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Rose, Rose, I Love You



Synopsis

In this lively translation of Wang Chen-ho's ribald satire, a Taiwanese village loses all perspective and common sense at the prospect of fleecing a shipload of lusty and lonely American soldiers. A rotund, excitable high school English teacher receives word that 300 GIs are coming from Vietnam for a weekend of R and R. He persuades the owners of the Big 4 brothels that they will all take in more U.S. dollars if the pleasure girls can speak a little English; his plan is to train fifty specially selected prostitutes in a "Crash Course for Bar Girls." The teacher, Dong Siwen (his name means "refinement") enlists the eager support of local Councilman Qian and the managers of such elite establishments as Night Fragrances and Valley of Joy. "If the girls learn how to say three things in English—Hello, How are you? and Want to do you-know-what? everything is A-OK!" But what begins as a simple plan to teach a few English phrases quickly becomes absurdly elaborate: courses will include an "Introduction to American Culture," a crash course on global etiquette, and a workshop in personal hygiene taught by Dr. "Venereal" Wang. Siwen, a virgin himself, dreads any bad P.R. from "Saigon Rose" (slang for a particularly virulent strain of v.d.) and so demands the finest conveniences and conditions for "servicing the Yanks." "Sanitation above all.... Do you think U.S. dollars will float out of their pockets in crummy rooms like that?" The Americans must not leave with a poor impression of Taiwan; not only Dong Siwen and the Big 4 but the entire nation would lose face. One of the most carefully wrought narratives in contemporary Chinese literature, *Rose, Rose, I Love You* will appeal not only to readers of fiction but also to those interested in Taiwanese identity and the effects of Westernization on Asian society.

Book Information

Series: Modern Chinese Literature from Taiwan

Paperback: 212 pages

Publisher: Columbia University Press (November 15, 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0231112033

ISBN-13: 978-0231112031

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars— See all reviews— (3 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #964,913 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #96 in Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Regional & Cultural > Asian > Chinese #868 in Books > Literature

Customer Reviews

This novel introduces a Taiwan very few Westerners know about, and while it takes place during the 1960s when American soldiers fighting a crappy ugly war in Vietnam come to Taiwan for rest and fornication, comfort stations taken to a new level, a new kind of comfort women servicing not Japanese this time but Yanks, the novel was written and published in Taiwan in 1984 and then translated for Western readers in 1999. In 2014, the Taipei Times expat newspaper in Taiwan reviewed the book and gave it a big thumbs up, too. I loved the novel and bravo to a very smooth translation that rocks. If you want to know why Taiwanese still refer to foreign white men as *adoah*, aka "big nose foreigners" -- aka "a-tok-a" -- this novel will serve as a very good guide to the evolving cultures of Taiwan and notice I said cultures in the plural because Taiwan is not just one country: it is a hybrid nation mix of several different ethnic groups, not all of them Chinese, and the bar girls in those readable novel are not Chinese women but descendants of the Aboriginal people of Taiwan who came to the island 10,000 years ago, perhaps even earlier. Read this book, as I did, and learn about the real Taiwan, not the touristy Taiwan the guide books post.

Rose, Rose I Love You is an alternately hilarious, sardonic and ultimately deeply tragic look at the underbelly of Taiwanese society with its sleaze, corruption and degradation of women. And waiting in the wings is the looming presence of the American G.I.s soon to arrive for rest and recreation. This is a unique and powerful book.

The book was an amazing story that shows the satire of political situations influenced by poverty, privilege and power.

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