



Parade

Sh?ichi Yoshida

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Comme à la parade ! Quatre jeunes gens, qui partagent un appartement dans Tôkyô, se racontent à tour de rôle : sa vie, son passé, ses amours, ses travers, ses folies, ses manies, ses secrets. Et lorsqu'un cinquième entre par hasard dans le jeu, son intrusion change la donne et révèle ce qui se trame sous les règles tacites de la communication humaine. La petite musique de Yoshida Shuichi excelle à décrire ce qui se joue dans le phénomène de la colocation, cette communauté de vies qui est le reflet de la société tout entière. Il s'entend à orchestrer le drame silencieux sous la futilité apparente du monde et nous ramène constamment au mystère de l'autre : celui que nous côtoyons et croyons connaître, celui que nous jouons vis-à-vis d'autrui et de nous-mêmes, entre norme et transgression, peurs et attentes, solidarité et violence.

Parade Details

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Sam says

This is the first book by Yoshida that I've read and damn has it made an impression. It starts off with a gentle introduction to each of the five people who live together in an apartment in Tokyo but gradually we find that there is a lot more going on under the surface with events taking ever increasing turns into the dark side of the human condition. Despite having been translated into English the writing still flows well and seems to capture every aspect of the characters and events that follow, drawing you in before giving you a vivid and violent wake up call that you just don't expect. An excellent read that may be a little slow to start but quickly pulls you in.

Dasha M says

So... about 80% of the book was a Japanese "Friends" setup. Then the disturbing ending was like a punch in the face. Completely did not see that coming.

Jayaprakash Satyamurthy says

A story of urban life among an unmoored younger generation on the borders between college and professional life. At first it seems like fairly cozy story of 4 roommates but we slowly see how empty their fellowship is and in a shocking final act, we see how much emptiness this low stakes, low involvement lifestyle conceals.

Tenma says

This novel reminds me of "confessions" by Kanae Minato. Both novels are divided into sections, each narrated by a different character to give the reader an overview of the story from contrasting points of view. However, while "confessions" is serious with a dark tone, "parade" is lightly hearted and funny. I felt the synopsis on the back cover to be slightly puffed up. I was expecting the story to verge and develop into a sort of crime novel with a climax, but that never happened. This is rather a plotless and simple novel that tells the happenings and story of five youngsters in their teens and tweens while sharing a small flat in Tokyo ... It should appeal to anyone interested in "slice of life" novels ... I really liked this book, at least a big chunk of it... What I did not like, or rather hated, is the side story about a series of assaults that occurred in the vicinity of the apartment ... This side plot was so poorly developed that it felt completely out of place .. It had no artistic value and only served to spoil a rather elegant novel... I would have given this novel a rating of 4 or 5 if it was not for this unnecessary intrusion ...

Son Agia says

Goodreads bagi saya adalah satu-satunya tempat review di mana seseorang bisa asyik mengetahui pendapat orang lain tanpa mesti terkait dengan apa yang sedang diulas. Terlepas dari tampang saya yang 98% mirip tukang begal, gini-gini saya rajin nongkrong di berbagai forum hiburan: *Gamefaqs*, *myanimelist*, dan *musicbanter* contohnya. Dan kalo boleh jujur, saya kurang begitu antusias jika membaca ulasan video game, film, musik, atau bahkan anime tertentu yang belum atau memang gak niat saya konsumsi. Selalu harus yang *sudah* atau minimal *ingin* saya tonton/mainkan.

Omongan saya ini jelas bukan tanpa celah, karena ada hal yang jadi pengecualian di sini: buku. Saya seneng baca review buku. Entah itu buku keren, jelek, yang belum saya baca, yang najis saya baca, yang isinya ceramah, yang dikit-dikit nyantumin kosakata norak kayak ‘bercinta’, buku yang penulisnya doyan koar-koar soal pembajakan di media sosial, bahkan buku lokal yang kesannya terasa seperti buku terjemahan amatir.

