

Paradise of the Blind: A Novel

By Duong Thu Huong, Nina McPherson

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Paradise of the Blind is an exquisite portrait of three Vietnamese women struggling to survive in a society where subservience to men is expected and Communist corruption crushes every dream. Through the eyes of Hang, a young woman in her twenties who has grown up amidst the slums and intermittent beauty of Hanoi, we come to know the tragedy of her family as land reform rips apart their village. When her uncle Chinh's political loyalties replace family devotion, Hang is torn between her mother's appalling self-sacrifice and the bitterness of her aunt who can avenge but not forgive. Only by freeing herself from the past will Hang be able to find dignity — and a future.

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Paradise of the Blind: A Novel By Duong Thu Huong, Nina McPherson Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This staunchly unsentimental, evocative novel, originally published in Huong's native Vietnam and beautifully translated by Duong and McPherson, offers a narrative rich in detail and free of cliché. The author, who lives with her children in Hanoi, depicts the complexity of Vietnamese culture--the allegiance to family and ancestors, the symbolic value of food, class distinctions and the continuing sense of desperation mingled with pride. The protagonist, Hang, a physically fragile young woman of the '80s, recalls Hanoi in the previous decade. While there are subtle allusions to war and peacetime, Huong's focus is on the shifting, uneasy relationships between modernized Hang and her traditionalist mother, a merchant who peddles food; Hang's selfish, hypocritical uncle, a communist peasant; and Hang's comparatively wealthy, unconditionally loving aunt. Contrasts between young, old, urban and rural, help to convey the full variety of Vietnamese lifestyles. McPherson's introduction provides essential background information without spoiling the plot of Huong's unquestionably powerful tale.

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From School Library Journal

YA-- Huong's exquisite book, banned in her own country, introduces readers to daily life in Vietnam under Communist rule in the 1970s. Readers will be captivated by this story of a young girl growing into womanhood under a regime that negates many of the people's old values and customs and tears families apart. Hang grows up seeking the name of her father and the circumstances of his disappearance and death. Concomitantly, her mother becomes more and more desperate and distant in her struggle to earn a living as a street snack seller, a job decried by Uncle Chinh, a loyal Communist, as reminiscent of old capitalist ways. Her mother is also tied to another remnant of the past; she will sacrifice health, food, and her own self-respect to cater to Chinh's needs and expects her daughter to do the same. As a young adult, Hang is sent to work in Russia, and the author describes that country with equal skill. The book captures the enormous beauty and sensory delights of this unique land, as well as the degradation and grim realities of the post-civil-war period. The translator's notes guide readers through the politics.

- Virginia Ryder, West Potomac High School, Fairfax County, VA

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From Library Journal

Duong Thu Huong was once a member of Vietnam's Communist Youth Brigade and defended her country from Chinese attack in 1979. She has since been expelled from the Communist party, and her works are now banned in her country. *Paradise of the Blind* is her gripping story of a young girl growing up in contemporary Vietnam. Hang is a timid, thoughtful child often overwhelmed by the fierce love of her mother and her aunt. Her education cut short by family and economic pressures, Hang relinquishes her dreams and becomes an "export worker" in the Soviet Union. Through Hang's eyes we perceive the importance of family ties and understand the role that food, ritual, and ancestor worship play in Vietnamese society. We see the Communist legacy as relatives and friends turn on one another in an effort to become the "king of the mountain," and we feel the pain of women living in a male-dominated society where they are on equal footing only with servants. Highly recommended for Asian studies and women's studies collections.

- Peggie Partello, Keene State Coll., N.H.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Patrick Cartwright:

The experience that you get from Paradise of the Blind: A Novel will be the more deep you excavating the information that hide in the words the more you get enthusiastic about reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to be aware of but Paradise of the Blind: A Novel giving you joy feeling of reading. The writer conveys their point in a number of way that can be understood by anyone who read it because the author of this book is well-known enough. That book also makes your vocabulary increase well. That makes it easy to understand then can go to you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We suggest you for having that Paradise of the Blind: A Novel instantly.

Mary Benoit:

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Laura Clark:

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Robert Dougherty:

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