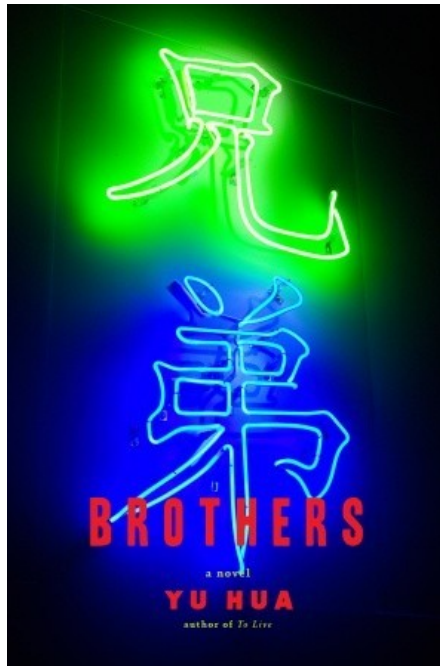




Brothers

Yu Hua , Eileen Cheng-yin Chow (Translator) , Carlos Rojas (Translator)

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A bestseller in China, recently short-listed for the Man Asian Literary Prize, and a winner of France's Prix Courrier International, *Brothers* is an epic and wildly unhinged black comedy of modern Chinese society running amok.

Here is China as we've never seen it, in a sweeping, Rabelaisian panorama of forty years of rough-and-rumble Chinese history that has already scandalized millions of readers in the author's homeland. Yu Hua, award-winning author of *To Live*, gives us a surreal tale of two brothers riding the dizzying roller coaster of life in a newly capitalist world. As comically mismatched teenagers, Baldy Li, a sex-obsessed ne'er-do-well, and Song Gang, his bookish, sensitive stepbrother, vow that they will always be brothers--a bond they will struggle to maintain over the years as they weather the ups and downs of rivalry in love and making and losing millions in the new China. Their tribulations play out across a richly populated backdrop that is every bit as vibrant: the rapidly-changing village of Liu Town, full of such lively characters as the self-important Poet Zhao, the craven dentist Yanker Yu, the virginal town beauty (turned madam) Lin Hong, and the simpering vendor Popsicle Wang.

With sly and biting humor, combined with an insightful and compassionate eye for the lives of ordinary people, Yu Hua shows how the madness of the Cultural Revolution has transformed into the equally rabid madness of extreme materialism. Both tragic and absurd by turns, *Brothers* is a monumental spectacle and a fascinating vision of an extraordinary place and time.

Brothers Details

Date : Published January 27th 2009 by Pantheon (first published January 1st 2005)

ISBN : 9780375424991

Author : Yu Hua , Eileen Cheng-yin Chow (Translator) , Carlos Rojas (Translator)

Format : Hardcover 656 pages

Genre : Cultural, China, Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction, Asia, Literature, Asian Literature, Chinese Literature

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From Reader Review Brothers for online ebook

Liya says

When I first picked up this book in Chinese in China, I was younger and my heart was fainter - I did not have the courage to finish even the first half. Years later, I picked up this novel again and finished reading it in almost two separate sittings. For someone who spent more than a decade in China (partially rural) and more than a decade in the US, the character descriptions and actions are very much close to home and real. I wish I did not have to read the final 1/3 of the book but that is just the absurdity and grim reality of a culture under phenomenal and even abnormal change. The raw and at-times explicit language used was appropriate in reflecting simple lifestyle of the suburbia, animal instincts during the cultural revolution, and crude behavior of the newly rich and newly corrupt. Like every other period of rapid change, some flourish, some falter, and others perish.

Overall the book is heavy with lots of comic relief and heart-warming moments. One common thread was how peaceful and even blissful death becomes in the face of life without dignity and hope - people find solace and hope in death, kind of reminds me of scenes from Wuthering Heights. If one can no longer imbue life with purpose, one can only seek to fill death with meaning.

One of my favorite excerpts from the book, which I'm going to translate below. It brought me back to my childhood when I too, smelled, admired and sometimes licked the precious snack, swallowed my saliva before wrapping it up and putting it back without even a nibble.

