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## CLCWeb Call for Papers: Global Futurism

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# Global Futurism: Next Generations of Literary and Artistic Narratives

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The imagination of the future is a constant topic that transcends geographical frontiers and cultural boundaries in human society, giving rise to future(s) studies, futurology, or simply, futurism. Futurism is taken here not in the sense of the art movement that originated in Italy in 1909, but simply all forms of cultural expressions that embrace the “future”. As a medium for cultural exchange and innovation, literary and artistic narratives reflect and shape societal values and visions of the future, exerting considerable influence on technological and social developments through imaginative foresight. This issue invites contributions on futuristic themes in literature and art that encompass diverse cultures and perspectives, envisioning to depict a “global” picture of contemplating futuristic narratives and contribute to constructing a diversified landscape of the future.

Literature is an important vehicle for people’s futuristic imagination, as speculative aspects of futurism are noticeably traceable to the traditions of utopian literature or science fiction. Literary texts seem to have shown great potential for cultural prophecy, as manifested by the term “fiction about the future” coined by H. G. Wells (1980), or the “fiction of the future” claimed by Robert Scholes (1975). Wells, who authored *Anticipations of the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress upon Human Life and Thought* (1901), is perceived as the founder of future(s) studies. In this sense, from the beginning, the systematic and interdisciplinary exploration (or “prediction”) of technological advancement and the social progress that the former may bring about is essential in people’s reflections on the future.

Firstly, people express a common conviction that science and technology will transform the world in the century ahead, either assertively or doubtfully. In other

words, the function of prophecy as exhibited by literature may have different natures of prophetic insight, both anticipation and exhortation. Secondly, the dimension of futuristic imagination in relation to history and reality is worthy of attention, for some science fiction aims “not to give us ‘images’ of the future...but rather to defamiliarize and restructure our experience of our own *present*” (Jameson 1982, 151). Thirdly, futuristic narratives are multi-dimensional: some are closely intertwined with political, ideological, or nationalist agendas in special socio-historical settings, as Jameson defends the political relevance of utopia and science fiction (2005, xi); while others are oriented toward shared interests of human society or, rather a community (e.g. the ideal of Great Unity in Confucianism). Fourthly, since recent years have witnessed the coming true of some incredible predictions in the early literary imagination, it is foreseeable that literary works can not only imagine the future as it might be, but may also become an inspiring force to turn imaginations into reality. Fifthly, does the imagination and representation of futurism have the potential to question, challenge, and improve the political, cultural, economic, and identity-based inequalities and unevenness between the global South/North, capitalists/laborers, males/other oppressed genders, and humans/nature? Finally, contextualized in constant techno-innovation, how might literary and artistic practice capitalize on technological advancement to generate new creativity today? What are the ethical dimensions to be addressed in this process?

From a global perspective, texts from various eras and locations may address similar global issues alongside transcultural activities: from the translation and creation of futuristic novels in late Qing China, as an important facet of China Question of Western Theory (Liu 2020), to Francesco Verso’s “future fiction” project in Italy today<sup>1</sup>; from the rise of “Afrofuturism”, as both a cultural movement and a critical framework, to the *Manifesto of Science Fiction Futurism* 科幻未来主义的状态或宣言 (2014) proposed by Chinese scholars to anticipate the future. In

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.futurefiction.org/francesco-verso/?lang=en>, accessed on January 12, 2023.

the new media age today, the ubiquity of technology has exerted an increasingly profound influence on people's imagination of the future, which makes the reflections on science and technology an overarching theme in thinking about the future as a global topic. On the one hand, the globalizing force has paved the way for literary and theoretical texts, or artistic expressions to circulate beyond their cultures of origin, address similar issues, and explore alternatives about the future across the globe; On the other, digital globalization has further made possible the circulation of literary texts across different media platforms, giving rise to transmedia futurities, as an inventive combination of theoretical, literary or artistic reflections vis-à-vis technological innovations.

With these questions in mind, by combining inter-disciplinary and international perspectives, potential contributions will be grouped under the following broad categories:

- Futuristic narrative and imagination in literature (as a response to/ or an intervention in reality)
- Criticism of future-oriented cultural phenomena/practices and their ethical implications
- The impact of technology (eg. Internet, AI) on future literary, artistic, and cultural creations
- Transmedia futurities: reflections on literature, art, and media for the next generation(s)
- Leftist futurism, futuristic cultural studies, global futurist aesthetics
- Ethical considerations in futuristic narratives (promoting responsible and inclusive visions of the future)

We invite original contributions in response to this theme. Please send an abstract of around 300 words and a short bio note of the contributor by email to the guest editor You Wu at [ywu@zhwx.ecnu.edu.cn](mailto:ywu@zhwx.ecnu.edu.cn) by December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Please

use the subject heading “*CLCWeb* Special Issue on Global Futurism” in communication or submission.