

2023 Hugo Awards

Best Fan Writer Finalist

Voter Packet

天爵
Arthur Liu





Bio

Arthur Liu is a Chinese SFF fan writer and author. As a software engineer living in Beijing, he co-founded the Chinese Science Fiction Database (CSFDB) with Sanfeng Zhang in 2020. He publishes fiction as Yang Feng (杨枫, a name taken from a self-reflective character from his own stories, and not to be confused with the other nominee of that name in the Best Editor[Short Form] category) and fan writings as HeavenDuke(天爵). He was the editor of the clubzine of the Tsinghua University Science Fiction Association of Students, with two special issues *Kingdom Anonymous* and *E=mc³: Side-Wonders of Science Studies* professionally published. Translation of his stories have appeared in *Clarkesworld* and *Future Science Fiction Digest*, with a reprint of "The Life Cycle of a Cyber-Bar" to appear in The Big Book of Cyberpunk, due from Vintage/Penguin Random House in September 2023. He dreams of becoming a web crawler.

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Portrait Artist: Lao Zao (醪糟)

Sorry folks, but
Twitter was out of
the letter K.

Unless otherwise stated, all articles in this pack are translated by DeepL/ChatGPT, subsequently edited ErsatzCulture and myself.

Sadly, some articles in the Chinese pack are very long, making it impossible to provide translations within the given limited time. Anyway, I've managed to get some similar substitution.

"Personal SFF Recommendation for the Year 2021"(2021 年 个人 SFF 阅读推荐) is replaced by "Twelve Space-Themed Chinese SF Novels in the 2020s". Both articles can be categorized as reading lists.

"A Virtual Guide to Chicon 8 for Chinese Fans"(2022 年世界科幻大会虚拟参会导览) is the guide I wrote for Chinese fans to learn about the Worldcon held last year.

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一场甜蜜的骗局——评菲利普·瑞弗“星际快车”三部曲

Such a Sweet Deception

A Review of the Railhead Trilogy by Philip Reeve

Originally published on Douban November 21st, 2022

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Illustration created from book covers

Original cover artists: Ian McQue (English edition) and YuSang (鱼桑; Chinese edition)

For a long time, despite the abundance of science fiction with interstellar themes, it can be said that the general public's conception of space has largely solidified. In the genre, sub-light-speed generation starships, superluminal spacecraft utilizing wormholes or jump technology, and an array of extraordinary planets hosting celestial sky-ferry systems, form the majority of means of transportation depicted. The longstanding "nautical" metaphor has dominated the field.

By contrast, Philip Reeve's **Railhead trilogy** belongs to a slightly niche spectrum. Unlike conventional space novels, this series cleverly combines stargates with terrestrial transportation. Specifically, it integrates the stargates with the nostalgic surface vehicles known as trains, with train stations rather than airports becoming interstellar travel hubs. This constitutes the cornerstone of the series' world-building, as the author establishes a distinctive mix-and-match aesthetic system. The series' world still adheres to the basic laws of space technology, introducing advanced computational techniques to support the operation of the interstellar transportation network, making the trains no longer cold, automatic machines, but rather artificial intelligences with self-awareness. Thus, the worlds of steampunk (trains), cyberpunk (artificial intelligence), and space opera (interstellar empires), which may seem unrelated, naturally blend together. The colorful virtual reality worlds are beautifully embedded in towns with strong classical British qualities, and the railway network connects multiple exotic worlds to each other.

The story of the series begins with a somewhat traditional premise: whilst engaged in theft, a pickpocket named Zen Starling accidentally befriends a "Motorik" (a biologically engineered human) named Nova and gets embroiled in the struggle between the god-like artificial intelligence Raven and other gods, known as the "Guardians". Offered a reward, Zen takes the risk of impersonating a royal descendant and sets out to steal a crucial item, in the process uncovering the hidden secrets of the empire. Throughout this process, the novel presents readers with two sets of class systems. The first of these is the hierarchy of royalty > capital > citizens (humans) > hive monks under the human monarchical system. The second is the hierarchy of Guardians > AI trains > Motoriks under the world of artificial intelligence. The true rulers are clusters formed by super AIs, delicately manipulating the flow of power to fulfill their mission of "protecting all of humanity", which is ingrained in their programming. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the hive monks, a collective intelligence formed by insects, represent the lowest form of life and face severe discrimination throughout the entire empire.

Galatava is the name of the galactic empire in the series, and it is a closed space. This enclosed nature gives rise to the core conflict of the series. Unlike traditional space novels, where planets are connected by freely roaming spacecraft, in this setting, they are linked only by trains on fixed tracks. This

eliminates the vast expanse of void and open sea of possibilities in the nautical style, instead becoming a metaphorical city in a municipal setting. The Guardians, the god-like artificial intelligences, control all information and power, are omnipresent within their territories due to data backups, and almost immortal. However, they seal off the "K-gates" (stargates in the novel) used for interstellar exploration into a closed loop, hiding advanced technology from the public, and leaving the outside world unknown to most. On the other hand, the hive monks, an alien species, lead humble lives while cherishing and reminiscing about the Station Angels who wander near the K-gates. Despite that, they possess knowledge of ancient routes and hidden histories unknown to humans. This creates not only disputes between ruling classes and immigrants, but also a deeper conflict between order and freedom. The Guardians fear the hidden risks of the unknown and worry that it might jeopardize their mission, but the lower-class people crave freedom and the exploration of the unknown, because the existing order can no longer protect their rights.

As early as the first book *Railhead*, this conflict has already risen to an internal struggle within the Guardians themselves. Zen Starling, who aligns with the opposition within the Guardians, starts working on creating a K-gate that leads beyond the Galatava. This matches up perfectly with his aspiration as a low-class individual, as he seeks wealth to improve the lives of his mother and sister. Thus, the adventure begins and progresses in stages, as is common in YA novels. (The series has earned nominations for awards such as the Andre Norton and the Locus Best Young Adult Book.) The series embarks on a spirited and romantic railway journey in the second volume. However, with the opening of a new K-gate, the serious proposition promised at the end of the first book emerges: a new world is coming; what will happen next? How will it change the existing order?

Regrettably, in regard to this question, the latter two books in the trilogy seem to falter. In the second book *Black Light Express*, the external world that the protagonist faces is not an eagerly awaited void to be explored, but rather a divine creation: an ancient intelligence called the "Railmaker" has already laid out all the territories, connecting world after world. In other words, the promised new world from the first book may not even exist; humans have merely awakened from a brief daydream and discovered their original position. Faced with this situation, Zen is filled with dread, worrying that freedom and exploration might just be illusions. It not only fails to satisfy his initial goals but also exacerbates his sense of being displaced from his home. The internal and external challenges in this book - whether the internal struggle for the throne or the external dominance of the lizard-like beings - further blur the focus of the entire novel. Ultimately, it ends with a banal reconciliation: Zen, together with the empire's Queen, returns to the empire, submits to the old order, and commences trading with the outside world

through newly built K-gates to compete with the upper-class families using wealth. Whatever societal questions the first book posed for exploration, the potential for such exploration is almost completely overlooked in the second book. After all, the revolutionary act of the merchant families overthrowing the feudal lords, as depicted in the novel, may be seen as history rather than the future for us in the 21st century.

It can be said that the human story is largely concluded in the second book. Notably, the author seems to have a habit of sacrificing secondary characters, leaving many of them dead with a sense of abruptness and an unresolved feeling. However, these minor characters from the lower class are key to addressing the questions raised earlier, as demonstrated in the Netflix animation *Arcane: League of Legends*. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the effort made by the work in exploring its worldview. All three books tantalize readers with their exploration potential, whether the first book's underground "Dog Star Line" crossing Galatava or the hive monks' mysterious beliefs in the Station Angels or the second book's speculations about the Black Light Zone and the Railmakers. These elements keep readers engaged and eager to read on. So, it is worth pondering another question: If this in-depth process does not point to a solution for old order, then what does it point to?

As mentioned earlier, In this world, there exist various forms of artificial intelligence alongside humans. Under the existing class order, the majority of mechanical beings are relegated to a marginalized state, yet often, they appear even more vivid than human characters. Street artist Flex changes their gender according to their mood. Motorik Nova fuses with the remnants of a Railmaker, enhancing herself radically - much like Alita, the heroine of *Battle Angel Alita* - to the point of challenging the Guardians. Not to mention the singing locomotives; these massive beings, old and experienced, passionately adorn themselves with graffiti that matches their personalities. They are loyal to their beloved passengers, and while racing along the railways, they may even engage in private expressions of love. They can undoubtedly be considered the most enchanting and unique species in the entire series. Comparing these AI characters with humans, who are obsessed with the pursuit of power and wealth, trapped in a repetitive cycle within the same closed loop, it becomes evident that the predicament of the latter precisely mirrors the common challenges faced by humanity today. This predicament brings significant psychological pressure, a profound crisis of self-existence, to individuals, which is also the issue that the non-human figures at the bottom end of the social hierarchies attempt to address. By endowing marginalized characters with idealized forms, the author is, in fact, presenting another possibility of human existence. In this context, not only is the existence of the "others" affirmed, but also the desire for change can be explained through the almost magical science fiction writing, thereby proposing a

tempting, but possibly too-good-to-be-true, offer: that through technology, individuals can at least attain the state described in the story. For instance, in the final chapter of the series, Nova, having integrated with the Railmaker, can even create a small world that meets her expectations by using memories and experiences, much like the Guardians. Such concepts can hold some instructive meaning for those of us living in China's "Metaverse" era^[1] - but such parallels may be a sweet deception, since the uniqueness possessed by the protagonist of a work of adventure fiction is beyond the reach of ordinary individuals. Nevertheless, the technological logic underlying the story retains plausibility, implying that even without a deep-dive character analysis, we can still derive empathy from the exploration of their emotional journeys, which are essentially a process of self-reflection.

From this perspective, the **Railhead trilogy** can be seen as a microcosm of popular science fiction in recent years. Although it may not delve deeply into profound propositions, these works, to varying degrees, are still able to awaken expectations for revolution through the aforementioned logic and aesthetic innovation. However, a dilemma lies in the fact that, in most cases, readers' expectations will ultimately be unfulfilled. It is worth noting that the novels' portrayal of the core imagery of "railways" and "locomotives" precisely conveys this situation: throughout the history of transportation, railways and locomotives have played the role of reliable pioneers as frontiers are extended. Unlike cowboys or spaceships, their significance lies in opening up a stable and dependable path for future generations to travel upon. This means that once established, the revolutionary significance of railways completely disappears, leaving only the division of space planned by the builders, and subsequent new railways merely serve to strengthen connections, expressing spatial-level order alongside the stations. Many subsequent authors have incorporated this contradiction into literary works, such as Han Song's *Subway* (地 铁) or Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad*. In particular, China Miéville's *Iron Council* and *Perdido Street Station*, where the titular station becomes a symbol of the New Crobuzon regime. The "Iron Council" is used as a powerful metaphor for proletarian revolution, with the act of tearing up the rear tracks to race across the wasteland in the forward direction - the scene in which it finally charges forever towards the station is stunning. By comparison, Reeve's series attempts to revive the spirit of when the first railways were laid. Fortunately, although the story itself may be far from sufficient to support this expectation, the depiction of the personable locomotives achieves at least one purpose: compared to the omnipresent Guardians projecting their will on to every corner of the railways, the secretive network formed by the running trains reveals another force that shapes the world's operation - a power inherent and unique to the lower class. This power is not awakened by any movement or slogan, but deeply rooted in the lives and existence of the common people. The

constant construction of new K-gates and the laying of tracks therein create more opportunities for interconnection, convergence, and penetration. Perhaps it is due to this aspect of the narrative that this sweet deception spanning three books can still leave a romantic impression on readers, much like the ending of the final book in the trilogy, *Station Zero*:

She had made the gates because it was good to look up at the great cold glitter of the night and know that out there, around those other stars, there were a million worlds where people were laughing and loving and living and dying, making things and thinking things and feeling things and stealing things. She had made the gates because it was good for people of all sorts to meet and trade and learn and change. She had made the gates because it was good to know that somewhere, always, there was a line of bright windows snaking through a midnight city or spilling their quick light down from tall viaducts, and somewhere a slow-worm shimmer of sunlight on shiny carriages hurrying from station to station and, listen, there on the wind, there on the radio waves, faint and wild and far away and forever singing, the trains, the trains, the trains.

