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Spatial and Literary Fixes in Chen Qiufan's *Waste Tide*

Lucy Z. Fang
(University of California, Irvine)

Abstract

This essay reads waste management, surplus populations, and translated literature as a homology—entities that are not only analogous but derive from the same political economic dynamics of surplus expulsion and absorption. In Chen Qiufan's Chinese science fiction (SF) novel *Waste Tide*, these entities converge in marginal positions: waste materials forgotten once they are sent to China, migrant waste processors excluded from social and political protection, and details that remain beyond representation. Reading together the Chinese originals and the English translation of *Waste Tide* reveals, through the vocabulary of globally-circulated SF, the contradictory fantasy of a virtuous cycle of consumption and surplus management sustaining endless capital accumulation. At the same time, the three versions, as instances of Chinese SF in world literature, exemplify how the global circulation of culture mirrors that of material and labor.

Keywords: Chinese science fiction, translation, world literature, rural-urban migration, surplus populations

Spatial and Literary Fixes in Chen Qiufan's *Waste Tide*

There have been three different publications of Chen Qiufan's science fiction (SF) novel *Waste Tide*: the first by Changsha Literature & Art Publishing House in 2013, followed by two versions in 2019—an English translation by Ken Liu from Tor Books, and a Chinese republication from the Shanghai Literature & Art Publishing House. I have not found perceptible differences among the three versions, except in one key scene: the scene in which three perpetrators stage an assault that leads to the protagonist Mimi's pivotal cyborg transformation. In this scene, the three versions diverge in the amount of detail they disclose. The 2013 edition glosses over the incident, describing it as one that is incomparably worse than any horror story about migrant women who experienced sexual assault.[1] In the 2019 English edition, the same scene is described in terms of a rape that ultimately does not occur: "But the thing she feared most didn't come to pass. Knifeboy didn't undo his belt and remove his loose, baggy forest-green sweatpants."[2] In contrast, the 2019 Chinese edition includes new details that describe the assault in terms of what does happen, including how Mimi's attackers take pleasure in violating her.[3]

As different as the three editions are, this scene nonetheless articulates Mimi's disadvantaged position as a migrant woman among the novel's "waste people," a social class associated with their garbage-processing work, situated within the larger context of global waste management. In the logic of the novel, this scene informs Mimi's later rationale for leading a class revolt and her decision to be more merciful than her past tormentors. The expansion of this crucial scene across the three editions can be understood as enhancing the depiction of Mimi's cyborg transformation with added detail, drawing newer and broader readerships with each publication. Details aside, this scene generates the expectation that Mimi will eventually hold the perpetrator(s) accountable. However, the versions of the scene differ so much that they contradict one another about what did and did not happen. In this way, they serve to alter the weight of this expectation as it ramifies through the rest of the plot. Since this scene

is the only substantial change across the editions,the unchanging plot suggests that the specifics of Mimi's experience during the scene are ultimately inconsequential. Whether omitted or added, the scene's details become disposable, unproductive, and therefore forgettable; as a kind of narrative "waste," they are simply absorbed. Thus, while additional versions of a novel may expand its existing readership, the republication of the same story, a literary "fix," simultaneously absorbs its less productive versions. This contradiction of expansion and absorption is homologous with the fantasy of global capital accumulation.

Global capital accumulation operates on a never-ending stream of profit that invariably produces waste as a function of its central process. This process relies on the fantasy of sending waste to a capitalist "outside", yet waste's enduring effects on the surrounding peoples and environments constitute a recursive problem that refuses to be contained or resolved. This logic follows on from what David Harvey calls "the spatial fix," a way of solving capitalism's problems by deferral, either in another place or in the future. This need for deferral is a constant feature of the world-system: electronics are junked, environmental degradation is externalized, migrants are deported, and debt accumulates.[4] Following the story of a group of waste processing workers, *Waste Tide*'s depiction of both the "outside" of capitalism (its excess and unproductive periphery) and of its "inside" (its productive and valued core) is, ultimately, a contradiction. This is because in reality there is no possible outside to capitalism— only a set of dumping grounds that process raw materials to feed back into the supply chain.

This essay explores the contradictory fantasy of global waste management as an endless deferral to an outside space that must be integrated back into the accumulation process. As these fantasies are rendered in speculative and literary terms, they result in a contradictory narrative logic that is revealed by the three published editions. In tracking the literary "fix" of republication, manifested formally by the excess details among the different versions and corresponding to the spatial fix of excess materials, I highlight a

homology—that is, correspondences resulting from a shared origin—between the literary and the political-economic.[5] This is not to say that literary production itself is homologous with capitalist dynamics, or that a homology is the only way to understand the relationship between the literary and the economic—but rather to show how economic logics suffuse the various spatial and formal "fixes" exhibited by the novel and its editions.[6]

The novel's fictional peninsula, Guiyu ("Silicon Isle" in Ken Liu's translation), recalls the real city of Guiyu, which is located in Guangdong Province, China. In the early 2000s, Guiyu came to global attention as the face of North-South garbage dumping due to its low wages and lax regulations.[7] However, in feeding the Global North's voyeuristic gaze toward the South, the Western media's attention on Guiyu was often framed in relation to environmental concerns and labor rights violations, relying on China's otherness to make the story appear far away, even "outside" Western reality.[8] If, for the average Western news audience, waste processing occurs in the unknown realm of China, it is still also peripheral to the lives of the average Chinese city dweller.[9] Up until recent state attempts to formalize this sector, migrant waste "scavengers" were typically not employed by the city and did not receive the same service access as its residents. Nonetheless, since the 1980s, these scavengers have facilitated one of the city's most important metabolic functions.[10] Even as they are increasingly affected by crackdowns, the workers who scavenge for this waste material for re-sale and re-cycling still reside on the outskirts of official regulation.

Waste management thus emerges as a position "outside" across different scales of both the regional and the global. In the representation of such processes, the fantastical place of disappearing waste gives way to the realism of waste's insolubility and its reliance on migration from the periphery to the core for a similarly disposable labor class. Like the parallel real and fictional cities of Guiyu, the "waste people" represented in the novel are not only metaphorically disposable, but they are also made to correspond to the migrant waste-processing class that is considered part of the surplus population.

The spatial dynamics of waste processing linking the U.S. and China are permeated by the same capitalistic logics that propel the export of culture onto the world literature market—linking American and Chinese SF genre formations. Reading together the literary and the material, I suggest, shows that they are not analogous forms, but rather homologous ones. *Waste Tide* thus exhibits, in speculative language, the contradictory fantasy of a virtuous cycle of consumption and surplus management as the basis for endless capital accumulation. The novel also exemplifies, in its position as translated Chinese SF, how the global circulation of culture is homologous with the circulation of labor and material.

