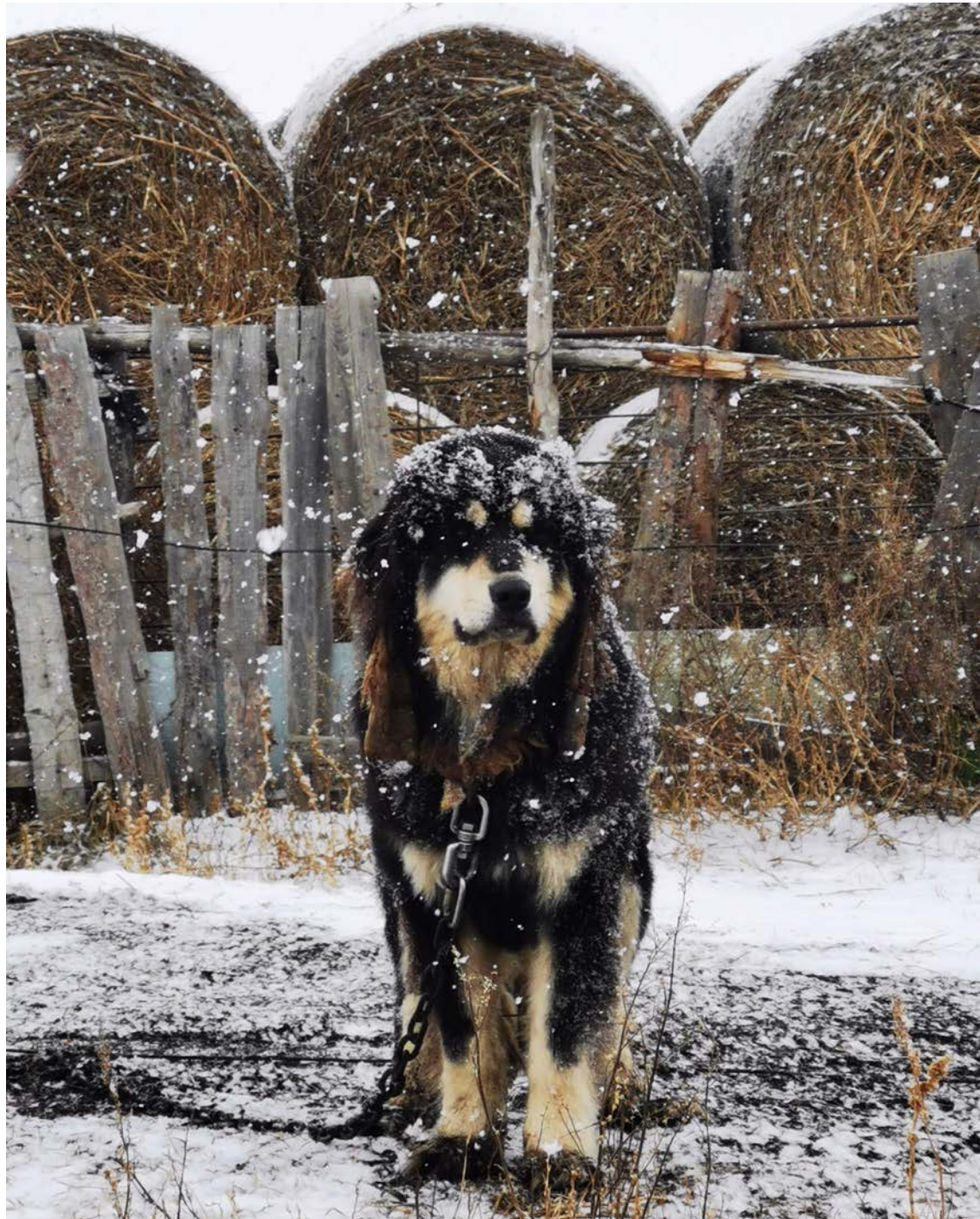
Li Donghua

Children's Literature Author,

Vice President of Lu Xun Literature Institute of China Writers Association

The animal literature writer Blackcrane brings a fresh yet intense breath of wilderness to readers with his new novel *Black Dogs: Hala, Nohai*. The articulation of this young Mongolian writer’s story is as lingering and soothing as a Mongolian long song, majestic and profound, speaking of his longing for the wilderness and his love for animals. The grasslands and mountain forests he writes of are not from his utopian imagination or the fabrication of an onlooker—they are the places he lived in in his childhood and are the roots of his deep affections. His childhood reminiscences and his retrospect of the fading nomadic cultures give his words a rich colouring, a glow, of nostalgia and poeticism, raising his nostalgia to a higher level where it is the universal impetus of humans to seek their spiritual homeland.