The following footnote was not part of the original Chinese language publication, and has been created for the Hugo Voter Packet, to explain cultural references.

Footenote [1]: How people outside China and Chinese people interpret the word "Metaverse" is very different. For Westerners, the likely impression is of a Facebook/Meta project that has cost billions of dollars, for what seems like a reimplementation of Second Life ([October 2022 Business Insider article](#)). The Chinese meaning is associated with concepts such as [Digital Twin](#), and it appears it may be part of the programming at the [Chengdu Worldcon](#). Other references: [China Daily](#), [Wired](#), [DisruptionBanking.com](#).



后记：我们为何追求科学

Afterword: Our Faith in Science

Originally published in *E=mc³: Side-Wonders of Science Studies* (Central Compilation & Translation Press, July 2022), the club zine of Tsinghua University Science Fiction Association of Students (Vol. 2).

Republished in *42 History* October 11th, 2022

Link: <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/zC5lzUChFgcK1MbLESGHpQ>

Illustration artist: Ziqi Yan (七七)

Throughout the history of the field of science fiction, the relationship between the genre and science has been an important topic. Even if we limit our attention to mainland China, we can clearly see at least three appearances of this topic along history: the first science fiction boom after the founding of People's Republic of China, which lasted from the 1950s to the mid-1960s; the science-literature debates heated in the 1980s, especially the 1983 campaign against "spiritual pollution"^[1]; and then, after Cixin Liu won the Hugo Award in 2015, the re-popularization of science fiction works whose main goal is to promote scientific knowledge.

Examining the social environment at those periods, it is not difficult to see that the aforementioned three rises and falls are rather closely related to China's policies related to science and education, and amidst all those debates and controversies, there exists a crucial but often overlooked question: **WHAT IS SCIENCE?** When we investigate whether SF belongs to "science" or not, we often presuppose an answer to the question: that the so-called "science" is the science and technology that exists in reality. However, this statement itself has a huge logical flaw - just like the constant equation "1=1", it is just a self-referential tautology, and does not answer the question in the context of the history of science. Indeed, the question is a difficult one: it is about the way in which human beings understand the world, and once we get there, it is easy to see that science, philosophy, art, and even religion all seem to share certain qualities. And this question can be further investigated; such as examining the relationship between natural and social sciences; the similarities and differences between science and technology, and so on.

A slim anthology of science fiction like this issue of a club zine surely cannot cover all of these topics in a comprehensive manner, and nor can science fiction be expected to do so. However, considering that the authors who have contributed to this book all have scientific backgrounds, we can at least see through their writing how the science fiction of researchers interacts with their real-life explorations.

It was with this aim in mind that at the China Science Fiction Convention in November 2019, the Tsinghua University Science Fiction Association of Students started a workshop titled "Weird Stuff from the Lab", and one of the final fruits was the novelette "The Ocean of Truth" (真理的海洋) by Xiang Yang. That tale forms the cornerstone of this book - it is based on the author's real-life experiences in graduate school, and focuses on two things: first, the process of scientific research; and second, the life and journey of a scientist.

Most of the original fiction in the book responds to these two issues, and the state of mind of its

protagonists shows a striking consistency: anxiety. This kind of anxiety is rooted in the Chinese utilitarian tradition of "applying what one has learned", and is centered on young scholars' confusion over the question of "What is the use of science?" However, this state of mind is different from the anxiety presented in previous science fiction works, such as "The Heartbroken One" (伤心者) by He Xi or "Warm Snow" (温雪) by Zhou Wen. Here, anxiety is not so much a subject of writing as it is a motivation for the characters to find answers. And their answers vary widely: in "The Ocean of Truth", a mathematician realizes that interpreting the truth is the same as discovering it; in this author's "The Struggle of a Two-Brain Man" (双脑筑城记), scientific research becomes a get-experience-point-and-level-up game, tradable in the eyes of a weirdo genius.

These answers respond in a variety of ways to stereotypes from a traditional perspective - impressions that are clearly demonstrated in the essays "Scientists in Science Fiction" (科幻作品中的科学家) and "A Biography of the Mad Scientists" (疯狂科学家列传) within this book. Superstitions about science, of scientists, and the other side of the coin that these superstitions and cults present - the instrumentalization of science and the scientist..... In recent years, these stereotypes have continued to persist in the science fiction we have been able to read on the Chinese market.

Back to the book. What's more, the stories included in this book also present the ways in which science interacts with reality: in "Dream Eclipse" (梦蚀 , multiple co-authors), a videogame company sponsors experiments in virtual reality and brain science, a very common model of industry-academia collaboration in the real world; Usagi-chan's^[2] "A Touch of Breath" (触摸呼吸) depicts real academic conferences, the process of teamwork research, and what the results of the research tell us about each other; and "The Struggle of a Two-Brain Man" presents the role theoretical science plays in the field of technology; and H.G. Wells' "The Moth" is a colorful portrayal of the suspicions, disputes, and rivalries that characterize the academic field. Here, like scientists, science is stripped of its façade and becomes a protagonist with flesh and blood.

But this is not enough, the answer to the question "what is science?" is still not clear enough and seems to be submerged in the lives of professionals. For this reason, we have gone the other way around and chosen "The Brick Moon" as the final story of this book. It is one of the most "unscientific" works of all time - but precisely because of this lack of real-world scientific accuracy, it helps us to understand the true meaning of science.

"The Brick Moon" is a novella written in 1869 by American author and educator Edward Everett Hale, in which a group of aspiring scientists launch an artificial navigation satellite - the first in the history of literature - with the aim of solving the problem of longitude measurement. To modern eyes, the satellite seems to be built in an absurd manner. It is constructed of bricks throughout and shot into space with two rapidly spinning flywheels - conceptually similar to an automatic rugby ball launcher^[3] - and powered by a waterfall, which operates as the equivalent of a perpetual-motion machine. After ascending into the sky with passengers, the seeds and livestock that the passengers have brought with them are subjected to evolutionary theory. Evolution begins to occur from generation to generation, with crops evolving into trees in just one year:

Write to Darwin that he is all right. We began with lichens and have come as far as palms and hemlocks.

But the novel also meticulously presents the manner in which such an arduous project is carried out, and even incorporates the forces of capital and politics to fully illustrate the various minutiae that have to be executed to accomplish such an unprecedentedly great project. It also provides a great deal of plausible detail, such as the purpose of the Brick Moon, the means of Earth-Moon communication, and the measurement and tracking of satellite trajectories. The meticulous writing is reminiscent of the moon landings enthusiastically planned 90 years later by young science fiction enthusiasts in the British Science Fiction Society on the other side of the Atlantic, the core of which included Arthur C. Clarke, a leading figure of the Golden Age. Here we can say that the story's outcome was unscientific, but the method depicted was scientific and followed scientific logic. The "scientificity" of the process is, in my opinion, the more important facet of science than the scientificity of the result. In a sense, science fiction novels are fascinating because they can lead readers to appreciate this process, so that readers can briefly participate in scientific research activities in the process of reading, to reap the joy of "dispelling the clouds to see the sky"^[4], even if the new discoveries here are fictional.

Take Ted Chiang's famous novelette "Omphalos" as an example: the variety of fictional "primordial creatures" (an archaeological discovery, such as mummies without navels, etc.) in the story has become solid evidence for creationism, but the theory of evolution has not died out because of this; instead, it

has merged with creationism and given birth to new theories about the origins of human beings and even the evolution of the universe. The scientists in the tale feel heartfelt ecstasy when they discover this new theory, because it reveals the deeper secrets of the universe, and takes them a small step forward in understanding the world.

To go back to the title of this article: why do we have faith in science? From the standpoint of scientists, this process and the joy in the process mentioned above can be regarded as a kind of spiritual nirvana - being born as a human being, one is bound to have all kinds of entanglements with the world, but no matter what happens, scientific research, which is a childlike and purely intellectual activity, can always be a spiritual harbor.

This is also the reason why most of the researchers in this book keep the paradoxical mindset of "pain and pleasure", and continue to fight on.

Of course, this book is not just a narcissistic attempt to please the scientific community. The question "Why do we have faith in science?" is a question that ultimately comes down to the general public. Here I would like to cite David Julius, one of the winners of the 2021 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, who studied the relationship between capsaicin and the burning sensation of the skin, but that study ultimately pointed to the "discovery of temperature and tactile receptors". While the findings of that study are significant from the point of view of their practical value in the medical and biomimetic fields - for example, there is a high probability that future virtual reality simulations involving the sense of touch may utilize the results - the intended purpose of the study sounds less "useful". Whilst it may seem that the purpose and the results of that study seem to diverge, this is not the case; as mentioned earlier, the purpose of scientific research itself is to gain insights into patterns. Taking this as a premise, it is easy to see the internal logic of Julius's research itself, from "seeking to know" to a state of "knowing". Moreover, we can also see the immense influence of a natural law on reality. As Liu Cixin says in the Three Body Problem trilogy, the laws of the universe are the supreme weapon. As human beings, every time our understanding of the world grows a little, our ability to cope with the environment around us is further advanced, and we move one step closer to becoming the "gods".

The following footnotes were not part of the original Chinese language publication, and have been created for the Hugo Voter Packet, to explain cultural and historical references.

Footnote [1]: In the early 1980s, Chinese science fiction was experiencing its second period of prosperity. During this time, science fiction not only thrived among the country, but also began to engage with the international community. Local science fiction authors were exposed to Western science fiction concepts, leading them to attempt to break free from traditional local writing frameworks, and to explore new ways of writing Chinese science fiction. Amidst this collision of Chinese and Western cultures, there arose a fierce debate surrounding the definition of science fiction itself, with one of the core questions being whether science fiction should belong to science or literature.

