

# Wild Kids: Two Novels About Growing Up - Ta-ch'un Chang

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These two searingly funny and unsettling portraits of teenagers beyond the control and largely beneath the notice of adults in 1980s Taiwan are the first English translations of works by Taiwan's most famous and best-selling literary cult figure. Chang Ta-chun's intricate narrative and keen, ironic sense of humor poignantly and piercingly convey the disillusionment and cynicism of modern Taiwanese youth.

Interweaving the events between the birth of the narrator's younger sister and her abortion at the age of nineteen, the first novel, *My Kid Sister*, evokes the complex emotional impressions of youth and the often bizarre social dilemmas of adolescence. Combining discussions of fate, existentialism, sexual awakening, and everyday "absurdities" in a typically dysfunctional household, it documents the loss of innocence and the deconstruction of a family. In *Wild Child*, fourteen-year-old Hou Shichun drops out of school, runs away from home, and descends into the Taiwanese underworld, where he encounters an oddball assortment of similarly lost adolescents in desperate circumstances. This novel will inevitably invite comparisons with the classic *The Catcher in the Rye*, but unlike Holden Caulfield, Hou isn't given any second chances. With characteristic frankness and irony, Chang's teenagers bear witness to a new form of cultural and spiritual bankruptcy.

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