

Abstract of PhD project

A Torn Generation's Future Visions: Critical Engagement with Socio-Political Discourses in Chinese Post-80s Science Fiction Literature

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For more than 100 years, Chinese science fiction literature has been an expression of intellectuals' expectations, dreams and fears. With the transformational processes resulting from the “reform and opening-up” (*gaige kaifang* 改革开放), heterotopian narratives dominate the SF landscape since the 1990s. As a consequence of a recent explosion in domestic and international readership, as well as large-scale media attention, Chinese SF circulates vastly challenging images that are differing from the official future vision, which is shaped by political guidelines such as the “Harmonious Society” (*hexie shehui* 和谐社会) and the “China Dream” (*Zhongguo meng* 中国梦).

By analyzing short stories and novellas written by the post-80s generation (*balinghou* 八零后) of Chinese science fiction authors in the PRC, this project examines their critical engagement with socio-political discourses. Informed by economic and cultural liberalization, commercialization, urbanization, and globalization, I argue that these stories not only depict China in an era of far-reaching economic and social change, but also illuminate various controversies that are inherent to the state's ideas for the future. In other words, post-80s science fiction offers thought-provoking and challenging views into the complex reality of Chinese urbanites that are demystifying the state's grand narrative of a flourishing China. In order to access the epistemological levels of the stories, I integrate narrative theory with genre-specific, feminist, gender-oriented, and cultural studies approaches in a combination of narratological analysis (close reading) and analysis of non-literary interdiscourses (wide reading). My aim is to make the complex cultural, social, historical, and political realities that influence the lives and writing of young authors tangible, as well as to provide a deeper understanding of how Chinese intellectuals of the post-80s generation deal with their own past, present, and future.