



BOOK LIST

Translated Chinese Literature: Short Fiction

Short stories are all the rage in China, but get short shrift in the West. We picked five recent translated collections, from riveting horror tales to irreverent queer fiction.

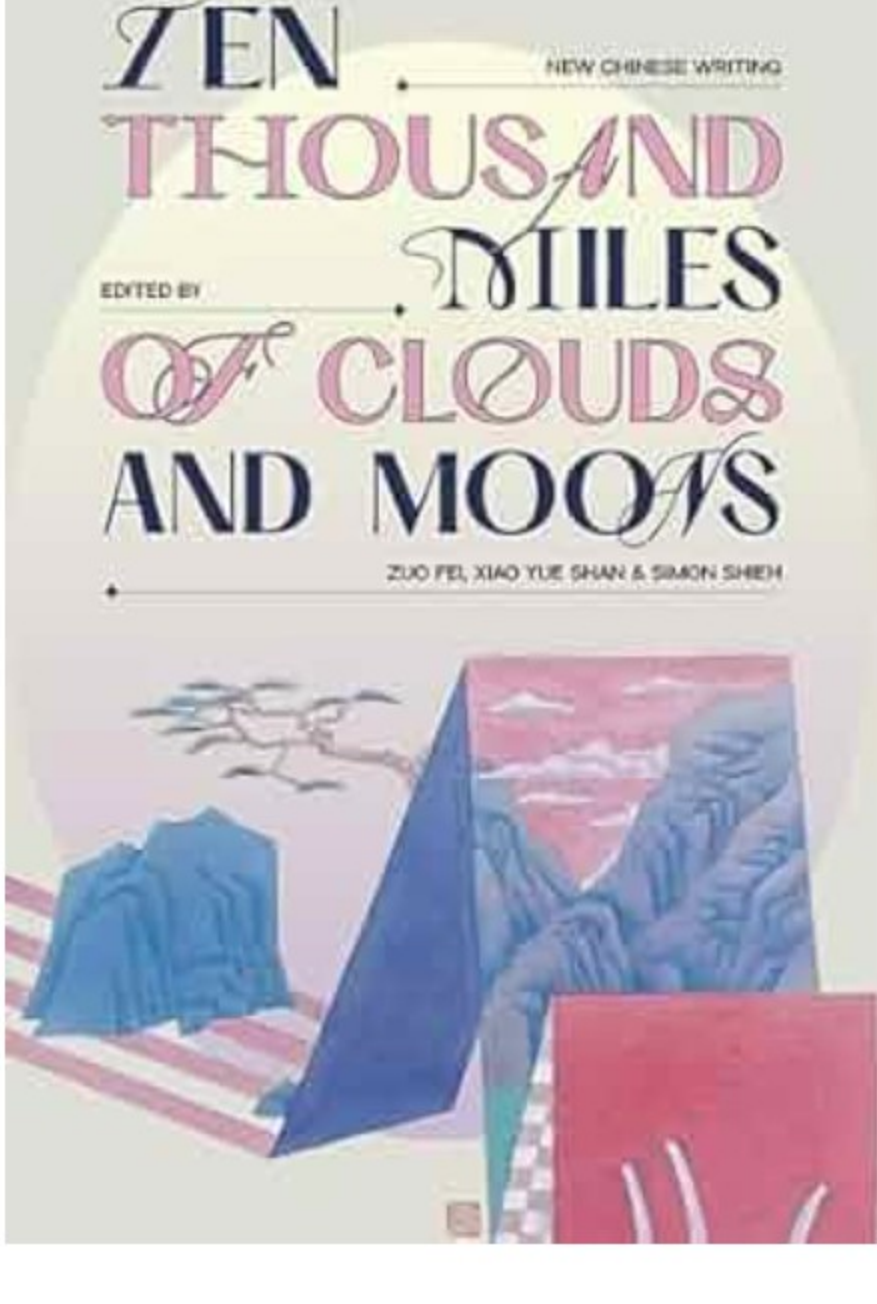
JACK HARGREAVES — APRIL 29, 2025

FICTION



In English literature, the novel is king. Best-of lists confirm it, as do bookstore shelves and editors’ remarks that short story collections just don’t sell. In the Sinophone world, however, short stories receive the respect and love they deserve. The annual top-ten books of domestic literature on [Douban](#) (the Chinese equivalent of Goodreads) has included at least five short story collections in all years but one since 2017. (By comparison, the 2024 best-book lists from the *New Yorker* and the *New York Times* both name a single