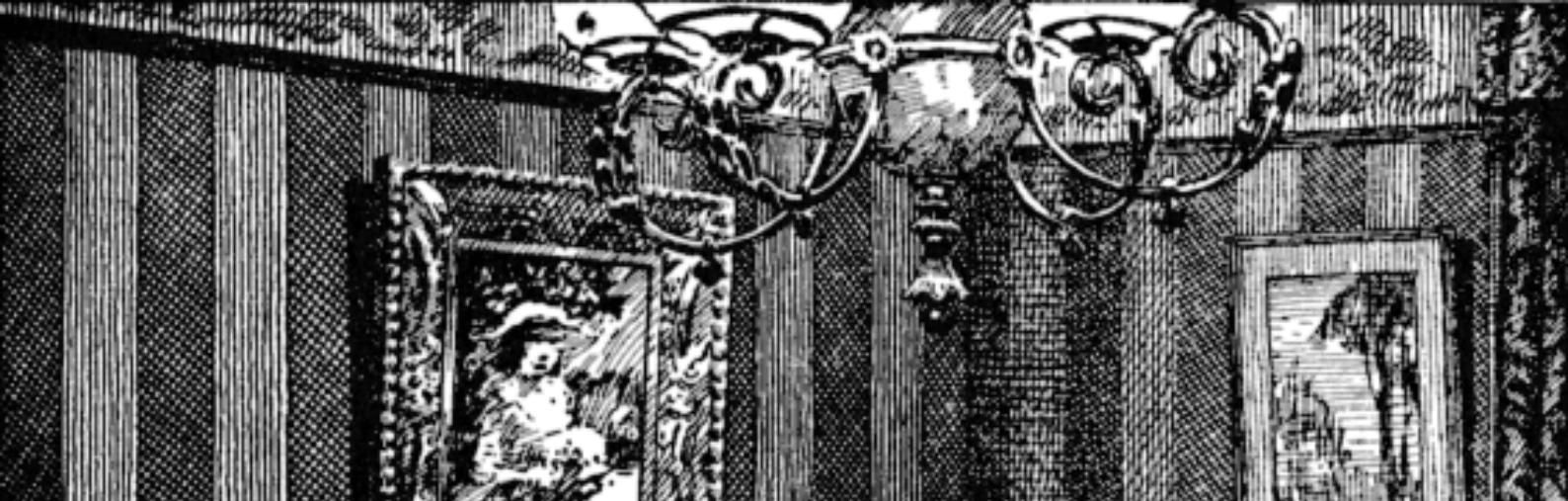
Prior to this period, science fiction in China was generally seen as a tool for science education and popularization, carrying a significant social responsibility. Therefore, when science fiction writers attempted to break free from these constraints and started engaging in popular fiction writing, it inevitably sparked disapproval from some critics. Simultaneously, in the literary world, the rise of popular fiction during the same period attracted a large readership, but it also led to an influx of poorly crafted and vulgar works onto the market. This, in turn, triggered a similar debate within that field, which traditionally valued the principle of "literature conveying virtue" (文以载道) .

In this dual historical context, by 1983, the debate surrounding science fiction gradually became more extreme, shifting from a discourse to a one-sided critique. It eventually escalated to the political level during the "Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign", leading to another downturn for Chinese science fiction, which persisted until the latter half of the 1980s.

Footnote [2]: Also known as a "rugby cannon", a device which might be found on a sports training pitch. An example can be seen [here](#).

Footnote [3]: Many members of Tsinghua University Science Fiction Association of Students (which is actually a student club) prefer to not have a public profile under their real names, so they call each other using code names, like "Usagi-chan".

Footnote [4]: "Dispel(ling) the clouds to see the sky"(拨开云雾见青天) is a Chinese idiom (成语), meaning you put lots of effort to decipher a hidden truth, and finally get through to see how brilliant it is.



Chinese Science Fiction Archaeology Notes

Co-written with Sanfeng Zhang

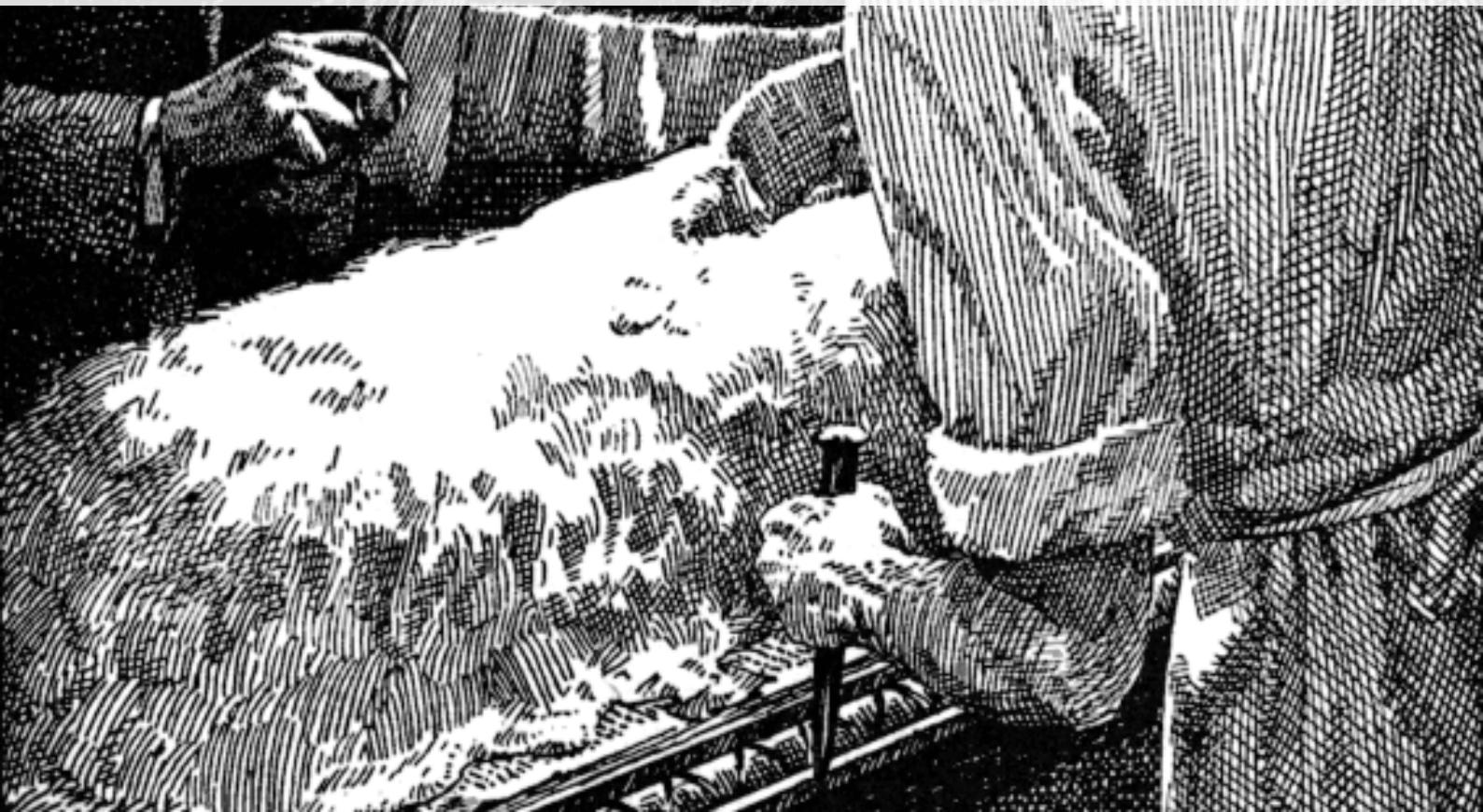
This packet only contains the portion written by Arthur Liu (originally published on Weibo - June 16th, 2022)

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Link: https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/1eoDruFbCm_ULjshvBsGgA

Illustration from *Famous Fantastic Mysteries*, artist unknown.



It has been verified that the original text of "The Invisible Creature" ("无形之生物", published under the pseudonym "奥白莲", translated by "旋华", with label "说丛"), published in the Republic of China era magazine "Novel Monthly", Vol. 9, No. 3 (March 25, 1918), is "What Was It? A Mystery" (March 1859 Harper's), written by the famous Irish writer Fitz-James O'Brien. Previously, the only known work by this author to have received a Chinese translation was "The Diamond Lens" (January 1858 Atlantic Monthly), first translated in the anthology *The Curious Tales of the Louvre Museum* (Jiangsu Science and Technology Publishing House, 1982), and included in the first volume of James Gun's *The Road to Science Fiction* as a representative work of O'Brien.

I found this publication record by chance while browsing through Liu Yongwen's *Bibliography of Republican Novels: 1912-1920* (Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, 2011), and the original author's signature, "奥白莲" (ao-bai-lian) immediately reminded me of "O' Brien" and of the author listed in *The Road to Science Fiction*, so we compared its theme and text with ISFDB and Project Gutenberg (thanks to Mr. Sanfeng for providing the original Chinese text), and finally solved the mystery. This kind of backtracking through translations is a common technique, but of course, it may not always work, for example, "科学家庭" (a.k.a. "科学者之家庭"), which translates as "The Family of the Scientists"), whose original author is "文豪蒙台" (Literary Giant Meng-tai), could not be found in this way - the closest possible answer, Michel de Montaigne, does not appear to have written any novels.

Returning to the text, "The Invisible Creature" follows the classic ghost story framework of a haunted house, except that this time the visitors to the haunted house have a slightly atypical composition: a group of heroic and intrepid tenants, and a landlady, Mrs. Moffat, who is determined to dispel superstition. Eschewing horror movie tropes, they capture a "ghost" alive on the night it haunts the house, and discover that it is in fact a transparent humanoid creature.

Since the creature does not speak any human language, the group does not know how to deal with it. It soon weakens, and eventually dies. In *The Road to Science Fiction*, James Gunn identifies O'Brien's story as probably one of the earliest stories dealing with invisibility. It predates H.G. Wells' *The Invisible Man* by 38 years and, in contrast to the gothic horror traditions, spends a great deal of time emphasizing the tenants' fumbling with the form of the creature - such as casting it in plaster in order to recreate its appearance - which distinguishes it from other fantasy or horror stories that contain similar elements. Furthermore, the story strikes a balance between the optimistic stance of man's determination to conquer nature, versus the disorientating effects of horror and panic; the former is probably the reason it was translated into Chinese, while the latter is what makes speculative fiction always so appealing.

