PODCAST

Ep. 21: Jenna Tang on Taiwan's MeToo Movement

We talked to the translator of a novel that helped launch #MeToo in Taiwan, about why both the movement and the book are having a second wave

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Sometimes a book really can change the world around it, when the impact of its publication shifts the culture and the conversation too dramatically to ignore. That was the case with *Fanny Ai Chia's First Love Paradise*, a Taiwanese novel which helped spark Taiwan's #MeToo movement when it was published in 2017. The book tells the story of a teenage girl, Fang Ya Chi, who was groomed by her cram school literature teacher Lee Guo-hao, who lives in the same building as her. The book became an sparse of the end experiences of the author Lin Yi-chin, who took her own life just months after the book's publication.

Our guest this month is the book's translation, Jenna Tang, a Taiwanese writer and translator whose work is published in *The Paris Review*, *Lit Hub*, *McSweeney and elsewhere*. We were delighted to be joined by Jenna at Asia Society in New York to tell us about the novel, its impact in Taiwan and how she came to translate the book into English.

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Guest

Jenna Tang is a Taiwanese Hakka writer and translator who translates between Mandarin, French, Spanish and English. Her translations and essays are published in *The Paris Review*, *Lit Hub*, *McSweeney's* and elsewhere. Her translations include works from Taiwanese Literature authors Lee Yi Jiun (*Ten Ways to Kill a Man*) and Lin Yi-Han (*Fang Ya-Chi's First Love Paradise*). Visit her site for more Tang and others.

> In Taiwan, there's a lot of cultural taboos in talking about sexual violence. … But the less we talk about it, the more it hurts if it ever happens.
>
> —*Jenna Tang*

Transcript

Alex Ash: So Jenna, thank you so much for coming in today. This book, *Fang Ya-Chi's First Love Paradise*, came out in English last year. But it originally came out in Taiwan, and it was published in Taiwan in February 2017. As I remembered, the author Lin Yi-Han died by suicide in April of that year, at the age of 26. Tell me just talk us through the context around this book? What do we know about Lin Yi-Han's story and what was the national conversation that it sparked in Taiwan and how did it spark?

Jenna Tang: Yeah. First of all, thank you for having me here. And yes, this book was first published in traditional Chinese in 2017. It's a novella. And what that it was translated into multiple other languages from East Asia including Korean, Vietnamese, Japanese and so many more. From what I know it has been translated in Brazil, also, so very, very, very, very, very.

So what happened back then? I don't feel that like I am in full position to speak but, you know, because I'm not Ben, I wasn't, I didn't, I don't know, I don't know, I don't know, I don't know. But I, I, I,