Female SF, Porridge SF, and Sinopedia – Xia Jia and Genres of Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction[1]

Regina Kanyu Wang

During the panel "Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction and Where to Find Them" at the 75th World Science Fiction Convention (Worldcon 75), which was held in Helsinki, Finland, in August 2017, the large room was packed with an audience of over 250 who were eager to learn more about Chinese sf after Liu Cixin's *The Three Body Problem* and Hao Jingfang's "Folding Beijing" had won the Hugo Awards in 2015 and 2016 successively. The panelists include Chen Qiufan, Liu Cixin, Xia Jia, Zhang Ran, Zhao Ruhan, and Regina Kanyu Wang. Xia Jia moderated this panel, and she began with a short introduction to Chinese sf. She didn't start with Liu Cixin, Han Song, Wang Jinkang, and He Xi – the "Big Four" of contemporary Chinese sf who are regarded as "The Four Heavenly Kings". Instead, she started from Chinese women sf authors, explaining that women had been historically neglected or put in second place in the narration of Chinese sf history, while male authors had been introduced first – and then sometimes as the sole representatives of Chinese sf. By doing so, Xia Jia raised awareness of women sf writers in China and opened the door for many related discussions afterwards.

Although there has been increasing attention towards Chinese sf in recent years both socially and academically, little research has been done on works by female authors. At the moment that the gender discussion is actively going on in China, it is critical to look at women's works in Chinese sf, the marketing situation they are in, how these women authors find a way to escape from that genre limitation, and how they try to establish a new non-hierarchical order of things. It will also help us to better understand Chinese sf in the global context.

In this paper, I will first map out the scene of the so-called *female sf* (*nüxing kehuan*) in Chinese context, the dilemma that it faces and the similar situation that Chinese sf is faced with on the international stage. Then I will examine how Xia Jia takes the marginality of *porridge sf* (*xifan kehuan*) to break out of the dilemma and transcend the genre/gender/cultural hierarchy. Finally, I will focus on Xia Jia's recent writing project, the *Sinopedia* (*Zhongguo baike quanshu*) series, and analyze how it uses intertextuality, narrative experiment, and technology imagination to build three interlaced layers that connect all things, thereby transgressing the dominant knowledge system and establishing a new order of things. I also argue that *Sinopedia*, with its feminist and marginal stance, enriches the grand narratives about China and works better than Sinofuturism to join the construction of CoFutures–a concept proposed by Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay, emerging from the global futurism movements and calling for complex, coeval, and compossible futures instead of a simple, linear, and dominant imagination of a single future (19-21).

Female SF: A Systematic Dilemma

Since Hao Jingfang's winning of the Hugo Award in 2016 and Xia Jia's introduction of Chinese women sf authors at Worldcon 75 in 2017, there have been various discussions on female sf. Usually, at least one program dedicated to female sf can be found at different events. The following table provides an overview of programs focusing on female sf taking place inside China or women in Chinese sf in the international context from 2017 to 2021:

Title	Format	Participants	Event Series	Time	Location	Language	Related link	Estimated

								audience
Assemble! Goddess of SF!!!	Panel	Xia Jia, Anna Wu, Nian Yu, Regina Kanyu Wang (m*)	SF AppleCore Party	Nov 2017	Shanghai	Chinese	https://www.douban.com/event/29799038/	20
Gender in SF and Fantasy Writing	Panel	Becky Chambers, Tang Fei, Zen Cho, Nicole Huang (m)	Melon Conference 2 @ University of Hong Kong	Mar 2018	Hong Kong	English	https://www.yunchtime.net/ARTS/Hong-Kong-Gender-in-sfF/	15
Post 90' Female SF Writers in China	Panel	Nian Yu, Li Yuxuan, Regina Kanyu Wang	SF AppleCore Party	Sep 2018	Shanghai	Chinese	https://www.douban.com/event/31152218/	15
Female Perspectives in SF Writing	Panel	Wang Nuonuo, Yezi Jiang, Bella Han, Count E, Peng Simeng, Xia Jia (m)	2018 China SF Con	Dec 2018	Shenzhen	Chinese	https://www.cdstm.cn/theme/khsj/khzx/khcb/201812/t20181224_902733.html	50

Feminist SF	Panel	Han Song, Zhao Haihog, Huang Yixin, Gu Bei (m)	1st Shanghai SF Film Industry Seminar	Jun 20 19	Shang hai	Chine se	https://m.thepa per.cn/yidian_ promDetail.jsp ?contid=38202 01&from=yidi an	60
Gender Portray in Chinese SF	Panel	Chen Qiufan, Anna Wu, Regina Kanyu Wang	Wŏmen: Retelling the China Stories -Yenching Global Symposium at Peking University	Ma r 20 19	Beijin g	Englis h	http://yenching symposium.or g/wmen- retelling-the- china-stories	100
Women in SF	Panel	Jo Walton, Aliette de Bodard, R.F.Kuang, Regina Kanyu Wang, Alvin Wong & William Lau (m)	Melon Conference 3 @ University of Hong Kong	Ma r 20 19	Hong Kong	Englis h	https://csgchku .wordpress.co m/2019/03/22/ melon- conference- hku-women- in-science- fiction/	15

Female Writing in Chinese and American SF	Panel	Tang Fei, Pat Murphy, Eileen Gunn, Ji Shaoting, Nian Yu, Zhao Haihong (m)	5th China (Chengdu) International sf Conference	Nov 2019	Chengdu	Chinese	http://m.cd.bendibao.com/tour/106301.shtm	80
She SF	Panel	Ling Chen, Chi Hui, Gu Shi, Wang Nuonuo, Li Lei	Fishing Fortress SF Award-Founding Ceremony of Writers Committee and SF Club of Fishing Fortress SF Center	Dec 2020	Chongqing	Chinese	https://chongqing.eol.cn/cqgd/202012/t20201208_2053686.shtml	60
Women in Chinese SF	Conversation	Regina Kanyu Wang, Clau Fusco, Maria Carolina Casati (m)	RELAMPEIO International Literary Festival	Apr 2021	Brazil /online	English/Portuguese	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfrwmWzGtvM&list=PL2BPmttBa5vjowEL-l-	314

							MRLK2Kgvg VoZox&index =2	
Women in Chinese SF	Conversation	Xia Jia, Regina Kanyu Wang, Francesco Verso (m)	Future Fiction Online Series	Apr 2021	Italy/online	English	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6Xidqd2W0E	216
Her SF High-End Dialogue	Panel	Chen Hongyu, Anna Wu, Gu Shi, Liang Ling, Li Shuangyin, Ling Chen (m)	2021 China SF Con	Sep 2021	Beijing	Chinese	https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/4Fs8LXiBxA40JiXw0YAxwQ	40
The Extreme Imagination of Chinese Women	Conversation	Anna Wu, Kiki Gao (m)	Top Her	Sep 2021	Online	Chinese	https://m.jiemian.com/article/6603988.html	Unknown
Education and Future from the Perspective of Women SF Writers	Panel	Ling Chen, Gu Bei, Regina Kanyu Wang, Gui Fangfang, Huo Xiaoru (m)	Gezhi Pro Talk	Dec 2021	Shanghai	Chinese	https://www.huodongxing.com/event/7627508328811?layout=EN	35

* "M" represents for "moderator" in the table.