Blackcrane reveres the rugged masculine beauty of the wilderness, that which makes the wilderness so fascinating. *Black Dogs: Hala, Nohai* is a story of growing up of a huge female dog and her two formidable children, Hala and Nohai. The law of survival in the animal world is harsh, and the mother dog, Hala, and Nohai have an arduous time growing up. They struggled against both nature’s forging, and the distortion and suffering stemming from human greed and



cruelty. Their struggle for survival is bloody and tragic, but it also trained up their bodies and will to be as tough as steel. Blackcrane takes great pains to write about the trials and tribulations encountered by these three shepherd dogs in their growth, and this serves as a self-evident declaration of deep concern for humans' abandonment of the wilderness.

Blackcrane likes to reflect on what kind of relationship should be built between animals and humans. In his writing, a shepherd dog should find an owner who suits it best, just like Hala in the book. It found a true owner and a ranch which belonged to it. It charged at the wolf like black lightning and killed it. It broke the chain and pounced on the conman to save its owner. It saved frozen pedestrians in a snowstorm.

Blackcrane describes the tender-heartedness of the ranch mistress Tana in the moving scene where she applies butter on Hala and Nohai's wounds. This poetic and picturesque scene highlights how Hala and Nohai's originally cold-blooded and stubbornly unchanging emotional world was melted away in Tana's expansive maternal love. Hala, taken away by humans, spent 12 days trekking from an unfamiliar town it had never been to before, dragging a broken leg behind itself, and finally returned to its camp 400 kilometres away. The author writes, "In the morning light, Hala buried its huge head deep in Tana's embrace, and stood quietly there. Tana, too, wrapped her arms tightly around its thick neck and spoke to it like she was murmuring to herself." This was one of the most beautiful scenes, achieved by the interchanging of emotions between animal and human. Nohai was not as fortunate as Hala. It was sold multiple times and suffered beatings and endless abuse from its rancher owners. It was starved and beaten in the city, and eventually slaughtered in a slaughterhouse.

Two equally excellent shepherd dogs had, instead, two completely different fates. This shows that the fate of a shepherd depends entirely on the humans' treatment of animals. Humans, who occupy a position of dominance on Earth, do indeed have a partial dominance over the life and death of other animals. Among these humans are people like Greeshik and Tana, who are friends and protectors of animals, and there are also people like the "dark ones" who hurt animals. In fact, the "dark one" in the book is a representative of human evil. He put the mother dog's nine puppies in the cave and denied them food and water to force them to slaughter each other. In the novel, Blackcrane makes no outright condemnation of "dark ones". He just let the details speak for themselves, like pieces of a mirror that make up a fractured reflection of the various scandals and atrocities in humans' treatment of animals.



Golden Pastures, Blood-red Stallion

—A Review of *The Blood Horse*

Xu Lu

Children's Literature Author, Poet, Essayist,

Vice President of the 5th and 6th Writers Association of Hubei Province

Blackcrane is a writer with ambitious dreams. His greatest dream is to use his literary works and his own actions to restore and “rebuild” the culture of the nomadic grasslands people of his memories. Every one of his literary works, every article, every book, about animals, the grasslands, forests, and mountains, is going towards to this dream. The novel, *The Blood Horse*, is centred around a purebred Mongolian stallion from the Hulunbuir Chen Barag Banner camp. It reproduces the legend of the survival of hardships of the blood-red stallion and its rider, Yundeng, and their everlasting noble spirit. Free will, as free as the howling wind, and the rumbling echoes of galloping hoofbeats, cross the extensive northern grasslands, transcending the reality of materialistic cravings of ordinary life today to become a sort of far-reaching, vast, and powerful literary theme.

The novel echoes with Blackcrane’s love and knowledge of grassland horses. The story

chronicles the entire life of the blood-red horse, from birth to death, and the rider Yundeng is witness to this magnificent life, as well as one who experiences it personally. The opening chapter “Flying Down the Cliffs” is like a “primer” where the child Yundeng rides on the back of a young horse and comes flying down from a steep cliff. The trip is hair-raising and allows the reader to have a taste of the ancient hidden capacity for survival of the grasslands horse and extraordinary charm of the elegant creatures. The second chapter, “Blood-colored Horse”, devotes over ten thousand tender-filled Chinese characters to the birth of the blood-red horse. They exalt in the author’s joy, care, and anticipation for the arrival of this magical little life. Blackcrane’s maternal warmth, care, and delight in writing about the birth of grassland puppies is reproduced in this chapter.