"Why is your mouth making nose sounds?"

Song Gang chuckled, "I didn't eat it, I'm just smelling"

Li Baldy asked, "Why don't you eat it?"

Song Gang swallowed his saliva, "I can't eat it, it's for you, smelling is enough for me".

I wept many times throughout the book, but not as wholeheartedly as I did when reading Yu Hua's To Live. Towards the beginning, I was still crying about the innocence of children; Towards the middle, my tears carried the weight of helplessness towards Fate; In the end, I felt as if I was weeping for an entire lost generation. This book is one unforgettable journey.

Maria says

this book is a wild ride through china during the cultural revolution & current times. it's disgusting & repulsive, informative, sad, comic, & dark. i'll let you know if i think of any other adjectives. i've never read a book like it before. it's divided into book 1 and 2. i preferred book 1.

Seth T. says

To begin with, a poorly-devised haiku review:

Yu's roller coaster

*Is careless with emotions.
Like a bad girlfriend*

I'm not really sure what to make of *Brothers*. I liked it, that much is certain.

The story is expansive and the characters indelible. The insight into the development of Chinese culture over the last four decades was enlightening. The episodes related were heartfelt, both funny and tragic. And sometimes even both simultaneously. I was involved for the book's entirety (which was not insubstantial).

The problem, I guess, is twofold: 1) I can't tell if the writing was simplistic and somewhat stilted by design or by translation; and 2) the extremism of Yu's emotional roller coaster reminds one of the formulaic approach of self-important tear-jerkers that mob the cineplex every Fall.

So far as the writing goes, it was more a curiosity than a bother. If the style was due to translator inadequacy, then I suppose I should feel a little ripped off (not getting anything close to the full expression of the author's intended work), but if the style was the author's choice and the translators indeed faithfully transmitted Yu's text into the book I read, then I find the choice fascinating. If the text was truly intended to be as simplistic as it was, then perhaps the semantic and grammatical choices fit the story. Liu Town, where the principal action occurs is certainly provincial and a place in which education is of the smallest of concerns. It then makes a kind of sense that the narrative should echo the voice of the story's inhabitants.

Emotionally, *Brothers* may be one of the saddest funny books I've ever read. I laughed a lot—mostly due to the ridiculousness of the town's many inhabitants and most especially because of the proclamations of the principal brother, Baldy Li. Still, the story carries more than its share of tragedies. And these aren't just garden-variety tragedies either. *Brothers* can be brutal as it destroys lives without tact or conscience. Perhaps this too is a reflection of the world in which our the brothers dwell, an echo of the terror—both loud and quiet—that the last half-century of China's history and culture have wrought in the lives of its citizens. In any case, I don't know if I've ever felt more mournful while reading a novel. Which of course makes me suspect it.

Brothers develops alongside the lives of two step-brothers (or more properly, brothers) from about 1960 onward. These brothers weather the terrible years of the Cultural Revolution and the mortal fear Chairman Mao's movement instilled in the nation. They struggle through the years following and look for opportunities in the more capitalistic China that would grow out of the revolutionary era. Their differing temperaments and philosophies of life offer breadth to the tale, allowing readers to more completely apprehend China and its culture.

Yu focuses much of his effort exploring the depths of human folly and the sewer stain of humanity's soul, only occasionally revealing the purity of true love and camaraderie throughout. And of course those moments shine all the more brightly due their depraved surroundings. I don't know exactly what Yu thinks of the human being, but I suspect that he doesn't think much of it—though he seems willing to be surprised by its moments of joy and beauty.

Andra Watkins says

It probably is not fair of me to rate this book, because I couldn't finish it. If you want to read pages and pages

and pages of words with no point, Brothers is the book for you.

