

# Answering the Deepest Voices Through Literary Creation

By Jin Yixin

In recent years, a group of middle-aged and young literary writers in China has emerged, carrying the banner of their era. Unlike the “wild growth” of earlier generations, the seeds of literature were sown early in their upbringing experiences, quietly sprouting over time.

For example, Shuang Xuetao's literary inspiration came from the stories told by his father, a tractor factory worker, while he was carried to school on his father's back. Zhang Yueran won the first prize in the National New Concept Writing Competition, drawing public attention as a teenager. Shi Yifeng majored in Chinese Literature during university, while Cai Chongda and Lin Bai improved their writing skills during years of media work.

## Shuang Xuetao



Born in 1983, Shuang Xuetao is a contemporary writer. After graduating from the School of Law at Jilin University, Shuang Xuetao worked at the Liaoning branch of the China Development Bank for five years. He began publishing film reviews in 2009 and started writing fiction in 2010. In 2022, his novella collection *Rouge Street*, which includes *The Aviator* (《飞行家》), *Bright Hall* (《光明堂》), and *Moses on the Plain* (《平原上的摩西》), was published by Metropolitan Books.

Shuang's novels reflect the turbulent 1990s in North-east China, capturing the passion and unexpressed fervor of youth as well as a flowing sense of anxiety. Themes of nostalgia and self-reflection permeate his work.

In 2024, Shuang was highly active in the “literature+film” sphere. In January, his new collection *Uninterrupted People* (《不间断的人》) was published. Starting from April, he served as a judge for the 7th Blancpain Imaginist Literary Prize. In July, he joined the 8th Pingyao International Film Festival's “Literary Picturized Project” (LPP) advisory board and served on the main competition jury of the 18th FIRST International Film Festival. In August, the filming of *A Writer's Odyssey 2* (《刺杀小说家2》) commenced, where he acted as a literary consultant. Its predecessor, *A Writer's Odyssey* (《刺杀小说家》), which was released in 2021, grossed over ¥10 billion (£1.11 billion).

## Shi Yifeng



Born in 1979, Shi Yifeng is the Vice Chairman of the Beijing Writers Association and a Lu Xun Literature Prize Winner. Shi Yifeng graduated from Peking University's Chinese Department with a master's degree in Literature. His notable works include novels such as *The Fruits of the Red Flag* (《红旗下的果儿》), *A Love Story in Peking* (《恋恋北京》), and *The History of the Mind* (《心灵外史》). His collections *There is No Chen Jinfang in the World* (《世间已无陈金芳》) and *Special Ability Fight* (《特别能战斗》) have also garnered critical acclaim. Shi has won numerous literary awards, including the Lu Xun Literature Prize, the Feng Mu Literature Prize, and the October Literature Award.

The titles of Shi Yifeng's novels are often four, five, or seven characters long, creating a rhythmic and powerful feel when read aloud. He says, “These kinds of titles sound especially smooth, like scattering beans, and they have a certain charm in terms of rhythm. They also align with the phonetic and syllabic habits of the Chinese language.”

In April 2024, his short story collection *Nouvelles de Pékin*, featuring stories about life in Beijing written by three authors, was published by Éditions La Route.

His new work, *A Day of Peak Fame* (《一日顶流》), debuted in the winter edition of top Chinese literature journal *Harvest* (《收获》) and is set for publication in early 2025. The novel, rich in satirical language, reflects the dark undercurrents of the contemporary era and society. Its film, television, and theatrical rights have been exclusively signed by Beijing Yiwei Culture Company.

## Zhang Yueran



Born in 1982, Zhang Yueran is a contemporary writer, an associate professor at the School of Literary Studies at Renmin University of China, and a member of the 9th National Committee of the Chinese Writers Association. She began publishing her works at the age of 14 and won the first prize in the “National New Concept Composition Contest” during middle school. Her works, such as *The Fall of Tao* (《陶之陨》) and *The Black Cat Doesn't Sleep* (《黑猫不睡》), published in *Mengya* (《萌芽》) magazine, created a huge stir in the youth literature world. These works were reprinted in various publications, such as *Xinhua Digest* (《新华文摘》). In 2002, she was named the “Most Talented Female Writer” and “Most Popular Female Writer” in a public poll conducted by the *Mengya* website.

