

Narratives in literature and beyond

1. Functions and roles

The screenshot shows a webpage layout for a Greenpeace article. At the top, there is a green navigation bar with 'GPM01' and 'GREENPEACE Magazine / January 2012' on the left, and 'GPM04 GPM03 GPM02' and a search bar on the right. The main content area features a large image of a man in a straw hat eating rice. To the right of the image are several article teasers with small images and text. At the bottom right, there is a 'TIMELINE: GE RICE FIGHT' section with a list of events.

GPM01
GREENPEACE Magazine / January 2012

GPM04 GPM03 GPM02
search

How Greenpeace got China to say "no" to GE rice.

HOW GREENPEACE GOT CHINA TO SAY NO TO GE RICE
The beginning of an epic battle to keep GE rice out.

WEB OF DECEIT
The complex web of players involved in the push to commercialize GE rice.

WHEN THE SCIENTISTS ARE THE BAD GUYS
In China, the bad guys were on a government board.

TOP OFFICIALS SAY NO TO GE
Help comes from the most unlikely of sources.

BETTER, BRIGHTER, GE-FREE FUTURE
Why the next 5-10 years is forecast for sunny days.

TIMELINE: GE RICE FIGHT
Campaign kicks off
Farmers' view
Web of deceit
Undercover work
Calm before the storm
Top officials say No to GE

It took seven years, one bald guy, one determined Swiss woman, and successive teams of young campaigners but finally late September 2011 Beijing said it was suspending the commercialization of genetically-engineered (GE) rice. Here's a historical look at one of our earliest - and most successful - campaigns in East Asia.
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It took seven years, one bald guy, one determined Swiss woman, and successive teams of young campaigners but finally late September 2011 Beijing said it was suspending the commercialization of genetically-engineered (GE) rice. Here's a historical look at one of our earliest - and most successful - campaigns in East Asia.

First let's introduce the bald guy. He's 38-year-old Sze Pang Cheung, also known as Kontau (which means bald in Cantonese). He's now the Campaign Director of Greenpeace East Asia.

Back in 2004, the GE rice campaign was one of the first campaigns for the new Greenpeace team in Mainland China. In October 2004, Kontau and his team headed to Yunnan [...] The tour was such a success [...] But just as they were about to head south, the team got some bad news. Chinese scientists had applied to commercialize four varieties of Chinese GE rice.

So when the team got back, they got stuck into the campaign. First they unraveled the complex web of players involved in the push to commercialize. It was a dirty mess full of conflict of interests. Let's take an example. One prominent GE scientist, who had applied to commercialize GE rice was [...] a member of the biosafety approval board under the Ministry of Agriculture and on the board of a company which sold GE cotton seeds to Chinese farmers.

Greenpeace leaked to the press their findings. The web of deceit was splashed on the page of the Southern Weekend, a Guangdong-based newspaper.

[...]

The next break came with a Newsweek story. The team had heard rumours that GE rice was already being illegally farmed but they had no proof. This Newsweek story quoted China's most prominent GE rice scientist and Vice-Chairperson of the China Association for Science and Technology, Zhang Qifa as saying 247 acres of GM rice had been cultivated in Hubei province. Alarm bells rang. At that time, only 6.5 acres of GE rice could legally be farmed in a field trial before it is approved for commercialization.

Now enter a new character. Swiss-born Isabelle Meister was a veteran Greenpeace campaigner by the time she joined the China team in 2005. She is 48 years old. Kontau stepped aside and Isabelle headed the Food & Agriculture campaign. (She's still there today).

Isabelle decided to use a campaign method with Chinese characteristics: China is a country where money talks, nationalism is rampant and people take their food seriously. So the campaign began pushing the angle that GE was quite literally a threat to food sovereignty. Multi-national companies – not Chinese farmers – stand to profit from GE rice from technology and patents.

[...]

Shortly afterwards, Chinese politicians began raising GE doubts, followed by a string of Chinese celebrities including Mao Zedong's daughter and the father of China's hybrid rice, Yuan Longping. Several Chinese scholars signed a petition urging caution on GE rice and submitted it to the annual parliament meeting.

[...]

The time was ripe for Greenpeace to begin a large-scale anti-GE rice campaign. The team exposed Walmart for selling GE rice and filed a legal case against it. The team beamed a GE shopper's guide to half a million Chinese consumers through mobile and Internet services. **Chinese consumers joined the campaign**, ringing up companies and demanding they go non-GE.

GE rice was big news: TV, magazines, newspapers, online media were joining the debate. Isabelle urged her team to get companies to make non-GE pledges. Two huge corporations, Cofco and Yihai Kerry readily obliged and **a string of supermarkets also pledged not to use GE ingredients**.

And then, in September 2011, came the big news we had all been waiting for.

China's major financial weekly, the 'Economic Observer' quoted an information source close to the Ministry of Agriculture saying that China had suspended the commercialization of GE rice.

And the happy ending to China's GE rice story has taught Isabelle the value of perseverance. "Even when almost everyone is telling you that you're powerless, never give up".

2. The Children Act, McEwan 2014

They'd had a decent sex life for many years, regular and lustily uncomplicated, on weekdays in the early morning, before the dazzling concerns of the working day penetrated the heavy bedroom curtains. At weekends in the afternoons, sometimes after tennis, social doubles in Mecklenburgh Square. Obliterating all blame for one's partner's fluffed shots. In fact, a deeply pleasurable love life, and beyond discussion, which was one of its joys. Not even a vocabulary for it—one reason why it pained her to hear him mention it now.

She had always loved him, was always affectionate, loyal, attentive, only last year had nursed him tenderly when he broke his leg and wrist in Méribel during a ridiculous downhill ski race against old school friends. She pleased him, sat astride him, now she remembered, while he lay grinning amid the chalky splendor of his plaster of Paris. She did not know how to refer to such things in her own defense, and besides, these were not the grounds on which she was being attacked. It was not devotion she lacked but passion.

Then there was age. Not the full withering, not just yet, but its early promise was shining through, just as one might catch in a certain light a glimpse of the adult in a ten-year-old's face... (pp. 20-22)

She thought again of the medieval sentence, seven weeks and a day, a period that began with the final stages of the Siamese-twins case.

All the horror and pity, and the dilemma itself, were in the photograph. Infant sons of Jamaican and Scottish parents lay top-and-tailed amid a tangle of life-support systems on a pediatric intensive-care bed, joined at the pelvis and sharing a single torso, their splayed legs at right angles to their spines in resemblance of a many-pointed starfish. [...]

Those weeks left their mark on her, and it had only just faded. She became squeamish about bodies, barely able to look at her own or Jack's without feeling repelled. How was she to talk about this? Barely plausible, to have told him that this one case, among so many others, could affect her so intimately.