



BOOK PRIZE

## 2025 Book Prize: Announcing the Winners

Find out who won our two \$10,000 awards in the Baifang Schell Book Prize, for nonfiction and literature from or on China and the Sinophone world published in 2025.

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China Books Review, the digital magazine published by *The Wire China* and Asia Society's [Center on U.S.-China Relations](#) since 2023, is delighted to announce the winners of its 2025 [Baifang Schell Book Prize](#).

This prize was launched in 2024 (see last year's [winners](#) and [awards ceremony](#)) to celebrate exceptional books on or from China and the Sinophone world, published in English. There are two \$10,000 awards, in nonfiction and literature categories.

This second year of the prize considers books published in the calendar year 2025. Over the last four months, two stellar juries — each comprised of five writers, scholars and experts on China — have read over 80 nominated titles between them, winnowing each award category down to two shortlists of five books each (see the full [nonfiction](#) and [literature](#) shortlists).

Now, they have settled upon the winners! Each category's winner will be rewarded with \$10,000 (split between author and translator for the literature award) and will be honored on June 9th in a closed prize ceremony at Asia Society in New York.

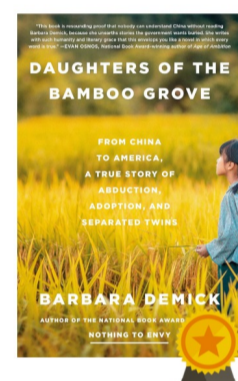
Without further ado, here are the winning books, as well as the honorable mentions:



### Award for Outstanding Nonfiction Book on China or the Sinophone World

**Barbara Demick** has won the Nonfiction Award for her book *Daughters of the Bamboo Grove: From China to America, a True Story of Abduction, Adoption, and Separated Twins* (Random House, May 2025), the story of identical twins born in China but separated at birth out of fear of repercussions under the one-child policy.

The book was selected out of a wide range of nominated titles by an independent jury of five writers and scholars: Isabel Hilton (chair), Yangyang Cheng, Andrew J. Nathan, Jeffrey Wasserstrom and Edward Wong. Issuing the award, the jury noted:



“

In *Daughters of the Bamboo Grove*, Barbara Demick exposes child trafficking and corruption in China's brutal one-child policy and the international adoption market through the extraordinary story of twins forcibly separated at birth. A deeply moving human drama set against a backdrop of cruelty, redeemed by enduring love.

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Read an [excerpt](#) of the winning book at *China Books Review*.

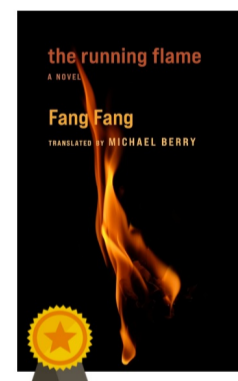
The jury also awarded two honorable mentions: to *I Deliver Parcels in Beijing* by **Hu Anyan** (Astra House, October 2025), describing it as “a piercing first-person account of surviving in China's gig economy, masterfully translated into English by Jack Hargreaves”; and to *Let Only Red Flowers: Bloom Identity and Belonging in Xi Jinping's China* by **Emily Feng** (Crown, March 2025), “a compelling collection of profiles that reminds readers of how varied experiences and senses of identity are in a country too often imagined as monolithic.”

Also shortlisted were *The Party's Interests Come First: The Life of Xi Zhongxun, Father of Xi Jinping* (Stanford University Press, June 2025) by **Joseph Torigian**; and *The Chinese Tragedy of King Lear* by **Nan Z. Da** (Princeton University Press, June 2025).

### Award for Outstanding Literature on or from China and the Sinophone World

**Fang Fang** (author) and **Michael Berry** (translator) have won the Literature Award for *The Running Flame: A Novel* (Columbia University Press, March 2025), a novel translated from the original Chinese about a young woman on death row in 1990s rural China.

An independent jury of authors and translators — Eric Abrahamsen, Jiayang Fan, R.F. Kuang and Megan Walsh — selected the winner from a close competition of nominated titles. Selecting the winning title, the jury commented:



“

Fang Fang's *The Running Flame*, inspired by the author's interviews with female death row inmates, asks an impossible question: What could justify a woman killing her own husband? The novella offers a gripping, devastating and ethically complex exploration of the many ways that rural Chinese women have had their agency so circumscribed that murder becomes inevitable.

”

Read a [review](#) of the winning book at *China Books Review*.

The jury awarded honorable mentions to two titles: *Time Tunnel: Stories and Essays* by **Eileen Chang**, tr. Karen S. Kingsbury and Jie Zhang (New York Review Books, October 2025), describing it as “a thrilling reminder of Chang's incomparable ability to trace the private thoughts of people caught up in times of cultural and social upheaval”; and *Hunter* by **Shuang Xuetao**, tr. Jeremy Tiang (Granta Magazine Editions, July 2025), “a collection of uncanny tales that layer China's past and present to create eerie moments of dreamlike clarity.”

Also shortlisted were *Mother River* by **Can Xue** (tr. Karen Gernant, Chen Zeping) and *Soft Burial: A Novel*, also by Fang Fang, tr. Michael Berry (Columbia University Press, March 2025).



Liu Baifang Schell in her ancestral hometown of Heze, Shandong, in 1986. (courtesy of Orville Schell)

The Baifang Schell Book Prize is named in honor of Liu Baifang Schell, who passed in 2021 after spending her life working to advance U.S.-China relations.

To watch the video of the prize ceremony on June 9th, follow *China Books Review's* biweekly [newsletter](#) to be notified of all new posts, including our reviews, essays and more.

Our thanks to everyone who nominated books for this year's prize. Nominations for next year's awards will open in November.