Ini mungkin karena menurut saya buku menyandang gelar sebagai medium hiburan—sekaligus informasi—paling seksi di antara yang lain. Konten yang pada dasarnya cuma berupa teks tanpa visual cenderung membutuhkan perhatian lebih dari si pembaca. Hasilnya, ia sering dapat melahirkan suatu interpretasi, sudut pandang, maupun ideologi nan menarik dan kadang-kadang, baru.

Tai anjing, malah kayak isi skripsi ya.

Intinya saya heran sendiri, kenapa setelah nulis panjang-panjang barusan, saya justru jarang aktif di Goodreads. Saking jarangnya sampe baru sadar kalo review terakhir yang saya tulis di sini, *Planet of the Apes*, ternyata saya pajang hampir setahun lalu. Jelas ini merupakan sebuah penghinaan bagi lelaki berprinsip seperti Agia.

Gak bakal ada yang peduli, pastinya. Mukadimah ini saya tulis buat nyambut diri sendiri aja sih. Ya sambil sekalian pengen tau kabar kawan-kawan di Goodreads, terutama cees-cees beratku Rido Arbain, Aravena, Guguk, Haris, Reyhan dll. Kumaha damang?

* * *

Ada semacam sensasi aneh tiap kali saya baca novel Jepang. Saya gak tau apa, tapi ini selalu sukses membuat saya menikmati sensasi aneh itu. Mungkin gaya narasi, atau mungkin juga budaya dan perilaku-perilaku yang ditampilkan dalam narasi. Contoh paling konkret yaitu sewaktu saya membaca satu cerita tentang sekumpulan pemuda-pemudi yang hidup bersama di kawasan ibukota.

Parade, novel yang secara jelas mengungkap bagaimana potret kehidupan masyarakat urban di sana; dan saya rasa ini tereksekusi dengan amat berhasil. Buku terbagi dalam lima bab, yang diambil dari sudut pandang masing-masing tokoh. Pada bab pertama kita disuguh dengan bacotan sehari-sehari Ryosuke Sugimoto, mahasiswa tukang ngelantur yang tengah menderita siksaan batin, sebut saja naksir ke pacar seniornya di kampus; Ada Kotomi Okochi, cewek pengangguran super cakep yang menghabiskan waktunya di depan televisi sambil ngarep ditelepon pacar; Mirai Soma, perempuan sinis yang hobi nongkrong di tempat berkumpulnya orang-orang gay; Naoki Ihara adalah pegawai kantoran yang diperlakukan sebagai figur kakak oleh penghuni rumah.

Kemudian muncul orang kelima, Satoru Kokubo—gigolo misterius umur 18 yang anehnya malah diajak ngontrak bareng setelah ketangkep basah nyelinap dan ikut tidur di kontrakan mereka.

Satu dari sekian alasan yang bikin novel ini unik dan menarik ialah minimnya konflik—atau seengaknya konflik mayor. Bahkan cuplikan di sinopsis yang semula saya kira bakalan jadi pusat cerita (“*Meanwhile in*

the next-door apartment, something disturbing is going on... ”), nyatanya cuma digunakan sebagai bumbu penyedap.

Parade murni berisi keseharian para tokoh. Keseharian yang menurut saya jauh dari kata membosankan.

Belakangan ini TV kami memang sering ngadat. Benda itu seolah ingin memberi kami sinyal: “*Oi! Beli yang baru, oi!*”

“Yah, nge-zip lagi,” ujar Kotomi saat kami memandangi layar.

“Itu bukan *nge-zip*. *Nge-zip* itu artinya mindah-mindahin saluran. Aku sering pake kata itu di kampus dan gak ada seorang pun yang paham.”

“Oke, kalau gitu kita mesti nyebut apa?”

“Entahlah, tapi setahuku cuma kita yang pake istilah begitu.”

Koto berdiri, berjalan ke arah TV lalu mengetuknya dengan cukup keras. Layar tiba-tiba berkedip, seolah seperti sedang kesakitan, dan akhirnya dengan hantaman ketiga, kembali normal seperti sedia.

“Hebat,” kataku.

“Hah?”

“Itu bisa langsung kamu perbaiki.”

“TV? Kan ada triknya.” Koto kemudian duduk lagi di lantai dan melanjutkan memotong kuku. “Ryosuke, acara TV favorit kamu apa? Maksudku yang drama.”

