



Zero and Other Fictions

Huang Fan

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Against the backdrop of nativist rural narratives dominating Taiwan's literary scene in the 1980s, Huang Fan published thrilling urban portraits and political satires, reorienting the nation's attention. His sardonic tone stood in stark contrast to the self-serious social realism then in vogue, and after decades of groundbreaking work, he is now one of Asia's most celebrated authors, crucial to understanding the development of Taiwanese literature over the past fifty years.

The first collection of Fan's work to appear in English, this anthology includes *Zero*, a futuristic novella that won the Uitas Prize, and three critically acclaimed short stories: "Lai Suo" (which won the China Times and Shibao Grand Literary Prize and established Fan's reputation), "The Intelligent Man," and "How to Measure the Width of a Ditch." In *Zero*, Xi De, a young man living among the elite in a postapocalyptic world, challenges the technocratic rule of a charismatic leader, mirroring Taiwan's own social character in the 1970s and containing strong allusions to George Orwell's 1984. Fan's novella poignantly renders the quandary of an idealistic man trapped between conflicting claims to truth, unsure of whether he is heroic or foolish in his ultimate choice of resistance or sacrifice. In the widely anthologized "Lai Suo," a naïve individual becomes the pawn of powerful men intent on advancement. "How to Measure the Width of a Ditch" is an absurdist, metafictional tale in which the narrator reminisces about his childhood in Taipei, and "The Intelligent Man" weaves an allegorical satire of Taiwanese migration to the United States and the business expansion to mainland China and Southeast Asia. All together, these remarkable works portray the tensions and aspirations underlying Taiwanese society, as well as other worlds waking up from political strife.

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