An Encounter with Mars at Lenghu

Journey Planet Issue 68 November 31st, 2022

Link: <http://journeyplanet.weebly.com/journey-planet---2021-hugo-nominee/issue-68-chinese-science-fiction>



An Encounter with Mars at Lenghu

在冷湖与火星相会

Author: Arthur Liu 作者：天爵

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导语

冷湖位于中国青海省柴达木盆地，地处大柴旦和茫崖行政区之间，在20世纪50年代，曾因石油资源的发现而兴旺一时。石油资源枯竭后，其经济支柱逐渐转向采盐业和旅游业。因当地环境荒凉清净，地貌酷似外星世界，近年，冷湖地区逐渐成为天文爱好者和研究者的聚集地：早年，有陨石猎人来此收集藏品；2017年，在俄博梁地区出现了火星科学实践基地兼主题旅馆“火星小镇”；次年，八光分文化公司设立了冷湖科幻文学奖，吸引科幻作家撰写具有当地地域特色的科幻作品；2021年12月，中科院国家天文台、青海省科技厅和青海省海西州人民政府决定将赛什腾山选作青海冷湖天文基地的台址……种种迹象都表明，此地正在变成人类观察外星世界的前哨站。本文是一篇科幻作家的冷湖游记，记述了作者于2021年10月在当地的见闻和感受。

Introduction

Located in the Qaidam Basin of Qinghai Province, China, Lenghu sits between Da Qaidam and Mangnai administrative regions. Thanks to the discovery of oil reserves in the area, it flourished in the 1950s, but when the oil fields dried up, its economy gradually shifted to salt mining and tourism. In recent years, Lenghu has become a gathering place for astronomy enthusiasts and researchers because of its barren, lifeless scenery that resembles alien landscapes. At first, there were meteorite hunters coming to search for new items for their collections. Then, in 2017, a Mars Science Base and a "Mars Town" themed hotel appeared in the Obo Liang area. In the following year, Eight Light Minutes Culture began to host the Lenghu Science Fiction Writing Contest, drawing attention from science fiction authors, encouraging them to write stories featuring local elements of the Lenghu area. In December 2021, Astronomical Observatory of Chinese Academy of Sciences, Department of Science and Technology of Qinghai Provincial and the Government of Haixi Prefecture decided to choose Mount Saishen as the site of the Lenghu Astronomical Base. All those signs suggest that this



基地

抵达火星小镇时，已是下午。下车时，司机说，一会要抓紧，不然追不上太阳。

司机姓杨，本地人，部队退役，比我小一岁，但看上去老练太多，甚至结了婚，一路上叫我哥，叫我的旅伴姐，令我们万分困扰。我们此行的目的地是与小镇遥相对望的俄博梁雅丹城，身份是游客兼科幻作者。向导去办进城手续，我们留在车上，纾解每小时70公里的戈壁急行军遗留的晕眩。

停车场旁边就是火星小镇的舱房阵列了。我们前些天已经来过这里——所谓的小镇，实际上是方圆百里内唯一的旅馆，前后大门距离营地均有近一小时的车程。舱房用集装箱改造成银白色的金属胶囊，一间一晚差不多要花费2000人民币，断绝了我一探其内部陈设的念想。

旅馆筹办于2017年，将火星的地貌同青海广袤的戈壁风光联系了起来。次年，负责人和成都八光分文化传播有限公司达成了长期合作。此后，每年

place has been turned into an outpost to study extraterrestrial worlds. This article is a science fiction writer's travelogue, which describes what the author saw and felt in the Lenghu area in October 2021.

The Base

It was late afternoon when we arrived at Mars Town. When I got out of the car, our driver said that we had to hurry up, or we won't be able to leave the desert before sunset.

The driver's family name was Yang. He was a local, retired from the army, and one year younger than me. But he looked way too seasoned, and even had been married. Along the way, he called me big brother and my travel companion big sister, which made us feel awkward. Our destination was the Yadan landform located not so far away from the Obo Liang town. For this trip, we were tourists and science fiction writers. When the guide went to handle the formalities to enter the Yadan area, we stayed in the car to ease the dizziness caused by travelling through Gobi at 70 kilometers per hour.

Next to the parking lot, there was an array of cabins that belonged to Mars Town. We had been here a few days ago—The Town was in fact the only hotel within a hundred kilometers and its front and back entrances were about one hour's drive from the main complex. The cabins were silvery metal capsules converted from cargo containers. The rental price was about 2000 Yuan per night, which put me off wanting to take a look at the interior furnishings.

The hotel was opened in 2017, advertising and operating around the idea that the vast Gobi Desert in Qinghai held some similarity with the landscapes of Mars. In the following year, the handler of the hotel reached an agreement of long-term cooperation with Chengdu Eight Light Minutes Cultural Communication Co. Ltd, which was known for publishing science fiction books. Since then, every year, the publishing house would invite sci-fi writers to come here for group study and inspiration. (Having missed the window period, I had to make the trip by myself.) The organizers would call for SF stories with specific themes, giving out prizes for distinguished works and publishing them in anthologies. So far, they have hosted the writing competitions for four years. In the hall for guests to take a short rest, there were some scripts on exhibition, which were stories created by well-known authors during their stay at Lenghu, and some of the most remark-

都会有科幻作家应这家著名科幻图书公司的邀请，成群结队来这里采风学习（我因未赶上窗口，只得自行前来）。同时，主办方创设了专题征文，发布赏金，悬赏优秀作品，结集出版。征文至今已成功举办四届，给过客歇脚的大厅里，如今仍然摆放着那些成名作家们为此地写下的篇章，精彩段落甚至被刻在了屋外的金属牌上，和勘探地震和测算天文的装置肩并肩放在一起。可是有闲情阅读它们的游客并不多，或许是因为此地的景色比科幻小说要更梦幻吧。那时，我摆弄着展柜上的天球仪，百无聊赖地翻阅着已然烂熟于心的《灵魂游舞者》^[1]，看着窗外空地上穿着宇航服拍照留念的人们，如此思忖。

向导很快就回来了——或许是因为星球上正在肆虐的瘟疫，此地的旅游业大幅缩水。人少，原本的定期科学培训也自然叫停了。

我们正要走，忽然一个人拦在了车前。他的神色有些不安。向导摇下车窗，那人说他的SUV不符合越野规格，不能进山，能不能载他一段，送他去跟大部队碰头。

他要去硫磺湖，一个在旅游网站上广为流传，但尚未被开发的野外景点。

“你们说的算，带不带他去？”向导回过头问我们。

我看看旅伴，她也看看我，一时不知该如何回答。或许是觉察到我们的不安，向导摇摇头，说硫磺湖我们不熟，单车进山，怕耽误时间，说完便升上了窗户。

我们这才松下一口气。

able passages had even been engraved on metal plates outside the house, sitting alongside the devices for detecting earthquakes and measuring astronomical bodies. But not many tourists bothered to read them, which most likely was because the scenery here was more akin to dreams than sci-fi stories. Out of boredom, I played with the celestial globe on the display counter, read the familiar text scripts of "Soul Dancer", a story written by Duan Ziqi that had won 2nd Award of the 1st Lenghu Award, and looked through the windows at people in spacesuits posing for photo shoots in the open space outside to commemorate their journey. A short while later, our guide came back.

The planet wide pandemic probably made the tourism in this area shrink significantly. The regular scientific training programs must have been suspended due to the decline in the number of participants.

While we were about to leave, a man suddenly came to the front of our car. He looked a little upset. When our guide rolled down the window, the man said that his SUV was not good enough for a trip across the wild mountains. He asked if we could give him a ride and send him to meet up with his group. He was heading to Lake Sulphur, a scenic site popular on travelog websites but not quite exploited.

"What do you say, should we take him or not?" our guide turned back to us and asked.

My travel companion and I looked at each other. For a moment, we did not know how to answer. The guide might have sensed our uneasiness. He shook his head and said that we were not familiar with Lake Sulphur, and that he worried about delays, especially since we were a single vehicle travelling alone in the mountains.

We were relieved.

To ensure a safe trip, we had signed up for a group tour in the first place. But due to various reasons, it ended up with three people in one car. In the wil-



此番出游，出于安全考虑，我们报了旅游团，但是出于种种原因，最终全团却只有三人一车。在网络信号都尚未全面覆盖的荒野里，节外生枝，引发事故，是我们最不想遭遇的事。

壮绝的风景和环生的险象。是为我对青海冷湖——这片号称火星镜像的土地的整体印象。

荒原孤岛



地桩沉降，前路大开，我们碾过入口处的钢板，发出巨大的声响。

“您已超过行星管理局设定的限速。”

过了一会儿，车载AI说话了。进入俄博梁城需要携带定位平板，用作导航和讲解，并根据预设的路线和速度来约束越野车的行进。平板内自带语音助手，发出的声音像是日本动画中的机器人，刻意在冷冰冰的话语中加入情感要素。它坚持不懈发出的警告成了全程中最大的笑话——如今已经入戏的我们已然置身于火星，为什么还要遵守形同地球交规一样的法则？周遭的荒原似乎已经回答了这个问题：因为此处的火星大陆已不是旧日的那颗荒芜的红色星球，四处可见人类文明的痕迹，尤其是工业系统的造物，而法则自然也随之而来，以保护访客的人身安全。

探险者则需要为自己的越界行为负责——没过

derness not fully covered by network signals, running into unexpected trouble was the last thing we wanted.

Stunning scenes and treacherous environments, those were my overall impressions of Lenghu—a land allegedly known as the mirror image of Mars.

An Island Surrounded by Wasteland

We ran over the steel plate at the entrance and it made a loud noise while settling into the earth. Then, the road widened.

"You have exceeded the speed limit set by the Planetary Administration Office." A short while later, the AI on-board began to speak. To enter the Demonic Town of Obo Liang, you must carry a GPS tablet for navigation and information. It would also guide the car according to the preset routes and speed limits. The tablet came with its own voice assistant that sounded like a robot from Japanese animations, fastidiously infused with emotions while remaining cold. Its persistent warnings became the most ridiculous thing of the whole journey—now that we were already on Mars, why should we follow the same traffic rules on Earth? Maybe the surrounding wasteland could answer the question: the Mars-like landscape here was not as desolated as the old Red Planet. You could see signs of human civilization everywhere, especially industrial artifacts. As it might be expected, the rules and regulations were introduced to ensure the safety of the visitors.

In the meantime, the tourists had to deal with the consequence of their own action of trespassing—it wasn't long before we came across such a group. The rain a few days ago had made the sloppy salt flats as soft as Napoleon cake. Their car had plunged headlong into its own ruts shortly after turning away from the main road.

The wilderness never seemed to be shy about showing its hostility. As far as the eye could see, there was a wordless tension pervading everything. A disorientation of time was rippling through the surrounding area: on the one hand, there were electricity towers, telecom base stations, electrical substations, highways, road lamps, gigantic windmills, and the solar power tower that might pass for God's miracle...human civilization was edging into everything unstoppably; on the other hand, this place was mostly untraversed, making the miracles look like ancient relics.

This seemed to speak something about the coloni-

多久，我们就遭遇了这样一群人。前几日刚下过雨，令稀松的盐碱地如拿破仑蛋糕般酥软。他们的车刚离开主路，便头一栽，陷进了自己的车辙里。

荒原似乎从不吝于表露自己的敌意。放眼望去，四处弥漫着一种无言的紧张。在周遭的大地上，一种奇妙的时间错乱现象正在持续上演：一方面，电塔、通讯基站、变电站、公路、路灯、巨型风车，乃至神迹般的光伏发电塔……人类文明正在势不可挡地四处急行军；可另一方面，此地却鲜少得见人烟，以至于神迹看上去就像遗迹般苍老。而这似乎也揭示出火星殖民的某些真相：在最开始，存活下来的只有冰冷的垦荒机器，在红色星球表面扎根、耕耘，与之融为一体。而人类则只是机器与荒芜的战争中微不足道的尘埃罢了，要想活下去，就必须舍弃天真，以抵御冷酷。

从这个意义上讲，指向火星之未来繁荣的风光也暗含末日的预兆。事实上，在冷湖镇东南方约20公里处，就存在着一处先民的遗址。20世纪下半叶，到此开采石油的工人们带来了自己的家属，将作业基地改造成两座完整的城镇，可后来却因为资源枯竭而不得不全员撤离。如今，从断壁残垣中仍然能够依稀分辨出昔日的生活气味——百货商场和



zation of Mars: in the beginning, only the grim terraforming machines could survive, taking root on the surface of the red planet, ploughing and sowing, until finally becoming part of the environment. Humans would be mere dust in this battle between the machines and the desolation. In order to survive, to withstand the cold reality, they must get tougher.