collection of “linked” short stories.) Even with the stratospheric rise of internet novels and the never-ending serial novel, students in China can still buy “pocket-sized” literature from magazine stands outside their schools.

Given this market difference, there is a mismatch when it comes to translating and publishing Chinese-language literature in English. Many of the best stories get overlooked or passed by. To tip the balance, below we’re spotlighting publishers that are willing to take “risks” on translated short stories and novellas. From pulsing urban literature to throwback rural fiction, poetry and horror to LGBTQ stories, here are five books that demonstrate the variety and originality of the form.



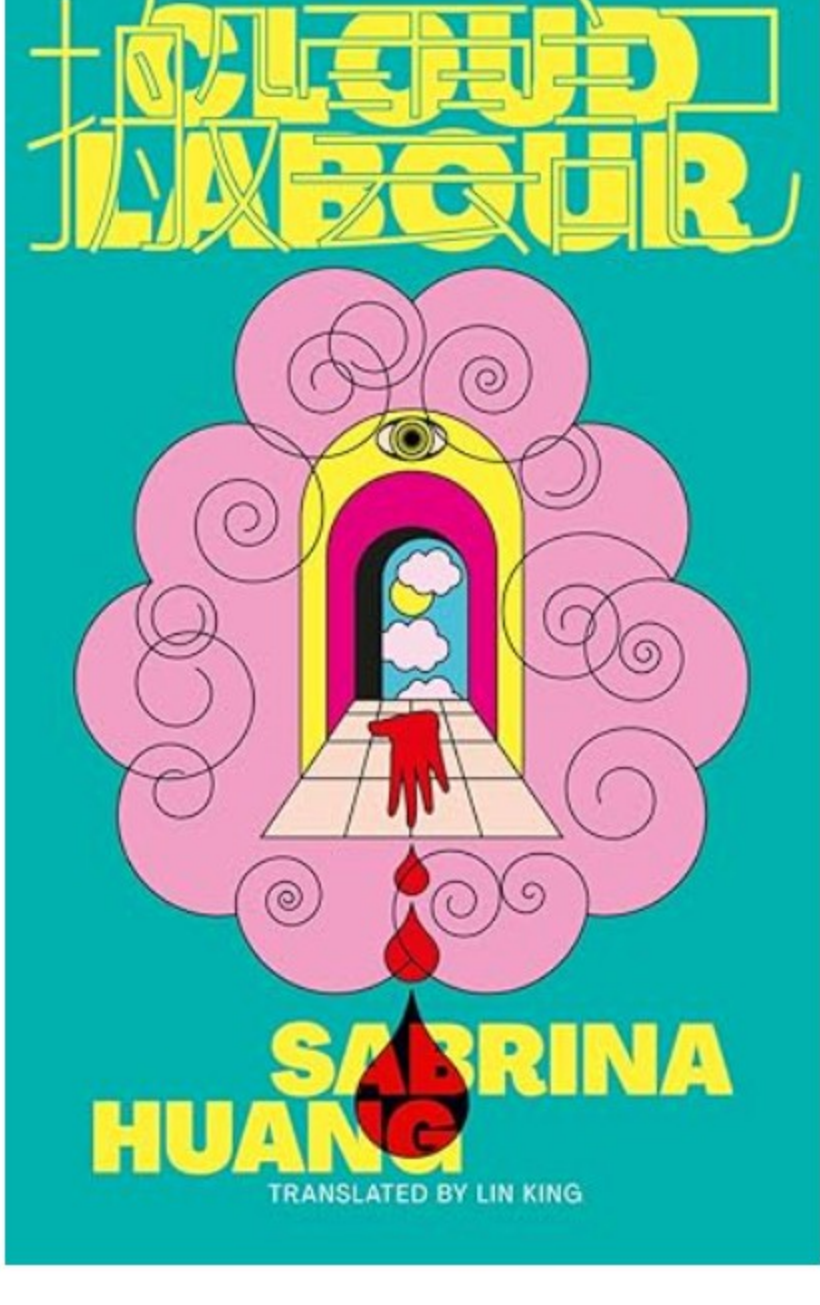
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1. Ten Thousand Miles of Clouds and Moons