The above list cannot be 100% comprehensive, but nevertheless represents the tendency of the growing interests towards female sf in China in recent years. Although event organization was hindered by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the number of related programs surged again in 2021. Meanwhile, there has also been an increasing number of interviews, podcasts, discussions, and all kinds of projects surrounding *female sf* or *women in sf* in the Chinese context or *women in Chinese sf* in the international context. A significant mark of such attention is the publication of four different sets of Chinese sf (and speculative fiction in general) anthologies of stories written by women (and in some cases, also nonbinary) authors in 2021 and 2022: four volumes of ~~She~~ *Her Science Fiction* (*Ta kehuan*, 2021) edited by Chen Qiufan, two volumes of ~~Her~~*She: A Collection of the Classic Works of Chinese Female Science Fiction Writers* (*Ta: Zhongguo nüxing kehuan zuojia jingdian zuopin ji*, 2021) edited by Cheng Jingbo, *The Way Spring Arrives and Other Stories: A Collection of Chinese Science Fiction and Fantasy in Translation from a Visionary Team of Female and Nonbinary Creators* (*Chuntian lailin de fangshi*, 2022) edited by Yu Chen and Regina Kanyu Wang, and *Running Red: Chinese Female Science Fiction Writers Anthology* (*Benpao de hong: Zhongguo nüxing kehuan zuojia xuanji,* 2022) edited by Tianjing Wu, Teruyuki Hashimoto, and Kazumi Oe. These anthologies have been planned and produced almost at the same time by different editors and publishers, and their publication languages include Chinese, English and Japanese, with further translation interest in other languages. The release of these books has aroused expansive attention towards female sf in China.

What should be noted here is that *female sf* doesn't mean *feminist sf*, which refers to sf with feminist trajectories, or *women's sf*, which is defined by Lisa Yaszek as "sf written by women about women" ("Feminism," 6), or *sf about women*, which concentrates more on the

theme or the perspective of the story. *Female sf* in China loosely refers to sf works written by women based on the related publications and events, though readers do not necessarily distinguish it from the other above-mentioned concepts and expect to see more gender awareness in these stories.[1] However, just as *female literature* (*nüxing wenxue*) in China is built by feminist critiques instead of emerging spontaneously among female writers (Guo 126–27), *female sf* in China is constructed by the market instead of growing from female authors' self-awareness. Of course, such self-awareness has begun to appear among more women writers in recent years in the broader social context of the ongoing heated gender discussion, but is not necessarily present in their writing from the very beginning.

According to Cheng Jingbo, editor-in-chief of the anthology *Her,* women authors have never been absent in different stages of Chinese sf (Yao et al. 355), but it is the first time in history that they have been put under the spotlight as a collective. There is no doubt that such projects and discussions are produced with 100% good intentions, and they indeed increase the visibility of women sf writers in China, but the Chinese market itself still needs time to integrate women authors in the still-flawed biased system. In these events, it is quite common to have all-women speakers (sometimes with one or two men among them) discussing female sf, while many other events with various themes feature the opposite gender ratio. Similarly, most of the other anthologies in the market with various themes, even those ones published in recent years, include a significant percentage of male authors' stories although they are not labelled as "all-men" anthologies. Female sf writer and critic Tang Fei comments that these are "just token, box-ticking affairs" and she is fed up with sharing personal experiences together with a few other female authors the organizers don't know where else to put (Harman and Bruce). Multiple female authors, including Tang Fei, have expressed their astonishment when being asked

questions like "as a woman, why do you like/write sf?" on different occasions, while male authors are never asked similar questions.

Such a situation is not unique to China and not unexpected given the fact that sf has been "a genre defined and long dominated by men" (Clute and Langford). Writers such as Johanna Russ and Ursula K. Le Guin have spoken about the poor portrayal of women's images in American sf (Russ; Le Guin, "American SF") and use their own writing to reshape the genre. Scholars have also written extensively on the unequal situation that women have faced in the American sf history: Jane Donawerth, for example, explores how women use different strategies to write sf in a male-dominant world; Sarah Lefanu approaches feminist sf history from how women fans fought for "Women and sf" panels at conventions in 1970s. Overall, there was a period in American sf history in which "women writers and fans were a disproportionately effective minority group, often hiding behind initials or male pseudonyms; always 'invisible' to the perception of sf as an exclusively male activity" (Jones 484).

Compared with their American peers who began to write in the pulp magazine era, Chinese women sf writers don't consider themselves to have experienced such discrimination in their writing careers. In the "Female Writing in Chinese and American SF" panel at 2019 China (Chengdu) International sf Conference, after Pat Murphy and Eileen Gunn had shared their experiences in their early careers, Zhao Haihong recalled that:

> When I began to publish in the sf community in (19)90s, it's also when Chinese sf began to recover…we indeed don't feel like being treated differently as female writers. Every year, we have three to four female winners of Galaxy Award, but pitifully, only Ling Chen and I kept on writing, while some other female writers only appeared for one year and then left in the second year…I don't feel we are

the minority or powerless when we entered the sf community, including the

gender ratio of being awarded. It might be true that there are more male sf fans

than female ones, but every year we have quite a number of female writers."

(Zhao et al. 334)[3]

Ling Chen, the other Chinese female sf writer mentioned by Zhao in her talk, comments in an article that:

> It is not a small number of women in China's sf writing history, but only a few
>
> have been able to keep writing and maintain the standard of their work. The
>
> reasons for this are: 1. women's interests are more likely to shift than men's; 2. at
>
> a certain point, romance [of writing sf] is replaced by the realities of family and
>
> professional life for them. (76)

Ling's comment implies that women are expected to take more family burden and face more career challenges when reaching the age of marriage and childbearing; thus, their interests towards sf writing can easily shift to some other less commanding ones. Zhao's and Ling's reflections echo the experience of Xia Jia, who began to write and publish sf in the 2000s:

> There were quite many [women sf fans and writers] at my age. Among the writers
>
> who were born in the [19]70s and began to write in the [19]90s, there was no lack
>
> of women who were writing and hanging out in that community. However, the
>
> women were omitted from the later narratives, or they wrote both sf and fantasy
>
> but only a few sf works, so they were not regarded as important. Today, it seems
>
> that Ling Chen and Zhao Haihong are the major post-70s women [sf] writers
>
> because they have been writing for a long time and have published significant
>
> works, but there are other women authors besides them who are rarely mentioned.

Women authors and sf fans were already very active back then. At least half of

the post-80s and post-90s active fans and writers were female. (Xia Jia, personal

interview Nov 2021)

It would be valuable to recover the history of women writing sf in China in a similar way

to that which Lisa Yaszek does for post-World War II women writers in *Galactic Suburbia:*

Recovering Women's Science Fiction, which is beyond the scope of this paper. I have rewritten

the history of Chinese sf with a focus on women in my essay "The Evolution of Nüwa: A Brief

'Herstory' of Chinese SF" (R. Wang), but there is definitely more research to be conducted.

Here, I am more interested in how the systematic bias is more subtle and hidden in Chinese sf.

On the one hand, individual women authors of different generations don't perceive gender

discrimination and there has been a recent celebration of female sf in China; on the other, women

sf writers have been omitted from the history of Chinese sf and their recent period in the

spotlight risks pigeonholing them with the fancy label of female sf while segregating them from

the general discussion of Chinese sf. Such a dilemma has in part deterred some Chinese women

sf authors from being labelled by their gender identity or participating in any female sf

discussions. A similar situation applies to the more general female literature in China as well.