Disposal Logics

David Harvey theorizes the spatial fix and absorption of surplus as part of a process he calls "accumulation by dispossession": in this scenario, profits must go "outside" the pre-existing parameters of accumulation in order to realize their exchange value, while the injection of surplus into these "outsides" results in further dispossession and creates more surplus available for appropriation. Surplus thus takes on a capacious meaning. It includes "the surpluses of labor (rising unemployment) and surpluses of capital (registered as a glut of commodities on the market that cannot be disposed of without a loss and/or as surpluses of money capital lacking outlets for productive and profitable investment)."[11] For example, the Chinese state absorbs its labor surpluses into "huge mega-projects" of infrastructure and urbanization that create a long-term supply of jobs, which in turn result in the further displacement of a future labor population.[12] Transnationally, this expansion manifests as neo-imperialism (which has been associated with China's activities in Africa),[13] or as an abstract metaphor of "spatio-temporal 'fix'"—solutions made possible through "temporal deferment and geographical expansion" or the "production of space, the organization of wholly new territorial divisions of labor . . . and the penetration of pre-existing social formations" as new ways to expand the reach of the capitalist system in a simultaneous process of

dispossession, absorption, and the further accumulation of a surplus.[14] Put differently, accumulation by dispossession continuously creates "outsides" to the current system in order to ensure reinvestment and the generation of a surplus. The surplus is then absorbed into the new space, and the "outside" is absorbed into the "inside" of capitalist relations. In this framework, e-waste parts become raw materials, and sprawling urbanization generates a supply of migrant labor. To expand is to absorb, and to absorb is to expand.

Waste Tide narrates these relationships of global consumption and waste externalization in terms of the social relations among the characters. The novel tells the story of Mimi, a migrant worker who travels to Guiyu to find work as a waste processor. In this way, Mimi becomes one of the "waste people": workers (usually employed by a Guiyu local clan) who salvage materials from e-waste for re-sale. As a vulnerable, somewhat impressionable, teenage girl, Mimi has difficulty navigating the local patriarchal dynamics: the Luo clan that employs waste people; Li Wen, the brother-like leader of the waste workers; Knifeboy, a "thug" who assaults Mimi on the orders of the Luo clan; Chen Kaizong, a U.S.-educated Chinese interpreter; and Scott Brandle, an opportunistic American working for a foreign company. Mimi is infected by a long-lost virus (a supposedly disposed-of biochemical weapon) that gives her substantial cyborg abilities and helps to spark a class revolt. She then struggles for control of her new body with a foreign consciousness—a "cyber goddess" with the face of the American actress, Hedy Lamarr—and finally forces Kaizong to kill her before she loses her sense of self or is captured for scientific study.[15] In the epilogue, Kaizong takes the decision to devote the rest of his life to tracking oceanic waste islands.[16]

The novel is thus organized around forms of excess and their circulation, including electronic parts, trash islands, biohazardous materials, and disposable populations. These circulations operate as perpetual spatial and temporal fixes—after waste is disposed of in the "outside," it does not simply disappear but is instead transformed and set aside—or contained for future use. *Waste Tide* follows these so- called "fixes" in order to reveal them as fantasies of disposal.

Put differently, the following readings suggest that the evolving iterations of surplus are connected as part of one long process of deferral—requiring new frames of reference as the waste transforms—rather than representing conclusive acts of disposal. In the following discussion, I show how this disposal begins at the concrete sites of garbage processing in Guiyu, China, and becomes progressively more conceptualized over space and time. Concurrently, I track how these disposed materials seep into the physical bodies of the waste people to lay bare their shared position as a form of surplus to be managed. As the narrative unfolds, Mimi becomes a proxy for both her fellow waste people and the literal garbage by-products that she ingests.

Waste processing requires some kind of agitation and interaction—for example, applying heat, so that the material can be identified. This process results in additional forms of the waste material that escape into the air and the surrounding environment. Waste processing is a practice of scavenging for raw materials: the waste people sort through plastics and metals "with practiced ease: ABS, PVC, PC, PPO, MMA if some fragment couldn't be easily identified, they burned it at the edge with a lighter to ascertain the type of plastic by smell."[17] Metals are even more precious: "The workers sifted through the piles and picked out valuable pieces to be placed into the ovens or acid baths for additional decomposition to extract copper and tin, as well as gold, platinum, and other precious metals. What was left over was either incinerated or scattered on the ground, creating even more trash."[18] Debris and fumes are the more invasive and toxic forms of the initial waste; these waste material finds ready entry into the workers' airways:

> Mimi widened her nostrils and gave a light whiff—she didn't dare to breathe in too much of the fumes—the smell was sweet, pungent, irritating to the nose, and she felt as though maggots were wriggling in her throat. Mimi quickly dunked the lit plastic piece into water, and a column of smoke rose up.[19]

The very task of classifying waste, in order to part with it, requires

that it first enter her body; similarly, when Mimi operates machines to physically break down materials:

> the fine white powder generated by the machines stuck to her skin, where the grains seemed to embed themselves deep in her pores, irritating and rash-inducing, and she could neither wash the particles away nor scratch out the resulting itch.[20]

Far from breaking down, waste and its by-products are uncontainable—they are breathed in by the workers, partly because "no one wore any protective gear," infiltrating the "black water" and "black shores."[21] Instead of disappearing or even being contained, the trash is absorbed by the people and their surrounding environment. As a local official in Silicon Isle tells Scott, "The air, the water, the soil, and the people have been immersed in trash for too long. Sometimes you can no longer tell what's trash and what's not in our lives."[22]

As a social category, the "waste people" are a "disposable industrial reserve army" that is repeatedly absorbed and expelled according to the boom-and-bust tendencies of capitalism.[23] The flexible employment of these workers depends on changes in the demand and availability of labor in various sectors (following the logic of "last hired, first fired").[24] As production adjusts to consumption or vice versa, the surplus populations are managed in order to keep up with over- or under-consumption without incurring the risk of higher wages than are truly necessary during the underconsumption phases.[25] Since the early 2000s, following the historical process of marketization, China's urbanization has been a major strategy of economic development. This period has been characterized by a mismatch between labor shortages in the migrant-receiving provinces (such as Guangdong, Fujian, Zhejiang, and Jiangsu) and a surplus of dispossessed rural labor in the migrant-sending provinces (such as Henan, Hubei, Guangxi, Guizhou, and Sichuan).[26] Mimi is likely to be from one of the typical migrant-sending provinces: she is told to "go south" from her home village, because "all the migrant workers are heading south," and she carries a jar of her mother's "homemade chili paste" to ward off homesickness.