In his book, *In Job’s Balances*, the philosopher Lev Shestov posed a question: Why does torturous and unbearable suffering always befall those with the greatest talents? Blackcrane also knows full well that any noble and pure life had to be got through being burnt thrice in fire, boiled thrice in boiling water, and washed thrice in blood. We see the wolves on the grasslands, the humans’ gelding blades, the shepherds’ lassos on long wooden poles, and the invaders’ desire to conquer, in addition to the wind, snow, and biting cold from the northern grasslands and more. All of these follow the blood-red horse like a shadow on its path of life, tormenting it, testing it, and tempering its bones, muscles, and will. Blackcrane makes use of endlessly vivid and dense details to portray the many separations of life and death that the blood-red horse and its master, Yundeng, experience. He writes about the blood-red horse’s fight with the wolves, about its resisting and pitting itself against the man with the lasso, and creates scenes that shake readers to the core, allowing them to witness the blood-red horse’s graceful bearing—its vow to not be defeated and never give in. Its wild and noble head lowers only for Yundeng, who is interdependent on it in life and death, and together with it through thick and thin. It preferred, even in the biting cold of wind, snow, and severe winter, to offer its own crimson blood to warm Yundeng, who was about to freeze.

The fifteenth chapter of the novel, “Wind and Snow” and the twenty-second chapter, “Cloud Height” writes of the death of the blood-red horse and are, in my opinion, the most resplendent movement of the symphonic poem of this magnificent and majestic life. The author writes of Yundeng after a snowstorm, moving back and forth in the depths of the grasslands and suddenly spotting a herd of fine horses standing there, unmoving. The novel reads, “These are the horses

whose lives were stolen by bitter hands of cold blizzard nights. They will keep standing here until spring comes, and they will fall when the snow and ice melt.” And where they fall, the snow and ice will melt away. New pastures will be plump with fertility and spread all over the earth. Deep in the earth echoes the rumbling hoofbeats of these sturdy lives which once galloped freely past.

Golden pastures, blood-red stallion. The epilogue of the novel reads, “The shepherds on the grasslands passed the legend on, repeating it from mouth to mouth. At dusk, on days when the sky is clear, a long-maned stallion can be seen loitering in front of Yundeng’s grave — the stallion’s coat and hair are red as blood in the sunset.” Blackcrane uses this novel of almost 200,000 Chinese characters to prophesy a dream of his: The horse culture of the grasslands from a thousand years ago never died out on the Hulunbuir grasslands. Even if these lives which once squalled and blazed really faded away into the distant horizon, their undying souls would exist still in a vivid literary world, their heads held high, neighing to the sky with their manes flying in the wind.





The Moose of Ewenki: A Book of Legend

Chen Xiang

Children's Literature Critic, Assistant Editor-in-chief of China Reading News,
Deputy Secretary-general of China Children's Literature Research Association

Picture books are a unique, artistic way to re-express enduring literary motifs. The appearance of two narrative subjects, text and illustration, and the comprehensive use of the art of language and the art of visuals result in special aesthetic forms and multiple interpretations which are encapsulated in picture books. A top-notch picture book should have superior expression of subject matter, theme, genre, pioneering exploration of artistic style and creation, and more. Text and visuals each has the ability to expand artistic expression, but drawing from each other's strength allows them to stimulate each other, and the cooperation results in a literary work that is rich in artistry and thought-provoking undertones.

The Moose of Ewenki is evidently an original picture book that has made breakthroughs in subject matter, theme, genre, and artistic style — A full-bodied legend from the distant depths of the Daxing'anling forests has brought about a legendary book.

The creativity and ingenuity of the story is the literary foundation that ensures a picture book

reaches an excellent or even classic level. The power of a picture book to move a person comes from the ideas and emotions it conveys. Outstanding picture books have considerable deep thought and great emotional impact, and are full of life's wisdom and philosophies of life.