Diane says

This is a funny, sad, bawdy (be patient, it is terribly bawdy towards the end) and compelling book. It is the story of two brothers beginning before the Cultural Revolution and ending in the 21st century and it is the story of China emerging into a modern country with all the good and the bad that comes along with such change. The story is set in a small town and is told in what seems to be a simple, repetitive manner. The characters are merely a way to move the story and they have no particular depth nor do they truly undergo any change, but that is okay - the main character here is China. I am not a fan of most satirical comedy - I find it tasteless and not funny - but I truly laughed out loud at many places in the book's 641 pages. Maybe because it is satirical but also sweet and the author loves China. A long book by pages but it goes quickly and is not like the wonderful long novels that you read with slow steps and feel when you finish that you have left a life somewhere. This book just hops along. I learned that it was a best seller in China.

Ettore1207 says

E' una ponderosa opera di 650 pagine (ebook) divisa in due parti, la prima intitolata "Brothers" (circa 200 pagine) e la seconda Arricchirsi è glorioso. E' una favolona per adulti che ci accompagna, per qualche decennio, nella vita dei due fratelli protagonisti in una cittadina cinese, dalla rivoluzione culturale di Mao fin quasi ai giorni nostri. Chi cerca inquadramento storico, temi politici e sociali, cenni sulla immane contraddizione di un Paese al contempo comunista e capitalista, stia alla larga. Niente di tutto questo, è solo una favolona tragicomica che si legge per il puro piacere di leggere, senza farsi troppe domande, per vedere "come va a finire". Un po' più tragica la prima parte, un po' più comica la seconda, che però è penalizzata dall'eccessiva lunghezza. C'è di buono che la trama è lineare e le vicende si seguono agevolmente, dato che i personaggi in scena sono solo una decina. I personaggi hanno una psicologia un po' infantile (l'ho trovata anche in altri libri, forse i cinesi sono davvero così?). Nella seconda parte uno dei due protagonisti, malato di sesso, si arricchisce smoderatamente e "gloriosamente". Si chiama Li, ma la traduttrice poteva prendersi qualche libertà e cambiargli nome, prenderne uno a caso, non so, per esempio: Silvio. Diversamente dalle favole tradizionali, alla fine qui non emerge una morale univoca. Sì certo, anche qui il denaro non dà la felicità, il sesso è nulla senza l'amore ecc., ma rimane sempre il dubbio se sia meglio vivere da "cattivi" o da "buoni". Quello che è sicuro è che l'umanità ne esce assai male, sia prima che dopo la rivoluzione culturale. E, forse forse, le donne son peggio degli uomini. Sarò pignolo, ma metto una nota di demerito a Casa editrice/editor/traduttrice per non aver inserito note a piè di pagina esplicative sui vocaboli intraducibili (baozi, mantou, majiang, jin, liang, jiao ecc.).

Teguh Affandi says

"Mama, tenanglah di sana. Bahkan kalau hanya tersisa satu mangkuk nasi terakhir, pasti akan kuberikan kepada Li Gundul. Bahkan kalau hanya tersisa satu helai pakaian terakhir, pasti akan kuberikan untuk Li Gundul pakai.(p.243)

Demikianlah janji Song Gang, yang kebetulan sedikit lebih tua dari dua saudara tiri tersebut. Song Gang dan Li Gundul. Di saat terakhir Mama mereka hidup, Li Lan, keduanya sudah banyak mengalami hal kesakitan yang tidak terperi.

Namun, kalau boleh saya simpulkan semuanya bermuara pada seorang perempuan bernama Lin Hong. Li Gundul kecil tertangkap mengintip bokong Lin Hong di kakus. Kemudian diarak keliling kota karena perbuatannya itu. Namun, keusilan itu membuatnya panen bermangkuk-mangkuk mi tiga rasa. Yang Li Gundul yakin, setelah Ketua Mao hanya dia orang seantero kota Liu yang pernah makan Mi Tiga Mangkok sekian banyak.