In this sense, the implications of a prosperous Mars in future might also suggest some potential doom. In fact, there was an old ruin lying about twenty kilometers southeast to the town of Lenghu. In the second half of the twentieth century, laborers who came here to extract crude oil brought their families and turned the operation sites into two comprehensive towns. Later, when the oil was depleted, they all had to leave. Today, the signs of the old lives were still discernible through the broken walls—doors of the department store and Bank of China stood out prominently, seats and lighting cables spread out across a deserted theatre hall, withered stumps in a plant nursery suggested a once verdant grove or perhaps an orchard, there were even some posts and notices on the walls of single-storey buildings pointing to private booths hidden in the alleys... This place made me remember Walter M. Miller Jr.'s *A Canticle for Leibowitz*. But even those ruins insinuated some hospitality, because the landscape beyond was an endless emptiness. Unlike the rolling dunes in a sand desert, there was utterly nothing on the horizon of the Gobi. It was as blinding as Michael Ende's fantasy kingdom on the verge of collapse: wherever you look, there was only blue above and earthy gray underneath, without anything for the eyes to focus on.

Faced with such a setup, I could not help but feel intimidated and depressed for no reason.

The stranded BMW was screaming at the foundation of the road. In the distance, the shadow of the Demoniac Town grew longer. People were talking nervously beside the car, looking for rescue. I was anxious. They sounded so loud, and I just wanted to get away as soon as possible.

In any case, the only rescue equipment we had onboard was a sapper shovel.

"Let's move on. At any rate, everyone coming in here has a tablet. With the preloaded network connection, they can call the visitor center for help."

"Well, that makes sense."

The driver nodded and restarted the engine.

Our field of view bumped up and down. As it hap-

中国银行的门楣依然显眼，剧院中仍能看到座椅和照明用电缆的分布情况，苗圃中残余的枯桩曾经暗示此处存在着一片密林，或许是一片果园，平房的墙壁上甚至还能看到指向隐藏在小巷中的私家店铺的标语和告示……来到此处，我不由想起小沃尔特

·M. 米勒的名篇《莱博维茨的赞歌》。可就连这样的断壁残垣也令人感到亲切，因为废墟之外的风景乃是一望无际的虚空。与高低起伏的沙漠不同，戈壁滩的远景是彻彻底底的无，是米切尔·恩德笔下濒临崩溃的幻想国的致盲终景：目之所及，上边一片蓝，下面一片土灰，甚至无一物可供瞳孔依附。

面对这样的风光，我不由得胆怯起来，并且无法由地感到沮丧。

搁浅的宝马正在路基下方嘶叫。远方，魔鬼城的阴影正在变得越来越长。人们在车下紧张地交谈着，寻求救援的机会。而我却烦躁起来，只觉得他们吵闹，想尽快离开这里。

况且，我们的车载救援装备只有一杆工兵铲。

“先走吧。反正进来的人都拿着平板，这里面有网，直接跟游客中心呼救就是了。”

“嗯，也是。”

司机点点头，重新启动了引擎。

视野上下摇摆。恰好又起风了，四周弥漫着黄褐色的烟，和石砾抓挠金属的沙沙声。我又想起儿时读过的一篇张天翼的小说，名字记不清了，只记得文中的地主末了说过一句话：我做人失败了。

盘古时间

进入俄博梁主城区，风景逐渐壮阔起来，就好像舍弃了生而为人的尊严，方能看到大自然显现出的蓬勃的生命力。

俄博梁为雅丹地貌，四处耸立着巨大的岩柱，靠近观察，会发现上面有层层叠叠的纹理，一层黄，一层绿，一层黑，中间夹杂着纤细雪白的云母脆片。未能同行的友人曾经把它们描绘成遭到废弃的宇宙飞船，而迫降在此的火星遗民则渐渐融入了

pened, the wind was picking up, filling the air with brownish dust and the sound of gravel rustling against metal. It reminded me of a novel by Zhang Tianyi that I had read in my childhood. I did not remember the name of the book, but at the end of the story, the landlord had said: I failed as a human being.

Pangaea Time

As we entered the main body of the Obo Liang area, the view became more impressive, as if nature only showed its vigor when you gave up your dignity as a human.

In the Yadan landscape of Obo Liang, there were huge rock pillars standing everywhere, which, upon close examination, were composed of layers of yellow, green, and black textures, with flakes of snow-white mica chips embedded in between. A friend who had not managed to come with us this time once depicted the rock pillars as abandoned spaceships, while the Martians who had landed here gradually integrated into the hard-working local settlers, assimilated, and eventually moved out to every corner of the country (the story was submitted to the writing contest mentioned above, but did not win any prize). That story had a similar flavor as *The Martian Chronicles*, and it wouldn't be too incongruous if they were presented side-by-side. This place would have felt familiar to Ray Bradbury if he were to have seen it.

Once we were in the Yadan forest, the AI guide began to mechanically read out the introductions of the Olympus Mountains on Mars.

At the foot of the mountains, row upon row of earth mounds lined up westwards, like the lumpy hunks of great whales swimming in the ocean. At that moment, in that place, time had become part of the geological history, with an eternity associated with the riverbanks of the Milky Way depicted by Miyazawa Kenji, or the space voyage cycles by Walter M. Miller—the history of mankind repeating itself among the stars, and these bare rock formations only showed a fragment of it. Past and future had been intertwined into one, overlaying each other, clicking into place like the staggering teeth of some canine beast ("The Big Hunger" by Walter M. Miller Jr.).

According to geologic theories, millions of years ago, during the time of Pangaea—the supercontinent—this area had been in the middle of a vast ocean, and all the land you could see from here

艰苦创业的垦荒者当中，缓慢同地球人同化，迁向国家的四面八方^[2]。小说颇有《火星编年史》的味道，就算与之放在一起，也并无明显的违和感。雷·布拉德伯里若是见到此处，也会感到亲切吧^[3]。

进入雅丹森林后，AI向导开始照本宣科，播送火星奥林匹斯山的相关信息。

而在山脚下，鳞次栉比的土丘拱起身躯，鲸鱼般自东向西匍匐游去。此时此地，出现了一种地质化的时间，像宫泽贤治笔下的银河河岸，又像米勒描摹的航天周期律——人类的历史在群星间自我重复着，而裸露的岩层只是暴露出其中的一个个片段，过去，未来，过去，未来，犬牙差互，交错重叠^[4]。

依照地质学解释，千万年前，盘古大陆犹在时，此地尚是一片汪洋，所有目之所及的土地都是海床的一部分。后来大地隆起，形成高原，海洋干涸，海床龟裂，又经过风吹日晒，方形成今日的景色。古生物曾在此地上方巡游，互相吞食，排泄，死后尸体沉降，分解，成为土地的一部分。我们与祖先的身体就这样通过物质循环联系在一起。

人类的出现让时间的交融变得更加丰富：失落的古国将陵寝埋在沙子下面，工人们在远古海洋最后的遗迹上建起了雪白的盐场，文化工作者们正在将外星球的风光投射在此，游客们留下的塑料垃圾则散落其间。多年以后的考古学家们将如何解释这些经年难灭的工业废料？它们是否会被视作盛装丰饶幻境的蓝色瓶子，被外星访客拾起，拧开，饮下其中的岁月，然后划着弧线飞向远方？

在冷湖石油小镇的废墟中，我曾找到了一座怪异的房子，内壁被粉刷得鲜红一片。2017年8月，废墟美术馆计划启动，一群青年艺术家来到此地作画，意在将这半座大宅改造成艺术场，吸引人来瞻仰前辈们的荣光。项目很快就荒废了，新生的废墟躺在了旧日的上面。而在一片荒芜之地的极东方，酒泉卫星发射基地正在将一颗颗卫星送进太空——中国的第一次载人航天飞行任务便是从那里启程的。时间的景象不仅彰显冰冷的岁月，还有人们的期待、伤感和愿望。我们这些后人，则会循着这些

was part of the seabed. Later, when the land rose to form plateaus, the ocean dried out, and the sea-



bed cracked. After more years of insolation and weathering, the landform came into its current shape. Ancient creatures had once swum over this land, preying on each other, and ejecting wastes. When they died, their bodies sank and decomposed, turning into a part of the landscape. Our bodies and those of our predecessors were thus connected through the cycle of matters.

The emergence of humans had enriched the texture of time passage: tombs from the lost kingdoms were buried under the sands, mine workers opened up snow-white salt flats on the last remnants of the

痕迹去理解前人，就像我们的向导有时会从凌乱的车辙中找寻统计规律，辨认安全的方向一样。

我们循时间前行，阅读时间，也留下自己的时间。我在这里会留下什么？一些受此地启发的科学幻想？几张随手拍的照片？此时正在写的这篇文章？或是日后与人提起此地时，写到他们记忆之中的只言片语？我不在以后，它们能否继续活下去，将信息传递给后代？真的有永垂不朽的时间吗？

或许只有时间才能回答这些问题。

一盘蛋炒饭

到了魔鬼城之巅，反而没什么风景可看了。我们穿过硫磺味道的烟尘，前往简易卫生间方便，远远地，在两个山丘之间看到了一座钻油井。

不紧不慢，它缓缓向我鞠了一躬。

它还活着！

我向前又走了几步。磕头机下面站着两个红色人影，看上去像是油井的维护人员。他们手里拿着什么东西，正在交头接耳，说了什么，我一概不知。但我的心情却放轻松了些，因为在遍地的游客和商贩之外，我终于发现了一缕人烟。同胞的出现唤醒了身为人类的自觉，也激起了我的归属感。

“飞船矗立在一片光辉灿烂之中，岿然不动，壮丽至极。”在莱姆笔下，困在瑞吉斯3号星球上的宇航员罗翰在狂奔回着陆地点时，目睹高耸的工业造物，大抵也是这样的心情吧^[5]。

当晚，我们驶过茫茫黑夜，前往茫崖花土沟。沿途，更多的人迹开始显现，更多的生命开始自狭窄的公路向两侧绵延。巨型运货卡车在我们身边轰鸣而过；千佛崖的洞窟之外，鹤嘴形状的油泵还在昏昏沉沉地前后摇摆着。几小时后，灯光密集起来，青海石油的徽标开始愈发密集地出现在偶然闪过的建筑物上。

最终，一座活生生的石油小镇出现在十字路口。根据《冷湖镇志》和前日小镇废墟入口处的铭文，冷湖地区的油气资源枯竭后，镇上的作业人员回归集团编制，有的去了甘肃，有的去了青海。此

ancient ocean, culture developers advocated the visage of another planet based on local scenery, plastic trash left behind by tourists were scattered all over the place. How would future archeologists interpret the undestroyable industrial wastes that lie here in time? Would any alien visitors pick up those blue bottles filled up with fantastical visions, unscrew the lid, knock down the vintage bourbon, and then fly away in a curving trajectory? ("The Blue Bottle" by Ray Bradbury)

In the ruins of the former oil town of Lenghu, I had found a strange house, whose interior walls were painted bright red. In August 2017, when the Ruins Art Museum project was launched, a group of young artists came to work on the paintings, aiming to convert the half-fallen mansion into an artistic attraction to showcase the glory of earlier generations. The project was soon deserted, leaving the new ruins lying on the back of the old ones. However, to the far east of this desolate land lay the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center, where artificial satellites were sent into space one after another—that was also where China's first manned space mission had launched. The visions of the past revealed not only the coldness of time, but also the expectations, sadness, and aspirations of people. Following those leads, we, as successors, were trying to understand those who had walked here before, much as our guide sometimes looked for patterns in the chaotic wheel ruts to find a safe passage.

