

Writing Women in the Future Tense

- Gender Visions in Contemporary Speculative and Science Fiction in Chinese

In recent years, Chinese and Sinophone science fiction has gained new popularity, not only among devoted readers, but within the scholarly community as well.¹ As part of the emerging field of 'global science fiction studies',² such research contributes to a diversification of literary scholarship by including hitherto neglected cultural and linguistic areas. This panel grows out of these postcolonial endeavours and adds a gender dimension to the ongoing academic discussion of how works of speculative fiction and science fiction envision global futures and challenge the present.

By analysing and comparing narrative negotiations of what it means to be a woman, a human, a plant, or something in-between, the presentations in this panel examine the variety and complexity of futurist visions in Chinese language fiction. Far from being concerned solely with technology and space travel, contemporary science fiction is a multifaceted genre that is equally taken up with questions of human societies and identities. By virtue of a shared focus on gender, this panel introduces the original and wildly imaginative ways in which contemporary authors contest, reinforce, or hybridise conventional concepts of gender.

From contemporary feminist reinterpretations of Lu Xun's and Henrik Ibsen's "doll houses" to the alienated female workers of the future in Han Song's 2012 novel *Gaotie*, from Chi Hui's feminist utopia to plant-woman hybrids and environmental criticism, this panel investigates the manifold ways in which literature crafts and questions gendered landscapes for a global future.

¹ For example, the international peer reviewed journal *Science Fiction Studies* published a special issue on "Chinese Science Fiction" in 2013 (Vol. 40, No. 1).

² Spearheaded by Palgrave Macmillan's new book series *Studies in Global Science Fiction*, edited by Anindita Banerjee, Rachel Haywood Ferreira, and Mark Bould.