



Dialogues in Paradise

Can Xue , Ronald R. Janssen (Translation) , Jian Zhang (Translation)

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The thirteen stories of *Dialogues in Paradise* are eloquent in a way the West associates with both the modern and the ancient: the dark oracles of Aeschylus and Sophocles, the paranoid mystery of Kafka, the moving stream of Woolf. The work of Can Xue (a pseudonym of Changsha writer Deng Xiao-hua) renews our consciousness of the long tradition of the irrational in our literature, where dreams and reality constitute one territory, its borders open, the passage back and forth barely discernible. She fuses lyrical purity with the darkest visions of the grotesque and the result is a unique literary experience.

Dialogues in Paradise Details

Date : Published June 1st 1989 by Northwestern University Press (first published May 1989)

ISBN : 9780810108318

Author : Can Xue , Ronald R. Janssen (Translation) , Jian Zhang (Translation)

Format : Paperback 173 pages

Genre : Short Stories, Fiction, Cultural, China, Literature, Literary Fiction

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From Reader Review Dialogues in Paradise for online ebook

Leia Penina says

Eat your heart out Mo Yan.

Kaisa says

Read the "Hut on a Mountain" ????? - made a presentation of it, with the focus on mother-child relationship (for uni)

E. G. says

I'll admit at times I grew frustrated with my inability to feel rooted in these stories, marvelous as they were, though I don't really fault Can Xue for her inaccessibility (I share her abstract inclinations). I've also been knee-deep in Crit Lit and essays lately, so I'm sure the gap between genres just left me with a sustained sort of shock and bewilderment, lol. At first, I wasn't quite used to Xue's sentence-to-sentence-level "flow", but I think this is because I rely too heavily on the musical aspects of language to drive my interest. It was a bit of a wake-up call to my senses actually, specifically to my sense of smell and taste; the way she incorporates these is mystifying but familiar from a dream-world perspective. "The Hut" and the titular five-part short story are especially memorable to me and bring forward shared themes in a way that feels more genuine/less obscure for obscurity's sake.

b bb bbbb bbbbbbbb says

I like some rambling surrealism on occasion- but only if it's charming, fun and it is at least semi-coherent. There wasn't enough here to stick around for more than a couple of the short "stories". A markov chain might churn out equivalent material.

Quick! Cue a Reading Rainbow cut sequence: But you don't have to take my word for it... let's quote the author.

"It is very abstract, very obscure - full of power to repel readers!"

"To ordinary readers, it is as difficult as deciphering some secret code. If I go on like this, I might lose all my readers. But what other ways are there? I am like this. I don't care about readers!"

For that kind of honesty and sense of purpose you pretty much have to salute the author. I'm not really the target audience. If I was, I'd know it. For those whom it does scratch an itch I bet it's satisfying in a way rarely encountered.

My taste is more along the lines of "My Life in the Bush of Ghosts" or "Kassandra and the Wolf".

Sherli says

Its like reading kafka

Gena says

Perhaps as close as written language has ever come to simulating actual nightmares.

Manglebrot Spknmpzk says

One of my favorite books and authors by a lot. 5 stars is too little

J says

What am I supposed to make of Can Xue [a name which translates literally as 'Dirty Snow'], who is perhaps one of the most avant-garde writers in the world at the moment, who refers to herself in third-person in interviews, who has explicitly stated she does not care, nor write, for readers, and who Susan Sontag declared was China's best hopes for a Nobel? At the heart of Can Xue's stories lies the domestic-fabulism carved out by, say, Kafka and Borges, where the intricate performance of movements within reality intermingles with the poetic depth of fantasy and surrealism. Slowly throughout *Dialogues in Paradise*'s thirteen very short stories, the reader journeys from narratives ground in the realistic world of physics being steadily encroached by irrationality, terror and the world of dreams and visions. But as these eloquently poised and surgically raw stories become more fantastic and grotesque - where grandmothers turn into soap suds, and people become animals - the realm of the interior moves away from the focus of the philosophically malevolent subconscious within society to the psychological interior disturbance of the tormented mind. Can Xue's stories are difficult and often very hard to decode, especially for the uninitiated reader, but through these stories the semblance of a framework - as well as a new way of reading - begins to take hold so that by the thirteenth, eponymous story - the masterpiece of the entire collection - the reader, understanding or otherwise, is fully exposed to the entire - quarantined - primitive lyricism that moves in Can Xue's prose. Her writing is both sensory but infinitely veiled inwards; hermetic and hermeneutic; lavish but equally tightly controlled, where sentences and thoughts seem to jerk startlingly from one perception to another, but always remaining within a fabricated world of mystery. Every word becomes revelatory important, every sensation becomes extraordinary. It must, otherwise the sparseness of each story leaves nothing for the reader. This collection demands a lot from the reader, and left me baffled, I must admit, by the last page. There seems to be something cosmic which ties everything together, which Can Xue knows about but the reader is not let upon: some greater narrative that feels like a whisper, or some untouched buzz of electricity, through the characters. Regardless of the collection's rather weird esotericism, the prose is haunting to read and lingers on your mind with great impressions. Moments are captured in a hallucinatory manner, relegated to motifs of nature, of animals and very elemental images which become one with the larger orbits of the home, the house, the walls of the mind; in essence, the myriad of configurations of space

and how bodies are able to come together, or apart, within their shifting realities. *Dialogues in Paradise* is slow and meditative, but by all logic - and defiance of - produces an existential reading experience like no other.

Sarah A. says

Brilliant. Not a traditional narrative...don't even look for a plot line...but so many hues, flavors, and textures...

soulAdmitted says

Per smettere di dialogare con le memorie ingenerose della Cina rieducatrice, rivoluzionaria culturale, anticulturale in cui è nata (1953) e cresciuta, per disabitarla finalmente, Can Xue (titolo di studio: Scuola Media) procede per allungamenti progressivi del reale fino alla veggenza e per torsioni della ragione fino alla persuasione metafisica. E viceversa. O viceversa.

Nel retroscena scorrono, defilati e lente: Lispector, Leonor Fini, Kafka, Dalí, volendo. Borges. Šar?nas Bartas. Un paio di decenni di surrealismi. Il Michaux mescalinico e altri visionari a scelta.

Oggi io e lui abbiamo un appuntamento. Lui è una persona del mio tipo, quello prodotto dalla mia immaginazione. Negli ultimi anni ho avuto appuntamenti con persone di ogni genere, tutte scaturite dalla mia immaginazione. Di solito non vado di persona agli appuntamenti, gli incontri avvengono nella mia mente. Qualche volta capita che vada davvero e dopo ritorno piena di piccoli ricordini di carta cerata. La mia libreria è piena di questi piccoli oggetti rosso-verdi. [...]

Lui mi ha dato appuntamento alle tre del pomeriggio in un'isola deserta. Poi ha aggiunto che potevo non andare, non era affatto necessario. Anzi, avrei fatto male ad andare.

Dopo averci pensato su, ho deciso di andare comunque, perché non era affatto necessario non andare. [...] Mentre prendevo questa decisione ho pensato subito ai ricordini.

Chiedo a mia madre: "Perché a notte fonda basta bussare a quelle porte chiuse perché si aprano e alla fine quel che si vede non è altro che quello specchio spaventoso?".

Fine corsa.

Tony Gualtieri says

Strange and beautiful stories, unlike anything else I've ever read.

Melissa Luna says

Strange, dark, compelling.

