

BOOK PRIZE

Shortlist: 2024 Translated Literature Award

Presenting the jury's shortlist of five books for the Baifang Schell Book Prize: Award for Outstanding Translated Literature from Chinese Language.

EDITORS — APRIL 15, 2025

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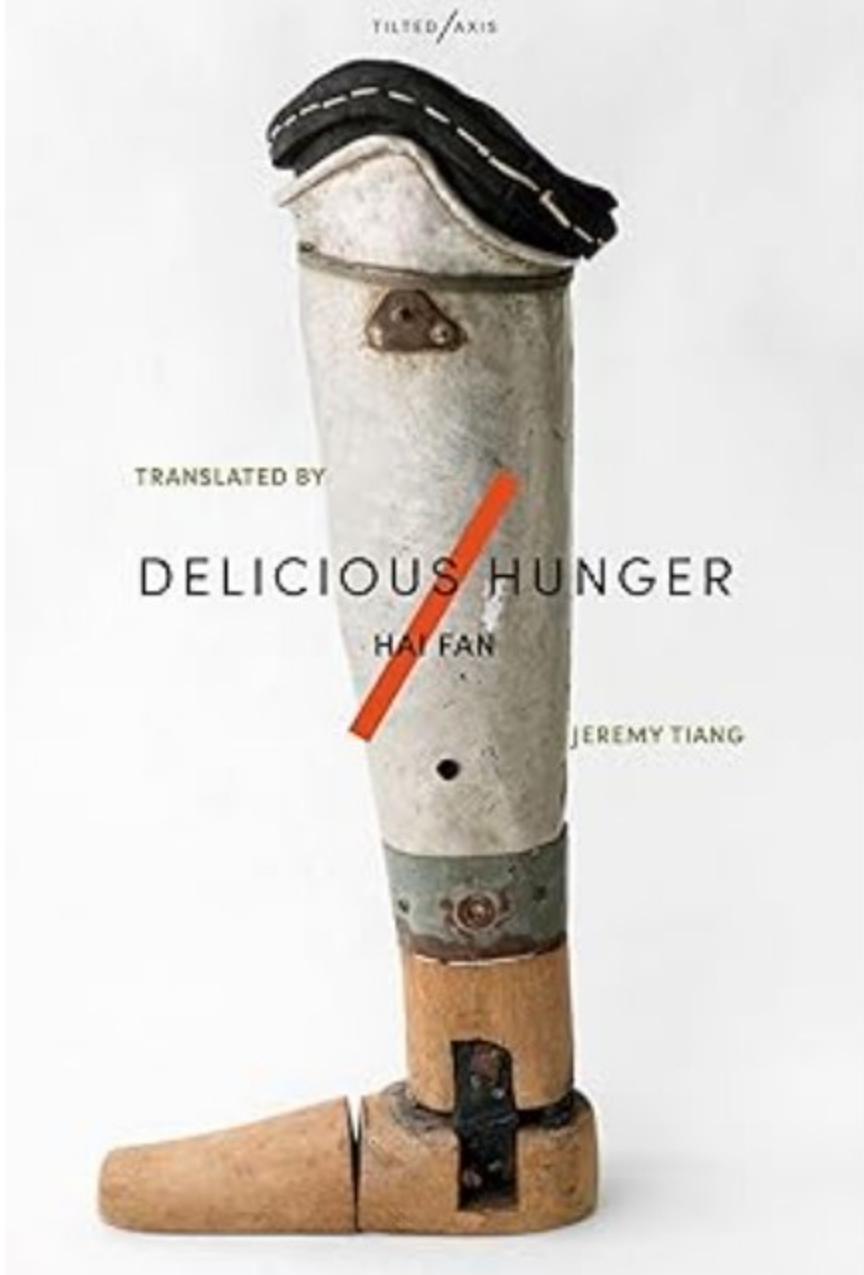


Last week, we announced the shortlist for the [nonfiction award](#) of the new [Baifang Schell Book Prize](#), administered by *China Books Review*, with two awards of \$10,000 in nonfiction and translated literature categories. Now, we're delighted to present the shortlist of five books for the **Award for Outstanding Translated Literature from Chinese Language**.

