of the humble self-effacing impression Liang usually gives in his publicity interviews, a good indication of the approachable "ordinariness" of some of his SF.

There is room for debate when it comes to considering Liang's work as SF. While many of his stories are typically futuristic in either their setting (outer space) or theme (introduction of new technology), Liang's interest in scholarly research into the late-Qing era means that on the other hand, he is also dedicated to writing about technology and wonder in the steampunk mode, set in the late 19th century, and what role these elements played in the issues that China faced at the time. While the prototypical SF written *during* the late Qing is characterized as utopian and self-justifying (Wang 39), as well as ambivalent with respect to science and technology (Isaacson 2–3), more than a hundred years later, why would a contemporary SF writer be interested in exploring the role of science in that historical setting? At least based on my own personal consumption of Chinese and sinophone SF, his interest in writing SF-adjacent stories set in that time period makes him a minority among contemporary writers.

A relevant critical term here may be Ken Liu's "silkpunk," which he very explicitly defines as "not 'Asian-flavored steampunk'" and "not 'Asian-influenced fantasy.'" Instead, in his own work, silkpunk is an emphasis technology that "relies on materials of historical importance to the people of East Asia and the Pacific islands: bamboo, shells, coral, paper, silk, feathers, sinew." He also takes pains to highlight the "punk" aspect of his novels, which are about "rebellion, resistance, re-appropriation and rejuvenation of tradition, and defiance of authority" (Liu). Peng Chao (a scholar as well as fellow SF writer) mentions that readers have likened Liang's work to silkpunk but does not elaborate on specifics (28). In my view, Liang's Qing dynasty fiction does contain a healthy dose of rebellious spirit, which not only provides his usually marginalized cast characters with an excuse for adventure, but also speaks to prevailing sentiments of deprivation and turmoil experienced by many citizens at the time.

Peng has also described Liang's work in this category as "history-based sci-fi" (28), with a unique aesthetic style that is a combination of nostalgia and technology. If I grasp Peng's argument correctly, he is saying that the ways in which these works re-imagine the process of technological development in China both represents a nostalgia for that period in history and a way to instill a newfound sense of national pride and cultural confidence.

The second category within Liang's work, SF based on contemporary settings, is more closely related (though not as much so compared to other writers, as we shall see) to science-fictional realism. Wei Lu points out that the term "sci-fi realism" (*kehuan xianshi zhuyi*) was largely coined by Chinese SF writers and scholars who needed to find some way to use sci-fi to describe their daily realities. According to Lu and others, because of China's dramatically accelerated technological development timeline since the late-20th century, there was an urgent need for fiction to address the possible dangers of technology (Lu 706–09). Happily, realism and social realism have long been the privileged literary genres in China, so "the combination of [SF and realism] proves to be surprisingly successful in the complicated Chinese social context" (Lu 707). In this critical formulation, Chinese SF is largely reactive, written in response to dramatic

societal changes wrought by technological pursuits undertaken in competition with the West. The scenarios described in these SF stories also tend to be dramatically larger than life: be they the cyborg adventures of Chen Qiufan, an entire folding city in Hao Jingfang's *Folding Beijing*, alien invasion in Liu Cixin's *Three-Body Problem*, or the apocalyptic scenarios precipitated by modern transportation in Han Song's various works.

So how can we categorize Liang's unique brand of "mundane" SF, and how does it cohere with his more dramatic re-imagining of late imperial China? With respect to mobilizing the concept of quotidian reality in the analysis of science fiction, we have as precedent Sunyoung Ahn's "The Everyday Life of Artificial Intelligence" and Jonathan Hay's "Quotidian Science Fiction: Posthuman Dreams of Emancipation." Citing theorists such as Henri Lefebvre and Raymond Williams, Ahn points out the "inherently utopian quality to thinking about the everyday" (73) which Ted Chiang uses to great effect in *The Lifecycle of Software Objects* (2010), a novella that critiques the dehumanizing forces of market and technology through "objects" that have infiltrated the everyday lives of characters in the novella: digients, or virtual pets. The humans in the story develop affection for these "pets" through sustained everyday interaction with them on a digital platform, but eventually realize just how much the digients' existence–and by extension their lives which are affectionately bonded to the digients–depend on the whims of capitalist logic that sustain the digital platform. Though the digients of the story are "things," their thing-ness falls by the wayside as humans come to see them as important entities in their own right. Ultimately, the characters in this story come to appreciate what is essentially another life form, but also gain an understanding of the precarity of their shared existence, specifically due to sustained interaction through everyday life.