Kemudian Yu Hua mengajak menyusuri sejarah bagaimana dua keluarga itu bersatu. Ayah Li Gundul mati juga gara-gara tercebur sungai akibat mengintip bokong di kakus. Song Fanping, ayah Song Gang yang mengangkat mayat lelaki itu. Dan membawa ke rumah Li Lan yang kala itu masih wangi akibat baru menikah, dan Li Gundul masih dalam kandungan. Kemudian setelah ibu Song Gang meninggal, duda dan janda yang masing-masing beranak satu itu menikah, meski orang kota Liu menghardik dan mencemooh mereka berdua.

Dua saudara yang tak beda jauh usianya itu, kemudian menjadi saudara tiri. Namun lambat laun hidupnya semakin susah. Li Lan harus berobat ke Shanghai akibat sakit kepala menahun yang dideritanya. Sedangkan karir Song Fanping sebagai atlet basket, yang kemudian menjadikannya "tuan tanah" jsutru berbuah pada persekusi akibat Revolusi China sedang beralngsung. Dan Song Fanping dihajar setiap hari, hingga meninggal. Hidup keduanya semakin terlunta-lunta, setelah tak lama kemudian Li Lan ikut mati.

Semenjak awal, Yu Hua sudah mengabarkan secara gamblang bagaimana dua saudara ini berkebalikan sifatnya. Li Gundul digambarkan tengil, sangat mudah bergaul, nakal dan otaknya enggak berhenti. Sedangkan Song Gang memang ganteng, tegap, namun lebih diam dan konservatif. Maka bisa dilihat, sikap Li Gundul sepanjang novel ini sangat meledak-ledak dan "revolusioner". Mengangkat dirinya sendiri sebagai kepala pabrik, kemudian saat bosan memberhentikan dirinya sendiri, inisiatif usaha namun gagal, kemudian protes ke gubernur dnegan mondok di depan kantor dan mengumpulkan sampah, dan kelak menjadi pengusaha jas bekas impor dari Jepang yang menjadikannya semakin kaya seperti kapal tanker--kalau dalam istilah Li Gundul dalam buku ini.

Sedangkan Song Gang, memang berhasil mendapatkan gadis Li Hong, tapi hidupnya semakin susah-susah saja. Enggak ada bahagianya....

(Simpualn saya: hidup kudu berani nakal dan kalau perlu seperti Li Gundul rada sedeng dan liar dalam bertindak)

Dan di akhir novel ini, meski banyak adegan affair antara Li Hong yang kecewa karena Song Gang tak juga memberinya kebahagiaan dan Li Gundul yang baru kali itu dapat menyentuh gadis pujaan hatinya. Namun, Yu Hua menutup seperti lingkaran tertutup. Akhir cerita dalam buku ini adalah awalan untuk novel ini.

Sebagai penyuka Yu Hua, saya sangat merekomendasikan yang ingin membaca kisah panjang 700-an halaman (ukuran buku besar) yang dijamin akan membuat berbagai campuran perasaan. Li Gundul kadang cabul, kadang lucu, kadang aneh-aneh. Tetapi yang paling mengiris hati adalah kisah ketika mereka masih miskin dan hidup susah. Dengan kepolosan masing-masing anak yang sebagai pembaca saya maklum dan segar.

Untuk novel panjang yang ditulis dengan indah, tidak membosankan (saya membaca lama karena diselingi banyak judul lainnya), harus saya beri lima bintang untuk semua full-package dalam buku ini.

- Orang kaya selalu monopoli usaha
- orang kaya suka perempuan, dan Li Gundul mungkin yang punya ide kontes perawan yang ujiannya adalah ditiduri.
- kalau patah hati, jangan kayak Yu Hua, malah vasektomi. Tapi tindakan Yu Hua punya benefit kelak saat dia sudah kaya dan meniduri buaaaaanyak perempuan setiap malamnya. Dan suatu ketika banyak perempuan mengaku punya anak darinya.

Yu Hua!!!! Favorit!

Lucas says

R?t hay, hay ??n m?c t?i cho m??n quy?n sách này và không bao gi? nhìn th?y nó tr? l?i n?a (không nh? cho b?n nào m??n nên b?n nào c? yên tâm mà c?m ti?p).