This shortlist was selected from a wide range of nominated and submitted titles, chosen by a fully independent [jury](#) of writers and translators: Eric Abrahamsen (chair), Xiaolu Guo, Nicky Harman, Ha Jin and Perry Link. The shortlisted books below are listed alphabetically by author, and each blurb was written by a different jury member (but do not indicate any favorites). The books range in theme from guerilla warfare to cancer survival, and in territory from Hong Kong to Malaysia. Follow our [newsletter](#) to find out who won next month — and in the meantime, read on to see which books to add to your growing [tsundoku](#) habit.



Translated Literature Shortlist



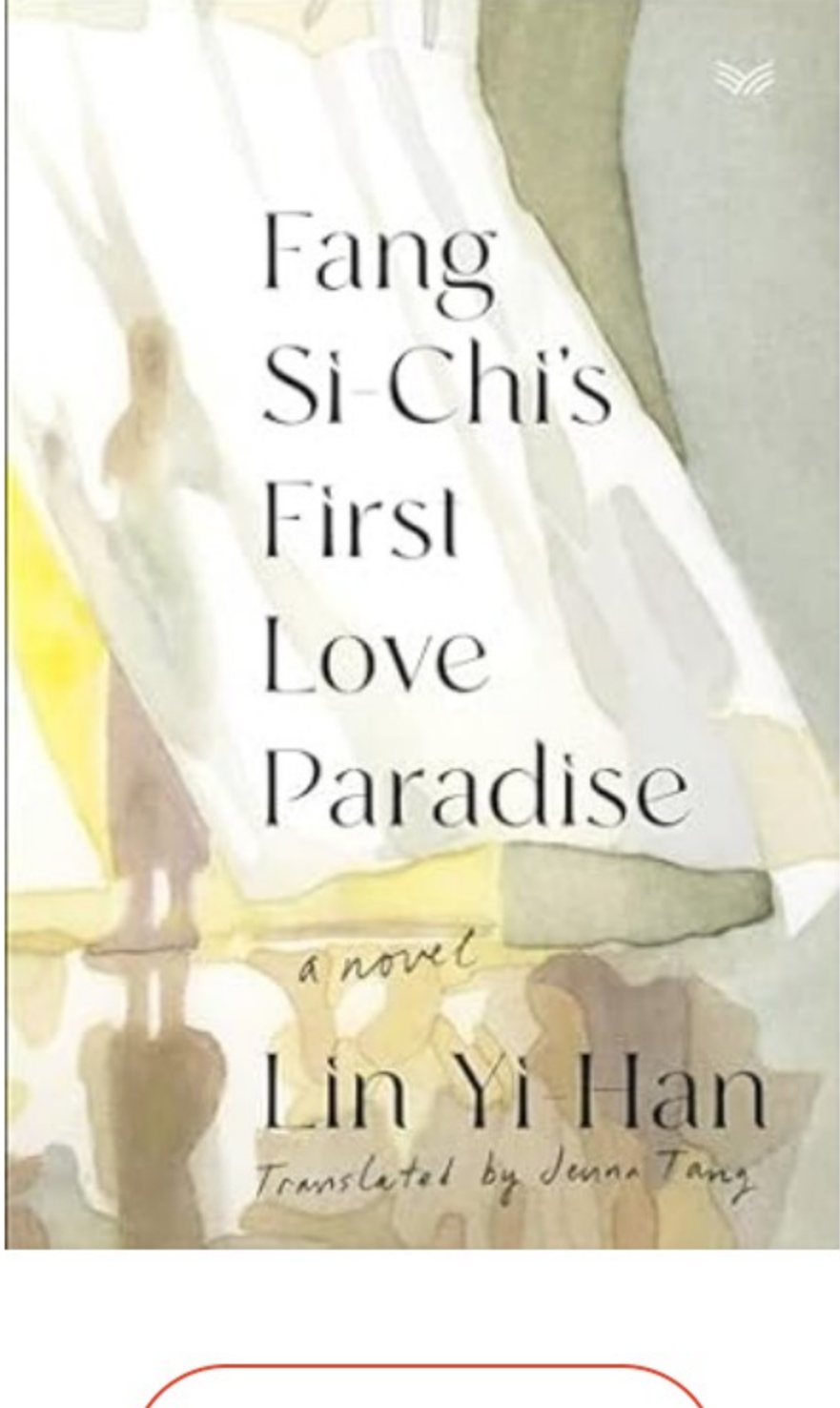
Buy the book >

Delicious Hunger

HAI FAN (TR. JEREMY TIANG) | SEPTEMBER 12, 2024 | TILTED AXIS PRESS