Hay analyzes SF texts that are more optimistic about positive and productive change, arguing that certain texts use the mundanity of everyday life to help readers imagine and accept possible posthuman realities. Through the depiction of banal and repetitive fictional lives, these texts help us imagine gradual social progress, alternatives to capitalism, and posthuman ecosystems, respectively, all of which would be more difficult to accept as possible and relatable without the grounding of mundane reality (Hay 43–44).

In *Anthropocene Unseen: A Lexicon*, Eli Elinoff and Tyson Vaughan also discuss how the quotidian can be a powerful way to make aspects of the Anthropocene relevant to regular people, who may not be familiar with the concept. The quotidian—in other words, the everyday experiences of regular people—can offer a way to understand "statistical" and overwhelming concepts such as climate change and space for individual action and agency (Elinoff and Vaughan 371–72). It can be a "grounding antidote to the apocalyptic" (Elinoff and Vaughan 371). While Liang's science fiction does not primarily focus on apocalyptic scenarios, its primary subject matter does fall into two categories: contemplating the roles of scientific and Western influence during a cataclysmic time in Chinese history, i.e. the latter days of the Qing dynasty, and contemplating the role of technology in our lives today. In contrast to his exciting, adventurous work depicting a Steampunk-oriented Qing dynasty, the banality and normality of his work

on contemporary lives is fascinating in comparison, and this article seeks to locate the shared concerns of these two sectors of Liang's interest.

While one can definitely argue that the more quotidian aspects of Liang's work perhaps reflect his own life as a young man trying to make his way in 21st century China, I argue that banality figured with a humorous lens is key to his vision of our near-future. His steampunk Qing dynasty fiction is colored with a nostalgic adventurousness that nearly obscures the fact that all of its characters are grappling with threatening new technology. When writing about the present, Liang transmogrifies this obscuring nostalgia into banality and absurdity, but in essence still depicts a skeptical attitude toward omnipresent new technology.

The Resolutely Mundane Protagonists of Liang Qingsan's SF

Few scholars have written about banality in SF other than with respect to the specific texts cited above, though the stylistic feature is occasionally highlighted in the analysis of literature. More well known is Hannah Arendt's "banality of evil" concept, famously characterizing the cluster of seemingly inane characteristics in a single individual (Adolf Eichmann) which gave rise to a great evil, an agent of the Nazi Regime and its innumerable crimes (Arendt). In contrast, I wish to consider a banality that is close to its dictionary definition, something that is unremarkable, mundane, even boring. A closely related idea is the everyday, which is akin to boredom but not quite the same. The everyday in fiction resembles so closely our reality that one wonders how it can be interesting enough to write about: protagonists go to uninteresting jobs, possess uninteresting personalities, and muse about their lives in an uninteresting way. Even when the dramatic or the novel intrudes upon their lives, these characters seem unable to resist the pull of their formerly boring lives, trying everything to maintain the status quo and their sense of normality.

The combination of banality and the everyday is essential to the particular worldview and purpose of Liang Qingsan's near-future SF: not an expression of sublimity, a consideration of great philosophical and ethical conundrums, or an allegorization of geo-political circumstances. What it primarily evokes is simply boredom, banality, and the feeling that the supposedly transformative technologies of the near-future are simply useless ornamentations in our mundane lives. In other words, a remarkably different outlook on technology compared to other SF works: technology not as savior or harbinger of doom, but a reflection of our current problems that require more fundamental solutions.

The characters in this type of Liang Qingsan story typically begin as and remain everyday people going about their jobs and mundane lives, despite their potentially exciting circumstances. The initial paragraphs of "Planet BBQ" (2011),[1] for example, depict the exciting "discovery" of a new planet under dangerous circumstances, a procedure called "leaping." But the story soon reveals that its protagonist is no pioneering hero but a regular traveler, obsessed with his reputation as a "planet exploration strategist," thinking always of his reputation and how he is perceived by friends and fellow travelers, and not in any way about what it means to discover or

visit other planets and what it might mean for their native inhabitants or humanity's interactions with them. In other words, space travel and contact with other species has become banal.