The Moose of Ewenki tells the story with a rich and multi-dimensional core. We can first view it as a legend about humans and animals. The last hunter of the reindeer Ewenki, an old man, shot and killed a moose while hunting. To his surprise, he found that this moose had a moose calf which was still not weaned. It was not the mating season of the moose, and the reindeer Ewenki hunters do not hunt moose cows with moose calves to feed. What was he to do? The old hunter brought the moose calf back to his camp and adopted it. Of course, the moose calf also treats the old hunter like its mother. Several interesting and heartwarming events happened between human and animal. Spring went and autumn came, and the old hunter grew older. Before he passed away, the old man knew that this moose could not adjust to the world of human beings further down the mountain, since moose were what humans hunted and killed for fun. And so, he pushed away his reluctance and forced the moose to leave him by shooting at it. In the end, the old hunter died, resting forever deep in the mountains, and the ancient traditional way of life went to rest with him. The moose, which had grown up, became a guardian of that stretch of mountain forest, guarding the final resting place of the old hunter.

The subject matter of this story is a rare one in original picture books, containing a heaviness, a sense of remoteness, and depth. Of course, this is in line with the writing style of Gerelchimeg Blackcrane, and he has brought this style into the domain of picture books. The poetically concise language, the calm and controlled narrative, and the open and far-reaching perspectives of time and space are integrated in the author's thoughts on human nature and the relationship between humans and animals, and humans and nature, including thoughts on philosophical propositions such as the dilemma of love. I hope that my child can see in this picture book a space more vast and far-reaching, a time more continuous and distant, and through this expansive perspective, understand, outside of his own sorrow and happiness, the magnitude, richness, profundity, and even helplessness of life and the world.

Of course, a story like this also incorporates the silliness and details typical of children's literature. For example, the grown-up moose didn't realise that it has grown up and still wanted to sleep in the old hunter's tent every night after a day of fun. However, the tent could no longer

hold it, and one day, it overturned the tent. Another show of silliness was when the greedy moose sneakily ate too much bean cake, and its belly swelled up like a drum. The old hunter had to lead it about for an entire night to expel a huge turd. Details like these make my child laugh out loud. As for the parts where the old hunter shot the moose to drive it away, where the hunter died, and where the moose went to guard him and never leave his side...these details made my child sink into deep thought. I believe that children always know more than we imagine.

This book is also an ode to nature. The title page reads, "Dedicated to the forests of northern China." When you open the picture book, the atmospheric and majestic illustrations crafted in pencil and muted colours stun you with the depiction of a vast and magnificent land. This is, of course, linked to the atmospheric beginning of the story. The picture book is testament to a devotion and reverence of nature and life. I heard that the artist, Jiu'er, over the span of three years, went several times into the forests of the north in Daxing'anling to restore that very real, very magnificent realm in her work. Children of modern day live in concrete jungles and have been away from nature for too long. The feeling of realness of nature comes from the emotional impact of the forests, the rivers, and the earth, and it is exactly this that is missing in this era. "The great life force of the earth itself", this fantasy-like forest, can repair the fractured spirits of the modern man.

The Moose of Ewenki is a picture book made in memory and remembrance of a bygone era. The story of one hunter reflects the gradual advancement of the times, and how everything will eventually slip away like water. The times change, society changes, and the heart too. All these are encapsulated by the author's writing. There is a simple line in the book saying that, "The young hunters drove the reindeer out and left the camp, never to return to this forest again." This one line holds so many hidden stories behind it. In fact, the ability to weave and even hold back words is a reflection of a writer's literary prowess. How well can a layperson do at using the simplest words to express the richest meanings? The change in Gerelchimeg Blackcrane's works over the past few years is quite apparent, and his literary expression has become more relaxed, flowing easily, and handled skillfully.

Because he was weak and sickly as a child, Gerelchimeg Blackcrane's parents sent him to their hometown on the grasslands, hoping that it would strengthen his body. It was not until he was eight and a half years old that he returned to Daqing to go to school. Blackcrane once mentioned

to me that he was able to see the horizon at any time in the day on the grasslands, and see the bright moon and stars in the sky at night. He's seen hundreds of horses gallop past, seen extensive snowstorms flurry. Yes, all of these pulled at the harp strings of spirituality.

Whether in the endless grasslands or the remote forests of the Ewenki people, the people of these lands followed a very ancient and traditional way of life, and they passed down this cultural heritage, power of faith and speed, believing in the existence of heroes. These heroes retain earthy ideals and exuberance of spirit. In the words of Zhang Chengzhi, it is "the last of the olden times", a part of the northern land. It is a kind of regional change, cultural inheritance, and way of life of the minorities of the north.

Regrettably, such a *modus vivendi* will soon give way to modernisation, and the culture associated with it will cease to exist. However, we will eventually miss the power and beauty of majestic nature after living in the city for a long time.