Inspired by the author's own experiences during his 13 years as a guerrilla fighter near the Malaysia-Thai border, as part of the Communist [insurgency](#) of the 1970s and 80s, *Delicious Hunger* is a complex and powerful collection of short stories. As if we have walked into a dense Malayan jungle, we taste the rain after a scorching noon; we hear a gunshot from a mountain path; we discover an injured fighter on the hillside; and we rest on a bloodstained rock to regain our energy. Hai Fan shows the rainforest to be a dangerous warzone where death awaits, but also a place where desire and love keep the fighters sane and hopeful. Jeremy Tiang's translation exquisitely renders the subtle beauty and power of Hai Fan's voice, and helps to open a window on the history of the struggle of a group fighting for their vision of a better world.

— Xiaolu Guo



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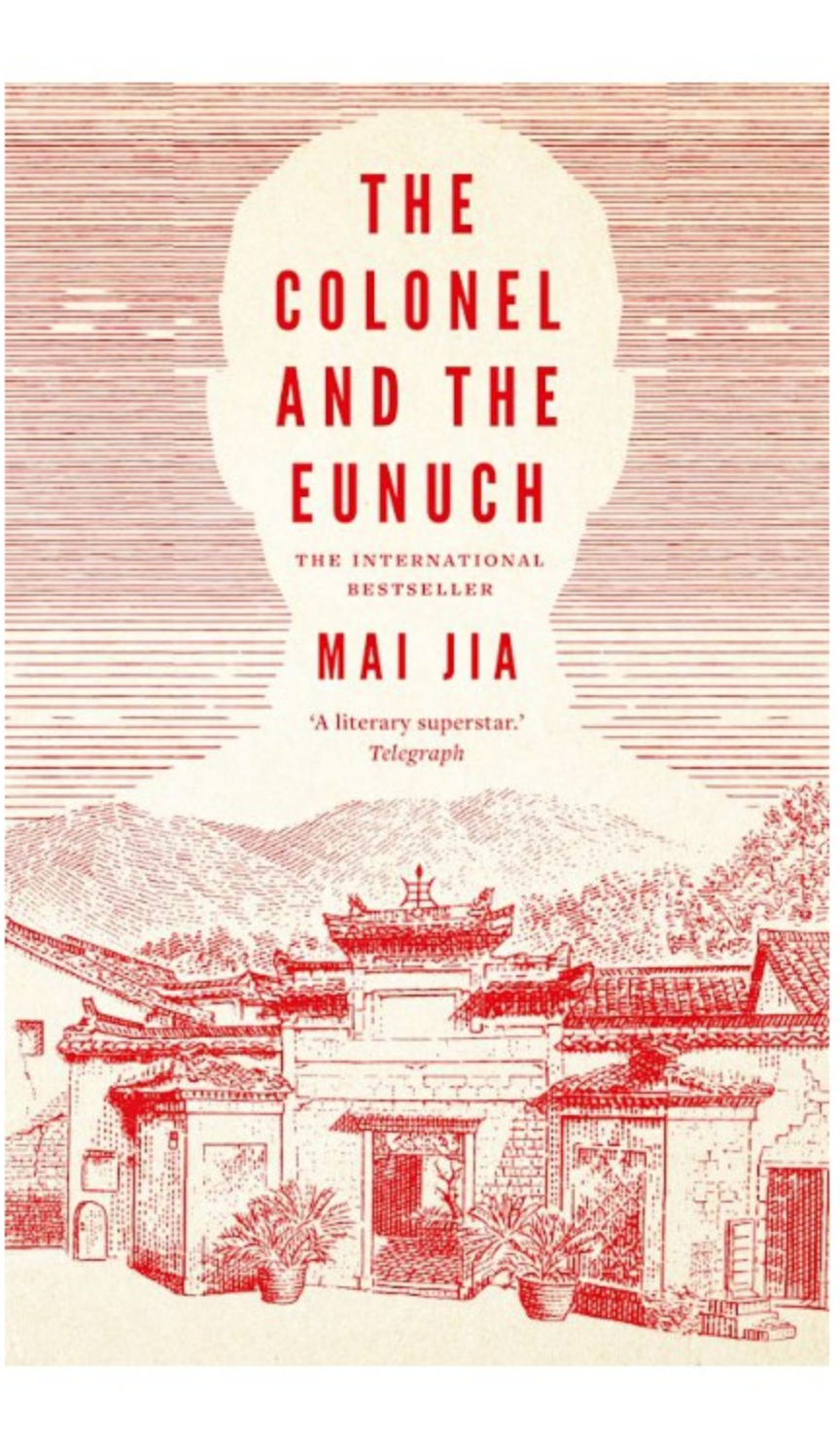
Fang Si-Chi's First Love Paradise