Presumably then, she is from a province north of Guangdong, an area that overlaps with several migrant- sending provinces known for their spicy cuisine.[27] While Mimi's initial recruitment was likely a response to labor shortages in Guangdong, her near-death experience as a migrant worker shows that she is disposable once her labor is no longer needed. The "waste people" are thus excluded from welfare protection, without *hukou* registration confirming their residency status; they bear the added stigma of working with the similarly disposable waste materials. Their pointedly literal name brings together these vital parts of capitalist consumption: "waste," the management of unneeded materials, and surplus "people," the management of an excess labor force. Capitalism thus manages its surplus populations and its surplus materials by both their expulsion to a material or social "outside" and their absorption (of extracted raw materials and an exploitable labor supply) into the profit-producing system. These are not new dynamics—but the SF vocabulary dramatizes these conflicting processes using its waste-themed cyborg revenge plot.

In political-economic terms, an "outside" to capitalism may be defined either spatially or temporally—what is expelled must exist outside capitalism in space or in time. While the temporal fix defers these materials to future management (with new advances in technology, for example), a theoretical temporal "outside," as in a moment in time when capitalism does not exist, is perhaps locatable only in the "pre-history" of capitalism.[28] One interpretation of Marx's use of "pre-history," then, is to locate the absolute outside of capitalism to the period before the enclosure movement in seventeenth-century England or, in China's case, before the 1980s reorganization of the commune.[29] This reading of Marx helps explain why the garbage in *Waste Tide* never truly "disappears" from the system that created it, as it cannot go back in time. However, disposal as a deferral to the "future" in anticipation of better garbage-processing technologies appears as a temporal fix with an end date. One such example is a disposed-of virus: this virus later becomes the mechanism for Mimi's cyborg transformation. This virus arrives in Guiyu and fuses with

Mimi's body decades after its first creation and subsequent disposal. The virus is developed through certain post-WWII experiments: out of the pain of losing a loved one in the war, Seisen Suzuki, a Japanese immigrant scientist under the direction of the U.S. military, attempts to develop a hallucinogenic, bio-warfare substance that can overpower soldiers without the firing of a physical shot. These experiments, part of "Project Waste Tide," are later "quietly shut down and all related documents sealed away."[30] The related patents from the project are then transferred to some "newly founded commercial companies in various fields," including the corporations that produced the prosthetics that led to Mimi's cyborg transformation.[31] Despite its apparent disappearance,

> Project Waste Tide never truly stopped. Hidden and decentralized, it had infiltrated all areas of human technology, changing the trajectory of the world's progress. After several rounds of financing, spin-offs, and mergers and acquisitions, the military background of the Arashio Foundation that held stock in the various companies had become obscured, but multiple top- secret research projects continued to be run out of the public eye.[32]

Without the technology or desire to destroy the biohazardous materials completely, the remnants of Project Waste Tide are deferred through new initiatives and projects until the ability or desire to process the materials finally appears—a temporal fix in addition to the spatial fix of North-South dumping. The potential risk of this discarded object continues to loom over the disposer, which is why Project Waste Tide sends Scott Brandle to retrieve the virus decades later, though the virus has already turned Mimi into a cyborg. The class revolt made possible by Mimi's cyborgification is evidence of the virus's uncontainability, paralleling the trash sent for processing that still invariably ends up in the ocean, forming "giant floating islands that threatened the world's shipping lanes."[33] The "fantasy" of disposal in *Waste Tide* thus amounts to a contradictory relationship between waste-producing accumulation

and accumulation-clogging waste. The central conceit of the novel is that the "waste people" are literally people made from waste. In tracking these forms of disposal as they extend from electronic parts, biohazardous materials, and surplus populations, the novel reveals a homology of these forms of waste—they are collectively shaped as categories of waste-surplus within the self-contradictory logics of capital accumulation.

Surplus Tropes

Capital logics of expulsion and absorption also propel the global circulation of culture. Much like the movement of surplus goods, cultural products are often exported to new markets to rejuvenate profits; crudely put, literary and cinematic tropes that find new consumers elsewhere are the "surplus" of cultural production. The export of cultural products is homologous to the expansion of capitalism's "outsides," while their localization in outside markets is homologous to the absorption of surplus. *Waste Tide* is emblematic of these cultural circuits. It incorporates American SF tropes into the Chinese literary imagination while simultaneously anticipating their re-export. These dynamics are most pronounced in the scene of Mimi's cyborg transformation.

Luo Jincheng, the head of the local Luo clan, is convinced that Mimi is responsible for his son's medical condition and wants to use her in an "oil fire" ritual so that she may die in his place.[34] As Luo's subordinates try to capture her for use in the ritual, Mimi goes through a transformation that literalizes the novel's previously implied analogy of waste products and waste people. Mimi feels the outward seepage of her consciousness as if it has become a vaporizing by-product: "her consciousness seeped out of her ruined body and penetrated into the tiny cracks in the waterlogged soil: it rose and rose like some soap bubble lifting off the end of the blowpipe, and lightly, leaving behind no trace, left the ground and hovered in midair."[35] As Mimi's transformation parallels the dissipation of the waste that she once processed, the biohazardous materials—deferred in a temporal fix—

arrive at the end of their deferral by melding with the symbolically disposable Mimi. Mimi attempts to resist this penetrating entity with "the last defenses of her sense of self" as the virus-like entity takes over her physiological senses: a "high-frequency whine," "nerves resonating, shattering, bursting into countless spinning mandalas."[36] This passage suggests an ontological and sensory shift, a transformation that completely upends how her "self" has previously been constituted and experienced. It makes literal the waste people conceit as Mimi absorbs, and is taken over by, the garbage materials she once processed, even as it expels her original human consciousness.