We moved along the river of time, read the signs, and left our own marks. What would I leave behind? Some science fiction ideas inspired by this place? A few photos taken casually? This essay I was writing? Or the few words that would be imprinted in the memories of people when I talked about this place later? Would they still be remembered after I was gone, passed on as messages to future generations? Was there really a time that could last forever?

Perhaps only time would tell.

A Plate of Fried Rice with Egg

At the summit of the Demonic Town, there was little to see. When we walked through a patch of sulfur-smelling smoke to use the makeshift restroom, I saw a drilling rig in the distance between two hills, bowing to me in an unhurried manner.

It was still in live operation!

I took a few steps forward. Beneath the bowing ma-

处生活着的，或许就是他们的后代，说不定还有本尊。

镇上四处可见穿着鲜艳制服的职工，跟路边卖水果的摊贩亲切地打着招呼，而后者说不定也正是他们的家属。这一连串的猜想很快就得到了证实——一吃晚饭时，馆子的老板说他是从东北过来的。他的儿子在这里做工，更小一辈的孩子也在附近上学。一家老小全都生活在这里，与此地共同成长，共同老去。

与盖伊·特利斯笔下的修桥工不同，他们是家园的制造者，走的时候也把家随身带上。几年前，我给山西的一家煤矿做智慧矿山项目，当时在大山深处也曾目睹过类似的情景。不难想象他们的日常生活：在这世界尽头的人造家园中，每天早晨，人们匆忙吃过早点，之后便穿好工装，各自出发，奔赴一线，等到深夜，再搭乘班车，自散落在崇山峻岭中的作业站点返回营地，去和家人和朋友共度这一日的剩余时间。



chine, there were two figures dressed in red, looking like some maintenance crew. They were holding something in their hands and whispering to each other. As for what they were talking about, I totally had no idea. But it made me relaxed, because apart from the tourists and vendors, I finally found some real people, which awakened my self-awareness and the sense of belonging as homo sapiens. "The twenty-storey-high spaceship that, bathed in a blaze of light, stood outlined before the paling sky. There it towered, majestic as ever in its motionless grandeur." In Stanislaw Lem's novel, *The Invincible*, when Rohan, the astronaut stranded on Regis III, was rushing back towards the landing site, and saw the towering industrial artifact, he probably felt the same way as I did.

That night, we drove through the darkness, heading for Huatugou Town of Mangnai City. Along the way, more people began to show up, more plants growing along the sides of the narrow highway and extending outwards. Large cargo trucks roared past us; beyond the caves of the Thousand Buddha Cliff, the crane-beak-shaped fuel pump was still swaying back and forth drowsily. A few hours later, the lights became denser and the logo of Qinghai Oil began to appear more frequently on the occasional buildings sweeping by.

Finally, a living and breathing oil town came into view at an intersection. According to "History of Lenghu Town" and the inscriptions at the entrance of the ruins we passed by yesterday, when the oil and gas in the Lenghu area were depleted, most of the workers returned to the corporate establishments in Gansu or Qinghai. The people living here today were probably their children and perhaps some of the original settlers were still around.

Staff in brightly colored uniforms could be seen all over the town, greeting cordially with roadside fruit vendors, who might well be their family members. The speculation was soon proved to be true—at dinner, the proprietor of the restaurant said he was from the northeast. His son worked here and the youngest generation went to the school nearby. His family all lived here, grew up and grew old with the place.

Unlike Gay Talese's bridge builders, they were the builders of their own home, and they took the home with them.

A few years back, when I worked on some smart mining project for a coal mine in Shanxi, I had seen something similar in the deep mountains. It was not difficult to imagine their daily life: in the improvised

他们不关心地球化给野外环境造成的影响，也不在意人类学家眼中的那些禁忌。这些问题属于规则制定者，对他们来说太遥远了。相比之下，更重要的是，重新制造家园的行为赋予了他们存在的意义，而他们用这种意义支撑自己在这里存续下去，娱乐自己，抵抗荒芜。而他们的生活也并不单调：

《流浪地球》里有蚯蚓干，酒泉卫星发射基地有人工湖、剧院和鸵鸟养殖场，此地则有葡萄、啤酒、烤串和热气升腾的铁锅炖大鹅。一想到这些，我便忽然理解了罗隆翔在《火星冷湖》中描绘的幽默情景：被困在火星营地外面的厨师机器人为了给宇航员做一盘蛋炒饭，耗费千辛万苦，完成了大规模的生活设施建设，为日后的殖民打下了基础。

这或许正是我们自己的太空开拓精神之真谛。藉由它，我终于在多日的戈壁奔波中，找到了些许安宁。

归途

此外，还需要一点互帮互助。

日薄西山，我们踏上归途，路上再次与那搁浅的一车四人相遇。他们的车还卡在原地，甚至陷得更深了。

“看来基地没来人。这次下去帮帮他们吧。”

我们同意了。结果，工兵铲并没派上多大用场。出乎我们意料的是，宝马车上竟然配了全套的救援装备，只是四人第一次自驾出游，谁都不知道该如何使用它们。结局皆大欢喜：扫清了车轮前后的砂砾后，向导解开安全绳，一端系在他们车头，另一端系在我们车尾，然后上车猛踩油门，将宝马拉回了正道。

“多谢你们了。”

“没事，天要黑了，赶快走。”

太阳带着意味不明的微笑，开始缓缓溜下俄博梁的山巅。

我想到《星空清理者》中的月表行走，想到《月海沉船》中的紧急救援。今日的半日之旅，与

homes at the edge of the world, people had their breakfast hastily, put on their uniforms and set off for frontline work. Later in the evening, they took the shuttle bus from the operation sites scattered in the mountains and went back to the camp, to spend the rest of the day with family and friends.

They cared not about the impact of terraforming on the environment, nor the taboos of the anthropologists. These concerns were too distant from them. More importantly, the act of re-making their home gave meaning to their existence, and they used that meaning to sustain and entertain themselves, to fight against the desolation. Their lives were not monotonous. In *The Wandering Earth*, there were dried earthworms; at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center, there were artificial lakes, theatres and ostrich farms; here, there were grapes, beer, grilled skewers and steaming-hot goose stews. The string of thoughts led me to a sudden understanding of a comedic plot in the 2nd Place winner of the 2nd Lenghu Award—"Lenghu of Mars", where Luo Longxiang had described how the robot chef stranded outside of the Mars camp had gone to great lengths just to make a plate of fried rice with eggs for the astronauts, completing the construction of massive living facilities in the process and laying the foundations for future colonization.

This was perhaps the true spirit of space settlers for us. With that thought, I finally found some peace in the backwash of running around in the Gobi for days.

The Way Back

It was time to hand out a little help, though.

As the sun went down, we set out on our way back and came upon the four stranded visitors again. Their car was still trapped in the earth, sinking even deeper.

"It looks like no one is coming from the base. Let's help them."

We agreed. It turned out that the sapper shovel was not much help. To our surprise, the BMW was equipped with a full set of rescue kits. But it was the first time for them to take on a self-driving trip and none of the four onboard knew how to use the tools. It all ended quite well. After clearing up the gravel around the wheels, the guide unwound a safety rope, tying one end to the front of their car and the other end to the back of ours. He then got into our car and slammed on the accelerator, hauling the BMW back onto the main road.

未来的天上之行或许真的别无二致。不知到时我们的天时地利如何，是否也做好了充分的准备？是否在遇险时，也会有人来施以援手？

最后我还是觉得，不遇险才是最好的。

于是，赶在司机返还车载AI的功夫，我打开4G网络，开始下载青海省的离线地图。

这时，一道银光从车边掠过，向着高坡下方的原野疾驰而去。那是一名自行车手，山地越野车后面驮着食物、水，但没看到睡袋和帐篷。等到司机回来时，我们和他说了这件事。他听了也觉得奇异，说天黑以后很难定位，而且冷，不敢想象有人会如此以身涉险，说不定是火星营地的住客，到周遭闲逛一番吧。

即便如此，单车欲问边的勇气也依旧令人难以置信。

因为中途停车救人，我们已经落后于计划了。越野车驶下高地之后，司机猛踩油门，送我们重返70公里每小时的急速狂飙，令车内的背包、零食、纸巾、墨镜和相机都一同上下弹跳。车中的我不若今日的我，能够全知全能地回顾整个旅程。他只是系紧了安全带，紧握着包袱和车门把手，眼睛盯着那狡黠的太阳，全然不知能否顺利逃出生天。在好友的另一篇科幻小说中，50年以后的我注定要前往群星冒险。如若他的预言准确无误，那便希望那时的我在火星，在金星，或在更加遥远的无名星球上行走时，还能想起今天这场科幻之旅吧。

附注：

- [1] 作品获首届冷湖科幻文学奖二等奖。
- [2] 小说也参加了冷湖征文比赛，但没有获奖。
- [3] 出自小沃尔特·M·米勒《大饥渴》。
- [4] 出自雷·布拉德伯里《蓝色的瓶子》。
- [5] 出自斯坦尼斯瓦夫·莱姆《无敌号》。

“Thanks a lot.”

“No problem. It's getting dark, you'd better hurry up.”

With an unfathomable smile, the sun began to slip down the hill tops of Obo Liang.

My mind wandered to the scenes of people walking on the surface of the moon in *Planete*, and of the emergency rescues in *A Fall of Moondust*. The half-day journey today might not be much different from the journeys to space in future. How would we fare? Would we be fully prepared? In case of distress, would there be any help?

In the end, I decided that it was best not to get into any trouble at all.

So, when the driver went to return the onboard AI, I turned on the 4G network, and started to download the offline maps of Qinghai Province.

Just then, a flash of silvery light swept past, racing toward the wilderness below the highland. It was a cyclist, with food and water carried at the rear of his mountain bike, but no sleeping bag or tent could be seen. When the driver came back, we told him about the cyclist. He thought it strange too. He said that it would be difficult to locate yourself after dark and it would be cold. He couldn't imagine someone would take such a risk, or perhaps it was just a guest of the Mars camp, who decided to wander around a bit.

Even so, the cyclist's courage to challenge the wilderness was incredible.