Sigit Prasetyo says

Awalnya saya ragu membaca novel ini, pertama karena halamanny yang mencapai 700-an juga terjemahan. Namun, begitu masuk paragraf awal saya tak kuasa berhenti membaca derita demi derita yang dialami li gundul kecil serta keluarga niya di era revolusi kebudayaan yang begitu kejam terhadap tuan-tuan yang dipandang sebagai musuh rakyat. Tak cukup hanya di paragraf atau bab awal saja pengarang yu hua menyajikan kompleksitas derita li gundul, bahkan bisa dikatakan keseluruhan novel ini ya tentang derita li gundul dari seorang bocah miskin sampai jadi konglomerat meski dibalut komedi disana-sini tapi tetep genre novel ini tragedi. Narasi yang padat, alur yang runtut sekaligus cerita yang semakin menyenangkan untuk diikuti serta kualitas terjemahan berkualitas dari agustinus wibowo membuat saya hanya butuh waktu empat hari saja untuk menyelesaikan membaca.

Stephen Durrant says

I wanted to like this book both because I admire several of Yu Hua's previous novels and because a book this large requires a considerable investment in time. While "Brothers" contains some sections of great humor and others of heart-wrenching tragedy, much of it is like a bande dessinée without pictures: flat, cartoon-like characters of extreme, unbelievable behavior. Moreover, I found the obsession with virginity, hymen-reconstruction surgery, and breast and penis enhancement, well, a bit tiresome and juvenile. Even though I suspect there has been some obsession with these topics in China in recent decades, they are not quite my cup of tea . . . or at least not beyond maybe thirty or forty pages. Perhaps this novel about two half-brothers and their quite separate fates would have been better at 300 rather than 600 pages. Or perhaps I need to talk to one of the translators, a brilliant scholar with whom I shared a few dinners a few years back. Maybe he can explain to me exactly what I missed.

Maricarmen Estrada M says

Este libro fue una montaña rusa de emociones. En muchos puntos de la historia estaba segura que no podría darle más de 3 estrellas, pero por la variedad de emociones y lo creativo y diferente de la historia, decidí darle el juego completo de estrellas. Estoy segura de que este libro y sus personajes entrañables permanecerán conmigo por mucho tiempo.

Esta es la historia de dos hermanos, tan opuestos como el blanco y el negro. Durante las más o menos cuatro décadas que relata el autor, se retrata a la China de poco antes de la Revolución Cultural, hasta lo que es la China actual, inmersa en esta cultura global.

El relato es sencillo y directo. Al igual que la historia, tiene pasajes que van de lo más crudo y sin adornos, hasta la casi poesía, como cuando hablaba de los momentos más sagrados y sublimes de la historia. Un ejemplo de esto es la despedida de la viuda de Song Fang Ping y la despedida de Song Gang. Pero por otro lado, también había partes en que el lenguaje y las situaciones caían en lo grotesco. Sin embargo, lo tomé quizás como parte de lo que es la cultura china porque estos detalles coinciden con percepciones que tengo de ese hermoso país por otras referencias.

El inicio del libro es sumamente cómico y divertido. El desarrollo de los personajes principales que son los hermanos Li Guangtou y Song Gang está lleno de detalles que me hicieron reír, enojar, llorar. En distintos momentos los llegué a odiar por separado, pero al final quedé prendada de los dos. Varios de los demás personajes alrededor de estos dos hermanos fueron también entrañables, sobretodo porque ellos daban todo el contexto de esa cultura y de la forma de pensar y actuar de quizás muchas personas en China, muy distinto a la cultura occidental. Esto es algo que a mí me llamó mucho la atención y también porque tenía muchas ganas de leerlo.

El libro es largo y aunque un par de veces estuve a punto de abandonarlo porque me enojé con los personajes, lo recomiendo; no sin antes advertir que hay partes que pueden herir la sensibilidad de algunas personas. En contraste, es un libro para reír, llorar y desesperarse.