The novel also features other elements that are familiar to American SF audiences—the overused, "surplus" tropes of the forgotten wartime experiment and a superpower-bestowing, biohazardous substance. More explicitly, the face of Mimi's cyborg persona is an embodiment of a localized American trope. There are "two Mimis": Mimi 0 is "the waste girl . . . cautious, guarded against everyone, oversensitive yet full of curiosity," and Mimi 1 is "a presence that . . . [had] come to possess this body like a ghost and become its master. Mimi 1's face was always overlaid on top of the face of a Western woman, like a ghost image."[37] This presence is a "*personality in her subconscious trying to study the world through Mimi's flesh*," observable as a "strange Western face" that "overlaid Mimi's face like a veil of light."[38] The face is that of Hedy Lamarr, an Austrian actress known for playing femme fatale roles who later immigrated to the U.S. and became famous acting in various Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer films.[39] Lamarr was known for "both beauty and brains." Motivated by the needs of the war, the actress invented,[40] an anti-jamming radio communication technique that is now part of today's satellite and wireless technology.[41] In the world of *Waste Tide*, Lamarr's consciousness is uploaded to a cloud after her death and redownloaded once Mimi acquired her cyborg abilities; she aids Mimi's shift from a timid migrant worker to a "cyber goddess, capable of transcending all layers of the net."[42]

Mimi's newfound cyborg abilities, derived from military- funded experiments associated with the face of a Western cultural figure, thus represent an absorption of mid-century American SF imaginaries

that were often infused with anxieties over the potential perils of wartime human and chemical experiments. The Marvel cinematic franchise often uses this trope to explain the existence of superhuman abilities—the serums and modifications that created Captain America and Deadpool, for example, are produced in secretive, weapons-manufacturing, military-associated labs in the postwar period. More broadly, mysterious radioactive substances (assumed to be leaking from nuclear-testing labs) are the handy explanation—though a trope perhaps now retired—for physical transmutations, such as the bestowing of spider-like abilities on young journalists or of ninja-fighting abilities on young turtles. The evocation of this trope registers the global circulation of an Americo-centric SF imaginary: of the top twenty all-time box office grossing foreign films in the People's Republic of China (PRC), seven are from the Marvel franchise, with *Avengers 4* as the all-time highest ranking entry.[43] As a product of these postwar imaginaries that have extended into contemporary spinoffs, these tropes are "surplus" in the sense that they no longer address pressing postwar anxieties but remain as overused explanations in SF cultural production. One way that these surplus tropes remain in circulation—and therefore still produce value—is on the "outside" of the Chinese cinematic market. But these Americo-centric tropes, when localized within the Chinese context, do not mediate the same anxieties about human experiments with a superhero figure—if the export of these tropes is homologous to the expulsion of surplus under capitalism, their localization is homologous to the process of absorption.

Unlike the American superhero, Mimi is a distinct type in modern Chinese fiction, one who, as Cara Healey notes, is a "vehicle for exploring national, political, and economic concerns" in modern Chinese literature.[44] This is a practice not uncommon within peripheral national allegory narratives of the twentieth century, especially when negotiating the influence of Western culture.[45] In much the same way as Lamarr is positioned in order to give Mimi the technical knowledge and an outlet for exacting revenge, the character of Nora in Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* functions as a similarly imported figure of

Western feminism in China, a "rallying cry for the cause of women's liberation" associated with the May Fourth movement—to become a Nora, as Mimi becomes Lamarr, is to instrumentalize her as a legible, dramatic pursuer of individual freedoms.[46] Mimi is part of a constantly evolving catch-all for domestic social critique: she has outgrown the influence of Nora but still exhibits the "conventional use of women's suffering as a commentary on the backward state of the nation." Through her human and cyborg body, Mimi negotiates with the issues of environmental injustice caused by offloaded pollution and the effects of modernization and technology.[47] Within modern Chinese literature, Mimi recalls David Der-Wei Wang's account of Xianglin's wife in Lu Xun's "New Year's sacrifice" and Guo Suo'e in Lu Ling's *Hungry Guo Suo'e*, both "powerful tokens who inscribe the misery of the powerless in a cannibalistic society" as part of an "arguably male imaginary of the physical and metaphysical destitution that besets modern China."[48] This trope continues into Chinese SF: working within an ecofeminism lens, Peter I-min Huang observes a connection between Mimi's "woman warrior" characterization against the "mad women" scientists of Liu Cixin's *The Three-Body Problem*, who are vehicles for exploring masculinist human-nature relationships.[49]

Chinese SF thus both registers and participates in the literary traditions of modern Chinese literature and the SF tropes within the world literature circuit; as a homologous form, and like China's position in the global commodity chain, it is a literary "outside" that processes surplus tropes. We might think about this process through the Warwick Research Collective (WReC)'s attribution of the world-literature problematic to the dynamics of combined and uneven capitalist development. The argument is that underdevelopment, like capitalism's apparent outsides, must be concurrently managed to make development possible. For the WReC, this manifests itself as the collision between modernism and pre-existing regional forms.[50] In Lena Henningsen's account, Chinese SF has developed in conversation with translated fiction, including the works of Jules Verne in the Republican era, Soviet Russian authors in the early PRC, and American authors following the Cultural Revolution.[51] Chen himself mentions

Verne, Arthur C. Clarke, William Gibson, and Ted Chiang's SF works as influences on his own writing and tastes.[52] Henningsen suggests that references by characters to foreign literature (most famously the reading of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* as a key plot moment in *The Three-Body Problem*) are intertextual "reading acts" that reposition SF works into the realm of world literature and "somewhere on the map of literary history," where both Chinese and conventional world literature classics coexist. Similar things can obviously be said for Chen's use of American SF tropes.[53]

However, these surplus tropes circulate in both directions. On Chinese SF since the 2000s, Henningsen notes a "reversal in the direction of translation," as an overturning of the import of forms into an export of literature, especially into the Anglophone market, as translated fiction or Anglophone cinematic adaptations of SF novels.[54] Discussions around the breakout success of *The Three-Body Problem* and Chinese SF award-winning authors characterize recent years as a new era of translated Chinese SF (as opposed to, but not unrelated to, the success of Asian American SF writers).[55] This is perhaps shaped by a broader international turn in the orientation of the judging panels for literary awards. These panels now increasingly valorize translated fiction in an apparent effort to bolster their own inclusivity and worldly status and perhaps to foster a sense of novelty among consumers during a period of market stagnation.[56] Fiction in translation implies the prospect of connecting national literary markets. This process is emblematic in the way the Chinese company Storycom International Culture Communication promotes Chinese SF through *Clarkesworld* and various SF conventions: international recognition results in domestic market value (creating, for example, the bilingual anthology of *Clarkesworld*-published, original and translated Chinese SF, *Untouchable Reality*) and the potential for future breakout or international award-winning works.[57] *Clarkesworld*'s impressive publishing rate of translated fiction (about one to two translated stories per issue in recent years, many of them by Chinese writers) is funded in part by Storycom and readers with a "curiosity" for translated SF—enough curiosity to support the project through a Kickstarter campaign

and booster subscriptions. It has even inspired a similar translation program for Spanish.[58] Significantly, the translated Chinese SF "wave" coincided with a 16% drop in fiction book sales between 2013 and 2017—a drop that naturally caused publishers to seek actively for new brand-name authors and new franchise novels to push sales.[59] In the face of stagnation, the temporary novelty of translated fiction and international recognition boosted sales in both the English and in the original-language markets.[60] While *Waste Tide* registers the circulation of surplus tropes in Mimi's cyborg transformation, the novel also embodies these dynamics as a product of translated Chinese SF.