“Pas kemarin kamu udah nanya itu,” kujawab sambil menonton Arisa Mizuki yang masih berlarian menyusuri lorong.

“Waktu itu kan aku nanya drama TV favorit Senin pagi. Oke, sekarang aku tanya drama TV favorit yang tayang Jumat siang di TBS.”

Setelah Arisa Mizuki terlihat sudah mengganti baju perawatnya, kuputuskan untuk pergi keluar. Di belakangku Koto berteriak, “Jawab dulu, hey!” Karena sepertinya dia masih akan tetap menerorku sepulangnya dari toko, aku pun bertanya, “*Mismatched Apples* masuk hitungan gak?”

“Iya, bisa,” katanya.

“Ya sudah aku pilih *Mismatched Apples*, yang musim pertama, kedua sama ketiga,” kataku. Dan sesaat setelah berada di luar, tiba-tiba aku kepikiran untuk menanyakan trik TV yang dimaksud Koto barusan, tapi aku langsung berubah pikiran. Kurasa memang lebih baik benda itu rusak.

Gak jelas bukan main. Tapi anehnya, percakapan kurang penting kayak gini malah pantes-pantes aja keluar dari mulut para tokoh. Seakan makin meyakinkan para pembaca bahwa memang ada sesuatu yang salah dengan orang-orang normal ini.

Coba bayangin, kalo aja saya nemu dialog seperti tadi di buku selain *Parade*, kemungkinannya ada dua: (1) saya kirim langsung buku itu ke alamat rumah mantan pacar yang dulu pernah nyakinin saya hingga meneteskan air mata, atau (2) saya akan coret-coret halaman judul buku itu pake pernyataan, “Bukan punya Agia. Demi Allah bukan punya Agia.”

Parade lebih menitikberatkan karakter. Dari awal sampe akhir kita digiring pada pola pikir masing-masing tokoh. Pola pikir yang mungkin sekilas terkesan biasa, padahal sebetulnya sangat dalam. Masa lalu kelam, perasaan sepi, alienasi, wajah dibalik topeng, dan segala macam sisi gelap manusia tertuang secara akurat dalam lima bab.

Beberapa orang yang saya baca ulasannya di Goodreads bilang mereka kaget sama twist novel ini. Kalo saya sih biasa aja. Saya malah ngerasa justru si penulis gak terlalu peduli sama ending. Saya ngebayangin dia nulis sambil mikir gini: “Penutupnya gimana ya? Ah, gini aja deh...” Bahkan seandainya sekarang saya bocorin ending itu, saya bisa jamin kalian gak bakal rugi-rugi amat kok.

Sebetulnya jika dicermati baik-baik, poin dasar yang terdapat dalam novel ini cukup simpel: hidup di ibukota itu keras, bung!

Terus terang saya memang belum pernah mendapat perlakuan keras dari ibukota, tapi seenggaknya sekarang saya mulai paham bahwa makna ‘keras’ dari jargon ini bukan hanya sebagai cerminan betapa sulitnya mencari uang, melainkan juga sebagai bentuk ancaman yang berpotensi membelokkan seseorang.

Minimal di ibukota Jepang.

Joanne Hong says

minor SPOILERS + RANT AHEAD (don't worry, I've hidden the major ones)

One day, when I was at the book store, I was contemplating whether or not I should buy this book instead of *Vanishing Girls* by Lauren Oliver. Both summaries were very appealing, as were their covers, however in the end there could be only one winner and that was *Parade*. Even before I brought this book to the counter, I went on Goodreads to see if the reviews for this book were fairly okay just to be sure that I was making the right decision. Lo and behold, they were.

Feeling satisfied, I proceeded with my purchase.

Oh how I regret not choosing *Vanishing Girls* instead. The decision I made that day is actually eating me up inside till this day.

Do you know what I was promised? Let's look at the summary shall we:

... In the next-door apartment something disturbing is going on. And outside in the streets around their apartment block, there is violence in the air. From the writer of the cult classic

Villain, Parade is a tense, disturbing, thrilling tale of life in the city.