New Chinese Writing

XIAO YUE SHAN | JANUARY 29, 2025 | HONFORD STAR

This collaborative anthology between Honford Star and [Spittoon](#) literary collective does not disappoint. The eight fiction writers, six poets and two essayists inside the covers — chosen, according to the editors, for the novelty of their points of view and the potential of their language to “torture translators” — are some of contemporary Chinese literature’s most exciting voices. The writing covers different worlds, themes and genres. An underground society and an autocratic empire in the year 4876 vie to retrieve lost fragments of *Dream of the Red Chamber* from the patchy memory of an unwitting time traveller. A gang of bored youths turn to crime out of, well, boredom. A man caught in a storm on the mountainside encounters a figure who claims to be able to harness lightning’s power. And that’s only the beginning. Expect to see more from these writers in the future.

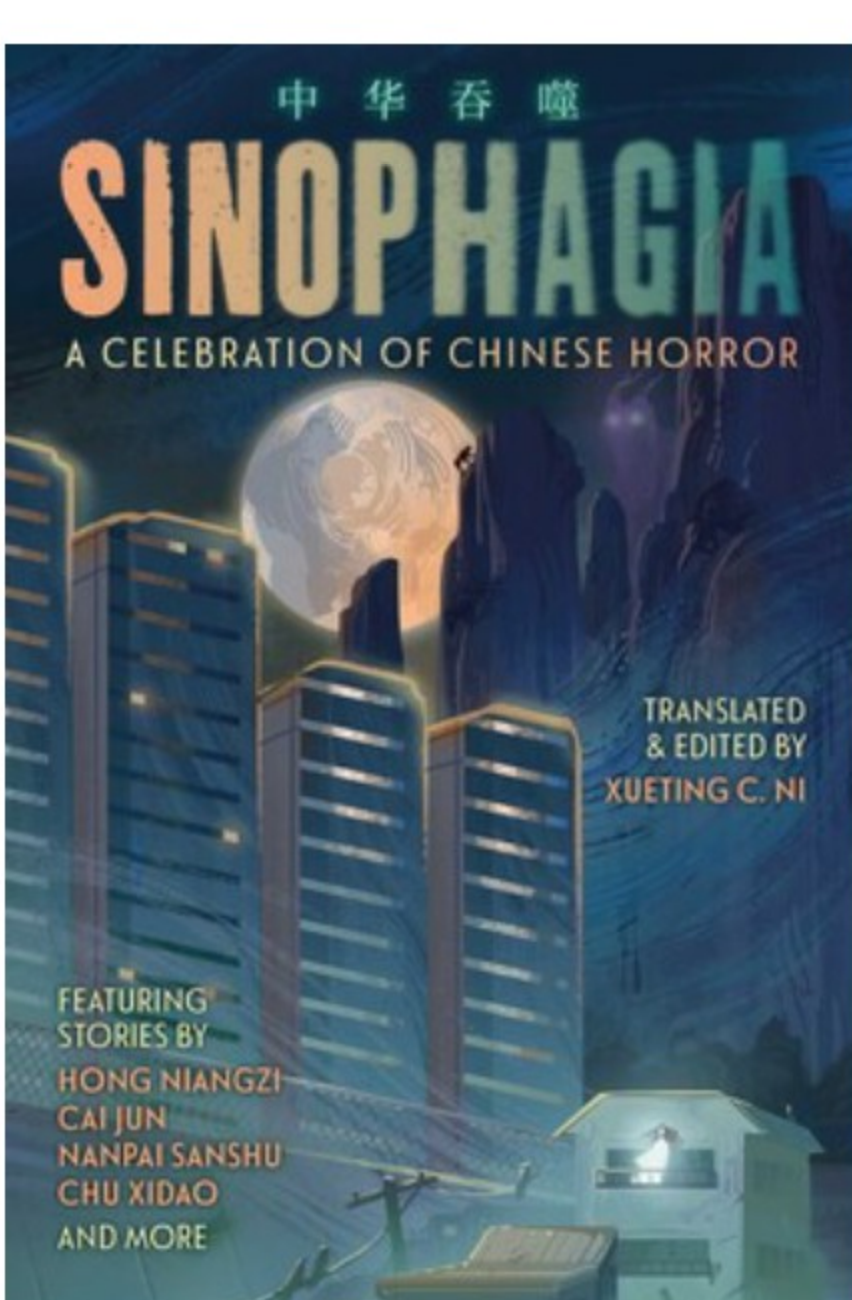


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2. Cloud Labour