Literary "Fixes"

China's market "outsideness" is not due to its spatial distance from global consumerism—the acceleration of global circulation and consumption renders this distance negligible—but due to its perceived difference from Western frames of reference, thus making the aforementioned world literature and Chinese SF dynamics possible.[61] Mimi's outsideness status is similarly exterior to Western representation by both proxy and portrait: Mimi's labor and human rights are politically unprotected, and her interiority is irrelevant to Brandle, who sees her only as an object for scientific study. The "waste people" are what Eric Hayot might call "the hypothetical Mandarin"—those who are, by definition, spatially and emotionally removed from the "inside" of Western representation; at the rhetorical level, they embody the theme of disposal.[62] Through their spatial and emotional distance, hypothetical Mandarins are excessive in number and easily sacrificed, summoned in rhetorical situations as a measure of value (the classic example posed by Adam Smith: a million Mandarin lives or your little pinky?).[63] *Waste Tide* negotiates this rhetorical disposability through a similar question of sacrifice: personal revenge—or the greater good of Silicon Isle? These questions regarding Mimi's disposability or indispensability might conjure up, at first glance, a subaltern critique involving the issue of whose lives are truly representable. However, the differing renditions of Mimi's assault

across the three editions—the differences I started this essay with—also exhibit a formal registration of the contradictory logic between disposal and absorption.

Mimi's assault emphasizes her disposability to her employers in relation to her social category as an exploited worker. In the 2013 Chinese original and in the 2019 English translation, her disposable status is gestured to as "outside" of representation, or an indicator of the unspeakable and unrepresentable. This is because "人的语言只能模拟现实，却不是现实本身 [the human language can only simulate reality, but was not reality itself]."[64] In contrast, in the 2019 Chinese version, this disposability manifests itself not as an absence of representation but as rather an *excess* or oversaturation of it. If the three published editions differ in what actually did or did not happen in this crucial scene (and later recollections of this scene do not change across the editions), it seems that the scene's specifics somewhat contradictorily play an unproductive role in the overall plot of the novel. If we read the details of the scene as insignificant and disposable, this disposal, like the waste products that the novel has tracked, does not disappear into an outside space but instead are reabsorbed into the novel'sunchanged resolution of its plot. With each new edition, the contradictions posed by what did or did not happen—by what details might be present or absent—become forcibly absorbed: they represent a literary "fix" of expansion and absorption.

In the 2013 version, the scene is compared to hearsay and bears a movie-like elements of exaggeration, even if this ultimately cannot come close to describing the real event that Mimi experiences:

> 小米听说过无数那类故事，从母亲口中，从文哥及其他垃圾人长辈的嘴里，就像是硅屿当地人编造出来恐吓小孩子的睡前故事，好让他们不去靠近垃圾处理工棚，不去靠近垃圾人。垃圾人也有自己的都市传说，当小米每次听到那些充满夸大而真假难辨的骇人细节时，心底总会暗自发笑，哪里会有人那么做啊，又不是在拍电影。
>
> 可此时此刻，她才真切体会到，所有的故事已经经过了刻意的修饰和美化，因为人的语言只能模拟现实，却并不是现实本身。

> [Mimi has heard those stories countless times, from her mother, from Brother Wen, and from other waste people elders. They were like bedtime stories that the Silicon Isle locals made up to scare their children so that they wouldn't go near the waste processing modular structures or the waste people. The waste people had their urban legends, too, ones with exaggerated, unverifiable, gruesome details that Mimi would secretly scoff at every time she heard them. What kind of story is that? This was not the movies.
> But now, she finally understood. The stories had gone through careful modifications and [had been] prettied up, because the human language can only simulate reality, but was not reality itself.][65]

In the 2019 English version, the unspoken horror is replaced with a horror that does not happen: "the thing she feared most didn't come to pass."[66] More detail is added, not of the physical assault itself, but rather of a neural device that sanitizes the physical contact into an indirect cyber-assault:

> Instead, he put on an oddly shaped helmet and stood right in front of Mimi.
> The helmet was connected by a cord to an augmented- sensing device shaped like a six-tentacled octopus. Skinhead and Scarface hauled it out of a tank filled with nutrient fluid and wrapped the dripping, pale gray, translucent tentacles around Mimi's body and limbs. The cold, slimy sensation brought out goose bumps all over her skin.[67]

In the 2019 Chinese version, however, the unrepresentable is transformed into an excess of details or, in Rey Chow's words, it becomes "purely pictorial, imagistic, beyond analysis: women's bodies."[68]

> 小米看见自己苍白的大腿，那条柔韧肮脏的工装裤已经不知去向，一股

垃圾腥臭气味，她的膝盖与脚踝分别被光头男和疤脸男牢牢固定住，拉扯向不同的方向，露出她最柔软的角落。
那个叫作刀仔的男人蹲下，在她双膝形成的山谷间，血红的火焰贴膜在肩头燃起，点亮了他的瞳仁，轮廓鲜明的面孔透着邪气，唇钉与鼻环轻轻相触，他仔细端详着小米的两腿之间，像在研究什么神秘现象。白这粒肉蚌还没开过光咧。他竟是一脸惊讶。垃圾雏。其他两人痉挛怪笑起来。

[Mimi saw her own pale, bloodless thighs—her soft, dirty pair of overalls had disappeared. In the sour stench of garbage, her knees and ankles were firmly pinned down, in opposite directions, by Skinhead and Scarface, exposing her most vulnerable area.
The man called Knifeboy squatted between the peaks formed by her knees. A blood-red flame glows from the decal on his shoulder, lighting up his pupils, his angular face suffused with a demonic gleam, his lip and septum piercings softly touching. He looked intently at the spot between Mimi's legs, as if investigating some mysterious phenomenon.
This clam hasn't been opened yet! He was full of surprise. *Virgin waste*. The others convulsed in laughter.][69]