I was promised a tense, disturbing, thrilling tale of life in the city but what I got instead was a snooze-worthy tale of life in the city. I was promised that there was something disturbing going on next door, but it turned out to be such a lame plot twist that it made this book 50% more dull than it would have been had the plot twist not existed in the first place. (view spoiler)

"Okay," I thought after having read the plot twist, " Maybe things won't go downhill from here. I mean, there IS another mystery to solve, a perhaps much more thrilling mystery than the one of the next door neighbours. You'll be okay. This story will be okay." I was wrong.

I was promised "violence in the air" but it wasn't as prevalent as I'd hoped it would be. It was always in the background, coming to centre stage a few hundred pages later, only to disappear once more (view spoiler) I was hoping to hear more of it, but I never got what I wanted. All I got was the characters going about their daily, miserable lives which weren't as intriguing as the things that were happening around them.

The characters were bloody awful, each and every one of them. (view spoiler) All of them seem mentally disturbed to me to be honest, I sincerely think that they need to get themselves checked out.

I wanted character development ya' know? It would have been nice for these strangers who regarded each other as strangers even after all those years of living together to sort of, form bonds that didn't feel fake. Their interactions just seemed fake and let's face it, they were. From my perspective, they weren't sincere with each other, they were just using each other to get through life and that's probably what the author had intended on showing us, although that's just simply NOT good enough in my book. Is it really possible for a group of people to not regard each other as friends after living together for such a long period of time? Is it really?

They were living together yet at the same time they weren't. Everyone was living in their own world, occasionally crossing over to each others' world to have a chat before proceeding to ignore each other again once they're back in their own world. (Man, I'm using a lot of "each other's" today...)

You know what could have been a great plot twist? If Satoru wasn't a prostitute but something else instead, like a murderer or a spy or something. THAT would have been a great plot twist. I mean just imagine it: Teen boy shows up at their apartment out of the blue, claiming he has nowhere to go and begs to stay with them, only to be the murderer in charge of the killings and wanting to get rid of the witnesses to the murders - that would be our 4 main characters - stalks Mirai on the night of her drunkenness and successfully earns himself a chance to stay in their apartment under false pretences. Then, he changes his plans and decides to torture them mentally instead, breaking their bonds by making them question each other's motives for staying together even though they could live in separate places just fine (although it would be much more expensive than staying together). THAT, would have been a 4 to 5 star worthy twist for me.

(view spoiler)

Wow, now that I've got everything off of my chest, I feel much more relaxed now.

In conclusion, I would recommend this book to people who don't mind reading about other people's boring, daily lives, people who can withstand a book filled with horrible characters and an almost non-existent plot

and people who want to know what it's like to read a book from a Japanese author.

Will I re-read this book? NO ABSOLUTELY NOT.

Will I proofread this review? Maybe in a couple of months, I don't know.

Dilushani Jayalath says

This was my first book by Shuichi Yoshida. As a matter of fact this was my first Japanese novel ever. I guess a part of me picked this book is because I'm kinda partial towards jap stuff but I kept trying to read it off for a very long time though. I really don't know how to start this review. Partly because this book was deep in a non-serious way but also kinda stupid or lame.

Fist of all I'll talk about the plot. The plot was pretty much slow-paced one could say. Throughout most of the book I kept asking myself "is there any point in the story?" because it pretty much didn't. most of the book just told how these 5 people were living in the apartment and the stories from their points of views. it was nice in a way to have multiple POVs but also sometimes confusing. Like I told before the story was slow paced for me but the end was just like a shocker for me. By the end I had even forgotten that there was supposed to be any crime in it. I had started to think that this was just another literary piece and forgot the crime element in it. After the major revelation in the book it pretty much ended abruptly. but in a way it felt good. Leaving a better impact on its audience.

Next I'll talk about the characters. Each character had a mental problem of their own I guess. I really don't mean to be rude but that's the most simple way one can say it. Rather than problem I would even say their unique mental state. For me each person was troubled in their own way. So the story becomes intriguing. Mostly because each person acts perfectly normal towards the world. they act so normal sometimes you forget they are all twisted in some way. Yoshida-sensei has shown in a way how people in the world pretty much act. I like how realistic in a way the story was. One could not actually relate to them but in way it was nice reading about people who wasn't fully complex but simple in a rather disordered manner. I know it sounds pretty confusing but one has to read this in order to fully get the concept of it.