Nonetheless, this does not mean that female sf in China shouldn't be studied or that

attention towards women authors should be dismissed. Instead, much more should be done

because so little research has paid attention to women authors among the vast amount of

scholarship on Chinese sf in recent years. Liu Jian and Hua Li collected a bibliography "On

Chinese Science Fiction: Selected Essays and Critical Pieces in English, 2015–2020." Among

over sixty works, a majority focuses on Liu Cixin, another large chunk looks at Late Qing sf,

some on sf at the early stages of the People's Republic of China (PRC), some on translation and

communication of Chinese sf, some on Han Song, some on Chen Qiufan, and finally a little on

Hao Jingfang. Apart from the tiny percentage devoted to Hao Jingfang, hardly any Chinese

women sf authors have been given any attention in the current scope of Chinese sf studies in

English, besides sporadic mentions of particular stories. There is slightly more attention in the

Chinese context, but it is still far from satisfactory. Critics regard "female awareness" in women

authors' works as being "stagnant" (Jiang 19), "in lack of self-examination" (Fan), or "de-

sexed/gendered" (Chen). The majority of the existent gender-related research on Chinese sf

either focuses on women characters (mostly in male authors' works) or scrutinizes the

"femininity" in female authors' works – neither provides an effective approach through which to

really understand Chinese women sf authors' works. Xia Jia comments that:

> On the one hand, women's sf writing is subject to greater questioning and
>
> discouragement, so they go to write non-sf genres that are more suitable for
>
> women; on the other, some writers, such as Chi Hui, have written a lot of
>
> "orthodox" sf, but critics feel that her works do not have the characteristics of
>
> female writers and cannot find meaning to research on her female sf writing.
>
> *Femininity* and *sf* don't seem to be compatible. It has to be about emotion, family
>
> life, personal expression, softness and literary expression, which can be seen in
>
> male writers' works as well, but in female writers' writing, it is generally
>
> classified as femininity. (Personal interview Nov 2021)

Such femininity has echoes with "the feminine mystique" in 1950s and 1960s America, a

term coined by Betty Friedan to describe the assumption that women could be fulfilled by

housework, marriage, sexual activity, and childcare (18). Relating femininity only to family,

emotions, and personal life and the emphasis on mere femininity in women authors' works not

only restricts our understanding of their writing but also falls into the systematic gender stereotype. Some recent efforts have been made to transcend such gender stereotyping or the binary thinking in general. Mia Chen Ma, Angela YT Chan, Yen Ooi, Frederike Schneider-Vielsäcker and Regina Kanyu Wang – a group of younger generation female scholars – contributed a roundtable discussion on "Can Chinese Science Fiction Transcend Binary Thinking?" at the SFRA 2021 conference. Mingwei Song, the established scholar who has been working on Chinese SF New Wave for years, has also published his recent article on "The Gender Question of Science Fiction – A Poetic Imagination Beyond Binomiality." Their work jumps beyond the femininity trap and seeks a new understanding of gender in Chinese sf.

Nevertheless, the issue is never only about gender. As Le Guin argues, the question of women in sf is essentially the question of "The Other—the being who is different from yourself," which is further specified into "the sexual Alien, and the social Alien, and the cultural Alien, and finally the racial Alien" ("American SF," 208). As a cultural Alien towards the dominant Anglo-American sf, on the international stage Chinese sf has constantly faced another mystique: its "Chinese-ness." Emily Xueni Jin has contributed a sharp essay questioning such Chinese-ness of Chinese sf. I want to further elaborate that the question of "what makes Chinese sf Chinese" resembles "what are the unique traits of female sf" in the way that both imply some kind of ignorant curiosity towards the outsider or latecomer to the club. Such questions may not be ill-intentioned, but cannot avoid othering Chinese sf or female sf, as if works from Chinese authors or female authors cannot be read as simply sf. Given the fact that such othering already exists and there is a long way to go to make a change, it is necessary for us to find a way to study sf from the Others while avoiding stereotyping or segregating them. The feminist theories lighten

the way by "contest[ing] the hegemonic representations of a patriarchal culture that does not recognize its 'others'" (Hollinger 159).

Xia Jia's attitude towards being a female sf writer suggests an approach to understanding sf from the margins:

> There is a complex tension between *female* and *sf* and it is difficult to find a natural and legitimate place for it, but in recent years, I have come to understand sf as a way of thinking across frontiers, in the sense that all cultural identities (gender, class, race) that are disadvantaged and marginalized have the potential to offer some kind of reflection on common sense and on the place of dominant ideological hegemony, on the cultural and bodily experience of alternative imaginaries. So female should be more than a narrow label carrying stereotypes, like sf, but an inclusive and open category for the future. ("Xia Jia," 299)

Xia Jia and her fellow contemporary Chinese women sf authors are making their own way out of the femininity cage as well as using sf to create a more inclusive future for not only women but also all marginalized groups. In the next section, I will zoom in to look at Xia Jia's porridge sf and analyze how she embraces its marginality and blurs the boundary between genres while transgressing the segregations and stereotypes that relate to genre, gender, and cultural hierarchies.

Porridge SF: A Genre-blurring Practice

Xia Jia, a.k.a. Wang Yao, is a representative of Chinese sf writers born in 1984. She published her first sf story, "The Demon-Enslaving Flask" ("Guan yaojing de pingzi", 2004) when she was still an undergraduate student majoring in atmospheric physics at Peking University. She

changed her major afterwards and obtained a master's degree in film studies at the Communication University of China and then a PhD degree in comparative literature at Peking University. Now she is an associate professor and dean of the Chinese Literature Department of Xi'an Jiaotong University with a research focus on contemporary Chinese sf. She has published one fantasy novel, *Odyssey of China Fantasy: On the Road* (*Jiuzhou: Nilü*, 2010), three sf collections – *The Demon Enslaving Flask* (*Guan yaojing de pingzi*, 2012), *A Time Beyond Your Reach* (*Ni wufa dida de shijian*, 2017), and *Xi'an City is Falling Down* (*Qingcheng yixiao*, 2018) – and one collection of academic work, *Coordinates of the Future: Discussions on Chinese Science Fiction in the Age of Globalization* (*Weilai de zuobiao: Quanqiuhua shidai de zhongguo kehuan lunji*, 2019) in Chinese. She has also published an English collection, *A Summer Beyond Your Reach: Stories by Xia Jia* (2020). Apart from being a writer and scholar, Xia Jia has also actively participated in the booming process of Chinese sf both domestically and internationally via joining university sf clubs, attending conventions and various events, moderating or speaking in panels, giving lectures, organizing writing workshops, participating in sf movie projects, editing anthologies and many more. Her writing and practices join the process of reshaping Chinese sf in the twenty-first century.

In her early stage of writing, Xia Jia's works are labeled as *porridge sf*, which "describes a story mixed with so many non-science elements (e.g. myth, legend or folklore) that it can hardly be classified as 'science fiction' anymore" (Liu). For example, "The Demon-Enslaving Flask" is a science fairy tale in which the demon and scientists make a gamble; "A Hundred Ghosts Parade Tonight" ("Baidui yexing jie", 2010) mixes ghosts with artificial intelligence (AI); and "Night Journey of the Dragon-Horse" (Longma yexing, 2015) portrays a post-apocalypse world where the mechanical Dragon-Horse has consciousness and a bat can talk.

