

# NEW CHINA BOOKS

## BOOK LIST

# Translated Chinese Literature: New Fiction

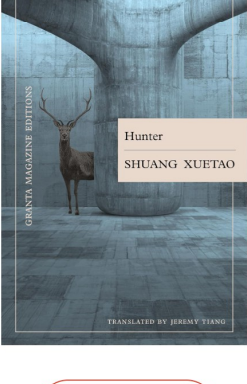
2025 has seen a bumper crop for Chinese literature in translation. We recommend five recent titles, from gritty tales of the northeast to conjoined fiction from Hong Kong.

JACK HARGREAVES — DECEMBER 9, 2025

FICTION

It has been a good year for Chinese-language literature. *Taiwan Travelogue* by Yang Shuang-zi (tr. Lin King) won the National Book Award for Translated Literature, as well as *China Books Review's* inaugural [Baifang Schell Book Prize](#) (last chance to [nominate](#) titles for next year's award!). At Riverhead Books, editor Han Zhang is [introducing](#) American readers to a broader idea of Chinese literary fiction, with Zhang Yueran's [Women, Seated](#) as the first foray. And plenty of great Chinese books were translated and published in English, including my own translation of a book that fellow columnist Na Zhong gave a [nod](#) to in her first “What China's Reading” column back in 2023, [I Deliver Parcels in Beijing](#) by Hu Anyan.

Here's a roundup of some recent translations of Chinese literature that you might have missed. Read on for off-kilter realism from the northeast, poetry in blue, a boy's mission deep into guerrilla territory, the Bildungsroman of a shut-in, and a body horror with an allegorical thread.

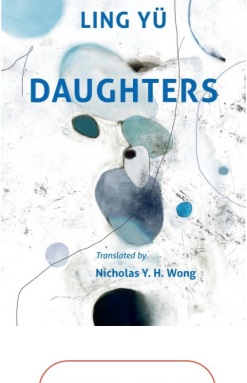


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## 1. Hunter

SHUANG XUETAO (TR. JEREMY TIANG) | JULY 1, 2025 | GRANTA MAGAZINE EDITIONS

Since the 2010s, China's “rust belt” — its northeastern provinces previously associated more with industrial decline and socioeconomic malaise than cultural exports — has been having a moment. The “Dongbei Renaissance” is now a [known](#) quantity, and Shuang Xuetao (双雪涛) is one of the phenomenon's literary poster boys. [Rouge Street](#), a volume of three of his novellas, came out in English in 2022. In the follow-up collection *Hunter*, also nimbly translated by Jeremy Tiang, Shuang again explores the feelings of alienation, ennui and abandonment that the gritty urban sprawls of his childhood engender, with the same characteristic dark humor and taut prose. But in an expansion of theme and setting, these new stories also swerve, often thrillingly, into the magically surreal, taking us beyond China's Northeast of the 1980s and 1990s to London, Republican Era China, and Shuang's current home of Beijing, where his concerns have — understandably after his stratospheric success — become slightly more writerly.

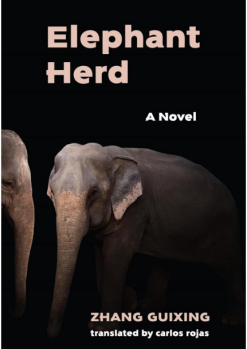


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## 2. Daughters

LING YÜ (TR. NICHOLAS Y. H. WONG) | MARCH 13, 2025 | BALESTIER PRESS

Ling Yü (零雨) opens her ninth poetry collection with a catalogue of the colors that form its emotional palette: “Powder blue greenish blue yellowish blue [...] Shuang-hsi blue Fulong blue [...] bittersweet blue”. In a book dedicated to her mother, whom she cared for when sick, it comes as no surprise that blue predominates. It is the tears shed, the bruises that turned to bedsores, the vein where the cannula was inserted. Diverse are the experiences that Ling Yü depicts in *Daughters* — of her mother's suffering and nurturing habits, of daughterhood in a broad sense — and she does so in a style that marries concise classical forms with colloquial language and modern references. The [citation](#) for the Taiwanese poet's 2025 Newman Prize for Chinese Literature win calls her voice “untrammelled” and “ingenious.” It's hard not to agree, but with one addendum: her work is all the more “compelling” for Nicholas Y. H. Wong's sky-blue translation.