We were running late due to the efforts of helping others. Once the SUV had finally rolled down the highlands, the driver slammed on the gas, putting us back into a 70-kph spurt that made the backpacks, snacks, tissues, sunglasses and cameras all bounce up and down in the car. I was not as omniscient in the car as I am today when I can look at the whole journey in retrospect. Instead, I fastened the seatbelt, clasped my hands around the baggage and the door handle, kept my eyes on the wily sun, wondering if I could get away unscathed. In another of my friend's science fiction stories, I was destined to venture to the stars fifty years later. If his prediction were correct, I hope I would still remember this SF journey while walking on Mars, Venus, or even some nameless planet farther away.





Twelve Space-Themed Chinese SF Novels in the 2020s

Journey Planet Issue 68 November 31st, 2022

Link: <http://journeyplanet.weebly.com/journey-planet---2021-hugo-nominee/issue-68-chinese-science-fiction>

Twelve Space-Themed Chinese SF Novels in the 2020s

十二部太空题材长篇小说（2020—2022）

Author & Translator: Arthur Liu 作者 & 译者：天爵



宝树、阿缺《七国银河：镐京魅影》

人民文学出版社，2020年10月

题材：太空歌剧、或然历史

Seven States of Galaxy Saga: The Phantom of Haojing

Author: Bao Shu and A Que

Publication: People's Literature Publishing House, October 2020

Genre: Space Opera, Alternate History

统一银河的周王室日渐衰落，战国七雄的纷争在太空尺度上徐徐展开，而一群少男少女被卷入了围绕一项先进科技的诸侯混战当中，开启了一场跨越银河的星际冒险。小说延续了《轩辕剑》系列电子游戏的或然历史风格，将中国古代王朝周朝的社会制度和演化移植到了外太空，尺度更加宏大辽远，打破了中国太空歌剧小说长期模仿西方经典太空歌剧作品的困境，开拓出了一条属于自己的道路。2022年8月8日，由多拉格文化改编的同名漫画在爱奇艺叭嗒漫画平台开始连载。

The Empire Zhou that united the whole Galaxy is decaying day by day, and the battles between the seven Warring States have gradually begun on a space scale. A group of boys and girls are caught up in a war of vassals around an advanced technology, thus starting an intergalactic adventure across the galaxy. The novel inherits the alternate historical style of the *Xuan Yuan Jian* video game series, transplanting the social system and evolution of the ancient Chinese dynasty, the Zhou Dynasty, to outer space stage on a more ambitious and far-reaching scale, breaking the dilemma of Chinese space opera novels that have long imitated classic Western space opera works and blazing a trail of their own. On August 8, 2022, the comic adaptation created by Drag Manga, began its serialization on the Iqiyi Comic platform.

“光渊”系列**重庆出版社，2020年10月****题材：共享世界观，太空歌剧****包含作品：**

余卓轩《光渊：黑曜天空》（长篇小说）

E伯爵《光渊：混乱之钥》（长篇小说）

江波《光渊：欧菲亚战记》（长篇小说）

沥书、余卓轩《光渊：边境传说》（短篇小说集）

Void of Light series**Publication: Chongqing Publishing House, October 2020****Genre: Shared World, Space Opera****Includes works:***Obsidian Sky* by Joey Yu (novel)*The Key to Chaos* by Count E (novel)*The Battle of Ophea* by Jiang Bo (novel)*Legends of the Frontiers* by Li Shu and Joey Yu (collection)

小说发生在遥远的未来太空。彼时，人类已分化为三个不同种族：以科技见长的瑟利，以战力取胜的埃萨克，以及崇尚和平的埃蕊。另外，还有游荡在宇宙中的神秘邪恶的赛忒。这个世界中的关键技术“微晶”是一种可以融入人体的纳米粒子，各个种族对微晶的运用和融合决定了他们之间主要的生理差别，这种差别又进一步造就了不同的社会制度和生活方式。在《黑曜天空》中，一群原本属于不同种族和阵营、处于争斗状态的敌人们因意外而流落异星，在求生过程中逐渐放下既有矛盾、建立信任和友谊，共同面对更加强大和邪恶的敌人。在《混乱之钥》中，走私飞船的女船长接下一桩危险生意，却被卷入联盟议员的暗杀阴谋。在《欧菲亚战记》中，身为埃萨克却被埃蕊养大的少年偶遇尚未成熟的赛忒，面临身份和情感的双重挣扎。这个系列源起自早前的一项商业化科幻项目（曾有同世界观下的射击游戏和图文阅读App面世），经过多年打磨，最终以图书的形式重新与读者见面。

（王侃瑜对本段亦有贡献）

The series takes place in a distant future space, where human beings have been divided into three different races: Ethereals, who excel in technology; Eskari, who win by battle power; and Ari, who believe in peace. There is also the mysterious and evil Scythe wandering in the universe. The key technology in this world, "dust", is a kind of nanoparticle that can be integrated into the human body, and the use and integration of microcrystal by each race has become the main physical difference among them, which has further caused their different social systems and lifestyles. In *Obsidian Sky*, a group of enemies who originally belonged to different races and camps are trapped on an alien planet due to an accident mid-flight. They gradually put aside existing conflicts, build trust and friendship in the process of survival, and face the more powerful and evil enemies together. In *The Key to Chaos*, a female captain of a smuggling ship takes on a dangerous business deal, but gets caught in the assassination plot of an Alliance councilor. In *The War of Ophea*, an Eskari teenager raised by the Ari meets an immature Scythe, which puts him into a dual struggle of identity and emotion. This series originates from an earlier commercial science fiction project, which has released a first-person-shooter game and a graphic reading app with the same world settings, and after years of polishing, finally reunites with readers in the form of books.

(Regina Kanyu Wang contributed in this part.)



邓思渊《触摸星辰》

四川科学技术出版社, 2020年10月

题材: 第一次接触, 硬科幻, 仙侠

Touching the Stars

Author: Deng Siyuan

Publication: Sichuan Science and Technology Press, October 2020

Genre: First Contact, Hard Science Fiction, Xian Xia

在小说开端, 人类文明与外星文明Xenus展开太空战争, 但渐渐地, 一种感染意识的瘟疫在人类文明中蔓延开来, 令大量感染者沦为僵尸般的傀儡。外星文明则实际上是人类无法理解的仙侠文明, 来到地球的Xenus人实际上是一个修仙门派, 来到太阳系寻找灵能。“仙侠”的概念扎根于中国传统的天地观, 其上清下浊的层次观与现代科学中的无垠太空有着本质区别。小说试图将前者的文化移植到后者当中, 虽然存在诸多纰漏, 但至少是一次勇敢的尝试。

In the beginning of the novel, the human civilization starts a space war with Xenus, an alien civilization, but gradually, a plague that infects consciousness spreads among the human civilization, reducing many infected people to zombie-like puppets. The alien civilization turns out to be a Xianxia civilization that humans cannot understand, and the Xenus who came to Earth are actually a sect of immortals who came to the solar system in search of spiritual energy. The concept of "Xianxia" is rooted in the traditional Chinese concept of Heaven and Earth, a hierarchical view of the top as clear and the bottom as dirty, which is fundamentally different from the infinite space of modern science. The novel attempts to transplant the former culture into the latter, and although there are many issues, it is a brave attempt.

西西《钦天监》

广西师范大学出版社, 2021年1月

题材: 历史, 天文学



Qin Tian Jian

Author: Xi Xi

Publication: Guangxi Normal University Press, January 2021

Genre: History, Astronomy

小说从清朝钦天监年轻天文官员周若闳的视角, 讲述了中国古代知识分子除了科举考试之外的另一条不为人知的进路, 透过周若闳与妻子的对话, 以克制的口吻探究了天理与人道, 东方与西方的关系, 在封建时代透出理性主义和女性主义等先

The novel is told from the point of view of Zhou Ruohong, a young astronomer of the Qing Dynasty, who explores an unknown path of the ancient Chinese intellectuals beyond the imperial examinations. Through the dialogues between Zhou Ruohong and his wife, the fiction explores the relationship between the divine principle and the hu-

进思想之光芒。长久以来，科学与科幻一直被视作西方世界在晚清时期伴随着现代化进程引入中国的舶来品，但后来的历史研究逐渐推翻了这种论调，表明：中西方的科学交流其实从未完全中断。本书是这一新史观的集中体现。小说的惊奇感也透过打破刻板历史印象的方式徐徐揭开。

man law, the East and the West, transmitting lights of advanced ideas such as rationalism and feminism into the feudal era. For a long time, science and science fiction have been seen as imported concepts introduced from the Western world to China during the late Qing Dynasty along with the modernization process, but later historical studies have disproved this argument and shown that the scientific exchange between China and the West has never been completely interrupted. This book is a concentrated expression of this new historical perspective, unfolding a sense of wonder through the breaking of stereotypical historical impressions.



一十四洲《猫咪的玫瑰》

北京联合出版公司, 2021年3月

题材: 世代星际飞船, 星际旅行, 灾后世界, 耽美

Cat's Rose

Author: Shisi

Publication: Beijing United Publishing Company, March 2021

Genre: Generations Starship, Interstellar Travel, Post-Disaster World, Danmei

来势汹汹的瘟疫让地球变得不再适合居住，幸存者乘坐世代星际飞船，启程寻找新的家园。在远航途中，生物学家林斯在基因改造计划中创造的实验品苏醒了。名为“凌一”的实验生物虽然拥有超人般的能力，但心智最初却仍停留在孩童状态。于是，林斯开始以监护人的身份培养自己的造物，与之建立羁绊，并慢慢揭开当年席卷地球的瘟疫的真相。萦绕全书的幸存者灾后创伤同新生智慧认识自我、了解伴侣、探索陌生环境的成长道路交织在一起，让小说具备了温柔的治愈色彩。

After a ferocious plague that has made Earth uninhabitable, the survivors travel on a generational starship in search of a new planet. During the voyage, an experimental product created by the biologist Lin Si in a genetic modification program awakens. The experimental creature named Ling Yi is a superhuman, but his mind is initially in a childlike state. So Lin Si begins to act as its custodian, nurturing the creature to establish a bond with him and slowly uncovers the truth about the plague that has swept across Earth. The post-disaster trauma of survivors that haunts the book is intertwined with the self-exploration of the newborn, the relationship development between partners and the adventure of unfamiliar environments, all giving the novel a gentle healing touch.



苏学军《洪荒战纪》

中国广播影视出版社，2021年5月

题材：太空歌剧，神话

The Times of Great Antiquity

Author: Su Xuejun

Publication: China Radio and Television Press, May 2021

Genre: Space Opera, Mythology

古老的文明在灾难中覆灭，幸存下来的一男（羿）、一女（娲）、一兽（鲲）流落到了不同的时空，各自展开了武力、智慧和形体的成长和进化，并最终与当初毁灭故乡的敌人在群星间展开战斗。而这一切都被一名现实世界中的男孩姬武看在眼中，萦绕在他的人生道路上，直至其生命的尽头。小说将伊塔洛·卡尔维诺的《一切于一点》式的奇想同中国古典神话相结合，模糊了虚构的宇宙史诗与现实人物的内在世界的界限，在近年的科幻作品中独树一帜。

An ancient civilization has been destroyed in a disaster, and a surviving man (Yi), woman (Wa), and beast (Kun) are sent to different space-times, each growing and evolving in strength, wisdom, and form, and eventually battling in the stars with the enemies who destroyed their homeland. All of their struggles are seen by a boy in the real world, Ji Wu, and haunt his life path until the end of his life. The novel combines Italo Calvino's science fantasy style as in *All at One Point* with classical Chinese mythology, blurring the boundary between the fictional cosmic epic and the inner space of real-world people, which is unique among recent Chinese science fiction works.