Since German philosopher Hegel's view of history as a purposeful linear move towards advancement, modernity, or modernisation, has been regarded as a positive thing. This in turn leads to things incompatible with modernisation inevitably marching towards an "end of history". Whence comest thou? This is a common cultural rhetoric that gnaws at the minds of modern Chinese people. Every urbanite person has a hometown they cannot return to. In terms of literary intent, there is a need to recreate a spiritual Peach Blossom Spring (a fable about an ethereal utopia where people live in ideal harmony with nature), and a Walden (Thoreau's reflection on living simply in natural surroundings). I feel that this is also the significance of this picture book.

The book's lively but controlled and concise narrative style produces a chilling yet warming reading experience that is an excellent literary primer for children. *The Moose of Ewenki* has a typical approach of picture books, which is to have images and words work together through static presentation and dynamic narrative. The narrative is cut off before the next page turn so that it can blend into the spatial representation of the corresponding image.

Just as the reading of literature in general first requires understanding of the meaning of the words, one of the conditions in the reading of picture books is to understand the significance of



images as one of the main characters in the narrative. The images and text are both interwoven and independent of each other. The relationship between the two is not simply correspondence and mutual description, but an echoing and interlocking that forms a greater narrative possibility of tension and dimension. *The Moose of Ewenki* is full of deep artistic considerations, from the use of lines, the composition of the image, to the deployment of colours. The muted colours of pencil matches perfectly with the story, and the art composition unfolds like a blockbuster movie, with several page-spreads that strongly impacts the reading experience.

The publisher, Bai Bing, used the word “luxurious” when talking about this picture book. The opening of the book is luxury, the paper and printing are luxurious, and the time taken too, lends it even more luxury. The making of this book was three years in the waiting for the author Gerelchimeg Blackcrane and the artist Jiu’er. I look forward to the appearance of more “luxurious” good books.



The Moose in Our Lives

Zhang Hong

Author of children's books Founder of the Club of Magical Children's Books

The vast majority of us may not have the chance to go into the ancient forests in our lives, nor touch the endless nature, nor encounter creatures that seem to have walked out of long-ago legends. However, the author, Blackcrane, and the artist, Jiu'er, have filled this gap in their readers' lives. *The Moose of Ewenki*, which they created together, not only proves that fiction and art can enrich lives in a real way, but also set a milestone for original Chinese picture books with its valuable artistic exploration. This is a picture book that can stand tall in the forest of classic picture books. It is not lacking at all, and also casts a unique light upon the reader. It is a book to be recommended to every child in China and to the world.

Blackcrane's writing has never run counter to "light and easy". He has chosen to explore a heavy theme through the medium of a picture book: Fate.

The fate of the moose, the fate of the hunter, the interdependence in their lives, and meetings and partings in life. These all seem to be themes which are too "heavy" for children's picture books and are rarely approached. However, Blackcrane is a little like the old hunter Gree Shek in the story, and the little readers are like the moose calf, with a life as blazing red as the sunrise.

When the author, with his unique life experiences, slowly turns back the pages to a distant time and space, he seems to sense the children's eager thirst for the story, like how "the moose calf suckled on Gree Shek's finger." Thanks to good guidance in the story, children can follow the old hunter on a deeper exploration of life with interest. Who says that children can only accommodate their own joys and sorrow in their lives, and feelings no richer or deeper?

With Blackcrane's story settled, the next mission is for the artist Jiu'er to draw the huge moose, a creature that she can hardly imagine in everyday life. I feel that the key in this enviable artistic partnership lies not just in the tacit understanding in creative work, but having similar values—they strongly identify with their artistic mission. The author, Blackcrane, has been going back to the forest annually for over ten years, back to his Ewenki friends, pushing away cursory superficial understanding and immersing himself in the ethos of nomadic life. The artist, Jiu'er, also visited the Ewenki camp several times, and studied every detail which could be used in her illustrations. She immersed herself in the story of the forest, just like the author did. She drew



and she drew, this book of over 40 pages and 60 illustrations, a big book. As you can imagine, this artist worked day and night for three years, without any “magic”. She drew everything by herself, stroke by stroke from charcoal pencil sketches. There is amazing strength in her art, sweeping violently over you and filling your senses so that you feel the splash of water from the pages, and see the moose’s sorrowful eyes reflect your tear-filled eyes. This is a picture book artist who put her heart and soul into her work. There would be no gripping pictorial narrative worthy of the word “fate” without this breathtaking explosion of impetus.

