

Among my classmates, the one with outstanding literary talents was YANG Ru Jiong 杨汝炯. Early in the first semester, the teacher in the Chinese class asked us to write an essay about ourselves. When he returned our compositions to us, he singled out one essay and read to the class. It was the one written by YANG. It was a long and very moving essay. I just could not imagine any one could write such a wonderful piece. His compositions were read to the class quite a few times again later.

YANG was also very athletic, playing the first base in the class baseball team. He was kind to others and gentle in manner. So after five weeks, when the term of the appointed class president expired, he was elected as our class president.

Although I was doing well in course works, I was not athletic. I was small and timid and just a rural kid from small towns. I did not feel qualified to be his equal. We were not very close in Nankai.

Japan surrendered in August 1945. But it was not immediately possible for people to return to home city. Only half a year later, by the end of our third semester, some of us started our homeward trip. We had all came from different places all over China. Classmates were thus scattered to different places. Among 40 or so classmates, about 5 or 6 went to Nanking as I did. So also did YANG and XIMEN.

While XIMEN and I were in the same school, YANG was enrolled in a different school in Nanking. But his family lived quite close by our house. We lived in YI Ho Road 颐和路, and they lived in Da Fang Xiang 大方巷, only 10 to 15 minutes walking distance apart. We started to get together as soon as we had learned that we were practically neighbors.

YANG's father had passed away, and he lived with his mother, a much older brother, and a younger sister. Their house was not big. But he had his own small room in the attic. So it was usually that I visited him at his place. We would stay in that small room for hours talking, mostly about the books we read or heard about and movies.

He knew through his brother some friends in literary circle. They wrote articles in the modern western style. Among Chinese authors they liked SHEN Cong-Wen 沈从文 and HE Qi-Fang 何其芳, and among western authors, Andre Gide. It was YANG who introduced to me the works of Gide: "Straight Is the Gate", "Fruits of the Earth", "New Fruits of the Earth", and "The Counterfeiters". We were both also enthralled by the works of Romain Rolland: "Jean-Christophe" and "The Lives of Beethoven, Tolstoy and Michelangelo".

We also discussed the movies we saw. We were the fans of the American movie stars Vivien Leigh, Greer Garson, Ingrid Bergman, and Gary Cooper; especially Ingrid Bergman. We liked very much the movies "Intermezzo", "Casablanca" and "For Whom the Bell Tolls" by Bergman and "The Waterloo Bridge by Vivien Leigh.

YANG had a scrap book collecting movie star photos from newspapers. One picture was Ingrid Bergman sitting by the window. He had written under the picture the verse:

Alone at dusk sitting
Is anyone her company keeping
How can't it help that
Into ashes beauty turning
独坐黄昏谁是伴，争教红粉不成灰。

In early 1950's, when I watched the movies "The Roman holiday" and "High Noon", I thought about YANG. He would have been an admirer of the new star Audrey Hepburn and enjoyed that great film of Gary Cooper.

He had already then started to write articles and short stories, and got published in newspapers in Nanking and Shanghai. Encouraged by him, I had even tried a few.

By the end of 1948, I left Nanking to Shanghai then Taiwan. His family went to Sichuan with his brother who had a job offer in Fu Shun which was also his sister-in-law's hometown. He became a teacher of Chinese in the local high school although he himself had not graduated from high school. He had never gone to college.

The first time we visited Mainland from the US was in 1975. For that visit, the only private persons we were allowed to see were direct relatives. I saw no old friends or classmates. During my second visit in 1979, I got to meet some old friends, among them XIMEN. I got to see more friends and classmates during later visit in 1980. But I heard no word about YANG. I was getting worried about him. With his taste and style in literature, He would not fit for the current in new China.

At the end of my visit to Mainland in 1980, I happened to notice a poem published in the journal POETRY by the author YANG Ru Jiong. Since it is not a common name, and the author was a poet, I was sure this was my old friend. I found out his address from the editor of POETRY, and we resumed correspondence after an interruption of 30 years.

In 1982, I was spending my sabbatical leave in Wuhan University. On my lecture tour after the visit in Wuhan, I went to Chengdu and visited YANG at his home in Qing Long Chang. During this visit, he told me that he was quite happy in early 1950's, teaching at the Fu Shun High School and writing poems. On the eve of publication of his first book of poetry in 1957, he was classified as a rightist. In 1970, he was again accused being anti-revolutionary, and sentenced for four years. While in prison, he was forcibly asked to divorce his wife. But he refused. He was sent deep down the mine to do hard labor, causing him to develop the untreatable emphysema. In 1976, when most people were 'liberated', his case was still pending. He became desperate, and even tried to commit suicide. Finally in 1978, he was notified from authority that his case was cleared, and he was united with his wife and two daughters. His wife was a geologist and his former

student. They found him a job in his wife's geological brigade in Qing Long Chang, and they were settled there.

On my departure, he gave me a hand writing note book which contained mostly the poems he wrote in prison. He gave the title of the collection 'The Grey Blossoms'. These poems could find no place to publish in China at that time.

I visited him again in 1985. His life in recent years was quite happy, and he had his first published book of collected poems and essays forthcoming. But his health was clearly getting worse.

I was notified in December that he passed away. His only book "By the Bamboo Fence" 篱畔集 was published in March 1986, and he did not see it.

For all the friends passing, he was the one I missed most. In his company, I could talk about anything, and always found appreciating substantial response. We were not physically close, but very close in heart, although we were in contact, either in person or by correspondence for less than ten years.

In 1995, ten years after his passing I managed to publish his GREY BLOSSOMS together with some our correspondences up to 1982. In 2000, his sister collected all the letters he wrote to his family from 1953 to 1985, and bound into a volume of close to 200 pages. There were so much painful and bitter memories that his daughter objected strongly for its publication.