Hugo Rios-Cordero says

Recommend to me by the immortal Eva, she made me read a long book again.
Reminds me of the verbal onslaught of GGM or Rushdie Prime

Quang Duy says

"M?t ng??i ph??ng Tây ph?i s?ng b?n tr?m n?m m?i tr?i qua hai th?i ??i khác nhau m?t tr?i m?t v?c này, nh?ng m?t ng??i Trung Qu?c ch? c?n b?n m??i n?m là ?ã tr?i qua ".
??c "Huynh ??" khi?n tôi nh? ???c s?ng ? th? tr?n L?u ??u nh?ng n?m ??i cách m?ng v?n hoá v?y. Chân th?c ??n khó t?. Nh?ng c?nh t??ng v?a khóc v?a c??i mà ch? ?? ph?c t?p c?a nó chính là TQ ???ng ??i.
N?u có 10 sao. Vote ngay không c?n ngh?!

Andrea says

This book is amazing. It goes from being hilarious, to depressing, to jaw-dropping and back it made me feel like I'm on a roller coaster. This book reads like it has 300 pages - not once did I think something was redundant or drawn out. In fact, I felt it stopped almost too sudden.

The characters are wonderfully drawn out and jump off the page. This despite the fact that the book often reads like a fable.

Most interesting is the cultural revolution and how it affected the town of Liu. It's interesting that the characters start out living in huts with no electricity or running water and having to use the public outhouse... and towards the end of the books the town has been completely modernized. And with it, the protagonists evolve as well. Ironically, the town and it's citizens all are much more capitalistic after the cultural revolution than before.

Meredith says

High comedy, high tragedy. Urban sprawl. The preparation of a city for the National Virgin Beauty Competition (otherwise known as the Hymen Olympics), not dissimilar to the preparation of Beijing for the 2008 Olympics. Scoundrel-turned-tycoon Baldy Li, spectacle-turned-loving-wife-turned-nymphomaniac-turned-madam Lin Hong, and then the faithful, terminally unlucky (and often pathetic) Song Gang. The real "romance" in this novel is the stormy relationship between stepbrothers Baldy Li and Song Gang. The center of the love triangle is not ultimately Lin Hong, but Song Gang, who is torn between the two for much of the story.

The deaths of Baldy Li's mother and Song Gang's father set the stage for the rest of the story. On her deathbed, Baldy Li's mother tells Song Gang that he must always take care of his younger brother, and he promises that he will give the last grain of rice in his bowl to Baldy Li. He only breaks this promise once: when he marries Lin Hong, whom Baldy Li has humiliated and stalked for years despite her lack of interest.

Also of interest: the theme of impotence. The brazen Baldy Li undergoes a vasectomy after learning that his beloved Lin Hong, whom he spent years humiliating after peeping her backside in a public bathroom, has married the quiet, sensitive Song Gang. Song Gang himself is impotent, never giving his wife a baby or, as we later find out, much sex at all. His impotence is not just sexual, but universal--he is unable to assert himself in relationships, and unable to provide for himself or his wife.

Moreover, Song Gang is a gender-ambiguous character, more often than not landing in feminine territory. We watch him assemble strands of flowers to sell in a basket to Liu Town women, and even undergo breast augmentation surgery to help sell Wandering Zhao's "Boobs" cream. For several chapters, he walks around town with D-cup breasts, and has moderate success selling the product. It is patently absurd. We, the readers, are embarrassed for him--not to mention irritated that he is so submissive to his wayward business partner Zhao that he would mutilate himself this way.

This story chalks much up to fate, emphasizing several times, "If you are fated to have only fifteen ounces of rice in this life, then even if you go away to seek your fortune, you still won't end up with a full pound." So perhaps Song Gang's tragic fate "est écrit dans les étoiles", as the French would say (my choice of expression

here will make sense when you read the last page of the book). Or perhaps he is simply too passive, too self-sacrificing to mirror Baldy Li's rampant material successes.

Beverly says

I found the tone of this book quite confusing. Early on the book was supposed to be funny and the tone worked for that. After, many awful things happened, but the tone was still identical to the comedic parts. Also, people's motivation didn't make sense to me - perhaps because I don't understand Chinese people. I couldn't understand how one brother could be so selfish or how people were rarely honest with even those closest to them.

