

Bookcover of *A Wild Light*.

Bookshelf

Pinter in Chinese

A collection of writings by Harold Pinter, Nobel Prize winner and author of over 30 plays, has been translated into Chinese and published by Yilin Press.

The collection is divided into two volumes and includes his 13 most representative plays, according to the publisher.

Coinciding with the collection, four plays written by Pinter will be staged at the Beijing Fringe Festival that opens today and runs until September 26. The festival's artistic director Meng Jinghui said Pinter's works are unique, clear and graceful.

Born in October 1930 in east London, Pinter was a playwright, director, actor, poet and political activist. He died of cancer in December 2008. During his lifetime, he wrote 29 plays including *The Birthday Party* and *The Caretaker*, as well as 21 screenplays.

In 2005 Pinter was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. The Swedish academy said that Pinter was an artist "who in his plays uncovers the precipice under everyday prattle and forces entry into oppression's closed rooms."

Hawking's take on God

Renowned British physicist Stephen Hawking will release his new book this week, in which he argues that God did not create the universe and the "big bang" was an inevitable consequence of the laws of physics.

In *The Grand Design*, co-written by US scientist Leonard Mlodinow, author of *The Drunkard's Walk*, Hawking says that a new series of theories have made a creator of the universe redundant.

"Because there is a law such as gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing. Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the universe exists, why we exist," he writes in his book. "It is not necessary to invoke God to light the blue touch paper and set the universe going."

Hawking, 68, is best known for his theories on black holes and the universe's formation.

The Grand Design explains how the 1992 discovery of a planet orbiting another star other than the Sun helped deconstruct the view of Isaac Newton that the universe could not have arisen out of chaos but was created by God.

▶ Marjorie M. Liu on writing

Bringing
fantasy alive

By Jiang Yuxia

With her new urban fantasy *A Wild Light* fresh off the press, Marjorie M. Liu, a New York Times best-selling author, shared her experiences with fans in Beijing last week.

Studying to be a lawyer at the University of Wisconsin and graduating in 2003, Liu did not spend much time on her chosen profession before taking time off to write her first full-length novel in 2005.

A month's work saw the publishing of *Tiger Eye*, a young American sculptor's adventure set in both China and the US.

In the five years that followed, Liu published 16 full-length novels in both paranormal romance and urban fantasy and 10 novellas. Her Hunter Kiss urban fantasy series, telling the stories of a demon hunter whose tattoos come alive at night and paranormal romance Dirk & Steele series, have gained her much popularity. The 30-year-old also writes stories for Marvel Comics, the largest American comic-book publisher whose well-known characters include Spider-Man, Iron Man and the X-Men.

For Liu, writing comes naturally. "[While I am writing a story] I'm feeling it and I'm

not forcing it out. If the stories are not alive beside me I won't be able to write them," she explained, adding that she only works on stories that she has a passion for.

"I love to write many different kinds of stories...I also love fantasy and science fiction, so combining that genre with romance was a very natural fit for me," Liu told the Global Times.

"The transition into all these genres was fairly smooth. There were some adjustments I needed to make in terms of voice and process and method – but for the most part, the art of storytelling never changes," she added.

With a comparatively-large volume of work behind her in her short career as an author, Liu said she never sets herself a pattern while writing. "As far as my process goes, I am very flexible. I don't usually write an outline ahead of time. I start with an idea, an inciting incident and then sit down and start writing. I try to craft an excellent beginning, along with rich, deep characters and that creates a momentum that pushes the story forward in a very organic, natural way."

Liu added that while ideas come easily to her, meeting deadlines is a different story.

"The more you learn about writing, the more you realize



Writer Marjorie M. Liu.

it's a business...You can only skip it, really only, when you are writing in the middle of the book... You try not to think about the business aspect of the book."

Her Hunter Kiss and Dirk & Steele series made it onto the New York Times bestseller list but Liu said that doesn't automatically mean guaranteed sales.

"It just means you sell more in the first week," she explained. "It's a very strange dynamic but publishers take the New York Times list very seriously and they take your overall number seriously too... You don't have much control anyway...It's great to sell a certain percentage of the books printed."

A huge fan of the X-Men comics, Liu tried for three years to get a foot in the door of the comic book industry, which was still stereotyped as male-dominated.

Now Liu's credits at Marvel include *NYX: No Way Home*, *Dark Wolverine*, *Black Widow* and *X-23*, also known as the female Wolverine.

"Getting into comics is much harder than getting your novel published. It's a small industry," she said. "There are a lot female artists, colorists and editors. When it comes to writers there are not a lot female writers."

"I was at the right place and right time and met the right person who talked to me," she smiled.

"I was spoiled – the first book came too easily," Liu reflected. "I thought I could do it again and again. What I didn't get is that I didn't have any pressure while writing the first book and it just came out. When once I start to have deadlines it's a different mindset. Then there is pressure."

"You have to find a way to solve the problem," she advised. "When there is a problem I just sit back, relax and think what I have written and meditate on it...Once you find out what the problem was, you just write fast. You can't just say it's pain and I hate it."