In "My Happy Pastry Life" (2015),[2] there is a similarly blasé reaction to marvelous events. When the narrator's bread machine somehow creates a human doppelgänger of himself, which then attempts to usurp his life entirely, his internal response is:

> I've indeed seen many strange things. When I check out at the supermarket, there's always somebody cutting in line in front of me. When I order beef tendon rice noodles, they always give me fish balls instead. At the subway, I always end up waiting for a train that passes without stopping. And so on. I am indeed a seasoned warrior!
> (Liang, "Pastry Life" 21)

Firstly, the miraculous technological incident—the creation of a sentient human being from a machine!—in this story is already associated with something utterly banal: a bread machine, an everyday appliance that appears in many households. It is not the outcome of serious scientific inquiry taking place in an ultra-secret government or corporate lab, just something that is discovered by an ordinary office worker upon his return home one day. The examples given above directly after the narrator's recounting of the miraculous technological incident is an additional layer of banalization, while simultaneously displacing impressions of the fresh incident to remind the reader of the narrator's everyday concerns and minor inconveniences, none of which have anything to do with the technology of the bread machine, which thus seems irrelevant.

Already, we see that the difference between this type of story and Liang's Qing-dynasty steampunk adventures is instructive. The banality with which technology is introduced in the story—and the way it is subsequently trivialized—hints that Liang does not believe that speculative technology can produce meaningful change in the present, instead consigning his wildest adventures to a fantastical past. (Even then, whether technology ultimately has a positive impact with respect to China's ultimate fate is debatable – but that is the subject of another scholarly inquiry.)

Additionally, in stories like "Planet BBQ" and "The Door Leads to the Hallway" (2013),[3] Liang combines futuristic technology with the banality, and even irritation, of familiar phenomena in our contemporary society to great effect. "Planet BBQ," for example, takes place in a time where space travel and the discovery of new planets has been commodified as luxury tourism, instead of the domain of scientific discovery. The industry's companies thus compete to offer the best equipment for these endeavors: oxygen tanks with the largest life-saving reserves, and the most protective spacesuits, for example – an advantage that ironically becomes a disadvantage. It is an industry that has generated entertainment publications and forums full of "strategy guides" dedicated to high-level (attractive to tourists or commercial interests) planets, mirroring our planetary tourism industry. When "Planet BBQ's" narrator Zhang Xiaobai crash lands on the titular planet, his first reaction is to marvel at a planet seemingly full of sentient beings that happen to take the form of foods that human beings are interested in eating, and his second reaction is that he will now be able to write a new strategy guide as a claim to fame.

In the midst of starvation and unable to access the plentiful amounts of food items that are seemingly ripe for the taking, he exhausts his options of attempting to pass the food through his airtight spacesuit, cursing the fact that some manufacturers offer suits with an "interior and exterior exchange port," but his does not. Then, he fantasizes about having a spacesuit that is light as a bubble, allowing exterior objects to enter when necessary. He muses, "Can't reality be more science-fictional?," underscoring—despite its setting—the felt banality of his existence (Liang, "Planet BBQ" 7).

Both "Planet BBQ" and "My Happy Pastry Life" thus utilize the unexpected preeminence of banality to great effect. While "BBQ" has the most obvious science-fictional topic of space travel, many SF stories feature sudden and marvelous scientific discoveries like that which the narrator encounters in "Pastry Life." In either case, the sense of wonder that could be engendered by these nova are quickly set aside for more pedestrian concerns such as the narrator's ability to maintain his usual routine in "Pastry," and Zhang's concerns over his influencer credibility in "BBQ."

A Future Made Out of Meat and Pastry: The Deflating Effects of Humor and Absurdity

While the circumstances in the two stories quickly settle into a pedestrian rhythm, Liang applies a liberal dose of humor and absurdity to both enhance the readability of his stories and underscore the exasperating contrast between amazing technology and attitudes or circumstances that negate its supposedly wondrous utility. In "My Happy Pastry Life," the mixture of pathos, existential despair, and quirky humor creates just such cognitive dissonance. In a society where workers feel disposable, Liang's narrator fittingly finds himself easily replaced by a pastry doppelgänger. The narrator's internal monologue as he realizes what has happened perfectly encapsulates the story's combination of ontological anxiety and absurdist humor:

> All my hard work, my struggles, the respect I've wanted to earn, or should I say that I wanted to demonstrate the unique qualities that only I possess? But I was so easily replaced by pastries! And they so easily out-performed me after they replaced me… (Liang, "Pastry Life" 32)