Before reading this book, I always thought that the moose was a type of reindeer. I did not know that this huge forest animal “has a flattened pair of antlers which falls off every year on the heads of the males, like a giant’s outstretched palms, and the width between the antlers can reach a maximum of two metres.” The subject matter of the moose is so fresh and new that it seems to have great commercial potential. However, the respectable thing about the two creators is that they are not directed by the laws of commerce. The artist Jiu’er specially chose a colour tone that reflected the “dusk of the years” in order to respect the history and culture of the Ewenki people, and decisively abandoned some elements which could be more attractive in the illustrations, like animals, plants and clothing. In her notes on her creative process, Jiu’er also wrote that, “The base design of the old hunter is an elderly reindeer Ewenki hunter, Uncle Andao, who still lives in the reindeer camp in the forest. The depiction of the old hunter was determined by the hunter’s identity. My opinion is that because the old hunter lives alone in the forest to raise reindeer for a living, his years of living in the forest made him hone his calmness, and also formed his trait of being unruffled and unsmiling. Later in the drawing process, whenever I thought that the character portrayal was not appealing enough, Blackcrane assured me and told me that the old reindeer Ewenki hunter should be like this.”

It is not just the old hunter, but all of true art creation that should be like this: steady, firm, and responding only to the calling of the heart, refusing the temptation and manipulation of “commercial appeal”. This actually implies a sort of artistic confidence—if the artwork itself can touch hearts, why would we need extra packaging? Why worry about it not being able to stand the test of time?

On that note, this book is an “enlightenment” in the world of original Chinese picture books, and is wholly deserving of being hailed a “milestone”.



‘The Moose of Ewenki

—A Reminder that China is a Multi-cultural Country

Anna Gustafsson Chen
Worldkidlit Book Review

When we think of China and Chinese culture we tend to think of paddy fields, bamboo, poetry, and other southern things – or perhaps of the Great Wall or the terracotta army in Xi’an. Few will think of snow and skiing and reindeer. But that too, is part of China.

The Evenks are a reindeer herding people who live in the north of China and in Russia. Originally, they moved freely across the borders, but since the beginning of the 20th century their movements have been restricted. War, revolutions and modernization have also had a serious impact on Evenki culture, and few young Evenks today learn to speak the Evenki language. In recent years, however, there has been an increased interest in the Evenks and their history among the Han Chinese, and several novels connected to this ethnic group have been published. Most famous is perhaps Chi Zijian’s novel *The Last Quarter of the Moon* translated by Bruce Humes and published in English in 2013, by Harvill Secker). That novel is the fictional biography of an old Evenki woman who has lived through war and social change, a life that

spans almost a whole century.

And now we have *The Moose of Ewenki*, a picture book written by Gerelchimeg Blackcrane and illustrated by Jiu Er.

Gree Shrek is an old Evenki hunter who by mistake kills a female moose, leaving her young calf orphaned. He decides to take care of the calf, brings it back to his camp and gives it a name – Xiao Han. Xiao Han joins the herd of reindeer, but soon outgrows them all. In spite of his size Xiao Han is still young and likes to play, which results in one awkward and funny situation after another. But Gree Shrek is getting old and he knows he has to let Xiao Han return to the forest. It's a sad goodbye – in fact, Gree Shrek has to threaten Xiao Han to make him leave – but it turns out that the young moose is ready to face life on his own and quite able to deal with vicious hunters.

Gerelchimeg Blackcrane is one of China's foremost writers of children's books about animals and wildlife, and he has a deep knowledge of Evenki culture. Jiu Er's beautiful illustrations in mostly brown and green shades makes Xiao Han come alive, and there's a large dose of humor in her depictions of his antics. All in all, *The Moose of Ewenki* is a lovely book and a reminder that China is a multi-cultural country with many people's aside from the most well known.



