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FLOWER TERROR:

Suffocating Stories of China

Pu Ning, trans. by Richard J. Ferris Jr. and Andrew Morton. Homa & Sekey, \$13.95 paper (256p) ISBN 0-9665421-0-X

Chinese writer Pu Ning (*Red in Tooth and Claw*) eloquently describes the oppression of intellectuals in his country from Mao's victory in 1949 until 1988 in these 12 autobiographical short stories. A survivor of hard labor, brainwashing and imprisonment, Pu uses his own name in the stories, or calls his hero "the writer," recording his family's and his own suffering in chilling tales whose characters are experts at rigid self-containment. In "A Glass of Water," neighbors ignore a feverish old woman's pleas for water because her family has been denounced as counterrevolutionary and they fear retribution by the state. In "The Fossil," a wife does not speak to or acknowledge her writer husband for three years, because he is under suspicion. When he returns from a forced labor camp, even his two young daughters won't talk to him. Pu, one of China's most influential writers, writes of his embittering experiences clearly and fluently, without sentimentality or self-pity. (Dec.)