In a more typical SF story, one could imagine a similar narrative, but centered around being replaced by automation or by artificial intelligence — the typical boogeymen of SF existential anxiety. But bread and pastries are traditionally sustenance and comfort for human beings, not to mention devices such as the bread machine are usually embraced because they enable convenience and efficiency in one small aspect of the modern middle-class lifestyle, but are not essential or revolutionary enough to be threatening as a piece of technology. Here, suddenly, what is usually comforting is transformed into something absurdly threatening. But the narrator does not have a typical response to the threat, either. Because he sees that the pastry versions of himself perform so well both in terms of career and romantic endeavors, instead of investing in these areas himself, he redoubles his effort in the creation of pastries – as his creations seem have guaranteed success, but he himself does not, at least through the way he used to live his life. Here, Liang emphasizes the very absurdity of the situation by describing, in a comically serious manner, the deliberation

and zeal with which the narrator creates pastry after pastry that have essentially replaced his own function in society:

> As long as the pastries are made in the bread machine, they should become people…. To make apple pie pastry, one needs not just fresh apples and butter for the filling, but a crust that will accentuate these characteristics. The flour requires large amounts of butter, and the baking time and temperature must be exact… [The apple pastry] was steaming hot, but flaky and tender. Each bite contained the juiciness of fruit but also the delicious decadence of butter… Everything was proceeding smoothly! My happiness—I had a feeling that my happiness had finally arrived! (Liang, "Pastry Life" 30)

The narrator does not exactly describe or investigate how or why his bread machine is able to produce sentient human beings, much less how these human beings emerge as exact replicas of himself, only better. Through the magic of literary narrative, the reader gradually comes to accept these absurdities as we realize that the narrator has accepted it, too. The mystery is how and why the narrator's pastry selves seem to perform their functions far more admirably. Eventually, we come to understand that the narrator's inability to "read" the blurry faces of his pastry selves amounts to a kind of literal and psychic misrecognition – the narrator has heretofore not realized that in society, he has never had an authentic self or an ego properly identified as his own; his life and dreams have in some way been shaped by the expectations of work and productivity, and by the expectations of others. Thus, when the narrator ultimately realizes that he himself may also be a bread machine creation, created to continue baking pastry selves ad infinitum, this realization is not surprising because it is in line with how the narrator views his function and work in society: deliciously individual, but ultimately utilitarian, disposable, and replaceable. The reason that the narrator so readily accepted the absurd situation in which he found himself baking pastry replacements, is because he himself was already one: he was not the individual, self-actuating entity that he supposed himself to be, but an interchangeable one in an endless series.

On "Planet BBQ," the author's skillful description of the protagonist's increasingly acute hunger—a mundane reality that all readers must have encountered in their lives—gradually acclimates us to the story's outrageous premise: that Zhang has crash landed on a planet where the biosphere is teaming with various grilled meats and organs, steaks and lamb chops, rotisserie ducks, and fully-cooked pigs, etc., ready to eat but somehow also alive and seemingly sentient, and bodies of water that are essentially barbecue sauce. The "sauce oceans" even contain bits of vegetation, aromatics such as scallions and cilantro. Having accepted this textual reality, we root for the protagonist and laugh wordlessly with him as he painstakingly finds a way to pass one of the pieces of meat through a valve, all the while getting ever more desperately ravenous. When Zhang finally succeeds in obtaining the piece of meat, he is scalded by his prize because it has just come from an environment where the temperature is apparently 800 degrees Celsius.[4] Humorously, because the meat was forced through the oxygen tank one-way valve, it arrives almost shredded into pieces. After this painstaking process that takes up approximately eighty percent of the story, Zhang's verdict is, humorously and anticlimactically, "It turns out that

ground-up pork belly was quite unappetizing… [he] silently swore that he would never eat grilled meat again" (Liang, "Planet BBQ" 13).

The ending of "Planet BBQ" adds to the absurdity that at this point we have come to accept, and also provides an ironic commentary to what the protagonist has just experienced. Mistaking an inbound spacecraft for a rescue vessel, Zhang fantasizes about capitalizing on this adventure on his blog. He feels smug self-satisfied about being a "pioneer," about having a near-death experience (he will naturally not mention the bathos of spending hours to acquire a piece of meat that ends up being unsatisfying), and imagines being able to bring groups of his admiring followers back to revisit this planet with him. It is at this juncture that Zhang realizes that the spacecraft has flown over his head to land directly next to a clearly man-made structure, a restaurant called "Planet BBQ Premiere Restaurant, Branch No. 4." These words are the final ones of the story. My somewhat inelegant translation aside, this signage immediately reveals the true nature of the fascinating planet that Zhang has landed on. Not only has it been "populated" (destroying who knows what kind of native ecosystems once in existence) as a commercial venture, it has been done to satisfy an outrageous whim: that of creating an entire planet where grilled meats and its accoutrements are readily available for consumption. The adventurous pioneering spirit and wonder of discovery that one is accustomed to in sublime SF is doubly pierced: by Zhang's comic episode with the meat, and the final blow of the planet's real purpose.