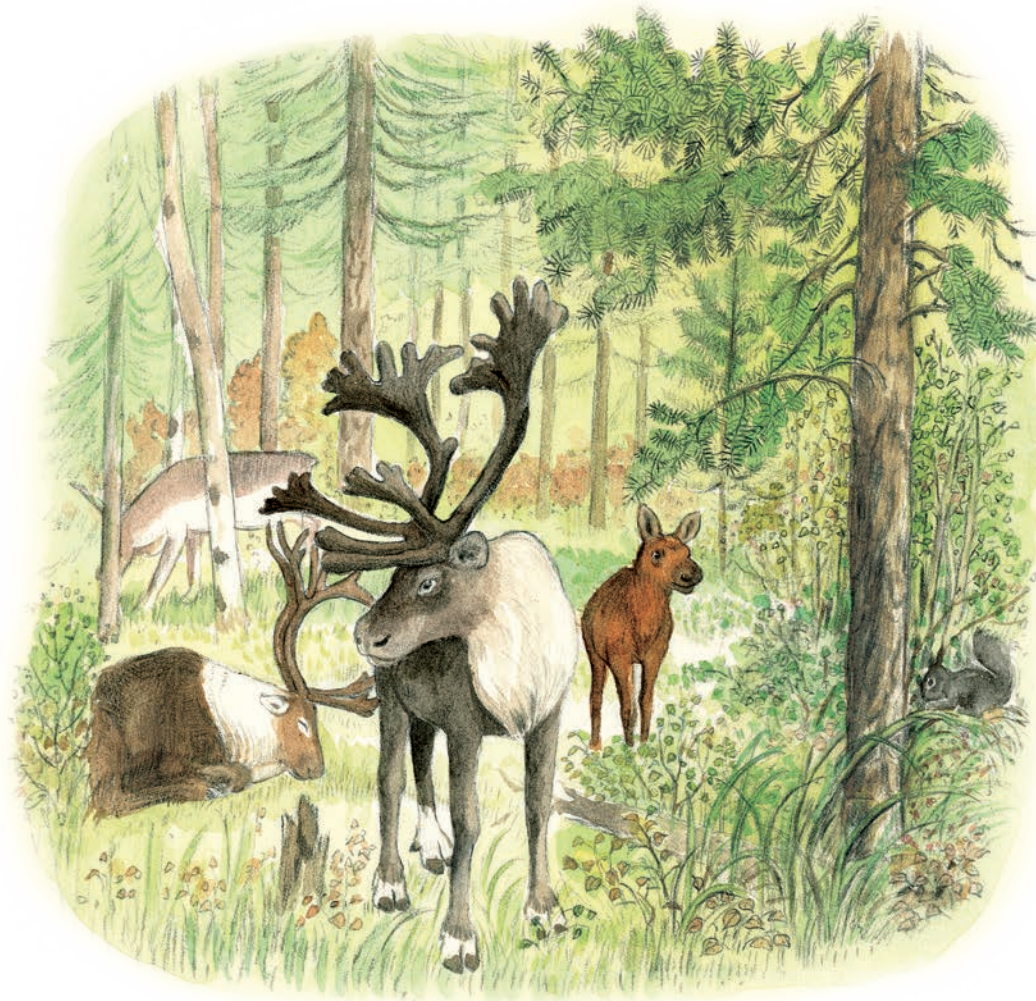
The Moose of Ewenki

Kirkus Book Review

Asurprising bond between an elder hunter and a moose sheds light on the lives of an Inner Mongolian people.

In the “vast forests” of mountainous northern China, the Indigenous Reindeer Ewenki people hunt, raise reindeer, and live in nomadic camps. When an old hunter named Gree Shek accidentally makes an orphan of a baby moose, guilt prompts the tan-skinned elder to bring the motherless calf back to his tent for the night. It's not long before Xiao Han (“Little Moose”) is adopted into the camp, where he quickly grows to the size of a reindeer, joins the herd, and wreaks playful havoc on his adoptive home. Young readers will delight in the lumbering mammal's antics; for instance, the ever growing Xiao Han insists on spending each night in Gree Shek's tent—until the clumsy moose knocks it down entirely. Despite the loving bond, the aging hunter realizes that Xiao Han will never be quite suited for life among humans, and the lighthearted tale takes an emotional turn when the steadily declining hunter sends Xiao Han

back into the wild. Blackcrane's tale culminates in a rather grim scene: upon checking on Gree Shek's campsite, fellow hunters discover his corpse (illustrated reverently by Jiu Er). Though the plot meanders, the tale is valuable for its thoughtful portrayal of the Reindeer Ewenki's traditional ways. The illustrations' delicate lines and shading meticulously model the characters, and there's a solemnity to them even at their most slapstick.



Return to the Original Life State of Prairie Wolf

Cao Wenxuan

Author, 2016 Hans Christian Andersen Award Winner, Professor of Peking University

Fenrir the Wolf and I is Blackcrane's first animal novel with wolf as the protagonist. The hero is a special little wolf who left the wilderness and was raised by a sheepdog. The wildness of wolf prevents Fenrir from living with human beings neither like dogs, nor like a real wolf because he lived away from the wilderness and lack of the necessary experience.