SABRINA HUANG (TR. LIN KING) | NOVEMBER 30, 2024 | STRANGERS PRESS

Norwich-based Strangers Press arguably boasts the most vibrant selection of book covers of any independent publisher. Since 2017, it has released seven series of novellas and short stories from around the world, most recently from Taiwan (one of the stories, *Cage* by Qiu Miaojin, tr. Shengchi Hsu, we already recommended in our [best of 2024](#) list). In the novella *Cloud Labour*, Sabrina Huang depicts a dystopian future in which emotions can be removed and uploaded as if data on the cloud, but only by Proxies and only for a pretty penny. The protagonist, Sky, is carrying on this family business from his mother, learning the ropes, and unspoken and official laws, of navigating others’ minds and desires. In Lin King’s lively translation, this cyberpunk world comes replete with zippy street dialogue, psychological jargon, and nebulous, almost Jungian passages.



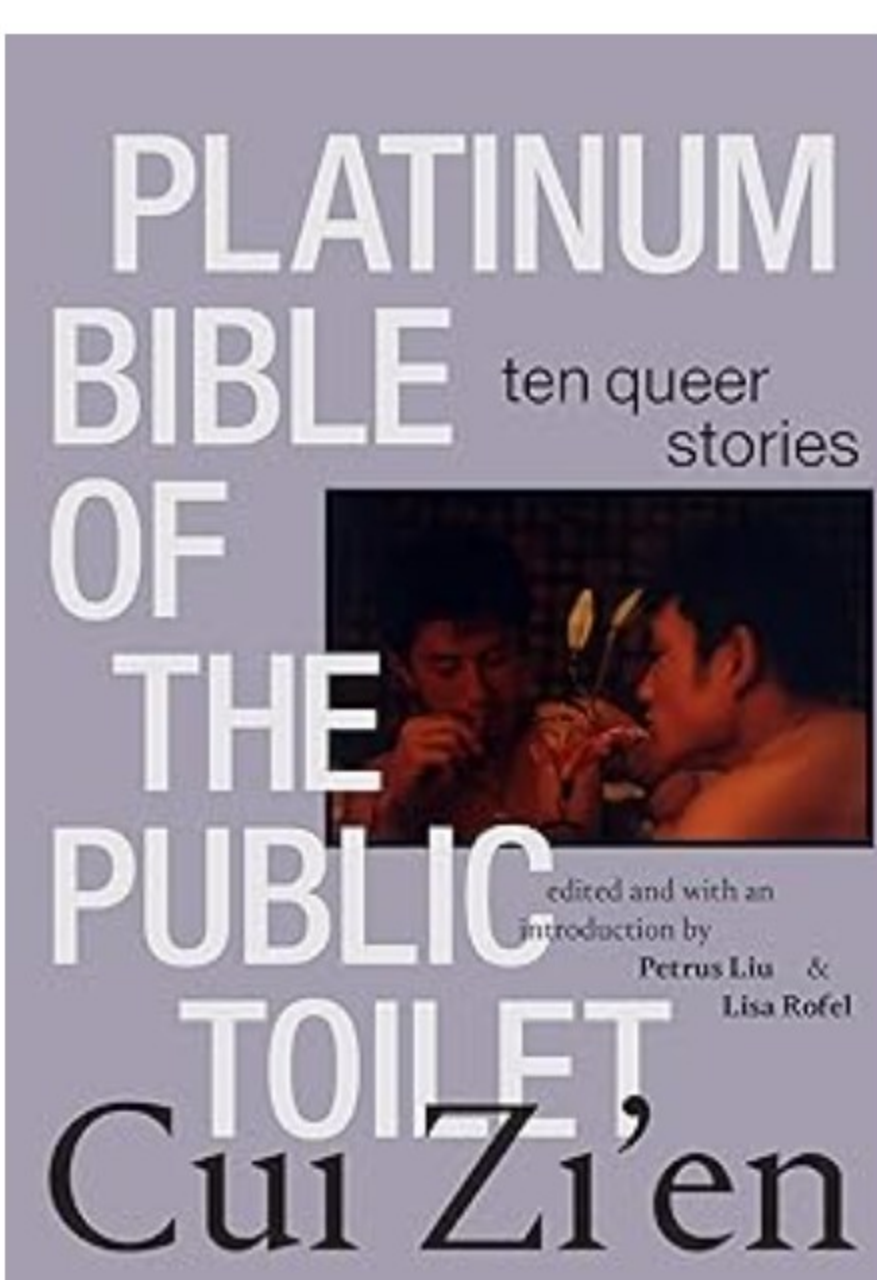
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3. Sinophagia