The passage continues to describe how Knifeboy gropes Mimi's nipples (first the left, then the right), and Skinhead's taunt: "'湿了湿了。'光头用普通话大喊，脑壳油光锃亮，似乎让小米听懂可以令他愈加兴奋。他卖力地钳制住猛烈挣脱的大腿。['She's wet, she's wet,' Skinhead yells in Mandarin. His head has become greasy and shiny, as if he was even more excited by the fact that Mimi could understand him. He doubled his efforts in clamping down on Mimi's violently struggling legs]."[70]

The subsequent internal struggle between Mimi 0 and Mimi 1 can be read, as Mingwei Song writes, as the "main achievement" of the novel in the way it "opens up a journey to interiority for Chinese SF," offering a revelation of the nature of the virtual world for the Chinese subject.[71] Alternately, following Chow's account of Chinese modernity, the detailed narration may be deemed a feudal relic in

its turn towards interiority and national subjectivity. But perhaps, in its longtime association with the feminine and the traditional, it can also "sabotage the identity that Chinese modernism seeks between 'inner subjectivity' and 'new nation'" and mock the "progressiveness" of such aspirations.[72] The compounding of detail with each new edition, especially of the abuse of Mimi's body, recalls Chow's reading of details not as a more realistic abundance of information but as remnants of what has been "cut up" from reality (following the etymology of the word)—as superfluous, trivial pieces of a still-unrepresented truth.[73] In the logic of the narrative as a whole, these details are indeed trivial: despite the scene's significance as the agitation that sets Mimi's cyborg transformation and revenge plot in motion, Mimi's later recollections of Knifeboy's abuse do not change accordingly. Regardless of her specific experience in each version of the novel, Mimi nonetheless spares Knifeboy for Brother Wen to kill, since Brother Wen is "*someone who wants to kill him even more*" than Mimi does, because his sister has died from a similar form of assault.[74] As the scene expands with each republication to new readerships, or as a process of constant enhancement, the conflicting details, like a social surplus, become absorbed into the new narrative.

Conclusion

This essay has presented the management of waste, surplus populations, and translated literature as homologous forms: interrelated entities that are not just coincidentally analogous but collectively suffused with the logic of surplus expulsion and absorption. In reading the representation of the "waste people" in a political-economic framework, I have examined the spatial, theoretical, and representational "outsides"—the maintenance of which makes these circulations possible and profitable. The convergence of these "outsides" grapples with a contradictory fantasy of the infinite expansion and absorption of surplus. Reading between the three separate editions of the novel suggests that this contradiction manifests itself conceptually and implicates both translation circuits

and their narration. *Waste Tide* is far from offering a utopian fantasy of a technological (and, by implication, sustainable) fix to surplus management: rather than their easy disappearance or absorption, the surpluses in the novel often appear on the verge of causing catastrophe for the systems that have created them. Despite its narrative closure, *Waste Tide* ends with the continuous cycle of accumulation and disposal in Kaizong's pursuit of the oceanic trash islands— a prediction, perhaps, that these processes will continue even as China's position within both the processes of global accumulation and of world literature shifts. Chinese SF thus becomes a site for these negotiations, particularly as a "form of imagination" and as an ongoing "chronicle of a history that will never end."[75]

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Notes

[1] Chen Qiufan, *Huangchao* (Changsha: Changsha Literature & Art Publishing House, 2013).

[2] Chen Qiufan, *Waste Tide*, trans. Ken Liu (New York: Tor, 2019), 134. This difference is unlikely to be the translator's choice given that the rest of the translation is mostly attributable, at the sentence level, to the 2013 Chinese edition. The English edition was likely translated from an updated Chinese draft that was later further updated for the 2019 Chinese edition. According to Mingwei Song, the absence of detail in the 2013 Chinese version is presumably the result of the censorship of graphic sexual violence. Mingwei Song, *Fear of Seeing*: *A Poetics of Chinese Science Fiction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2023), 263.

[3] Chen Qiufan, *Huangchao* (Shanghai: Shanghai Literature & Art Publishing House, 2019), 113.

[4] David Harvey, "The 'New' Imperialism: Accumulation by Dispossession," *Socialist Register* 40 (2004): 63–87.

[5] The correspondence between literature and the material has been described either as literature's passive reflection—or its more active mediation—of the material world. See Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 97; Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. Hannah Mitchell and Stanley Mitchell (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983).

[6] I make a distinction between analogy and homology drawing on Williams's discussion in *Marxism and Literature*, 105. I also refer to homology as a part of foundational Marxist literary criticism such as in Lucien Goldmann, *The Hidden God*: *A Study of Tragic Vision in the Pensées of Pascal and the Tragedies of Racine*, trans. Philip Thody (London: Verso, 2016). Frederic Jameson warns against conflating the production of goods and the production of language, which can be implied in a homology of shared origins, rather than pursuing the more dynamic and mutual relationships between text and the material. More recently, Leigh Claire La Berge offers an overview of the stakes of reading by homology as being overly deterministic or overly reliant on a capacious "shared historical present" as a premise of analysis. See Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*: *Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 44–46; Leigh Claire La Berge, *Scandals and Abstraction*: *Financial Fiction of the Long 1980s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 23.

[7] Josh Lepawsky and Chris Mcnabb, "Mapping International Flows of Electronic Waste," *The Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe Canadien* 54, no. 2 (2010): 177–95; Wang Kun, Qian Junxi, and He Shenjing, "Contested Worldings of E-Waste Environmental Justice: Nonhuman Agency and E-Waste Scalvaging in Guiyu, China," *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 111, no. 7 (2021): 2165–84.

[8] This distance and sensationalism have racial connotations. Michelle Huang,

for instance, argues that the plastic contaminants in ocean garbage are discursively framed by a logic similar to those of Asian containment and assimilation. This draws from Cold War rhetorics that sought to contain the racial and political Other geographically, or to assimilate them into the American racial order and capitalist system. Michelle N. Huang, "Ecologies of Entanglement in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 20, no. 1 (2017): 95–117.

[9] Xin Tong and Jici Wang, "Transnational Flows of E-Waste and Spatial Patterns of Recycling in China," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 45, no. 8 (2004): 608–21; Lin Wei and Yangsheng Liu, "Present Status of E-Waste Disposal and Recycling in China," *Procedia Environmental Sciences* 16 (2012): 506–14; Peter Wynn Kirby and Anna Lora-Wainwright, "Exporting Harm, Scavenging Value: Transnational Circuits of e-Waste between Japan, China and beyond," *Area* 47, no. 1 (2015): 40–47.