Such genre-blurring characteristics of porridge sf relate it to weird fiction, which "has been a fugitive category, a blur in the corner of other genres" (Luckhurst 1041). Reflecting on her early writing, Xia Jia regards it "having trans-media and fan-fic traits, inclusively referring to a variety of media and creating dialogues with other works" (Xia Jia, personal interview), which also echoes with a "weird archive as a site of new entanglements and destabilizations of the distinction between high and low culture, the literary and the nonliterary, modernism and postmodernism" (Noys and Murphy 119). One of Xia Jia's major literary influences, Ray Bradbury, also published a significant amount of weird fiction in markets such as *Weird Tales* (Thomas). Johanna Russ comments that Bradbury "writes both science fiction and fantasy, often in the same story. He doesn't seem to care" (200). For Xia Jia, she doesn't inherit the "eerie" (Fisher) or "abcanny" (Miéville) spirit of the weird fiction contents, but her writing does feature the "intertextuality and hybridity" (Noys and Murphy 128) of the weird fiction format.

Another linkage between porridge sf and weird fiction is their being positioned at the bottom of the genre ladder. Weird fiction "was usually abjected as the lowest form of culture in the explosion of the mass magazine pulps that emerged, crested and vanished between 1890 and 1945" (Luckhurst 1041), while porridge sf (taking the metaphor of "hard rice" and "soft rice") is "softer" than soft sf (Liu). In the Chinese sf context, not only is the boundary between sf, fantasy, horror or weird (if there is any) clearly drawn but there is also a hierarchy between hard sf—sf with more focus on the natural sciences and technological details—and soft sf—sf more in favor of the social perspectives—which also relates to the gender bias. As Bai Huiyuan notices, "the so-called 'hard sf' (represented by Liu Cixin) and 'soft sf' ostensibly distinguish between the 'intensity' of sf writing, but actually contain a certain gender bias. This focuses on fundamentalist sf fans' obsession with technical rationality and their rejection of psychological

sensibility". Wang Wenlin also points out that "as a literary genre that is mostly 'masculine', the core idea of sf literature is the pursuit and promotion of science and technology. The strong discourse of male writers makes sf literature lack the warmth of human nature, and in Chinese sf, it even shows the characteristics of 'male chauvinism'" (10). Xia Jia herself has also comments that "besides 'porridge sf,' my work is frequently described as typical 'girlish soft sf,' which brings me biting comments and attacks from those who believe women are never qualified enough to write 'hard sf' but can only make up watered-down love stories (I have noticed that many of those critics are also women)" (Liu).

We can see that in the Chinese context, *hard sf* is strongly related with the masculine, the scientifically rational, and regarded as superior, while *soft sf* is usually associated with the feminine and the emotional, and regarded as inferior. *Hard sf* is sometimes an equivalent of *core sf*, which is proposed by the author Wang Jinkang, referring to these works that prioritize scientific aesthetics and rationality. The word *core* itself implies its central position in relation to those who are *non-core sf*. This partly explains why the male authors who write *hard sf* are always listed as representatives of Chinese sf. In his book *Science Fiction and the Mass Cultural Genre System* (2017), John Rieder discusses how the genre system is "firmly associated with large-scale commercial production and distribution of narrative fiction in print, film, and broadcast media" (1), which he calls the "mass cultural genre system". Via writing, reviewing, publishing, defining, and awarding *core sf* for years, the advocators of the masculine appreciation of scientific rationality render it the major aesthetics of Chinese sf.

Again, we see the above-mentioned dilemma surrounding female sf: on the one hand, the Chinese sf community welcomes Xia Jia's arrival, awarding her with a Galaxy Award for her first publication and giving her an abundance of attention; on the other, she is regarded as an

"alien" breaking into this genre[4], and the attention towards her has been usually associated with her gender identity and appearance. Descriptions like "beautiful woman writer" (*meinü zuojia*) have constantly been bound to Xia Jia's achievements in her writing career. In the online forums and unofficial gatherings of sf fans, discussion about her appearance is given as much attention as discussion about her writing. The label has accompanied her since she published her first sf story in *Science Fiction World* in 2004 through to the publishing of her first English-written sf story in *Nature* in 2015. "Beautiful woman writer" has always been attached to her name in news titles to celebrate her success. This emphasis on gender and appearance is repeated again and again during the distribution and reception of certain works and certain authors. Xia Jia reflects on her own reaction to such labels:

> I feel a little bit vain when I was young because it's better for people to say you're good-looking than to say you're not good-looking. At that time, I was also unknown, and being discussed by others means being seen. Then I found that this kind of attention and focus has a negative impact on your growth and writing life. People don't fully focus on the works but have a preconceived notion that "because you are a female writer, so blah blah blah". *How to Suppress Women's Writing* by Russ has been published recently [in China] … She is so right about how the women writers have rich writings but are excluded from the canonization and textbook selection. The same problem arises in all fields, in literature, in acting, in science, and by labeling women as a minority, there are a lot of preconceived biases that prevent us from recognizing (their works). In turn, I realized that I had been wearing this filter as well… and needed to get rid of it as soon as I realized that. (Personal interview Nov 2021)

As Xia Jia says, Russ's classic feminist literary criticism only properly reached the Chinese readers in 2020, almost forty years after its original publication in 1983. What is described in *How to Suppress Women's Writing* can still be seen in various disciplines in China. The readers, publishers, and critics of the sf genre, or the co-victims of the patriarchal social system, deliberately or unconsciously alienate Xia Jia's writing by devaluing her porridge sf or categorizing her into a "beautiful woman writer" instead of an sf writer.

Realizing the marginality of her writing style and the general bias against her gender identity, Xia Jia sticks to her porridge sf as a resistance against such hierarchy. By insisting on the self-categorization of porridge sf, she also parallels Marleen S. Barr's effort to advocate for "feminist fabulation," "a new term for feminist sf writers' work, stem(ming) from realizing that sf is not feminist; sf is divided into separate women's and men's worlds" (143). Although porridge sf does not respond to the feminist issues directly, it stems from rejecting the gender-implied binary of hard sf and soft sf. Like weird fiction, which often has "subversive or playful approaches to scientific conventions of the time" (Alder 4) and breaks the binary between natural/supernatural, mystery/explanation (Alder 7), porridge sf also provides us with a new way to think about the science and attracts readers who are doubtful of the dominant masculine, scientific rationale aesthetics of sf.

By purposely blurring the genre boundaries and promoting porridge sf through writing, teaching, public speech, serving on award juries and more, Xia Jia challenges the masculine and *hard* tradition of Chinese sf. Although the discussion about hard sf and soft sf resurges from time to time, the Chinese sf market has indeed become more open-minded over these years, and Xia Jia has also become one of the representative sf authors – as well as scholars – in China, winning seven Galaxy Awards and five Xingyun Awards, the two most important awards in Chinese sf,

being translated into more than ten languages, publishing fiction in *People's Literature*, *Nature* and other major platforms, and serving as dean of her department. Porridge sf has transcended the hierarchy of the hardness of sf and earned its success.

Additionally, the hierarchy between core/non-core, hard/soft, and masculine/feminine also echoes with the one between anglophone/non-anglophone. To return to the Chinese-ness of Chinese sf again, we have to bear in mind that "the established hierarchy of the global literary market and the residual legacies of colonialism are obvious factors" (Jin) of the dilemma. Xia Jia, as well as her fellow writers, are constantly being asked "what makes Chinese sf Chinese", even though they may regard "American science fiction from the late 1930s and 1940s as their model and predecessor" (Tsu 96). The modern history of China has interrupted the continuous development of Chinese sf as well as the inheritance between generations of writers: the wars between 1949, the Great Famine between 1959 and 1961, the Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1976, and the Anti-Spiritual Pollution Movement in 1980s. Instead of learning from the early Chinese sf authors in the Late Qing Dynasty and early PRC era, contemporary Chinese sf writers have been reading and enjoying the translated works of Asimov, Clarke, Heinlein, and more because these western sf writers are marketed as the top-level writers in the sf world. For them, sf are naturally stories set in the west with male protagonists.