A Novel

YI-HAN LIN (TR. JENNA TANG) | MAY 21, 2024 | HARPER COLLINS

If Nabokov's *Lolita* reveals the workings of the mind of a sexual predator, *Fang Si-chi's First Love Paradise* reveals the tortured psychology of a victim. Lin Yi-han unpacks, without any diminution of its horror, the paradox of how a teenager can remain in the pall of a sexual abuser. The victim's mind runs wild as it crashes against flotsam in the sea of pain that engulfs it. In the end she goes insane. Translator Jenna Tang is caught up in the book's passion and puts it into inspired English. The language is often artful — unclear in a way that reflects the unclarity of the teenager's own tortured consciousness, and that therefore might be its best possible expression. The author of this essentially autobiographical account took her own life at age 26. That the book sparked a #MeToo surge in Taiwan after its publication in Chinese in 2017 is hardly surprising.

— Perry Link



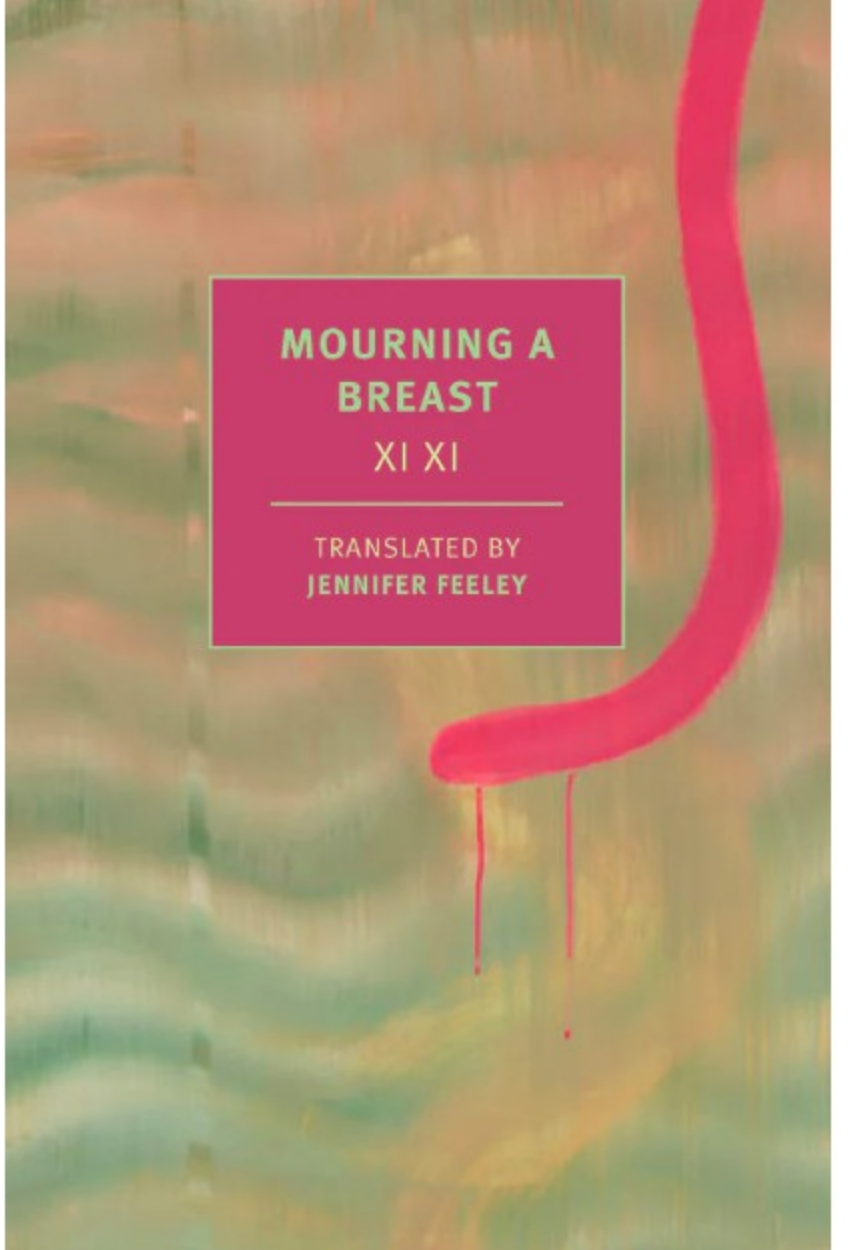
Buy the book >

The Colonel and the Eunuch

MAI JIA (TR. DYLAN LEVI KING) | MAY 9, 2024 | BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING

The Colonel (aka the Eunuch) is a larger-than-life character in this epic novel set in 20th century China. Having been on the losing side in the Chinese Civil War, he retires to a quiet rural life, until peace is shattered by the Cultural Revolution. The Red Guards dig up the Colonel's past in wartime Shanghai, with its political complexities and moral ambiguities, and attack him viciously. The story is narrated by a fellow villager who grows up observing the Colonel, leaves, then comes back to the village as a successful businessman. It is at this point that he resolves the mystery of the Colonel's alternative name and describes, with a rare intimacy, the old man's last days and those of the woman who loves him. Mai Jia masterfully holds the complex threads of the story together, while Dylan Levi King gives us a translation that perfectly captures the varying pace and tone of the original.

— Nicky Harman



Buy the book >

Mourning a Breast

XI XI (TR. JENNIFER FEELEY) | JULY 9, 2024 | NYRB CLASSICS