Thirdly I'll talk about the ending I guess. Like i mentioned before, the ending was pretty abrupt but it ave the audience the intended effect I think. It was pretty shocking to get to know it and what Yoshida-sensei has done to build up the moment to reveal the truth was pretty good. I like how he brought up the conclusion in a manner that I haven't seen anyone else doing it. I guess that's the reason why he has become quiet a good author. Like i told before it was a shocker to the maximum.

All in all this was a very good literary piece. When I was like in the middle of the book I wouldn't have rated the book a 4 stars but now when I have finished I guess even 4 stars seem inadequate in a way. But rather than a 4 star I would say I like to give a 4.5 stars. It was very satisfying reading it in a different way. After the many contemporary romance and other suspense books i've read, this was without doubt a good read. I would very much like to tell anyone who loves reading books and who is open enough to read any sort of good literary texts that they should try this out.

Real ratings= 4.5 stars

Supreeth says

The main problem of this book lies in its synopsis and labeled genre. If it was labeled as literary fiction without that synopsis which promises something else, it would've been a decent novel, but now it's all

ruined. To be honest, nothing really happens until the ninety five percent of the book, and whatever that happens isn't worth it all. So if you're looking for a thriller-mystery book, you're up for a serious disappointment given that J-thrillers have really high standards. Four twenty something Japanese men and women share an apartment in a busy part of Tokyo, two men and two women. Everyone's different from each other, under different situations - given that all of them are alienated and isolated from the rest of the society and driven by inner demons. Like another Japanese book *Penance* by Kanae Minato, this one has POVs of different characters each chapter. All of them start interesting, people opening up and all, but it just drags a lot and nothing really happens forever. So if you ask me why three stars, it's probably for the reality of youth alienated in a busy conformist society portrayed in the book. It's set in typical Tokyo, but I guess it's same everywhere.

Rise says

I did this again: bought a random book and started reading it without having any idea what it's all about. This is my first time reading Shuichi Yoshida's novel. The way he writes is smooth that I ended up spent my whole Sunday reading this book (after all I have nothing to do today).

In the beginning of the book, there are two pages dedicated as the introduction of the characters: three guys and two girls living in a two bedroom apartment in suburb Tokyo.

The story started from Ryosuke's point of view, a junior in university. After that the point of view switched to other characters: Koto, Satoru, Mirai, and Naoki.

I didn't expect the story would end like that. It really surprised me.

Anyway, about 40 pages before the ending, I somewhat decided to listen to "Je veux vivre dans ce rêve" by Maria Calas. I can say that it enhanced the reading experience towards the ending. I am still speechless with the ending somehow.

Colin says

Four twenty something 's share an apartment in Tokyo.Ryosuke who works in the economics dept of a university and is in love with an older women.Kotomi,unemployed and in love with a soap star.Mirai,illustrator who gets drunk every night.Satora works as a rent boy and takes speed,he was picked up by Mirai and just moved in.

Naoki works for a film company and originally rented the flat.The others see him as a father figure,look to him for advice.He reflects that he's only acting out of self interest so how bad must the world have treated them to make them think he cares.Ryoko and Koto jump to the wrong conclusion when they see schoolgirls crying on the stairs after leaving the apartment next door.

If you read the jacket you would think it's a psychological thriller.Although there is a violent ending which wrong footed me.This is literary fiction.The story lingered in my mind for days afterward.

Susan says

This is the second novel by Shuichi Yoshida which has been translated into English, following his hugely successful literary thriller, “Villain.” Parade looks at the lives of several young people who share an apartment in Tokyo. There is twenty one year old student, Ryosuke Sugimoto, unemployed twenty three year old Kotomi Okochi, who spends her time waiting for her boyfriend to phone, twenty four year old Mirai Soma, who manages a store, longs to become a successful illustrator and drinks too much and the eldest, twenty eight year old Naoki Uhara, who works for an independent film distributor. This book examines their past, lives and dreams as they each tell their story.

