



Leaden Wings

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Published in 1980, Heavy Wings focuses on the Morning Light Auto Works in Beijing, a microcosm of the ongoing struggle between reformers who want to allow a measure of freedom and party hardliners clinging to the ideology that justifies their privilege and power. It provoked a storm of controversy with its frank portrayal of party corruption and mismanagement, its eloquent feminism, and its ringing defense of individualism.

Leaden Wings Details

Date : Published (first published 1981)

ISBN : 9780860687641

Author : Zhang Jie

Format : 308 pages

Genre : Cultural, China, Fiction

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From Reader Review Leaden Wings for online ebook

BoekenTrol says

I'm glad I've read this book.

Theme-wise it is not an easy book, but it reads okay, not paying any attention to the language that is a tid bit outdated.

For me it was very much worth reading, because I'm interested in China and know a little about the country as well as about Eastern European countries.

The things that Zhang Jie describes (bureaucracy, hard work, women at work successfully, not heard at home which causes trouble) are familiar. I knew it was the way things worked in Russia during the Soviet era, but that China also had these features, is new to me.

The book follows several characters, with their own problems, ideals, desires, but ultimately they all go back to the above themes. Very dry descriptions of situations, showing in Western eyes absurd situations.

I liked reading this book very much.

Manda says

Interesting but pretty dull. Is this how communist china is for the masses, I wonder? Monotonous living hand to mouth and survival of the fittest and boldest. Mmm - I'm glad I read it and can see why its on the list....

Amber says

by Zhang Jie

Amerynth says

While Jie Zhang's "Leaden Wings" is interesting from a historical and cultural perspective, as a novel it is incredibly dull.

Set in China, the novel succeeds in its portrayal of the upheaval that occurred after the Cultural Revolution in the 1980's. The main focus of the story is whether the traditional way of running a factory is more efficient than new-fangled western ways. What makes it unsuccessful is the endless parade of characters and lack of any substantive movement in plot.

For a short novel (175 pages) this took me such a long time because I couldn't read 20 pages without falling asleep.

Eadie says

Leaden Wings was praised for its honesty and condemned for its satire and has been described as 'China's first political novel'. The novel shows the upheaval that occurred after the Cultural Revolution in the 1980's. The main focus of the story is whether the traditional way of running a factory is more efficient than western ways. I found it rather interesting except that the language was very outdated. There is a host of characters but not much of a plot. I would recommend Leaden Wings to anyone who may have an interest in modern Chinese history.

Books written by POC says

I discovered an author called Zhang Jie who was published by Virago in the 80s, stunning short story writer.

Brian Lin says

Zhang Jie's *Heavy Wings* exhibits China's state after the Cultural Revolution in a captivating novel of historical fiction. I chose this book because I heard that the novel presents modern China in a way that not many people know about. I have also always had an interest in history, Asian history in particular. *Heavy Wings* is told from the point of view of many characters that are in different positions in society. Hindered by selfish and corrupt bureaucrats, China tries to get back on its feet after the fall of The Gang of Four. As advocates of reform and advancement, benevolent government officials like Zheng Ziyun greatly risk their careers. Mo Zheng, an orphan of persecuted intellectuals, lives in discontent as he searches for happiness in the hateful world he lives in. A weary wife named Liu Yuying struggles to support a family that lives a life of poverty. For everyone in China, there is no easy way out of the strife and despair that attacks the population like a plague.

Heavy Wings is a multi-faceted story that includes the conflicts between man against man, and man against the society he finds himself in. Mo Zheng, who basically represents China's disillusioned youth, is constantly bludgeoned by others for his image as a different being. His parents were killed during the Cultural Revolution, which has scarred his life and thus made him an outcast. He seeks desperately for love and a reason to live, but his savaged soul stays chained by society. "Ye Zhiqiu cares about him, but no matter how broad and strong her shoulders she can't carry the burdens of social prejudice that weigh so heavily on him" (Zhang 162). Zheng Ziyun is constantly attacked by jealous and corrupt government officials. His liberal thinking is often taken advantage of by the more conservative majority who wish to ruin Zheng Ziyun. He works for the common people, yet is not close enough to them to receive their support. He is also despised by many factions in the Communist Party, who fear men of psychology, science, and reform. Characters in the novel are often trying to do their best for a better China, but in the way of them is China's own society and men. The (Communist) Party is a symbol of China's turmoil that affects every citizen and drives them into fruitless selflessness. Food also serves as prominent role as a symbol of hope for those in despair. Again and again, food is something the poor and wealthy find in times of need in order to find a temporary calm and enjoyment. A theme that really stood out to me came as I read the stories of the many men and women living and working for the sake of others. Even though you may not live to see change in your lifetime, it is still important to contribute for a better tomorrow.

In general, *Heavy Wings* is an intriguing book I had a lot of fun reading for many days and nights. Zhang, the

author, wrote the book from the point of view of many people from all walks of life; this creates a broad prospective anyone can appreciate. However, some may find it confusing to navigate through the book as a result of the skipping around done in the novel. This work is intellectually satisfying, as it dives into political, and personal issues that still exist today. I recommend *Heavy Wings* to anyone who may have an interest in modern Chinese history, or those who appreciate a story of one's struggles and fortitude. If you can handle taking on many characters' stories at once, you will be in good shape while reading. The novel is smart and enchanting with but a few kinks in its pages, earning it four out of five stars.