Though written as an autobiographical novel, this book is an avant-garde work. It is a genre bender in the tradition of W.G. Sebald, but also a pioneering work of fiction about the body and disease. Ingenious in conception, free and imaginative in execution, the book challenges the conventional form of the novel. It describes the author's experience of cancer with honesty, intimate knowledge and psychological acuity. Despite dark and glum details — death looms in the background — *Mourning a Breast* portrays illness and loss as a perennial human condition. Xi Xi passed away in 2022, but this book is a celebration of life: a eulogy of the vitality, beauty and fragility of humanity. Her bravery and vision deserve to be recognized. In Jennifer Feeley's sharp translation, the novel also explores the different ways of blending fiction and nonfiction into literary art.

— Ha Jin



Buy the book >

Taiwan Travelogue

A Novel

YANG SHUANG-ZI (TR. LIN KING) | NOVEMBER 12, 2024 | GRAYWOLF PRESS

This masterful novel begins with a curious mixture of effusion and restraint, combining sly literary conceit with the lush pleasures of food writing. Exploring the world of 1930s Japanese-occupied Taiwan, what appears to be a mere travelogue reveals layer after layer of deepening intent, while Lin King's artful translation allows tension to swell beneath the narrative surface. We see the protagonist Aoyama Chizuko's travels in Taiwan painted in vibrant washes of color: a young woman's appetite for adventure; an intellectual's fierce curiosity; a gourmand's determination to know the world through her stomach. Gradually, her self-assurance is upended by a deepening experience of colonialism and its effects on friendship and love. As the novel arrives at an astonishing merging of the personal and political, the sensual and the subtle, the reader is left both satiated and haunted by yearning.

— Eric Abrahamsen

The winners (and honorable mentions) of the inaugural Baifang Schell Book Prize will be announced in early May, followed by a ceremony at Asia Society in New York. Be the first to know who won — and follow our other fare — by subscribing to our [newsletter](#). ■