Conceptual Frameworks for Liang's SF and Their Applications

While the depiction of the banal and the absurd risk becoming just that and no more, Liang's SF is important precisely because of the counterbalance it offers to most popular Chinese SF. While myself and others have identified elsewhere that Chinese SF is largely concerned with social and environmental justice (Luo; Song; Zhou and Liu), Liang's work is unique in approaching these topics through the lens of banality and absurdity. There are two important advantages to Liang's unique fictional voice: 1) its relevance to contemporary youth and work culture and 2) its ironicization and subversion of ideas relating to the power and impact of technology as envisioned by China and most Chinese SF.

Liang's incorporation of the most banal elements of everyday existence and thoughts offers the opportunity for readers to both reevaluate the purpose of technology in real life, and the purpose of the scientific imagination in SF. In Liang's absurdist SF, his lone protagonists encounter technology that either creates unnecessary complications in their lives, or causes them to reflect further upon the meaninglessness of their daily routines. In these stories, technology neither revolutionizes nor subverts the status quo of social or political conditions at large, because the story provides no opportunity to register impact on a larger scale. There is no hint of the larger physical world beyond the small patch of planet on which Zhang crash lands in "Planet BBQ," or beyond the commute between home and office that the protagonist of "My Happy Pastry Life" undertakes everyday. For a large part of the story, "Planet BBQ's" Zhang struggles extensively in a comic-absurdist manner just to pass a single morsel of meat through his spacesuit, revealing a fatal flaw in the suit's design, only to be disappointed by the taste. The protagonist of "Pastry

Life" discovers that his machine can make sentient people that look and act just like him, but his concern is whether the pastry people can win the heart of the colleague he admires, and whether they can perform work functions without anyone discovering his absence, thus banalizing and routinizing these miraculous biological creations. These fictional scenarios are likely to recall for the reader moments in their lives that relate to technological frustration that relate to, and further maintain, the status quo of banal everyday life. For example, Zhang's struggle may be akin to being forced to use slow and complicated software systems for a work or bureaucratic function rather than reliable pen and paper. On the other hand, the "Pastry Life" protagonist's one-of-a-kind bread machine produces sentient beings who then… go to work at a boring office job, an outcome which thematically echoes the ways in which revolutionary algorithmic and artificial intelligence technology are being used to further the ends of invasive capitalism, creating conditions not for creativity or transcendence, but simply more work.

These realizations provide a framework for reevaluating the ways in which contemporary SF curtails the parameters by which our near future can be imagined. Usually, the science-fictional imagination is spoken of in the positive sense of inspiring the future, but it is equally likely that the conditions for both scientific inquiry and literary creativity are incubated within the same contemporary technological milieu. Liang's work points to the ways in which our current imagination is already strictly limited by mundane concerns and the pressures of an ultra-capitalist society, so it is a voice within contemporary Chinese SF that we should not ignore.

To reiterate perspectives on Chinese SF from two representative recent works of scholarship, Lu asserts that "science fiction in China… has always been taken as a literary way to express the strong desire of the Chinese people to realize and adapt to modernization, urbanization, industrialization, and globalization" (Lu 708), while Peng likewise argues that SF promotes modernization, except one that is parallel to and nourished by a national narrative of growth and progress. These two types of discourses both assume that science and science-fictional ideas promote positive growth and equate technological development with progress. What is unique about Liang's SF is, as mentioned earlier, its kinship with the "lie flat" ethos that seeks to question, if not disrupt, this kind of ideological narrative that is intertwined with unadulterated technological and capitalistic growth.

As Wendy Su explains, Xi Jinping's "internal circulation" strategy, designed to reduce Chinese dependence on international markets and technologies, also created intensified competition and increasing frustration among China's youth: "The anxiety further extends to the uncertainty in the job market and the insecurity of income, and turns into a fear for the future, a sense of futile effort and the pointless meaning of life, and eventually an attitude of lying flat" (Su 133). While this "lying-flatism" emerged as a result of post-pandemic geopolitical and economic instability, Su also identifies various subcultures from the past two decades as precedents. Though these subcultures emerged due to a variety of different factors, what they have in common is a negative outlook that disclaims the official national narrative of harmony, progress, and growth (Su 133). Liang's "mundane SF," all published since the mid-2010s, substitutes whimsy for negativity, but is clearly informed by sentiments of youthful discontent with the status quo.