I read this in a book group and we couldn't have had a larger disparity in people's reaction. Two people actually hated it and thought it was the worst book they'd ever read, and several people loved it. The best thing anybody said about the book was that Song Gang represented "Old China," Baldy Li represented "New China," and Lin Hong was the only character who really spanned all the ways in which China behaved through her life.

Magda Tatiana says

Tuve muchas expectativas en esta novela, me interesaba particularmente por el periodo histórico que aborda en China, un país desconocido en gran parte para mí, y del que he tenido unas pocas pinceladas a través del cine. Brothers tiene su mayor mérito en su arranque, es dinámico, te ubica en el tiempo y en el espacio, construye, con humor, unas situaciones bien particulares que dibujan el carácter de cada personaje.

En la parte histórica, tuvo su mayor acierto en la puesta en escena de la revolución cultural, pues esta nos la presenta desde la inocencia de los niños, que están en su propio mundo y no les interesa y no entienden lo que sucede a su alrededor, que están muy ocupados siendo niños, esto el autor nos lo muestra al estilo de la vida es bella (me refiero a la película). Es que, si hay algo que deja claro el autor, es lo convulsionado que fue este periodo histórico en China, donde el héroe de hoy es el villano del día siguiente, donde un montón de adolescentes, embriagados en poder e investidos en guardias rojos sumerge a la sociedad china en caos. Esta mirada a la revolución cultural, revela la injusticia, contradicción y absurdo de este periodo ¿vergonzoso para China?

Para el momento de la apertura económica, se hace tangible, que es el momento para el más “vivo”, por lo que es el nicho para personajes como Li Guangtou, cínico y adaptable a las diferentes situaciones. Es que pareciera que la apertura económica fuera el momento para poner a prueba la teoría de la evolución de Darwin, sobrevive el que mejor se adapte y ese es Li Guangtou. Por el otro lado, vemos a un personaje de carácter, a mi parecer débil, Song Gang, que no puede sobreponerse a sus circunstancias y lo devora el nuevo mundo, pasa a ser uno más de la generación perdida en China. Li Guangtou y Song Gang, son opuestos, que muestran desde cada perspectiva, la china oscura, Li Guangtou desde su capitalismo salvaje y Song Gang siendo víctima de este capitalismo, donde personas como él no tienen cabida, es el pez más chico siendo comido por uno más grande.

Este mundo de apertura económica, trae consigo el concepto de todo puede ser vendido y todo puede ser comprado, se comercian secretos, se comercia la vida, se desdibujan los valores, se desdibuja la ética o simplemente esta no existe. Los principios son cambiados por el dinero y el honor y el orgullo ya no significan lo que solían ser. En este pasaje, la crítica al capitalismo es evidente, la decadencia que ha traído, en lo que se ha transformado la sociedad china.

Creo que para nosotros es una visión equilibrada de la sociedad china, o mejor, se nos presenta un análisis neutro de esta sociedad, recordándonos que es una sociedad y cultura de extremos... Sin embargo, me falta algo.

La mujer en esta obra, no pasa de ser un objeto decorativo, trivial, insustancial e intrascendente. Ni antes, ni durante o después de la revolución cultural, las mujeres tuvieron alguna aparición en la novela, es un mundo de hombres, donde las mujeres son esposas, “cariagachadas”, o vividoras en busca de fortuna a cualquier precio.

Sí el autor me está dando una radiografía de la sociedad china ¿Debo asumir que ese es el papel de la mujer china en la sociedad? ¿es que el autor, no pudo encontrar o pensar en un solo personaje femenino que estuviera a la altura de sus pares masculinos?

No sé si esto sea deliberado por parte el autor, pero sí sé que es chocante y no puedo creer, que en un país como China la norma sea que las mujeres no tienen relevancia en ningún ámbito, ni siquiera en cargos públicos, eso por nombrar uno de los aspectos. Si se es mujer objeto, pareciera que no es censurable el tomar a una mujer por la fuerza, como si el autor me llevara a aceptar esta realidad como algo chistoso, propio de un “super amante”.

