Report on the promotion event of Chinese literature “Humor and reality in literature: Liu Zhenyun’s works sharing event”, Toruń, June 20, 2022

On June 20, 2022, thanks to cooperation between Marszałek Publishing Group (MPG) and China National Publications Import & Export (Group) Co., Ltd. (CN-PIEC) an online book sharing event took place. It was focused on works of Mr. Liu Zhenyun, a renowned Chinese novelist and screenwriter. This meeting created an opportunity for Global Youth Readers to both meet Mr. Liu Zhenyun in person and to exchange their opinions and insights regarding the two discussed books: I Did Not Kill My Husband and The Cook, The Crook and The Real Estate Tycoon.

The event was organized in form of video conference through the Zoom online platform. The meeting started with a welcome speech by Dr. Adam Marszałek, President of Marszałek Publishing Group, the biggest academic publisher in Poland. Firstly, Dr. Marszałek welcomed all the invited guests and expressed his gratitude for the possibility of organizing this event in Poland. Secondly, Dr. Marszałek introduced Mr. Liu Zhenyun and emphasized the great value of his work to Polish readers. Finally, Dr. Marszałek thanked all readers for attending the meeting.

Mr. Liu Zhenyun’s book “I Did Not Kill My Husband” is a very well-written novel about people’s hardships and a brave woman fighting against fate. It speaks for those, whose voices could not be heard. This book is not only an interesting look at modern society from the inside, but it is also a reflection on how spite can poison your life. The novel doesn’t just lay out its ultimate message in plain words. It respects its readers enough to assume that they will pick up on it and figure it out on their own, which I appreciate. Li Xuelian herself is easy to sympathize with in the first section, but on the revisit 20 years later it becomes harder to understand her. She seems to be the only one obsessed with how she’s been wronged, we never see her condemned or outcast from the town based on her ex-husband’s accusations, and it’s clear her entire life has been turned into a bitter, stubborn fight she cannot win. Liu Zhenyun’s plot reads like an absurd and hilarious comedy. “I Did Not Kill My Husband” is storytelling and satire of the highest order, sharp-edged and ironic. His writing stance makes him

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The second book, *The cook, the crook and the Real Estate Tycoon*, was discussed by Mr. Bartosz Kuczyński.

“The Cook, the Crook, and the Real Estate Tycoon” by Liu Zhenyun is quite a unique reading experience. The book talks about the usually turbulent lives of many different characters from different life backgrounds. One of them, which is the closest to being the actual protagonist of this story, is Liu Yuejin, a poor cook working for his friend on a construction site in Beijing. His struggles with fate lead to interactions with other characters that he often needs to get out of trouble. Despite the differences between Liu Yuejin and these characters, it is very easy to see the similarity in their ways of life, also relying on tricks, deceit, theft, or corruption. In every case, this dishonesty has far-reaching consequences that sooner or later affect the fate of other people in an unpredictable manner. What emerges from this is an extremely chaotic world in which success depends on quick adaptation to new conditions.

Liu Zhenyun faithfully depicts the ruthlessness of modern society by emphasizing the relentless pursuit of money, sex, and other material benefits above all else. The multithreaded nature of this story, along with the complex, well-thought-out network of connections between the characters, effectively gives life to the presented world.

Following Mr. Kuczyński’s introduction, Mr. Szymon Ostrowski also shared his opinion on the book. According to Mr. Ostrowski,

Liu Zhenyun wrote a very accessible story about people of different backgrounds living in a big city. They are rich, poor, envious, noble or everything once in a time. Their stories can be funny, sometimes sad and suspenseful. What connect them however is the humanism of Liu’s writing in general. The novel heavily depends on the characters, the titular Cook, Thief and rich developer, and the story of each of them is a little study of human nature in the 21st Century, not only in China but in the world in general.

“The Cook, the Crook and the Real Estate Tycoon” brings a lot of joy during reading. It is humoristic; however, it is not a plain comedy. Liu Zhenyun does not leave any event or chapter empty. Each time he uses a story to be a vehicle for some truths about honor, honesty and lack of them that can bring catastrophe to one’s life.

As in the case of the first book, the translator, Mr. Bartosz Plotka, also spoke about the process of translating *The Cook, the Crook and the Real Estate Tycoon* content into Polish.

After the presentations, a free discussion session began, during which questions could be asked both to the author of both books, as well as to translators and NCU students. Students expressed their great interest in Chinese culture and in the creative methods of Mr. Liu Zhenyun. In conclusion, representatives of Marszałek Publishing Group announced the organization of the third promotion event, tentatively scheduled for the first half of September 2022.