[10] Adam Liebman, "High-Metabolism Infrastructure and the Scrap Industry in Urban China," *The China Quarterly* 255 (2023): 560–74; Xin Tong and Dongyan Tao, "The Rise and Fall of a 'Waste City' in the Construction of an 'Urban Circular Economic System': The Changing Landscape of Waste in Beijing," *Resources, Conservation and Recycling* 107 (2016): 10–17; Guo Chen, Feng Jia, and Chen Liwen, "Dharavi in Beijing? A Hidden Geography of Waste and Migrant Exclusion," *The Professional Geographer* 75, no. 1 (2023): 187–205.

[11] Harvey, 64.

[12] Ibid., 65.

[13] Ching Kwan Lee, "Eventful Global China," in *The Specter of Global China: Politics, Labor, and Foreign Investment in Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

[14] Harvey, 65–66.

[15] Chen Qiufan, *Waste Tide*, 272.

[16] The ecological implications of this novel are explored in Hua Li, "The Environment, Humankind, and Slow Violence in Chinese Science Fiction," *Communication and the Public* 3, no. 4 (2018): 270–82; Guangzhao Lyu, "Waste People and the Vampiric Society: The Heterotopia of Migrant Workers in Chen Qiufan's *Waste Tide*," *Extrapolation* 62, no. 3 (2021): 1–14; Yen Ooi, "Translating the Chinese Monster in *Waste Tide*," in *Science Fiction in Translation* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

[17] Chen Qiufan, *Waste Tide*, 70.

[18] Ibid., 31.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., 72.

[21] Ibid., 31.

[22] Ibid., 27.

[23] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London:

Penguin, 1981), 784.

[24] Chris Chen, "The Limit Point of Capitalist Equality," *Endnotes*, accessed May 16, 2023, https://endnotes.org.uk/translations/chris-chen-the-limit-point-of-capitalist-equality.

[25] The general instability of the migrant labor supply, while typically following the rural-urban or inland-coastal pattern, results from limitations on moving entire families due to the *hukou* registration system, the instability of available jobs, and the competing, more stable income sources in the rural or peri-urban regions. As coastal industries have shifted to export-oriented production modes, labor supplies have struggled to keep up with the over- and under-consumption patterns of the global economy. John Knight, Deng Quheng, and Li Shi, "The Puzzle of Migrant Labour Shortage and Rural Labour Surplus in China," *China Economic Review* 22, no. 4 (2011): 585–600; Yan Yuan, Rong Zhao, Yang Rudai, and Yang Liu, "Instability of Migrant Labor Supply in China: Evidence from Source Areas for 1987–2008," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 56, no. 3 (2015): 231–59; Chen Chen and Min Zhao, "The Undermining of Rural Labor Out-Migration by Household Strategies in China's Migrant-Sending Areas: The Case of Nanyang, Henan Province," *Cities* 60 (2017): 446–53.

[26] Chen and Zhao, 448.

[27] Chen Qiufan, *Waste Tide*, 68–69.

[28] Marx, 876.

[29] Michael Webber, "Primitive Accumulation in Modern China," *Dialectical Anthropology* 32, no. 4 (2008): 299–320; Jack Barbalet, "Primitive Accumulation and Chinese Mirrors," *Journal of Classical Sociology* 19, no. 1 (2019): 27–42.

[30] Chen Qiufan, *Waste Tide*, 195.

[31] Ibid., 236.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., 346.

[34] Ibid., 66.

[35] Ibid., 141.

[36] Ibid., 139.

[37] Ibid., 209–10.

[38] Ibid., 271–72, original emphasis.

[39] "Hedy Lamarr," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed September 11, 2024, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hedy-Lamarr.

[40] Chen Qiufan, *Waste Tide*, 272.

[41] "Hedy Lamarr," *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

[42] Chen Qiufan, *Waste Tide*, 272.

[43] "Domestic All-Time Box Office Ranking, Imported Films [内地总票房排名-进口]," *Endata*, accessed July 4, 2025, https://www.endata.com.cn/BoxOffice/BO/

History/Movie/Alltimedomestic.html. Note that domestically produced films still make up the majority of the all-time domestic box office rankings. The only foreign film to enter the top 20 is Marvel's *Avengers 4*.

[44] Cara Healey, "Estranging Realism in Chinese Science Fiction: Hybridity and Environmentalism in Chen Qiufan's 'The Waste Tide,'" *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 29, no. 2 (2017): 14.

[45] For example, Fredric Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text*, no. 15 (1986): 65–88; Partha Chatterjee, "Colonialism, Nationalism, and Colonialized Women: The Contest in India," *American Ethnologist* 16, no. 4 (1989): 622–33. However, the allegorical reading is just one potential lens for interpreting literature: it is not limited to the global South and should not be treated as a defining feature. See Aijaz Ahmad, "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory,'" *Social Text*, no. 17 (1987): 3–25.

[46] Shouhua Qi, "(Mis)Reading Ibsen: Chinese Noras On and Off the Stage and Nora in Her Chinese Husband's Ancestral Land of the 1930s as Reimagined for the Globalized World Today," *Comparative Drama* 50, no. 4 (2016): 342. Nora has been a shorthand figure in discussions of Chinese feminism, at times contested as a Western import by men (notably in Hu Shi's promotion of Ibsen's play), criticized as an emblem of individualist liberation without systemic struggle (following Lu Xun), and especially relevant as an image of empowerment in theater spaces by actresses, most famously Jiang Qing. This Chinese actress assumed the role of Nora in a similar manner to the way that Mimi "becomes" Lamarr. See Lu Xun, "What Happens after Nora Leaves Home," in *Lu Xun Selected Works*, trans. Xianyi Yang and Gladys Yang (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1980); Elisabeth Eide, *China's Ibsen: From Ibsen to Ibsenism* (London: Curzon, 1987); Shu Yang, "I Am Nora, Hear Me Roar: The Rehabilitation of the Shrew in Modern Chinese Theater," *Nan Nu: Men, Women and Gender in China* 18, no. 2 (2016): 291–325; Xia Liyang, "The Silent Noras: Women of the First Chinese Performance of *A Doll's House*," *Asian Theatre Journal* 38, no. 1 (2021): 218–44.

[47] Healey, 15–16. Rey Chow's study of women and Chinese modernity similarly positions the Chinese woman as a "stand-in" for China's self- consciousness, where her traditionally oppressed position becomes a measure for and a limit of social transformations toward modernity. Rey Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading Between West and East* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 170.