The apartment block the four live in is meant to be for young married couples, so they are wary of complaining about apartment 402, which they suspect of being involved in illegal activity. As well as concerns about their neighbours, they are aware of violent attacks happening to women locally. Then they are joined by a young boy, eighteen year old Satoru Kokubo. Nobody at first seems sure who he is or who invited him to stay, but he is gradually accepted by “these-people-playing-at-being-friends.” Gradually, Satoru changes the delicate balance which has existed within these almost random group of housemates and his story intertwines with theirs. Why is such a young boy living on the streets and how does he earn his living?

Although there are undercurrents of a crime story, this is really more a portrait of a place and the people living there. These are all young people who live in the city of Tokyo, and who have been brought together almost by random events. It is about anonymity, friendship, family and alienation amongst young people. I found it an incredibly fascinating picture of Tokyo, especially the younger generation who exist on the margins of society and the fact that so many people, especially in cities, know so little about their neighbours or friends and have to accept them on face value. I am not sure it worked so well as a thriller, but as a literary novel it was extremely interesting, even if the ending was a little abrupt and I would certainly read more books by this author. Lastly, I received a copy of this book, from the publisher, for review.

Iantony says

I read this book back then in 2015 during an easy night shift on my job. A lot of free time and being away from civilization but still got internet connection, I randomly purchased it through my friend's Kindle. This is my first Shuichi Yoshida book, perhaps 'the strangest' Japanese author after Haruki Murakami for me. At the very least, this book did help me to stay awake.

This book has a kinda slow-paced story, not kinda, slow-paced story that at some point you would start wondering 'where the story goes?' or something like that. Still, the ending of the story would shock you. As for the characters of this book, each of the 5 characters seemed to have a mental problem (or mental health problem, depended on how you see it) of their own. All of them are troubled, twisted people who tried to act

normal at some point of the story.

Yeah after slow-paced story build up, mentally unhealthy characters, changing point-of-views which might confusing to some people, in the end you would find a very shocking ending, which would made you think about the whole story for some time after reading this book, thus this book is a really good eye opener! Definitely gonna recommend this for most book lovers, especially if you were into some thriller, mystery or just strange stories. Now I want to read another novel from Shuichi Yoshida. 4/5 stars from me, 4.5/5 stars if the early to mid part of the story weren't feel dragging.

Leah says

Strangely discombobulating...

Four young people are sharing a small flat in Tokyo, each having drifted there in a casual, unplanned way. Forced into a kind of physical intimacy by this living arrangement, each remains emotionally isolated and, as we discover, damaged to varying degrees by their pasts. Naoki is the eldest and something of a big brother figure to the rest - he originally shared the flat with his girlfriend, who left him for an older man but still pops back to visit and stay in the flat on occasion. Mirai works hard and plays hard, spending her evenings getting drunk in gay bars. Kotomi stays home all day watching TV and waiting for her soap-star boyfriend to ring. Ryosuke is a student and as we meet him he has just fallen in love with the girlfriend of his older friend and mentor. Then one morning a fifth arrives, Satoru - no-one really knows who invited him but in this casual set-up he soon becomes accepted as another flatmate, even though no-one is quite sure who he is or what he does when he works late at night.

Although this is billed as a crime thriller, it really falls much more into the category of literary fiction. There is a crime element but it's almost entirely in the background for most of the book. There's not much plot as such - this is more an examination of the somewhat empty and alienated lives of these young people. Each section of the book is narrated by a different character, so we get to see what they each think of the others and also to find out a bit about what has brought them here and made them who they are.

Whenever I read Japanese fiction, I find it a strangely discombobulating experience - it always seems to reflect a society that is uneasy in its modernity, with a generation of young people who have thrown out the values of their elders but haven't really found a way to replace them satisfactorily. There is always a sensation of drifting, of free-fall almost, and a kind of passivity that leaves me feeling as if there's a dangerous void in the culture, waiting to be filled. But since I don't know anything about Japan except through their fiction, I don't know whether this is just a style of writing or whether it's an accurate picture of the society.

