



Naked Earth (New York Review Books Classics)

By Eileen Chang

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An NYRB Classics Original

Set in the early years of Mao's China, *Naked Earth* is the story of two earnest young people confronting the grim realities of revolutionary change. Liu Ch'üan and Su Nan meet in the countryside after volunteering to assist in the new land reform program. Eager to build a more just society, they are puzzled and shocked by the brutality, barely disguised corruption, and ruthless careerism they discover, but then quickly silenced by the barrage of propaganda and public criticism that is directed at anyone who appears to doubt a righteous cause. Joined together by the secret of their common dismay, they remain in touch when Liu departs to work on a newspaper in Peking, where Su Nan eventually also moves. Something like love begins to grow between them—but then a new round of purges sweeps through the revolutionary ranks.

One of the greatest and most loved of modern Chinese writers, Eileen Chang illuminates the dark corners of the human existence with a style of disorienting beauty. *Naked Earth*, unavailable in English for more than fifty years, is a harrowing tale of perverted ideals, damaged souls, deepest loneliness, and terror.

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Editorial Review

Review

“An unrelenting portrait of love and loss in Maoist China. . . . Chang develops a tragic wartime romance that leaves readers with a painfully clear picture of just how deeply Mao’s reign scarred her native country.”—*Publishers Weekly*

“[A] brutal, powerful look at the cost the Maoist regime exacted on even those who perpetuated it.”
—Kristine Huntley, *Booklist*

“Chang’s novel is a searing portrait of the absurd and frequently brutal elements of life, love, and war in Maoist China.” —James Yeh, *Vice*

“There is no doubt about the compassionate quality of the novel, the purity of its language, and the metaphorical richness of its imagery.” —C.T. Hsia

“The novel shines. . . . It’s telling that it ends on a personal note rather than on a political one. Chang’s description of small compromises and grand despair are both affecting and compelling.” —*Kirkus Reviews*

Praise for *Love in a Fallen City* (NYRB Classics)

“Chang’s powerful, cruel tales are usually without a vestige of tenderness or redemptive faith, but the existential hell in which they unfold is luxuriously furnished and full of sensuous temptations.” —*The Independent*

“A major rediscovery.” —*Kirkus Reviews*

“She expertly burdens her characters with failed dreams and stifled possibilities, leads them to push aside the heavy curtains of family and convention, and then shows them a yawning emptiness. Their different responses are brilliantly underplayed and fascinating.” —*Publishers Weekly*

About the Author

Eileen Chang (1920–1995) was born into an aristocratic family in Shanghai. Her father, deeply traditional in his ways, was an opium addict; her mother, partly educated in England, was a sophisticated woman of cosmopolitan tastes. Their unhappy marriage ended in divorce, and Chang eventually ran away from her father—who had beaten her for defying her stepmother, then locked her in her room for nearly half a year. Chang studied literature at the University of Hong Kong, but the Japanese attack on the city in 1941 forced her to return to occupied Shanghai, where she was able to publish the stories and essays (collected in two volumes, *Romances*, 1944, and *Written on Water*, 1945) that soon made her a literary star. In 1944 Chang married Hu Lan-ch’eng, a Japanese sympathizer whose sexual infidelities led to their divorce three years later. The rise of Communist influence made it increasingly difficult for Chang to continue living in Shanghai; she moved to Hong Kong in 1952, then immigrated to the United States three years later. She remarried (an American, Ferdinand Reyher, who died in 1967) and held various posts as writer-in-residence; in 1969 she obtained a more permanent position as a researcher at Berkeley. Two novels, both commissioned in the 1950s by the United States Information Service as anti-Communist propaganda, *The Rice-Sprout Song* (1955) and *Naked Earth* (1956), were followed by a third, *The Rouge of the North* (1967), which expanded

on her celebrated early novella, “The Golden Cangue.” Chang continued writing essays and stories in Chinese and scripts for Hong Kong films, and began work on an English translation of the famous Ch’ing novel *The Sing-Song Girls of Shanghai*. In spite of the tremendous revival of interest in her work that began in Taiwan and Hong Kong in the 1970s, and that later spread to mainland China, Chang became ever more reclusive as she grew older. She was found dead in her Los Angeles apartment in September 1995. In 2006 NYRB Classics published a collection of Chang’s stories, *Love in a Fallen City*, and in 2007, a film adaptation of her novella *Lust, Caution*, directed by Ang Lee, was released.

Perry Link is Chancellorial Chair for Teaching Across Disciplines at the University of California at Riverside. He translated China’s Charter 08 manifesto into English and recently co-edited *No Enemies, No Hatred*, a collection of essays and poems by Liu Xiaobo. His latest book is *An Anatomy of Chinese: Rhythm, Metaphor, Politics* and his translation of the autobiography of the Chinese dissident astrophysicist Fang Lizhi, *The Most Wanted Man in China: My Journey from Science to Exile*, will be published in early 2016.

Users Review

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