In the afterword of "Eternal Summer Dream" ("Yongxia zhimeng", 2008), Xia Jia reflects on the writing process for the story. She had been trying to write such a story for ten years, but was unable to find the right starting point. The original story was set in the west–San Francisco in the 1960s, ancient Roman Constantinople, the city of Sodom, and Victorian England, with references to Ulysses, Borges, Homer, and Jack London. These western settings were fascinating, but she had to do extensive research even on the names of food dishes. She

asked herself two questions that she had asked herself countless times: "1. Why can't science fiction story be set in the East? 2. Why can't the main character be a woman?" And then the right story came to her, with references to Chinese elements such as Banpo Culture, Yanhuang Civilization, Laozi, the Yellow River, her hometown Xi'an and more (194). The process well mirrors the previously discussed center/periphery hierarchy of West/East and male/female in sf tradition. Since then, Xia Jia has further challenged the routine and default setting in sf, bringing in the references from the sextual, social, cultural, and racial Others.

Xia Jia's writing does not simply overturn the power structure dominated by the western or masculine tradition in sf via strengthening its Chinese-ness or its femininity. Instead, she tries to build bridges and create dialogues between the center and periphery. One of her key methods is intertextuality, an important feature of Xia Jia's porridge sf, by which she "builds a new aesthetic space in familiar texts and instills new meanings" (Zhang and Wang 76). In "A Hundred Ghosts Parade Tonight", she retells the story of "Xiao Qian" from Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* (*Liaozhai Zhiyi*) and merges it with classical robot tales. In "On Miluo River" ("Miluojiang shang", 2008), she refers to Asimov's psychohistory and weaves it together with the Chinese Warring States era history, and add an additional layer attributing to the late Chinese sf author Liu Wenyang. She also refers to Goethe's *Faust* in "The Demon-Enslaving Flask", to the opera *Carmen* in "Carmen" (Kamen, 2005), to Haizi's poem "Take Dream as Horse" ("Yimengweima, 1987) in "Night Journey of the Dragon-Horse", to the Japanese game *Dynasty Warriors* and the Chinese classic *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in "My Name is Sun Shangxiang" ("Wode mingzi jiao Sun Shangxiang", 2009) and many more. By connecting to these various texts in Chinese, German, French, Japanese and more, in literature, opera, game, history and more, she manages to build a network of texts and add layers of

meanings to her stories. Such connections help Xia Jia to transgress the boundary between sf and non-sf genres as well as transcend the hierarchy between hard sf and soft sf, west and east. In a recent reflection on porridge sf, Xia Jia summarizes that:

> SF will change, but its core spirit remains: to challenge mainstream knowledge, common sense, and the classics. What is novel in a certain era becomes stale when it turns into a classic, and it's time to reactivate the tradition…To shed or redefine porridge sf is not to simply get rid of the sf label, but to call for more radical sf. It doesn't matter whether it's soft or hard, or what it is called. (Personal interview Nov 2021)

Porridge sf is a breakaway from the dilemma of female sf and Chinese-ness in Chinese sf. Xia Jia no longer actively claims her writing as porridge sf these days, but her attempts at crossing the boundary, challenging the mainstream, and reactivating the tradition continues in her *Sinopedia* series. In the next section I will focus on how Xia Jia establishes a new order of things and makes connections to all things after breaking away from this dilemma and transcending hierarchies.

Sinopedia: A Textual Connection to All Things

In 2015, Xia Jia began to publish her latest cluster of works, a series of short stories under the project named *Sinopedia*, or in its direct translation, *Chinese Encyclopedia*, which shares the same protagonist and similar technology background among twelve interrelated yet stand-alone short stories and novelettes. These twelve stories take place in twelve months of a year, among which eight have already finished and there are four more to go.

In the *Sinopedia* series, Xia Jia builds three layers of nets: the net of the texts, the net of the visions, and the net of the beings. These nets provide a new epistemology to understand the relationship between things, which echoes with "the carrier-bag theory" of Le Guin and Haraway. Le Guin uses the theory to reject the masculine aggression and heroism in the genre-fiction tradition ("The Carrier-Bag Theory," 1–12), and Haraway uses it to suggest a net-shaped knowledge structure with gaps (*Staying with Trouble*, 122-5). Both of them acknowledge the gaps that the nets bear and support the abandonment of the construction of the current mansion of knowledges. In her stories, Xia Jia weaves the nets via intertextuality, narration experiments, and technological imaginations, and essentially provides an alternative imagination of the world after addressing all these social inequalities in the story world.

The first layer of net is suggested by the title *Sinopedia*, which plays with intertextuality, as Xia Jia herself has said in a speech:

> In the introduction of *The Order of Things*, the French philosopher Michel Foucault quotes an essay by Borges, in which he suggests imagining a very strange "Chinese Encyclopedia" in the distant China, which classifies animals in such a way that we would probably scan it and think that the classification is different from that of any of the encyclopedias with which we are familiar today. Foucault builds on this by suggesting that what really holds us back when we understand a problem is the understanding of that order of things. ("N-TALK")

An understanding of the order of things involves an understanding of their relationship with each other and the hierarchy in-between. Quoting the seemingly weird and illogical category of animals in Borges's "Chinese Encyclopedia" and the conversation surrounding it between the human protagonist and the AI companion Dongdong in the very beginning of

"Black House" ("Heiwu", 2015), the very first story of the *Sinopedia* series, Xia Jia lays out the basic stance of the whole series: a challenge towards mainstream knowledge of the order of things and an attempt to enlighten a new non-hierarchical and non-stereotypical way of thinking.

We have already discussed how intertextuality works in porridge sf and weird fiction as a way to cross boundaries and transcend hierarchies. By constantly and actively making connections to other texts in the *Sinopedia* series, Xia Jia builds a more expansive and complicated net of texts. Firstly, these independent stories have internal intertextuality among themselves via shared technologies such as *iWall, iCart, iWatch, iRobot, iCloud* and more (in the recent stories, the *i-* names are changed to *LING-* names to avoid potential copyright issues.) Key settings such as the *Babel Syndrome* and the AI Seal Dongdong are also repeatedly referred to in different stories, reflecting back to each other. Secondly, the external intertextuality expands more extensively to various texts, from ancient Chinese poet Qu Yuan's poems to migrant worker poet Xu Lizhi's poems, from Zheng Wenguang's sf novel *Descendants of Mars* (*Zhanshen de houyi*, 1984) to the Mandarin pop song lyric "Peach Blossoms" (*Taohua duoduo kai*), from Alen Turing's article to Buddhist Sutras. Thirdly, Xia Jia also textualizes contexts and refers to real-life events in the stories, such as the high-tech transition of Lingyin Temple, the construction of Lenghu Mars Town, the utopian practice of Tent Theatre, and the lockdown of the pandemic. By referring to these texts that range so widely, from ancient times to today, from China to the west, from poetry to theatre, from fiction to reality, Xia testifies to the mobility of texts beyond the temporal restriction and their powers of co-acting together (Felski 580, 588). These texts, as co-actors, play in the science-fictional world created by the author while echoing with real social concerns in our present world. Through these texts, Xia Jia makes connections

from the margin to the larger world, building a textual network that transcends the spatial, temporal, and fictional boundaries.