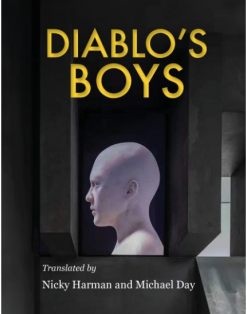


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## 3. Elephant Herd

A Novel  
GUIXING ZHANG (TR. CARLOS ROJAS) | JANUARY 14, 2025 | COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Malaysian-Chinese writer Zhang Guixing (張貴興), another Newman Prize recipient, grew up in the Sarawak rainforests of north Borneo, but had lived in Taiwan for over 20 years when his novel *Elephant Herd* (群象) was first released in 1998. You wouldn't have guessed it from the lush, evocative descriptions (ever verdant in Carlos Rojas' translation) of the flora and fauna — crocodiles, turtles, elephants, lizards — that inhabit almost every page. This density makes for an animist, phantasmagoric space: just as a gecko might transform into a Chinese character on a chalkboard, a vision of the protagonist Shicai's dead father crawls out of a Chinese sentence. But we soon learn, through Shicai's childhood, that in a place so full of life, death is never far away. After he loses both his grandparents, Shicai goes in search of his uncle, the leader of a Communist guerilla group running its revolutionary operations and hiding out (as many insurgent Maoists did in the latter half of the last century) deep in the jungles of Borneo. His journey is a perilous one, which reveals to him a world fractured along political, ecological and ethnic lines.

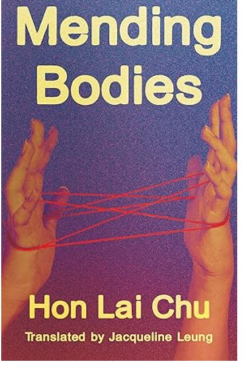


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## 4. Diablo's Boys

YANG HAO (TR. NICKY HARMAN, MIKE DAY) | MAY 1, 2025 | BALESTIER PRESS

Suwei is a 15-year-old boy with autism and an addiction to the video game *Diablo II*, into which he regularly escapes from his mollycoddling mother and emotionally isolated home life. Li Wen is Suwei's new tutor; he speaks fluent English, plays the piano and chess well, and yet his mother is still disappointed with his achievements. Before he and Suwei meet, he has never played *Diablo*, but roaming deeper into the labyrinths and dungeons of the virtual world together becomes their way of connecting. In another, more forgiving world, this might be a step in the right direction for two boys who've never grown up. But this world moves fast, and the boys only end up more isolated and introverted. In this, Yang Hao's (杨好) first translated novel, she casts a harsh light for youth life today, but illuminates important topics like loneliness and over-competitiveness, parent-child trauma and arrested development. The twists and inventive metaphors can feel as dizzying to read as it must be to be a teenager now, but with translators Nicky Harman and Michael Day we are in safe hands.



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## 5. Mending Bodies

LAI CHU HON (TR. JACQUELINE LEUNG) | APRIL 28, 2025 | TWO LINES PRESS

In an unnamed city, a thinly veiled stand-in for the author Hon Lai Chu's home of Hong Kong, a government program branded the Conjoinment Act incentivizes men and women to be sewn together in the name of economic growth, resource parity, sustainability and the end of an loneliness epidemic. Soon, almost everyone of age has had the surgery. But not the narrator, an unnamed young woman whose dissertation on the program's history grinds to a halt when insomnia and external pressures make her question whether she really does value her independence, after all. This is the second of Hon Lai Chu's books to appear in English (*The Kite Family*, translated by Andrea Lingenfelter, came out in 2015), and the third book in as many years to explore Hong Kong's reality through a nightmarish and dystopian allegory (2023's [Ozlish](#) and [Tongueless](#) in 2024 are the other two). It is a haunting body horror in needle-sharp prose, and Jacqueline Leung's translation is seamless. ■



Jack Hargreaves is a London-based translator from East Yorkshire. His published and forthcoming full-length works include *Winter Pasture* by Li Juan (2020) and *Seeing* by Chai Jing (2020), co-translated with Yan Yan; *I Deliver Parcels in Beijing* by Hu Anyan (2025); and *A Man Under Water* by Xiaoyu Lu (2026). He occasionally contributes to [Paper Republic](#).