"My Happy Pastry Life" most directly speaks to this kind of discontent as the narrator's already mundane life and minor career ambitions turn out to be illusions pierced by the revelation that he is not only easily replaced, but was an illusory human being himself. The ease with which his machine produces sentient entities that are capable of replacing a human being renders insignificant that human's aspirations and sense of purpose in modern-day society, just as many modern Chinese youth feel like interchangeable cogs who feel out of step with the country's prescribed economic goals and social objectives. On the other hand, the scenario described in "Planet BBQ" implies that much of what a modern nation strives to achieve in the name of technological progress is ultimately used not for the material benefit of its people as a whole, but for idle, vain pleasures such as the type of space travel depicted in the story. The two settings, while seemingly unrelated, are connected through their shared conviction that our banal realities of work and striving are not inherently worthwhile objectives, but merely ends to imposed capitalistic means.

Thus while much of Chinese SF, as Lu and Peng assert, does indeed express the aspirations and fears pertaining to China's dramatic modernization process and thus could be said to evince a kind of unique "Chineseness," Liang's work crafts a narrative relatable to a large part of the world that is suffering under relentless capitalistic technological development, pursuing productivity, efficiency, and growth instead of serious scientific investigation, while losing the sense of self and humanity that would be accessible during a less hectic existence. While those who control most of the world's resources would have us believe that social classes, ethnic groups, and nation-states are in competition with one another for survival, Liang's stories reveal much more absurdist rationales underlying modern day-to-day routines: resources and ingenuity spent on creating a planet of sentient food, and an impulse to "go to work" and perform despite one's biological existence coming into question. The felt mundanity and exasperation in these stories underscore a kind of fundamental human struggle that would be relatable regardless of language or nationality, striving for a kind of connectedness across our existences despite politics and division.

To encounter mundanity and absurdity in a work of SF—a reflection of one's everyday life—is unexpected, as SF is popularly conceived as an escapist genre depicting awe-inspiring "Big Dumb Objects" that contrast with human insignificance.[5] In addition to this relatively unusual approach and tone, Liang's work is important for two reasons: first, it is a voice of representation within Chinese SF that, along with the "porridge SF" of Xia Jia, contributes to the heterogeneity and maturity of Chinese SF as a genre. For the Chinese reader, it is undoubtedly refreshing to encounter SF that is sympathetic to one's everyday struggles and does not only depict exceptional people accomplishing impressive feats. Certainly, many SF stories depict ordinary people struggling against extraordinary circumstances, but despite the relatable nature of the characters, the incredible situations in which they find themselves ultimately help the reader readily process the story as "merely" fictional entertainment, not relevant to one's everyday life. For the non-Chinese reader, this type of SF helps mitigate the negative stereotype of China as fiercely competitive and nationalistic.

Secondly, "SF of everyday life" such as Liang's stories and Ted Chiang's *The Lifecycle of Software Objects* draws attention to a different way that the science-fictional can impact our everyday lives. Its unexpected use of science and technology is revelational in that it immediately feels authentically true to life in ways that much more dramatic narratives do not. One counter-intuitively important aspect of the SF imaginary is not always evident: SF hypothesizes unimaginably optimistic and pessimistic scenarios, but it should also acknowledge the ways in which technological nova do not change our lives, where it may encounter or point to intractable problems that are attributable to societal structure and human psychology, and not technological developments. These stories' foregrounding of the mundane drives home this point, so they should not be dismissed as mere whimsy or a "lesser" version of the sublime SF of Big Dumb Objects or national narratives. Instead of presenting escapist fantasies or reflections of philosophy or geopolitics, they ask us to look within and scrutinize the way technology potentially impacts the meaning of our own lives.

Notes

1. 《烤肉自助星》
2. 《面包我的幸福》
3. 《门，是穿堂门的门》
4. The text does not explain why the meat has not been burnt to a crisp.
5. The editors of *Science Fiction Encyclopedia* have since replaced this "jocular yet affectionate" term first coined in 1981 with the more appropriate yet less fun "macrostructure," because the big objects depicted in SF are not always "dumb" in any sense of the term, but turn out to be sentient and/or intelligent ("Big Dumb Objects").

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