The second layer of net is composed of visions. Xia Jia does this by carefully choosing the positionality of her characters and their "situated knowledges" (Haraway, "Situated Knowledge", 585). Following her approach developed in "Eternal Summer Dream", Xia Jia makes her protagonist a female linguist instead of a male scientist or engineer, which has been the conventional narrator of sf[5]. By doing so, she is able to bring her own positionality into the stories and address issues that might not be seen in traditional sf perspectives. Such positionality grows during her writing. In the first six stories of the series published in *Science Fiction World* from 2015 to 2016, we only learn that the protagonist's family name is Wang. In the two recent stories in 2020 and 2021, we learned about her family, her full name, and her life path. Xia Jia comments on the development of the character that:

> Originally, I was not particularly interested in the fate of this protagonist, more interested in discussing the problem. Later I found that through her way into the problem, her pain, confusion, and confrontation with the people around her, her way of thinking about the problems turned more and more similar to my way. After that I designed the fate of the protagonist, her family relations, and what she wanted to do in the future. (Personal interview Nov 2021)

While the figure of Wang grows clearer in the stories, her standpoint and positionality also become more explicit. In the beginning of the story, Wang is trapped in her own trauma as though she is on an isolated island, but gradually she walks outside of the black house and steps into the larger world, having more interactions with other people and other beings. Xia Jia uses her own situated knowledge to establish the protagonist's vision. By doing so, she manages to

transcend the boundary between reality and the fictional world. The fictional problems emerge from the author's observation of the reality and then reflect back on our future treatment of real issues. Thus, the situated knowledge of Xia Jia not only helps the protagonist to deal with issues in the story world but also helps us to learn about future possibilities in our real world.

Such vision is also trans-perspective. The *Sinopedia* stories are not always written in the first-person perspective of Wang, but sometimes in the third person, and even in innovative formats. The protagonist Wang is sometimes the narrator, sometimes the narrated, sometimes the observer, and sometimes the observed. By jumping between different point of views, Xia Jia makes the single positionality compound and the situated knowledges more complex. "Into the Rivers" ("Shejiang", 2015) is written in an experimental way that serves the purpose. In this story, Wang is only one of the anonymous users in an online forum who raised the initial question about the technology product *iMemorial*. Her post is followed by various first-person perspective replies from those who have interacted with this technology in different ways. Various people provide their visions and situated knowledges, and their experiences are interlinked in one way or another, building a network surrounding the technology. Wang's initial post and question stirs up ripples on the forum like a stone on the lake. Similarly, when Xia Jia publishes the stories, she not only publishes it in print magazines but also posts them on *Douban.com*, China's gathering forum for people who love literature, arts, and humanities in general, to encourage discussions from various perspectives. The replies after her stories echo with the format of the story itself. Thus, Xia Jia transcends her own perspective and connects to various people's views in both the fictional world and the real world.

By employing such an experimental method of narration, Xia Jia gathers perspectives as well as ideas that are usually neglected in the linage and progressive sf narration. She collects

those voices into the carrier bag, not from the heroes or heroines, but from ordinary people who come out of our daily life. She weaves their stories, their confusions, desires, melancholy, and pains together into a net. While intertextuality enables Xia Jia to weave a net of texts, the compound perspectives allow her to knit a net of visions. Furthermore, Xia Jia particularly chooses to compile stories from those who are rarely seen in middle-class privileged life: primary school students in poor mountain villages, migrant workers who labor on construction sites, minority ethnic people whose only chance to study in big cities is with a scholarship, and a disabled boy who travels by scooter and talks with the help of AI – those who are with marginalized identities and cared for the feminist concerns. She brings in their visions and positionalities into the discussion of technology and the future:

> Instead of saying that I am writing about ordinary people, it is better to say that I am writing about people with marginality. It's not easy to write about people with marginality. Without first-hand experience, I have to understand them through other means such as documentaries. I hope to write about different groups and bring in what they endure in discussing technical issues. The technology issues being discussed today are very middle class, such as AI replacing middle-class jobs and childcare. These issues exist, but there are many others ... It has been hard for sf to capture the issue. They've already happened, so it's necessary to bring those issues in [the stories]. (Xia Jia, personal interview in Nov 2021)

Xia Jia's efforts to build a net are even clearer in the third layer: to connect all beings via technological possibilities. In "Iron Moon" ("Tie Yueliang", 2016), Xia Jia imagines a technology that enables people to feel each other's pain and speculates various possible applications of such a technology. It could be a non-profit project that makes people feel direct

pain and really connects with others, or a commercial toy gun that adds entertainment to middle-class people's parties. Through the discussion in the story, Xia Jia proposes that "only through real embodied experience can we break the boundary between self and others, can we feel through the body and then emphasize via emotions, can we really enter the worlds of others beyond languages" ("Iron Moon"). This embodied experience of pain transcends the corporal limitation and makes connections between different individuals.

Such connection also goes beyond the human world. In "Monk of Lingyin Temple" ("Lingyinsi Seng", 2020), the same technology is used to make a boy feel the pain of a fish which is suffering due to his actions. Through this, the author proposes a more equal relationship between human and non-human as well as an urgent awareness of the non-human agencies. The pain of fish can also be related to *the joy of fish* proposed by the Daoist philosopher Zhuangzi. Huizi and Zhuangzi debates on whether Zhuangzi can know the *joy of fish*, which is essentially the question of whether one can know the feelings of others. Xia Jia provides a technology solution to the debate, but a further question is proposed via the stories: can people really understand others' feelings even if it is technologically possible? This is where technology cannot promise, but stories enter.

The connection between different individuals is further developed into a network and system. *iPlantmal*, a small, fun project in "Iron Moon" can connect human, plants, and animals via a set of sensors detecting the plants' status and receivers attached to the pets. It creates a more intimate multispecies relationship by connecting urban human residents, their plants, and their pets into an intelligent ecosystem, and all the individual household systems compose a larger user eco-system. The *Karma* system in "Monk of Lingyin Temple", on the other hand, depends on big data and pattern recognition. Referring to the Buddhist concept of *karma*, the

system is developed by Lingyin Temple and calculates each individual's karma by following

tracks of their words and actions in daily life. The karma will accumulate into certain results and

can only be checked in Lingyin Temple. The system largely depends on the basic idea that

"everything is connected in the world." The "everything" here refers to human, non-human, life,

non-life, thoughts, actions, and more. Such an idea also reminds us of feminist scholar Stacy

Alaimo's "trans-corporeality – the time-space where human corporeality, in all its material

fleshiness, is inseparable from 'nature' or 'environment'" (238). Each individual human

corporeal is essentially connected to the surrounding world and inseparable from the ecosystem.

This further relates to Haraway application of Le Guin's "carrier-bag theory of fiction" back to

non-fiction again, and calls for "staying with trouble" and "making kin" (*Staying with Trouble*).

iPlantmal and *Karma* are technological design for such symbiosis futures. In the end, we are all

connected with all beings in a large net. Xia Jia confesses that:

> We know that we are harming the environment, but we can't do anything about it.
> For example, the daily garbage generated by take-away foods makes me anxious
> because I know that no one is taking care of it. There is no way to live completely
> free from this system, but we know that what we do every day is damaging our
> future. Through the concept of *karma* in Zen Buddhism, I would like to discuss
> whether to make good karma or bad karma, and how everything in the world is
> connected in some way, and encourage people to think about the relationship with
> all beings… (Personal interview Nov 2021)

Now we can return to look at the whole *Sinopedia* series. Borrowing from Haraway

again:

Dozens of feminist writers have refused both relativism and universalism.
Subjects, objects, kinds, races, species, genres, and genders are the products of
their relating. None of this work is about finding sweet and nice – "feminine" –
worlds and knowledges free of the ravages and productivities of power. Rather,
feminist inquiry is about understanding how things work, who is in the action,
what might be possible, and how worldly actors might somehow be accountable
to and love each other less violently. ("Emergent Naturecultures" 7)

Through the writing of the *Sinopedia* series, Xia Jia explores the new order of things that
transcends dominant mainstream knowledge. She makes connections between texts and texts,
texts and contexts, human and human, human and non-human, and eventually establishes three
layers of net that connect all things. During the process, she brings in her own situated
knowledges and expands individual visions into compound visions with a feminist and marginal
approach, and essentially seeks to construct a better world for all beings in both the fictional
future and reality present, regardless of their gender, class, race, species, or existence.

