



## The Vintage Book of Contemporary Chinese Fiction

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### **The Vintage Book of Contemporary Chinese Fiction** From Vintage

David Su Li-Qun and Carolyn Choa introduce nineteen of China's most enthralling writers-to date largely unknown outside their native land. From Shanghai to Beijing, we meet people whose lives have been transformed by their country's turbulent recent history.

Cheng Nai-shan writes about the present-day life of the former Shanghai upper class and their children. Sent to work on a rural commune at age fifteen, Wang An-yi now writes about the struggles of the urban underclass. Wang-Meng, once exiled to Tibet, now writes award-winning, character driven stories. Mo Shen had been a railway porter before emerging as a writer after the fall of the Gang of Four. With these and seventeen other writers represented, **The Vintage Book of Contemporary Chinese Fiction** is a literary testament to a post-revolutionary nation in transition.

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This anthology, a revision of one published by Picador in the U.K. in 1998, contains 21 stories equally divided between urban and rural settings, mostly granting a view of life in modern China unlike anything presented to us by the news media. The perspective throughout the book is consistently childlike, without the ambivalence of most modern fiction in English: all women are exceedingly beautiful or plain; men are clever, dull or merely dutiful. Life follows the simple parameters of Communist dictum: birth, marriage, one child (two if it's a rich or aristocratic family) and death. Decidedly tame in tone and subject matter, the tales offer only mild, glancing criticism of Communism; they often focus on single characters who disrupt the social fabric through small "rebellions." One such example is "Black Walls" by Liu Xin-wu, which portrays the confusion in a small town when word spreads that an old man is spray painting the wall of his apartment black. In "Fate," by Shi Tie-sheng, an egotistical writer describes his anger and confusion at being rendered a paraplegic after he runs over an eggplant on his bicycle and is thrown in front of a truck. This bland anthology describes a China that appears poor and claustrophobic, but somehow still provides a context for romance, dreams and the occasional tragedy. Agent, Judy Daish. (Nov.) Forecast: The Vintage brand will lend this modest anthology some cachet, helping to land it on many an undergraduate syllabus.

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From Library Journal

Choa, a choreographer and film producer in London, and Su Li-qun (Asian studies, Univ. of London) have selected 19 authors for this anthology of recent fiction. With the exception of David Su, all the represented authors live in China and continue to pursue their careers there. The writers depict life in rural and urban China, almost always against the backdrop of the Cultural Revolution and its upheavals. While some stories are character-driven, others comprise a series of short fables, sketches, or vignettes. The translations, mostly by British scholars, are generally smooth, though some seem stilted and too literal, and the short author biographies would have been more useful if they had noted which of the authors' works were available in English or at least gave complete lists of their major works. For example, the editors fail to list Feng Ji-cai's *The Three-Inch Golden Lotus*, Wang An-yi's *Baotown*, and Zhang Jie's *Heavy Wings* along with their other works, although all these novels were translated into English within the last 20 years. Recommended for larger public libraries. Kitty Chen Dean, Nassau Coll., Garden City, NY  
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From [Booklist](#)

The horrors of the Cultural Revolution have come and gone in China, but political dissent in fiction is still a dangerous endeavor. Several of these stories manage to subtly indict the government amid praise for the proletariat. Most acknowledge political situations in China without being consumed by them, proving that although art may be inherently political, it is not merely political. From a lyrical evocation of a crematorium and its workers to a first-person narration of a crippling car accident, the stories give color and depth to a world that most Americans glimpse only on television. The selection includes some folktales of the sort that has increased in popularity in the West, but it encompasses much more than that, embracing a range of prose styles that is genuinely astounding. Wholly accessible to a Western audience, these remarkable stories will be particularly valued by established fans of Chinese literature yet are sure to give enjoyment to any short-story fancier. *John Green*

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