[48] David Der-Wei Wang, *The Monster That Is History: History, Violence, and Fictional Writing in Twentieth-Century China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 119.

[49] Peter I-min Huang, "Chinese Science Fiction and Representations of Ecofeminists: Mad Women or Women Warriors," in *Ecofeminist Science Fiction*, ed.

Douglas A. Vakoch (New York: Routledge, 2021). Note that the "woman warrior" and "mad women" tropes are also imported tropes from the Asian American and British canons, respectively, in a dynamic perhaps similar to Nora's entrance into the Chinese cultural imaginary. There is also a broader continuity to be drawn between the novel and larger trends in contemporary Chinese literature. With the novel's attention to local clan dynamics and domestic migrant worker patterns, many scholars place Chen Qiufan and *Waste Tide* within a distinctive wave of post-1990s Chinese SF. Interestingly, one of Liu Cixin's first SF novels also involves the uploading of Mao Zedong's consciousness to a cloud, not unlike Lamarr's appearance in *Waste Tide*. See Mingwei Song, "After 1989: The New Wave of Chinese Science Fiction," *China Perspectives* 2015, no. 1 (2015): 7–13; Pattarapong Kongwattana, "The Sinicized Posthuman Future: Reimagining Cyberpunk and the Cyborg in Chen Qiufan's *Waste Tide*," *Tamkang Review* 53, no. 1 (2022): 93–116; Yue Zhou and Xi Liu, "Representing Environmental Issues in Post-1990s Chinese Science Fiction," in *Ecocriticism and Chinese Literature*, ed. Riccardo Moratto, Nicoletta Pesaro, and Di-Kai Chao (New York: Routledge, 2022). In particular, Frederike Schneider-Vielsäcker writes that Chinese SF writers born after 1980, including Chen, share some common preoccupations in their writing, responding to an era of rapid changes in social and urban landscapes, especially through the trope of the body as an allegory for social transformation. Frederike Schneider-Vielsäcker, "Bodies in Transformation: The Politics of Post-80s Science Fiction Authors Chi Hui, Chen Qiufan, and Zhang Ran," in *Chinese Science Fiction*: *Concepts*, *Forms*, *and Histories*, ed. Mingwei Song, Nathaniel Isaacson, and Hua Li (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024), 254.

[50] Warwick Research Collective, "World-Literature in the Context of Combined and Uneven Development," *Combined and Uneven Development*: *Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 13.

[51] Lena Henningsen, "Reading World Literature in Chinese Science Fiction," in *A World History of Chinese Literature*, ed. Yingjin Zhang (New York: Routledge, 2023), 198.

[52] Chen Qiufan, "China and Chinese SF: Interview with Chen Qiufan," interview by Mengtian Sun, *MCLC Resource Center*, April 1, 2017, accessed November 30, 2024, https://u.osu.edu/mclc/online-series/sunmengtian/.

[53] Henningsen, 204.

[54] Ibid., 198.

[55] Christopher T. Fan, *Asian American Fiction after 1965*: *Transnational Fantasies of Economic Mobility* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2024), 26. For a discussion of the key role that Asian American translators have played in this reversal of literary circulation, see L. Maria Bo, "The Asian (American) Century? Translating Between Chinese and Chinese American Science Fiction," *Verge*: *Studies in Global Asias* 11, no. 2 (2025): 218–41.

[56] Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?," *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 2 (1991): 347.

[57] Promotion of translated SF is not limited to Storycom or from the Chinese language; fiction from languages with smaller readerships such as Finnish also finds a promotional presence at SF conventions like Worldcon. Cheryl Morgan, "Books from Worldcon," *Cheryl's Mewsings*, August 18, 2017, accessed November 30, 2024, https://www.cheryl-morgan.com/books-from-worldcon/.

[58] Neil Clarke, "Editor's Desk: A Secret Project!," *Clarkesworld Magazine*, accessed November 30, 2024, https://clarkesworldmagazine.com/clarke_09_14/; Neil Clarke, "Editor's Desk: Ten+ Years of Translation," *Clarkesworld Magazine*, accessed November 30, 2024, https://clarkesworldmagazine.com/clarke_09_21/. Similarly, the Literature Translation Institute of Korea has funded nine translated stories for Clarkesworld.

[59] Jim Milliot and Rachel Deahl, "What's the Matter with Fiction Sales?," Publishers Weekly, accessed November 30, 2024, https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by- topic/industry-news/publisher-news/article/78446-what-s-the-matter-with-fiction- sales.html. The long-form translated Chinese SF wave was between 2014 and 2020, though SF titles still made up a smaller portion of all titles translated from the Chinese (including authors from Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Tibet). "Translation Database," Publishers Weekly, accessed November 30, 2024, https:// www.publishersweekly.com/pw/translation/home/index.html. Though translated SF titles reached their peak in 2020 with five standalone titles published that year, they seem to be on a downward trend (only one title was published in 2022 and 2023 respectively, and none in 2024). Compared with short-form fiction, novels still tend to be the basis for extended commercial franchising. A good example is the Netflix adaptation of The Three-Body Problem.

[60] The International Booker Prize, for example, reported significant increases in book sales following the nomination of a translated work. Explaining for this "recent" interest, nearly half of translated-fiction sales in the U.K. are made by readers under 35, while the largest group of fiction buyers overall are those aged 60–84. "Generation TF: Who Is Really Reading Translated Fiction in the UK," *The Booker Prizes*, April 13, 2023, accessed November 30, 2024, https://thebookerprizes.com/the-booker-library/features/generation-tf-who-is-really-reading-translated-fiction-in-the-uk.

[61] Ivan Franceschini and Nicholas Loubere, *Global China as Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

[62] Eric Hayot, *The Hypothetical Mandarin*: *Sympathy*, *Modernity*, *and Chinese Pain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[63] Ibid., 2.

[64] Chen Qiufan, *Huangchao* (2013), 100. Quotes from the 2013 and 2019 Chinese versions are my translations.

[65] Ibid., 100.

[66] Chen Qiufan, *Waste Tide*, 134.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Chow, 106.
[69] Chen Qiufan, *Huangchao* (2019), 113.
[70] Ibid., 113–14.
[71] Song, *Fear of Seeing*, 266.
[72] Chow, 120.
[73] Ibid., 119–20.
[74] Chen Qiufan, *Waste Tide*, 307, original emphasis.
[75] Song, *Fear of Seeing*, 312.

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