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我的同学中，有着杰出文学才能的是杨汝綱。早在第一学期，语文老师让我们写一篇关于自己的文章。我们的作文发下来的时候，他挑出来一篇在班上朗读。这是杨汝綱写的，一篇长而非常感人的文章。我根本就想象不出可以有人写出这么好的文章来。此后他的作文又多次在班上朗读。

杨汝綱体育也很好，是班上垒球队的一垒。他为人友善，性情温厚。因此，当指定的班长五周后任期满了，他被选为我们的班长。

我尽管功课学得很好，但体育并不强。当时我个子矮小、有些羞怯，是个从小城来的乡下孩子。我不觉得够格跟他相提并论，在南开的时候我们关系不太密切。

日本人 1945 年 8 月投降，但人们并不能立刻返乡。直到我们第三学期末，才有些同学开始返乡之旅。我们来自全国各地，同学们也因此分散到不同的地方。40 位左右的同学中，仅五六人跟我一样去了南京，其中就有杨汝綱和西门纪业。

西门纪业和我同校，杨汝綱则上了南京另一所学校。但他家住的离我家很近，我们住在颐和路，他们住在大方巷，走路仅 10 到 15 分钟。我们一发现实际上是邻居就立刻过从密切起来。

杨汝綱的父亲当时已经辞世，他与母亲、比他大得多的哥哥和一个妹妹一起生活。他们家不大，但在阁楼上有一个他自己的小房间。因此经常是我到他那儿去，好几个小时地待在他的小屋里，谈论我们读过或听说过的书，还有电影。

他通过他哥哥认识一些文学圈里的朋友，这些人用现代西方的风格写作。他们喜欢中国作家中的沈从文、何其芳，以及西方作家中的安德烈·纪德。是杨汝綱介绍给我看纪德的作品《窄门》、《地粮》、《新粮》和《伪币制造者》。我们也都迷上罗曼·罗兰的《约翰·克里斯多夫》和《名人传》。

我们也聊看过的电影。我们是美国影星费雯丽、葛丽亚·嘉逊、英格丽·褒曼、贾利·库珀的影迷，特别是英格丽·褒曼。我们非常喜欢褒曼的影片《间奏曲》、《卡萨布兰卡》、《战地钟声》，以及费雯丽的《魂断蓝桥》。

杨汝綱有一个剪贴簿收集从报纸上剪下来的明星照片。其中一张是英格丽·褒曼坐在窗前的照片。他在照片旁边写上诗句：“独坐黄昏谁是伴，争教红粉不成灰。”

五十年代早期，在看电影《罗马假期》和《日正当中》的时候，我想起了杨汝綱，他应该已经会成为新星奥黛丽·赫本的影迷，也会赞赏加莱·古柏的杰作。

他那时已经开始写散文和短篇小说，并在南京和上海的报纸上发表。受他鼓动，我也试着写了一些。

1948 年底，我离开南京去了上海，然后到台湾。他家跟着他哥哥搬去四川，他哥哥在他嫂子老家富顺谋到一个职位。他尽管高中都没有毕业，后来却在当地的高中教语文。他从未上过大学。

我们第一次从美国访问大陆是 1975 年。那次，允许私人见面的仅限于亲戚，因此我们没有见到老朋友或同学。1979 年第二次访问的时候，我见到一些老朋友，包括西门纪业。后来 1980 年再来时，见到更多朋友和同学，但一直没有杨汝綱的消息。我开始为他担心起来，依着他文学上的品味和风格，不会符合新中国的潮流的。

1980 年大陆之行快结束，我碰巧注意到《诗刊》上发表的一首诗作者是杨汝綱。这不是个常用的名字，作者又是个诗人，因此我确信这是我的老朋友。我通过《诗刊》的编辑找到他的地址，睽隔 30 年以后我们又开始联系起来。

1982 年我学术休假到武汉大学。武汉授课结束以后，就去成都青龙场他家里去看他。这次交谈中，他告诉我五十年代初期他很开心，在富顺高中教书、写诗。就在 1957 年快要出版第一本诗集的前夜，他被划了右派。1970 年，他被判了反革命，判刑四年。坐牢期间，要求他向妻子提出离婚，但他拒绝了。他被送到矿井深处做苦工，以致患上不可治愈的肺气肿。1976 年，多数人被平反了，而他的事情还悬而未决。他开始绝望，甚至试过自杀。最终到 1978 年，终于被当局告知平反，回去与妻子及两个女儿团聚。他妻子是个地质学家，他过去的学生。他在妻子所在的青龙场的地质队找了份工作，就在那里待下来。

我离开的时候，他给了我一本手写的笔记本，其中的诗歌大多是他在监狱里写的。他给这集子起了个名字《灰花集》。那时候，在中国这些诗是无处出版的。

1985 年我又去看他，他那几年的生活很愉快，第一本诗歌散文集就要出版了。可他的健康状况明显恶化。

十二月我得知他过世，唯一的一本书《篱畔集》于 1986 年三月出版，他自己没来得及见到。

在故去的朋友中，他是我最为怀念的。跟他一起，我可以无所不谈，而且总是能够在深层得到呼应。我们身不近而心甚近，尽管我们相互联系（直接或者信件往来）的时间加起来都不到十年。

1995 年，他过世十年后，我把他的《灰花集》以及到 1982 年为止我们的一些通信出版了。2000 年，他妹妹把他在 1953 年到 1985 年之间的家书收集起来，汇成接近 200 页的一册。因为其中太多痛苦悲怨的回忆，他女儿强烈反对出版。