I find Yoshida's writing quite compelling and although I don't always feel that I understand why his characters are as they are, I find them believable and fully rounded. The somewhat shocking ending of this one took me completely by surprise, and at first I felt almost as if the author hadn't played fair with me. But a few days on I find the book is still running through my mind and I am seeing in retrospect what was hidden

during the reading - which means that my appreciation for the ending has grown as I've gained a little distance from it.

Although this shares a translator, Philip Gabriel, with Yoshida's first novel, I enjoyed the translation of this one much more. It is still Americanised but without the clumsy slang that irritated me so much in *Villain*.

On re-reading this review, I feel it isn't giving a very clear picture of the book, and that's actually a pretty accurate reflection of my feelings about it. I'm not sure I totally 'got' it (which happens to me a lot with Japanese fiction) but I am quite sure I found it a compelling and thought-provoking read. And I will most certainly be looking out for more of Yoshida's work in future. 4½ stars for me, so rounded up.

NB This book was provided for review by the publisher, Random House Vintage.

www.fictionfanblog.wordpress.com

Aria says

Review can also be found at *Snow White Hates Apples*.

This was not what I expected. At all.

...Okay, fine, that's not entirely true because I expected whatever one is supposed to expect when reading literary fiction. The first of which is the text being concerned with some social commentary or political criticism, or it being a reflection on the human condition—all of which *Parade* is concerned with to varying degrees.

The second of which is the text being character-driven and ***Parade* is, indeed, character-driven**. Each part of the book is a character's perspective, focusing on their thoughts, beliefs and opinions, and their daily life. **Although the characters are pretty unique in their own way, the story can still get boring. This, I find to be more of the fault in the author's execution than the characters' mundane routines.** Yoshida (or the translator) could've done a better way in adding the 'extra' into the 'ordinary' (sorry, that was terrible but eh). For instance, using more symbolism or metaphors or allusions instead of listing a bunch of books and movies (am I the only one who's slightly irked by all those spoilers?) and attempting to involve some kind of character development through those mentions.

Moreover, **the story is pretty shallow since everything is pretty much told and not shown**. The writing isn't as layered or as complex as I expected it to be, and it feels like the author was trying too hard to keep the reader in the dark about the underlying "violence in the air". The hints dropped in the story weren't substantial enough and honestly, **there isn't much underlying violence at all**. Maybe I've gotten somewhat desensitized to what could be termed as 'mild violence' but prior to Naoki's POV, the only events that I could see as violent are Satoru getting beaten up, some side characters getting killed in accidents, and that rape tape. However, I couldn't view them as some sort of constant underlying violence because all of these aforementioned events are mentioned by the characters. They aren't 'present' (as in something happening during the 'present' of the story) events but 'past' or explanatory ones. There's also a mention of getting an abortion but that definitely didn't happen in the story.

Another problem I had with *Parade*, has to do with my expectations of it as what it's billed as: a crime

thriller. Now, I've read a bunch of Japanese crime thrillers before and they're pretty damn good at being their genre even if I don't like other aspects of them. Natsuo Kirino's *Out* is gruesome and perverse, Ryu Murakami's *In the Miso Soup* is disgustingly gore-tastic, and Otsuichi's *Goth* is intriguingly macabre. All of them are anxiety-inducing/tense reads and I couldn't put them down until I reached the end. Thus, I had expected *Parade* to be similar but unfortunately, it isn't. Really, **it has so much promise but** as mentioned earlier, **the author tried too hard to keep the reader in the dark and as a result, the plot twists came off as disappointing.** They all lacked the punch they're supposed to have.

In short, *Parade* isn't as violent or as tense as I had expected it to be. The characters are pretty interesting but they fell short due to the author's less-than-stellar execution of the story. Also, if you're going to read this book, read it as literary fiction and not as a crime thriller.

Neko Neha (BiblioNyan) says

"I went on crying. The tears wouldn't stop. It was like there was another me, totally separate, ignoring the real me, and crying like crazy."

I can't think of a better description for what this book represents than this quote right here, up above this review, which I hope comes out sounding coherent.