Conclusion: From Sinofuturism to Sinopedia

In *Gendering China*, Dai Jinhua discussed how the gender logic, the watcher and the watched,
and the power relationship between the subjectivity and objectivity in Hollywood movies
evolved into a race/gender narrative in movies about China in the early stages of world movie
history. China, the object watched by the west as women were watched by men, was expected to
be portrayed in a modern, masculine, and heroic "Young China" image in Chinese films as
against the western gaze and alienation. However, the Chinese movies failed expectations and
created more female image sequences instead (29-30).

In the twenty-first century, Chinese sf, a grassroots genre which has coincidentally achieved global popularity, bears similar expectations as those laid on Chinese movies in the twentieth century. With its grand narratives, sublime aesthetics, and masculine scientific logic worship, *The Three Body Trilogy* may have fulfilled such expectations to some extent. It also parallels with the mainstream political narratives of PRC such as *community with a shared future for mankind* in its grandness, magnificence, and universalism. That is partly why *The Three Body Trilogy* is much more popular and welcomed by the mainstream discourse relative to Hao Jingfang's social parable "Folding Beijing." Xia Jia's *Sinopedia* series, on the other hand, breaks such mainstream narration and transcends the dominant knowledges with its feminist marginality and situated knowledges. It still aligns with *community with a shared future for mankind*, but with the feminist cares for each individual beings in such community and expands the *mankind* into women, the poor, the disabled, and non-human as well.

Sinopedia is about "China's status in the near future and the relationship of Chinese people" (Yang 96), but also dealing with issues and problems that we face now. In Xia Jia's stories, the future is happening in a fragmented, dynamic, and gradual way. It dissolves the western narration of future China such as Sinofuturism, which is a kind of inverse orientalism, trapping China in a future temporality just as orientalism's trapping of China in a past temporality eventually denies China's coevalness (de Seta). *Sinopedia*, through its marginality, connectivity, and transgressivity, puts China's present into the future and joins the complex, compossible, and coeval CoFutures.

Although female sf and Chinese sf both face the previously discussed dilemma, they are in the gaze of both domestic and international audiences, and they still have the potential to break out of the status quo via their marginal positionalities. Through the practices of writing,

translating, publishing, and discussion, they promise to make connections and build dialogues, transcend the dominant narratives that have locked them in certain boxes, and establish a new order of things that is ever-changing, non-static, non-independent, and non-hierarchical. Like Xia Jia's works, they can be read as just sf, or just literature, not female sf or Chinese sf.

Notes

1. This result is part of a project that has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant agreement No. 852190).

2. Take reader reviews under the Chinese version of *The Way Spring Arrives and Other Stories* on *Douban.com*, a Chinese book review website similar to *Goodread*, for example: a significant number of reviews include contents like "this is marketed as an all-women anthology and that's why I read it, but I cannot see a focus on feminist theme or gender discussion in these stories, thus I am disappointed and wouldn't recommend it."

3. All quotes from Chinese-language references and personal interviews are my translation from Chinese to English.

4. See Bai, Huiyuan. "The Chinese-Ness of 'Porridge sf' – Reading Impression on Xia Jia" ("*Xifan kehuan' de zhongguoxing – Xiajia yuedu yinxiang*") and Wang, Wenlin. "'Porridge sf' That Has No Difference with First Love – On Xia Jia's sf World" ("Yu chulian wuyi de 'xifan kehuan' – lun Xiajia de kehuan wenxue shijie").

5. See Donawerth, Jane. *Frankenstein's Daughters: Women Writing Science Fiction* and Yaszek, Lisa. *Galactic Suburbia: Recovering Women's Science Fiction*.

Works Cited

Alaimo, Stacy. "Trans-Corporeal Feminisms and The Ethical Space of Nature." *Material*

Feminisms, edited by Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman, Indiana University Press, 2008, pp.

237–64. *JSTOR*, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt16gzgqh.12.

Alder, Emily. *Weird Fiction and Science at the Fin de Siècle*. Springer International Publishing,

2020.

Bai, Huiyuan. "The Chinese-Ness of 'Porridge sf' – Reading Impression on Xia Jia" ("*Xifan*

kehuan' de zhongguoxing – Xiajia yuedu yinxiang"). *Wenyi Daily*, 21 Aug. 2017,

http://www.chinawriter.com.cn/n1/2017/0821/c405173-29482077.html.

Barr, Marleen S. "Feminist Fabulation." *A Companion to Science Fiction*, Blackwell Publishing,

2005, pp. 142–55.

Chattopadhyay, Bodhisattva. "Manifestos of Futurisms." *Foundation: The International Review*

of Science Fiction, vol. 50, no. 2, 2021, pp. 8–23.

Chen, Qiufan. "Feminist Writing in SF" (Kehuan zhong de nüxing zhuyi shuxie)". *Guangming*

Daily, 26 Sept. 2018, https://share.gmw.cn/news/2018-09/26/content_31367152.htm.

Clute, John, and David Langford. "Feminism." *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, 3 Oct.

2022, https://sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/feminism.

Dai, Jinhua, *Gendering China (Xingbie Zhongguo)*. Maitian, 2006.

de Seta, Gabriele. "Sinofuturism as Inverse Orientalism: China's Future and the Denial of

Coevalness." *SFRA Review*, vol. 50, no. 2–3, Spring-Summer 2020, pp. 86–94.

Donawerth, Jane. *Frankenstein's Daughters: Women Writing Science Fiction*. Syracuse

University Press, 1997.

Fan, Jialai. "Feminist in SF: The Domestic SF Literature Is in Lack of Self-Examination from Women" ("Kehuan zhong de nüxing zhuyi: guonei kehuan xiaoshuo queshao nüxing de ziwo shenshi"). *The Paper*, 3 July 2019, https://m.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_3820201.

Felski, Rita. "Context Stinks!" *New Literary History*, vol. 42, no. 4, Autumn 2011, pp. 573–91.

Fisher, Mark. *The Weird and the Eerie*. Repeater Books, 2017.

Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. W. W. Norton, 1963.

Guo, Bingru. "Today, How We Discuss Gender" ("Jintian, women ruhe taolun xingbie"). *Shanghai Literature*, vol. 2021, no. 7, pp. 125–35.

Haraway, Donna. "Emergent Naturecultures." *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*, Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003, pp. 1–65.

---. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3, Autumn 1988, pp. 575–99.

---. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press, 2016.

Harman, Nicky, and Natascha Bruce. "Sexism and Science Fiction: An Interview with Tang Fei." *Words Without Boarders*, 16 Oct. 2020, https://wordswithoutborders.org/read/article/2020-10/sexism-and-science-fiction-an-interview-with-tang-fei/.