Quizás, porque empecé a notar esta situación es que el último tercio del libro se me hizo eterno. Entiendo que el autor buscó hacer una crítica mordaz y a lo mejor acida de la sociedad china, pero la sociedad nos incluye a todos, hombres y mujeres, y estas últimas no tienen ningún peso en la historia, no más peso que un trofeo sexual.

Sheila says

I'm a classic book reader. i like to experiment a little on japanese, chinese and korean authors. so far I have read murakami but I like this book better. I call this an idiotic book, light and comical to the point that you would rather not sleep so you can finish the book. The author is a two thumbs up for me:

Beat says

Carloesse says

Due libri, ora unificati in questa nuova edizione Feltrinelli, che raccontano le vicende di due fratelli (in realtà fratellastri) cresciuti intrecciando un legame fortissimo nell'amore sincero tra padre del primo e la madre del secondo. Ma dei padri diversissimi ognuno dei due eredita un carattere opposto. Onesto, integerrimo, serio e fondamentalmente buono il primo; scanzonato, scapestrato, trascinato dalle proprie passioni il minore, Li, detto "Testapelata".

Nella prima parte (quella che fu pubblicata a se stante per prima, con lo stesso titolo e una copertina simile, da Feltrinelli) i due fratelli vivono e soffrono le pene e gli eccessi di fanatismo di una Cina travolta dalla famigerata "Rivoluzione culturale" dei primi anni '70, fino a rimanere orfani in giovanissima età. Il padre-patrigno sarà infatti vittima del fanatismo becero e violento dei suoi concittadini, suscitato dalla "nuova dottrina" rivoluzionaria, cui lui stesso aveva aderito. La madre-matrigna morirà di stenti poco tempo dopo, e ai due giovani rimarrà solo la strada, e imparare l'arte di arrangiarsi (per la quale "Testapelata" si rivelerà particolarmente versato)...

Nella seconda, dal titolo "Arricchirsi è glorioso", si respira il clima radicalmente mutato e contraddittorio della nuova Cina, nella quale il regime totalitario incoraggia il suo popolo ad intraprendere il capitalismo sfrenato che porterà alla nuova potenza economica di oggi, a prezzo dello snaturamento del suo passato, delle sue tradizioni della sua cultura, travolti da un consumismo esasperato. E qui i due fratelli, innamorati della stessa donna, si separeranno, allontanati anche dalle loro diverse indoli. Il primogenito sarà quello che conquisterà la donna, il secondo, deluso, si getterà a capofitto negli affari, diventando in breve uno tra i più ricchi e potenti figuri di questa nuova Cina. Ma le strade dei due fratelli, e della donna ora maritata col primo, si incroceranno ancora...

Se i toni tragicomici caratterizzano l'intera saga, nella prima parte l'orrore e le volgarità della vita riescono bene a bilanciare questa alternanza. La seconda si dilunga invece forse anche troppo nelle farsesche e picaresche avventure dei suoi protagonisti e di alcuni comprimari. Quello che ne viene fuori, nel suo complesso, è un romanzo divertente, e alla fine un apologo morale, arricchito da un certo gusto satirico, sui sentimenti della passione, dell'amore, della fratellanza. Questo più che una analisi approfondita sulla società cinese attraverso quel quarantennio che l'ha trasformata radicalmente portandola a conoscere due estremi opposti di applicazione di politiche sociali ed economiche. Ma in fondo non è questo ciò che si chiede a un romanzo, e quella società rimane ugualmente costantemente sullo sfondo, mostrando tutta la sua capacità di adattarsi alle sue condizioni senza chiedersi troppo riguardo alle sue radicali contraddizioni. Le masse, in fondo, non sono che un insieme di individui, il cui primo pensiero è (sempre e ovunque) sopravvivere. Possibilmente nel migliore dei modi.