Parade by Shuichi Yoshida is a story about four distinctly different individuals who all reside in a small two-bedroom Tokyo apartment. How these four came to be together is a matter of happenstance due to life's quirky humour. They end up developing a friendship that they don't even realize exists; their connections to one another that much more attuned than they could have imagined, and it's brilliantly executed.

You have Ryosuke Sugimoto, a college student who ends up starting an affair with his best friend's girlfriend. Kotomi Okochi is a young woman who devotedly sits by the telephone awaiting a former boyfriend's call so they can go have random sex. Mirai Souma is another young lady who goes out drinking every night, sharing late night theatrics with a bunch of gay men. Finally, there's Naoki Ihara, the responsible one of the four-some, who works long hours as an aspiring filmmaker.

This hodgepodge of individuality forms the blob that resides in apartment 401. Day in and day out they share the details of their daily lives, no matter how scandalous, like a distant relative asking for you to pass the butter at the breakfast table. While their conversations are casual and relaxed, beneath the glaze of each of them, resides **dark secrets from their pasts that have been meticulously incubated through trials and tribulations of being an adolescent and then an adult.** The result of this pregnancy reveals itself through actions that are taken during the two-hundred-thirty pages of this novel.

The book is written in five chapters with each chapter being the perspective of one of the characters, and an extra mystery person who shows up in the first half of the book. Talking about this stranger would be construed as giving a spoiler, so I'm not going to touch it. I will say that it is someone who tosses the precarious balance that the four-some have developed into array, which then creates a cause-and-effect type of situation that makes the reading even more bizarre. Each perspective is expressed in great detail, taking into account the ambience of city life. Everything is very fast-paced and bustling. There is a scene described where one of the roommates is watching the autonomy of cars stopping and going at a lighted intersection. This natural order of things is an element of the city that fascinates him; these cars moving and stopping

without ever getting into an accident. There's another scene that takes place in an office, where folks wearing suits, ties, and stockings shuffle papers and answer phone calls, illustrating the atypical work-day of another character. These come together to formulate **an in-depth look at how functional and routine city living are for most people.**

While this can sound down-right boring, and it just may be boring as fuck for many readers, I found it to be positively engrossing. Even though I live in a small city (so to speak), I rarely step outside of my own home. To be able to get a glimpse of how things work in a totally different environment than what I know as "comfortable" is quite riveting. It also helps establish the working order of the small household in apartment 401.

The prose is careful, intellectual, and scrupulous with anecdotes and life-lessons hidden away in drunken or vulnerable situations. On some level, I began to formulate a sort of love-hate relationship with each of the characters. I grew to love specific traits (such as bluntness and kindness), but I just couldn't help myself and began to loathe the poor decisions that these kids continue to make out of comfort or fear. It can be excruciatingly frustrating, yet simultaneously it's enlightening. I was bitch-smacked in the face with my own fears and denial about certain aspects of my life that I'm just not ready to face. The people, each of them, end up inhabiting some titbit of empathetic morsels that you never truly see coming. Makes you realize that you really can't know **everything there is to know** of any one person.

Parade is a deeply provocative novel with complex characters, but it is a **slow** read. I'm already a slow-reader to begin with, so it took me much longer to finish these two-hundred pages than normal. The diligently way it's written, makes you want to focus on every word to get every inch of the larger picture, which isn't a bad thing, but it can stir boredom or restlessness for long reading sessions. The book is also a bit **anti-climactic**. You go on and on absorbing information about four people, hoping for some kind of catastrophic explosion at the end, but it never arrives. There is a huge shock that does occur eventually, however, it's in the last ten pages and way that it's dealt with is very unsatisfactory.

While it works for this book, it's not something everyone can pick up and enjoy, and not something that will work for other books. If you need more action, or fast-paced occurrences within a novel to hook your interest, then you should pass on *Parade*. The bulk of the "action" just won't be worth it to you. Nonetheless, if you are the type of person who enjoys reading about wholly complicated people with some deep, dark shit hiding underneath their mask of smiles and how-do-you-dos, then definitely pick it up.

3.5 rainstorms out of 5!