A Celebration of Chinese Horror

ED./TR. XUETING CHRISTINE NI | SEPTEMBER 24, 2024 | SIMON & SCHUSTER

In 2021, writer and translator Xueting C. Ni took us on a curated journey into hyperspace with the Chinese sci-fi collection *Sinopticon* (also published by Solaris). Now she has returned to guide readers into the more chilling and less explored reaches of Chinese literature. *Sinophagia* is a collection of 14 horror stories, all by different authors, covering everything from the gothic and myth-influenced to the more modern and Black Mirror-esque. As is often the case with horror writing, real-life themes are what inspire the greatest fear: housing nightmares; the feeling of being trapped in a relationship; the stresses of work and university life. Ni suggests in the book that China’s horror fiction is at the same stage science fiction was around a decade ago, right before the latter’s explosion in popularity. I suspect we’ll be reading much more of it (hiding behind the couch) in years to come.



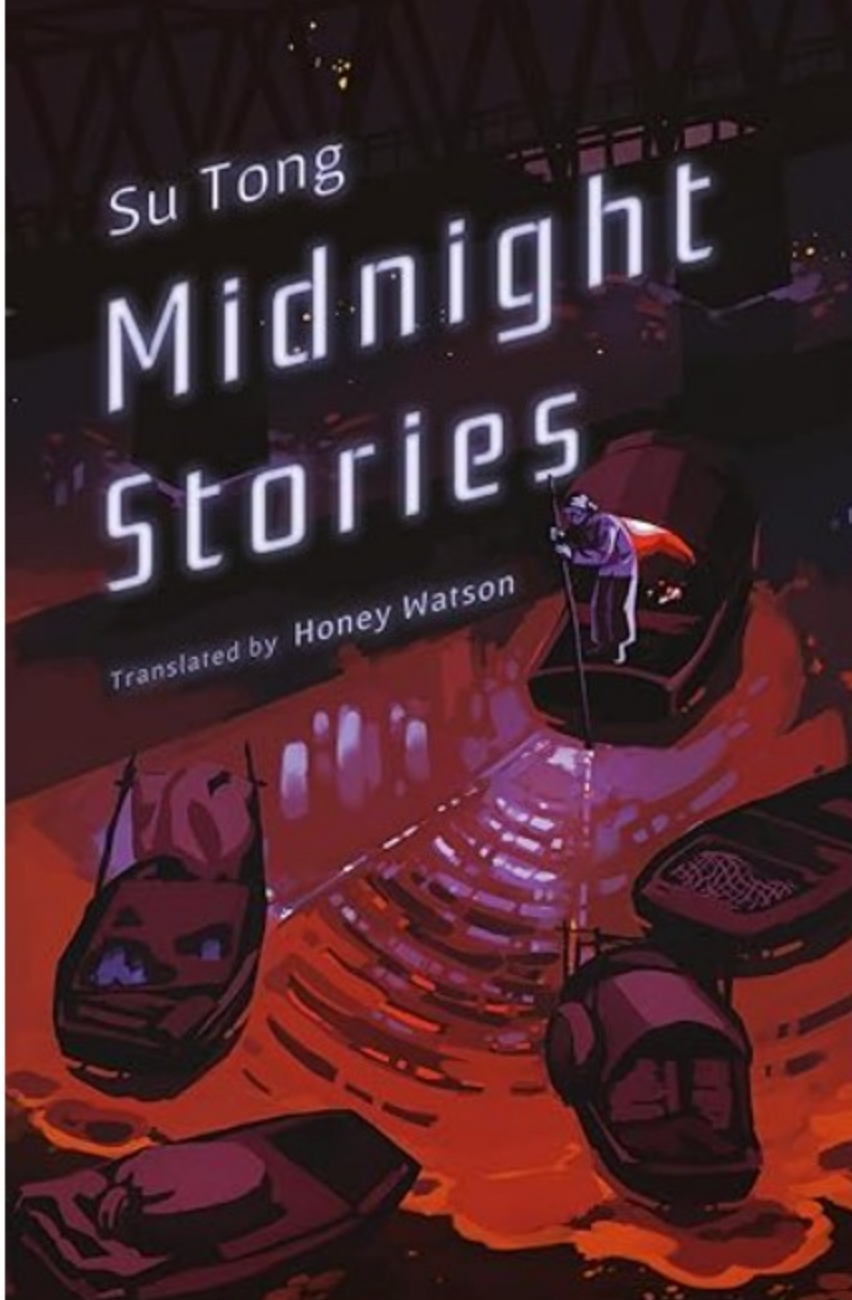
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4. Platinum Bible of the Public Toilet

Ten Queer Stories

CUI ZI’EN | FEBRUARY 6, 2024 | DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS

An outspoken LGBTQ activist and film director, Cui Zi’en’s fiction has previously been translated into various languages, but this is the first time that a book-length collection of his work has appeared in English. While many of his stories feature recollections of childhood explorations of gender and sexuality, the wrestling with shame that has almost