Hollinger, Veronica. "Feminist Theory and Science Fiction." *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 125–36.

Jiang, Zhenyu. "The Stagnant Female Awareness – Comment on The Gender Issue in SF Literature" (Tingzhi de nüxing yishi – ping kehuan wenxue zhong de xingbie wenti"). *Literature Paper*, 14 July 2016, p. 19.

Jin, Emily Xueni. "The Questionable 'Chinese-Ness' of Chinese Sci-Fi." *Sixth Tone*, 24 July

2022, https://www.sixthtone.com/news/1010832/the-questionable-chinese-ness-of-chinese-sci-

fi?

Jones, Gwyneth. "Feminist SF." *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by Mark

Bould et al., Routledge, 2009.

Le Guin, Ursula K. "American SF and the Other." *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1975,

pp. 208–10.

---. "The Carrier-Bag Theory of Fiction." *Women of Vision: Essays by Women Writing Science

Fiction*, edited by Denise DuPont, St. Martin's Press, 1988, pp. 1–12.

Lefanu, Sarah. *In the Chinks of the World Machine: Feminism and Science Fiction*. The

Women's Press, 1988.

Ling, Chen. "More Than Just Embellishments - A Brief Discussion of Female SF and China's

Women SF Writers" (Bujinjinshi dianzhui – luetan nüxing kehuan yu zhongguo de kehuan

nüzuozhemen"). *Science Popularization*, vol. 6 no. 5 (34), 2011, pp.75-7.

Liu, Jian and Hua Li. "On Chinese Science Fiction: Selected Essays and Critical Pieces in

English, 2015-2020." *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 48 no. 3, 2021, pp. 537-55.

Liu, Ken. "Exploring The Frontier: A Conversation with Xia Jia." *Clarkesworld Magazine*, no.

100, Jan. 2015, https://clarkesworldmagazine.com/xia_interview/.

Luckhurst, Roger. "The Weird: A Dis/Orientation." *Textual Practice*, vol. 31, no. 6, Sept. 2017,

pp. 1041–61.

Ma, Mia Chen, et al. "Roundtable: Can Chinese Science Fiction Transcend Binary Thinking?"

SFRA Review, vol. 51, no. 4, 2021, pp. 217–31.

Miéville, China. "On Monsters: Or, Nine or More (Monstrous) Not Cannies." *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, vol. 23, no. 3 (86), 2012, pp. 377–92.

Noys, Benjamin, and Timothy S. Murphy. "Introduction: Old and New Weird." *Genre*, vol. 49, no. 2, July 2016, pp. 117–34.

Rieder, John. *Science Fiction and the Mass Cultural Genre System*. Wesleyan University Press, 2017.

Russ, Joanna. "The Image of Women in Science Fiction." *Science Fiction Criticism: An Anthology of Essential Writings*, edited by Rob Latham, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017, pp. 200–10.

Song, Mingwei. "The Gender Question of Science Fiction - A Poetic Imagination Beyond Binomiality" ("Kehuan de xingbie wenti – chaoyue erxiangxing de shixue xiangxiangli"). *Shanghai Literature*, no. 5, 2022, pp. 126–36.

Thomas, G. W. "Ray Bradbury in Weird Tales." *Dark Worlds Quarterly*, 22 Sept. 2020, https://darkworldsquarterly.gwthomas.org/ray-bradbury-in-weird-tales/.

Tsu, Jing. "The Futures of Genders in Chinese Science Fiction." *The Way Spring Arrives and Other Stories*, edited by Chen Yu and Regina Kanyu Wang, Tordotcom, 2022, pp. 89–98.

Wang, Jinkang. "Wang Jinkang: On Core SF" ("Wangjinkang: mantan hexin kehuan"). *42 History*, 5 Mar. 2021, https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/wB7OKSJaIwaJ3HuOOE8voQ.

Wang, Regina Kanyu. "The Evolution of Nüwa: A Brief 'Herstory' of Chinese SF." *Vector*, vol. 293, no. Spring, 2021, pp. 7–11.

"'Porridge sf' That Has No Difference with First Love – On Xia Jia's sf World" ("Yu chulian wuyi de 'xifan kehuan' – lun Xiajia de kehuan wenxue shijie"). *Journal of Lanzhou Institute of Education*, vol. 35, no. 1, Jan. 2019, pp. 10–12.

Xia, Jia. "Eternal Summer Dream." Translated by Yan, Carmen Yiling. *A Summer Beyond Your Reach*. Wrym Publishing, 2020, pp. 169-195.

---. "N-TALK ｜ Xia Jia: Better or Worse Future." ("N-TALK ｜ Xiajia: genghao huo genghuai de weilai".) *Southern Weekly*, 24 Dec. 2021, https://www.infzm.com/contents/220392.

---. "Iron Moon" ("Tie yueliang"). *Science Fiction World*, Wechat Read ed, no. 11, 2016.

---. "Xia Jia." *Her: A Collection of the Classic Works of Chinese Female Science Fiction Writers (Ta – Zhongguo nüxing kehuan wenxue jingdian zuopinji)*, edited by Cheng Jingbo, China Radio Film & TV Press, 2021. Volume 1, p. 299.

Yang, Qingxiang. "Start from 'The Last People' – Discussion on SF Literature (Part I)" ("Cong 'zuihou de ren' kaishi – guanyu kehuan wenxue de taolun (Shang)". *Xihu*, no. 2, 2018, pp. 96–104.

Yao, Haijun, et al. "Three-Person Conversation on China's Female SF Literature" ("Zhongguo nüxing kehuan wenxue sanrentan"). *Her: A Collection of the Classic Works of Chinese Female Science Fiction Writers (Ta – Zhongguo nüxing kehuan wenxue jingdian zuopinji)*, edited by Jingbo Cheng, China Radio Film & TV Press, 2021.

Yaszek, Lisa. *Galactic Suburbia: Recovering Women's Science Fiction*. The Ohio State University Press, 2008.

Yaszek, Lisa. "Feminism." *The Oxford Handbook of Science Fiction*, edited by Rob Latham, Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 537–48. *Silverchair*, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199838844.013.0042.

Zhang, Yihong, and Weiying Wang. "'Porridge SF': Intertextual Writing and Its Characteristics ("'Xifan kehuan': huwenxing xiezuo jiqi tezhi"). *Research on Popular Science*, vol. 10, no. 05, 2015, pp. 73–76. *CNKI*, https://doi.org/10.19293/j.cnki.1673-8357.2015.05.012.

Zhao, Haihong, et al. "Female Writing in China and America SF" ("Zhongmei kehuan xiaoshuo zhong de nüxing xiezuo"). *2019 The 5th China (Chengdu) International SF Conference Essays*, Internal Publication, 2019, pp. 328-37.

Abstract

This paper looks at the phenomenon of increasing attention towards *female sf* (*nüxing kehuan*) in the Chinese sf genre and uses Xia Jia's practice and works to seek an approach to studying female sf in China without essentializing it. I first map out the female sf scene in the Chinese context, the dilemma it faces, and the similarity with the double-edged sword of Chinese sf. Then I examine how Xia Jia takes the marginality of *porridge sf* to break away from the dilemma and transcend the genre/gender/cultural hierarchy. Finally, I focus on Xia Jia's *Sinopedia* series and analyze how it uses intertextuality, narrative experiment, and technology imagination to build three layers of nets that connect all things, transgressing dominant knowledge and establishing a new order of things. I also argue that *Sinopedia* enriches the grand narratives about China and works better than Sinofuturism to join the construction of CoFutures.