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Wolf Totem revisited (yet again)

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I know that this site has run more than its fair share of commentaries on *Wolf Totem* already, including both a negative review and a piece defending the novel. I’ve even done one piece about it already myself, which took the form of a wrap-up look at the widely varied responses it generated in different quarters. It might seem that enough is enough, but I can’t resist slipping in one more short post, due to a new award that this work is up for that some people who thought it shouldn’t have gotten earlier prizes might be rooting for it to win: the 2009 Delete Key Award for Bad Writing. I learned about this nomination from a comment that Janice Harayda—the one-time book editor for the (Cleveland) Plain Dealer who now runs the entertaining and informative site, “One-Minute Book Reviews,” that’s sponsoring the prize in question—posted recently at China Beat. (This just goes to show that many of us at the blog do pay attention to those comments, even if we aren’t always quick on the keyboard in terms of responding to those about our own pieces—I know I can be slow to do this.) Harayda offers a wonderfully concise rationale for *Wolf Totem*’s inclusion on her short list, and also offers up for this book (as for many others) a “Totally Unauthorized Reading Group Guide” to it. Definitely worth checking both of these out, but a word of warning: the site, which I’ve just discovered, seems like the type that offers the sort of serious fun for the intellectually curious that could easily become addictive.

*p.s. I find it particularly appropriate to use a posting about *Wolf Totem* to draw attention to a site many of our readers might not know about (after all, it only very occasionally focuses on any sort of Chinese theme), since Jiang Rong’s novel was the focus back when the New York Times’ “Paper Cuts: A Blog about Books” ran its first piece telling readers about China Beat (a site that runs many posts that aren’t about books). So, there’s a nice working of Karma here, which, whatever else one has to say about *Wolf Totem*, is definitely a point in its favor.*

*p.p.s. I was going to vow that I would never again mention the book on this site, but I might not be able to resist the temptation of doing so, if only to update our readers on whether it “wins” this latest prize.*