Zhang studied in Shandong University and later went to the National University of Singapore to study computer science. She is regarded as “a leading figure in China's new generation of literary creation”. Many of her works have been translated into English, French, and Spanish. For example, the English version of *Cocoon* (《茧》) was published by Singapore's World Editions in 2022.

Mo Yan, Vice Chairman of the Chinese Writers Association and the first Chinese Nobel laureate in literature, praised Zhang Yueran's novels for capturing the psychological growth trajectory of sensitive and melancholic youth, which reflect a realness perfectly aligned with the mental strength of that age.

In 2017, her novella *Big Qiao and Little Qiao* (《大乔小乔》) won the Novella Award at the 2017 Wang Zengqi Chinese Fiction Prize. In October 2024, *Big Qiao and Little Qiao* was adapted into the suspense film *The Unseen Sister* (《乔妍的心事》), which became a box office hit in the Chinese mainland, grossing over 150 million RMB (£16.8 million). The English version of *Women, Seated* (《天鹅旅馆》) is set to be published by Riverhead Books in August 2025.

## Cai Chongda



Born in 1982, Cai Chongda is a contemporary writer and media worker. After graduating from university, he worked in media for 10 years, for magazines such as *New Weekly* (《新周刊》) and *Sanlian Life Weekly* (《三联生活周刊》). In 2014, his

essay collection *No More Than Skins* (《皮囊》) was published and it had sold over 3 million copies by 2018. Cai decided to transform his childhood home into a publicly accessible library named “Mother's House”.

Themes such as family, fate, small-town narratives, and spiritual solace are prominent in his works. In 2020, he was listed as one of Dangdang's 6th Annual Influential Writers (Dangdang is a prominent online Chinese bookstore). In 2021, his memoir *Vessel: A Memoir* was released in English audiobook format by HarperAudio, and the Portuguese version was published by Fisical Book. In 2022, he published his debut novel *Fate* (《命运》). In 2023, he became one of the first signed writers of Huacheng Writers' Academy and joined the China Writers Association.

In 2024, his short story collection *Common People* (《草民》) was released, completing the *Hometown Trilogy* alongside *No More Than Skins* and *Fate*. These three books, known as the *Golden Hometown Trilogy* have collectively sold over 6 million copies. The same year, Cai was elected Vice President of the Fujian Writers Association. An excerpt from his memoir *My First Best Friend* (《我人生最开始的好朋友》) was published in *People's Literature* (《人民文学》) magazine, followed by the full release by Writers Publishing House.

## Lin Bai



Born in 1958 as Lin Baiwei, Lin Bai is a contemporary writer and one of the representatives of the “New South Writing movement”. She worked as a teacher in private schools in her early years, then studied library science at Wuhan University and worked in the film, book, and journalism industries.

Lin began writing poetry at the age of 19 and later focused on fiction. Her works often use “memory” as a narrative style and feature strong female consciousness. She describes extreme personal experiences of women in her works and is skilled at capturing the complex and subtle emotional turmoil within women's hearts. Lin has won the Chinese Literary Media Award for Novelist of the Year and the Chinese Women's Literature Award for Creative Writing. Several of her novels have appeared on Chinese fiction bestseller lists.

Her work *A Chair in the Encircling Corridor* (《回廊之椅》) has been translated and published overseas, including the French edition *La Chaise Dans le Corridor*, published by Bleu de Chine in 2006.

In December 2024, her *Female Trilogy*, consisting of *Going North* (《北去来辞》), *A War of One's Own* (《一个人的战争》), and *Speaking, My Room* (《说吧, 房间》), was released. These three works collectively encapsulate women's perceptions of life. Lin emphasized at the book launch that these works are not about any particular ideology or social issue but focus on the expression of life's essence through literature.