Such specialty and fate attribute to human beings' foolishness: two young shepherds dug out the wolf's den on a whim, but they were afraid of being retaliated by wolves, so they gave the little wolf away. In the end, "I" had to help the little wolf recover his instinct of predation and survival, and sent him back to the wilderness, so that he could return to nature and regain his nature.

Fenrir the Wolf and I is written with Blackcrane's unique aloofness and sentimentality.

It's an aloofness with tender and an empathy with principle. When describing the howl of Fenrir, Blackcrane wrote: "Every evening, Fenrir will make the howl that belongs to a wolf. Under his

leadership, all the dogs in the kennel will follow him for an indulgent chorus. Fenrir squats, raises his nose and faces the sky. This posture can make his throat more stretched, and the air can pass his throat more smoothly, thus making a round and long howl." The descriptions of sounds, gestures and scenes are subtle yet appropriate.

It is an aloofness based on scientific observation, a kind of holdback and objectivity based on years of field observation. Blackcrane sneaked into Fenrir's heart and behavior, described Fenrir's hope, entanglement, embarrassment and perplexity in detail, recorded the pain of growth and the joy of transformation of the little wolf with vivid details, and used the restoration of the plain wolf's life state as a metaphor for the strength and courage of survival instinct.

It's an aloofness that combines fiction and reality to fit the story, and a vision that respects the natural rules. Blackcrane particularly used the word "Lang Gu", and it says: "What an accurate Chinese word this means—a look-back of a wolf. This is the instinct inherited from his ancestors. After being frightened, he would flee, but after running out of dozens of meters, he would look back just to confirm the danger is far away "...

Against great details combined with fiction, such philosophical reflects such as wilderness and pastoral areas, wildness and domestication, escape and return are highlighted. With aloofness and sophistication, Blackcrane leads readers into the literary world where animals and human beings, nature and humanity, past and present blend together, reflecting the joys and sorrows of human beings with animal emotions, observing the evolution of human relations with animal instincts, exploring the value of life and calling for respect for life. And even as adults, we still need to pursue and practice such values for our whole life.

In a word, Blackcrane's novels has his characteristic aloofness, simple in language, yet abundant in content, which, I believe, is a necessity for excellent children's literature works.



Respect the Origin of Different Lives

Gao Hongbo

Children's Literature Author, Former Vice President of China Writers Association

Fenrir the Wolf and I is a children's literary by Blackcrane, with its protagonist as a little wolf captured by shepherds. The wolf was forced into the human world and raised by a sheepdog. However, when the sheepdog died, he was caught in a dilemma between being a wolf or a dog. Living far away from the wilderness prevents him from being a real wolf, and the nature of wolves prevents him from identifying himself as a dog.

In the end, "I", who adopted Fenrir, helped him reactivate his predatory instinct. When the winter came, "I" drove Fenrir back to the wasteland far away from the camp, pushing him to be a real wolf ... Such content vividly shows Blackcrane's respect for nature, his praise for life and his eulogy for the brave. In his view, the story of Fenrir, who was misled into human life, torn between being a wolf or a dog, and finally returned to the wilderness, is a trick of fate, a painful growth, and an unruly and true life.

As a natural literature author, Blackcrane emphasizes the authenticity and scientificity in animal novels. The also applies to *Fenrir the Wolf and I*. As a wolf, Fenrir is more alert and aggressive



than other puppies; this little wolf lives in the wasteland, where he coexists with reindeers, marmots, nighthawks, etc. The wasteland is rough and wild, far from modern civilization, and has self-sufficient ecological system, survival rules and natural wisdom ... Such vivid representation of the protagonist's character and environment fulfills the theme of survival and fate in *Fenrir the Wolf and I*, and the plot development is progressive and authentic.

Fenrir the Wolf and I deeply reflects on the relationship between human beings and nature. It respects the origin of different lives, provides a healthy and safe environment for the growth of wild animals, and requires human beings to stop expanding into the wilderness, take actions according to the laws of nature, and remain humble and awe of life. In the end, only mutual respect can make every life live harmoniously, and through humility and awe can we achieve an infinite future. Harmonious coexistence between men and nature is the greatest wisdom of mankind.



Please click the link below to watch video
about Gerelchimeg Blackcrane:

<https://cowtransfer.com/s/ea7a5853987841>