易飞扬《陨石猎人》

文汇出版社，2021年5月

题材：秘密结社、伪科学、失落的世界

The Meteorite Hunters

Author: Yi Feiyang

Publishing: Wenhui Publishing House, May 2021

Genre: Secret Societies, Pseudo-Science, Lost World

主人公马陆因为二叔的关系加入了“探星小组”，成为了一名陨石猎人。这些坠落在地球上的陨石不仅会在落点形成怪异秘境，还拥有奇异的力量，因而大多价值不菲。马陆在一次次前往秘境挖掘陨石的过程中，慢慢接触到了潜伏在陨石猎人这一行业背后的势力，也见证了一些猎人的野心和幻灭。陨石猎人是一个存在于现实中的行业，本指民间自发出现的陨石爱好者或陨石商贩，却在这部小说中得到了传奇故事式的书写，呈现出

Ma Lu, the main character, joins the "Star Searching Team" because of his second uncle and becomes a meteorite hunter. The meteorites that have fallen to Earth bear strange powers, twisting the environment at the landing point. To meteorite hunters this meant that most of them are worth a lot of money. Digging for meteorites in twisted zones, Ma Lu slowly comes into contact with the forces lurking behind the meteorite hunting industry and witnesses the ambition and disillusionment

了类似杰夫·范德米尔《遗落的南京》却与之截然不同、更加市侩的面貌。这种对异物和秘境的奇异力量的迷信贯穿中国的想象传统，也普遍存在于当下的幻想写作当中。

of some hunters. Meteorite hunters are a real-life profession, originally referring to the spontaneous emergence of meteorite enthusiasts or meteorite dealers, but in this novel, it is written in the style of an urban legend, presenting a similar but very different look to *Southern Reach* trilogy by Jeff VanderMeer. This fetish for the strange power of exotic objects and lost worlds runs through the Chinese imaginative tradition and is also prevalent in contemporary fantasy writing.



月亮熊《OPUS：灵魂之桥》

台湾尖端出版，2021年8月

题材：灾后世界、废墟、宇宙飞船

OPUS: Bridge of Souls

Author: Moon Bear

Publication: Sharp Point Press (Taiwan), August 2021

Genre: Post-Holocaust world, Ruins, Rocket

在遥远的未来，人类在地球教的引领下，发展出“宇宙葬”的习俗，教会的女巫会和火箭工程师一同将亡者的灵魂装上火箭，送往遥远的银河，令逝去的生命安息。然而大疫席卷世界，文明崩溃，幸存的工程师约翰和从冬眠中苏醒的最后的女巫林芳开始携手重新打造火箭，试图将迷失在废墟间的无数灵魂送往安息之地。小说为SIGONO工作室为自家出品的同名游戏推出的官方小说，在轻盈浪漫的科幻元素之下透出了厚重的东方生死观。荒芜之中，两位希望使者之间的羁绊感人至深，和摆渡灵魂的宇宙飞船一道，为身处疫情和乱世之中的我们带来了一丝希望。

In the distant future, humans have developed the ritual of "cosmic burial" under the guidance of the Church of Earth, where witches of the Church and rocket engineers will load the souls of the dead onto rockets and send them to the distant galaxy, so that the departed lives can rest in peace. However, as a pandemic sweeps the world and civilization collapses, John, the surviving engineer, and Lin Fang, a witch who has awakened from hibernation, begin to work together to rebuild the rocket, trying to send the countless souls lost among the ruins to their resting place. The book is the official novelization of SIGONO Studio's game of the same name. Under the light and romantic science fiction elements, there is a heavy East Asian view of life and death. Amid desolation, the bond between the two messengers of hope is touching.



文九柔《无限循环》

中国工人出版社, 2022年1月

题材: 爱情, 外星世界, 虚拟现实, 时间循环

Infinite Loop

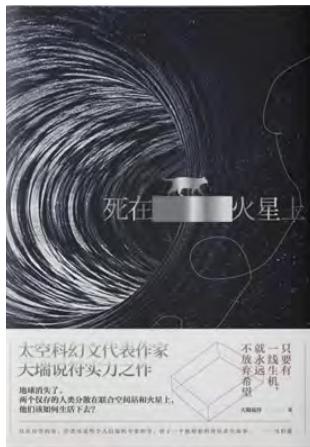
Author: Wen Jiu Rou

Publication: China Workers Publishing House, January 2022

Genre: Romance, Alien world, Virtual Reality, Time Loop

地球被一种怪异病毒感染，导致生灵涂炭。幸存者乘坐时间旅行者带来的穿梭机，逃亡至陌生星球“力微星”，在这颗空间和时间全都一片混乱的星球上苟且度日，慢慢形成了带有复古东方色彩的新社会秩序。后来，星球上出现了神秘的虚拟现实装置“瓦舍”。在瓦舍中，人们可以进入幻境，攻略通过无序拼贴历史而形成的关卡，破关后即可获得物资奖励，过上更好的日子。然而瓦舍世界中的场景却逐渐逼近灾难爆发前的现代世界，女主人公元莱也逐渐在这些游戏中，回忆起自己在地球上的一段爱情往事，并渐渐明晰自己的身份与存在的意义。小说将现代都市文学安置在宇宙时空的尺度上，借女性的自我探索，讨论了人类在纷繁无序的景观社会中存在的价值。

The Earth is infected by a strange virus that causes the living to be wiped out. The survivors flee to the strange planet "Liwei" in a shuttle brought by time travelers, and live in its chaos of space and time. Gradually, they form a new social order with a retro oriental scent. Later on, a mysterious virtual reality device "Vasher" appears on the planet, where people enter the illusionary world and play in scenes that depict a disorderly collage of history, and are rewarded with materials after breaking each level. However, the scenes in the world of Vasher gradually approximate the modern world before the outbreak of the plague. In these games, the heroine Yuan Lai gradually recalls a love affair she had on Earth and finally clarifies her identity. The novel places modern urban literature on the scale of cosmic time and space, and uses women's self-discovery to discuss the meaning of human existence in the chaotic landscape society.



天瑞说符《死在火星上》

青岛出版社, 2022年1月

题材: 火星、太空鲁滨逊

Die on Mars

Author: Tianrui Fu

Publication: Qingdao Publishing House, January 2022

Genre: Mars, Robinsonade, Last Human

地球突然消失，原因不明。身在火星昆仑站的宇航员唐跃和火星空间站上的科学家麦冬成了仅存的人类。二人不得不在没有任何救援的情况下，努

The Earth suddenly disappears for unknown reasons. The astronaut Tang Yue, who is on the Mars Kunlun Station, and scientist Mai Dong, who is on the Mars Space Station, become the only remain-

力在荒凉的红色星球上求生，并在人工智能“老猫”的帮助下，应对各种紧急状况。小说最初于2018年在“起点中文网”上连载，题材与安迪·威尔的《火星救援》类似，但创造了一个更加令人绝望的孤岛困境，通过“家”的消失，最大程度上唤起读者的共鸣（也呼应了《流浪地球》中带着家园逃亡的情怀）。主人公唐跃所体现的“基层小人物”色彩浓缩了当代中国的诸多社会面向，类似“接地气”的人物塑造方式也体现在众多本土原创科幻作品中。

ing humans. Without any rescue, the two must struggle to survive on the desolate red planet, and with the help of the artificial intelligence Lao Mao, they have to deal with various emergency situations. The novel, originally serialized in 2018 on the Qidian Literature website, has a similar theme to Andy Weir's *Martian*, but creates a more desperate dilemma that resonates with readers to the greatest extent through the disappearance of home (also echoing the sentiment of "Home" in the movie *The Wandering Earth*). The "grassroots" identity embodied by the protagonist Tang Yue distills many social aspects of contemporary China, and a similar "grounded" approach to characterization is also found in many Chinese science fiction works.



圆太极《无限天罗》

北京联合出版公司, 2022年3月

题材: 能源、灾难、技术惊险

Infinite Skynet

Author: Yuan Taiji

Publication: Beijing United Publishing Company, March 2022

Genre: Energy, Disaster, Technological Thriller

在近未来，地球建成了全球性的三级天电互联网络（名为“三重天罗”），实现了电力的有效利用。然而一颗带有超导微粒的彗星在进入地球轨道时，慧尾扫过地球表面，将超导颗粒洒落到大气层中，造成了天地电网的击穿和全球性的灾难。一支由多国科学专家组成的调查小组紧急成立，试图破解灾难形成的原因并加以遏止，同时，一个由能操纵电能的“圣女”领导的宗教团体借灾难兴盛起来……小说对多级电网的刻画顺应时代潮流，并且呈现出面对全球灾难时，中国语境下的国际合作方式。

In the near future, Earth has built a global three-tier celestial interconnection network (called "Triple Skynet"), which enables the efficient use of electricity. However, when a comet with superconducting particles enters the Earth's orbit, its wispy tail sweeps across the Earth's surface and spills superconducting particles into the atmosphere, causing a breakdown of the power grid and a global disaster. An investigation team of scientific experts from many countries is urgently set up to decipher the cause of the disaster in order to stop it, while a religious group led by a female "saint" who can manipulate electricity thrives during the disaster. The novel's portrayal of a multi-level power grid keeps up with the modern design and presents a Chinese approach to international cooperation in the face of global crisis.



灰狐《火星往事》

四川科学技术出版社, 2022年4月

题材: 火星, 星际殖民, 机甲

Once Upon a Time on Mars

Author: Hui Hu

Publication: Sichuan Science and Technology Press, April 2022

Genre: Mars, Interstellar Colonization, Mecha

火星政府日渐式微，于是，被大型企业垄断的聚集地四处野蛮生长。在此背景下，从维和部队退役的机甲战士罗恒加入了一家名叫“岩铁流”的防卫公司，与昔日的战友和量身定制的机甲中内置的人工智能一道，在维护火星和平安定、与恐怖团体“萤火”战斗的过程中，探索在火星创造理想生活的道路。扎实的机械刻画和高度复古的火星殖民地叙事让人想起乔治·R.R.马丁和加德纳·多佐伊斯共同编纂的选集《火星复古科幻》。小说最后为开放性结局，实为同名影视作品的先行图书。近年来，这种多角度从零打造科幻IP的创作模式正在成为中国科幻创作的主流，意在于“刘慈欣宇宙”之外杀出一条血路。

The diminishing government of Mars has caused gatherings of large corporate monopolies to grow. In this context, Luo Heng, a retired mecha warrior from the peacekeeping force, joins a defense company called "Rock Iron Stream". In the process of maintaining peace and stability on Mars and fighting the terrorist group "Firefly", he struggles for a good life on Mars. The solid mechanical depictions and highly retro Martian colony narrative are reminiscent of the anthology *Old Mars* edited by George R. R. Martin and Gardner Dozois. The novel ends with an open ending and is a precursor book to the film and television production of the same name. In recent years, this multimedia approach to building science fiction IP from scratch is becoming popular in the Chinese science fiction industry, hoping to open a new path outside the "Liu Cixin universe".