become a trope of queer literature is scarcely present. Instead, these stories are playful and celebratory in their characters’ transgressions of taboo. They are, to borrow a film term, “homo pomo” (homosexual post-modernism). Creepy uncles, overstepping teachers, voyeurs, exhibitionists, money boys and cross-dressers count among the cast, and none of them feel the need to justify who they are; they just are, irreverently and joyously so. The range is wide, exploring effeminacy, tenderness, gender-non-conformity, deviance, bottomhood and penis worship, although the translations could be more consistent in quality.



Buy the book >

5. Midnight Stories

SU TONG (TR. HONEY WATSON) | NOVEMBER 29, 2024 | SINOIST

Sinoist Books has been turning out a steady stream of Chinese story collections in recent years. Su Tong bookended 2024 with two new collections, *Missives from the Masses* (tr. Josh Stenberg) and this latest, *Midnight Stories*. Set in an unnamed river town in eastern China, with “Toon Street” at its center, these ten stories bring to life an era of China’s history when the countryside was where things happened, before the breakneck growth of the 1990s sent everyone scrambling to the city. They capture with comic sharpness the eerie and off-kilter side of provincial living, when everyone knows their neighbors’ business and how to get on each other’s nerves. The strangeness of the more outrageous storylines — involving a Madonna lookalike, viviseculture (burying alive) and a murder over a mix-up with a watermelon — only serve to remind us how distant a world that is today. ■