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YU HUA. *Mânia lui Mao: China de astăzi văzută prin ochii unui scriitor*, [Mao's fury: China today seen through the eyes of a writer], translated from Chinese by: Mugur Zlotea, București, Humanitas, 2019, 161 p.

Translated into more than thirty languages, the literary works of the Chinese writer, Yu Hua, have become more and more known to the public from China and outside of China, due to the unique way of the writer of expressing his ideas and also, due to the increasing interest of the public for Chinese literature. As it has been declared many times by the Romanian sinologists, we are witnesses to the era of the Chinese novel.

During the last decades, precious works of the important contemporary Chinese writers, including Yu Hua, have been translated into Romanian language, being accessible to Romanian readers, therefore making one step forward in the relationship with the uncountable values that China owns.

As *Le Monde* describes the writer, *this Hemingway of China*, was born in Hangzhou, Zhejiang, in 1960, and his life is marked by the Chinese Cultural Revolution, which forces him to give up Medicine in favor of Literature. Yu Hua walked timidly on the literature scene through the stories he had published since 1984, then continuing with novels, stories and essays. The most influential works have been translated into Romanian: *În viață - Alive* (2016), *Cronica unui negustor de sânge - Chronicles of a Blood Merchant* (2017), *China în zece cuvinte - China in Ten Words* (2018), and in the year of 2019, the volume of short texts: *Mânia lui Mao: China văzută prin ochii unui scriitor* -

Mao's fury: China today seen through the eyes of a writer.

From a compositional point of view, the volume: *China văzută prin ochii unui scriitor*, has brought together 26 texts that have been translated into different languages of international circulation, such as English, French, Spanish and published in international magazines. However, the texts have not appeared so far in a volume that would have facilitated the access to them and the understanding, in fact, of the situation that China is currently facing.

The importance of this work results from the combination of the unique, sometimes ironic, humorous and simple literary style of the author, which, as Lisa See points out, *is one of China's deepest voices today*, with some specific themes from the Chinese society, not so much known to the Romanian public.

Topics such as censorship of the works of art, such as film or books, the illogical laws of China, the pollution that goes beyond the control of the authorities, patriotism and the perspective of Chinese outside China versus the perspective of Chinese in China related to their country, censorship in virtual space and the inventive ways in which Chinese manage to post on micro-blogs their own opinions on hot topics in China, but also the past and present perspective on America are just a few of the topics discussed by Yu Hua.

Being of short length dimensions, of only a few pages, the texts are very

focused on presenting the theme of each one. The author takes great care to provide a brief introduction, developing only the highlight and offering, as a conclusion, where his presence is felt, either a joke, a rhetorical question, or an answer received from any reader who sets out his point of view on the article in question. The author often identifies himself with the voice of his readers.

The volume begins with the text *Diferite fațete ale cenzurii - Different faces of censorship*, in which the way that books, films, newspapers and everything in front of the public are checked and carefully selected is briefly presented. Following this text, the reader can understand why a book can be sold and become a best seller, but a film made on the basis of it will be rejected and banned. Of course, these decisions made by the two entities involved, one of the censorship of books being represented by commercial entities, and the other of the censorship of the films, which are subordinated to the state, create various reactions from the Chinese public. In response, the author publishes a message on the Chinese equivalent of Twitter, named Weibo, comparing film censorship to food control, stating that food safety officers only need to learn from those who check the films, and thus the problem would be solved. Yu Hua ends his story with a reply from one of his readers who argued that roles should be reversed between the two entities, and that China could solve two important issues: food control and freedom of expression.

The literary talent of the author can be better perceived especially in the text called *Amintiri despre ziua națională - Memories of the national day*. The text begins with an account of an event in the

author's life that had taken place a few days before China's National Day, at which point his friends and he were having dinner at a restaurant on Chang'an Boulevard, a boulevard that had already been closed for rehearsals for the big day of October 1st.

The second part of the text takes us, the readers, to the author's childhood, when, being born and living in southern China, he did not have the opportunity to go to Beijing to attend the National Day. However, by the ingenuity of a photographer who painted on the wall the Tian'anmen gate and the portrait of Mao Zedong, Yu Hua manages to have a photograph that made him think of his presence in the big market of the Chinese capital. As a child, watching the celebrations on television, the author remembers his fascination with firefighters and the way he looked at the table with the fruits and sweets he saw in the documentary, alongside Mao's image. At the same time, the author confesses that those were some of the most beautiful moments of his childhood.

The story continued, the author digging deeper into the rock of his childhood memories, and heading for the oldest memory they had, regarding the National Day, namely -the ceiling in his room.

He tells that once a year, his father changed the newspapers on the ceiling, to prevent dust and dirt from falling over him and to give the impression that there is something between the tiles on the roof and them.

The image kept in the author's mind is the large photo of Mao that appeared in newspapers with China's National Day, and the fact that over time, other political figures such as Liu Shaoqi or Lin Biao accompanied him, have been

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replaced; only Chairman Mao remained the same.

The author concludes this story in a meditative way, saying that *remembering the past means living again*.

Yu hua's book thus presents both real-life aspects of everyday Chinese life and the perception that Chinese have of the space that is outside China, as presented in the text of *Cele trei Americi - The three Americas*, but also aspects related to the author's own perspective, reproduced in the text *Amintiri despre ziua națională - Memories about The National Day*.

This volume is, in addition to the novels written by Yu Hua in which although the theme of Chinese society and the shortcomings it faces are present, but rendered indirectly, the texts in this

volume directly highlight the solutions that the Chinese use to provide an answer to the challenges imposed by the regime, thus illustrating the portrait of a country, of a nation in a transformation that is unfolding so rapidly that it is difficult and sometimes almost impossible to assimilate.

The book is therefore recommended both to those interested in contemporary Chinese literature that have already become acquainted with Yu Hua's humorous style, to those who are passionate about Chinese history and culture, but also to those who want to know the current state of daily life, to the Chinese and not least, to those who study Chinese language, literature and culture, in order to form a realistic perspective on China.

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