

EVENT TITLE: The Future is Female and Fantastic

Event Description: More and more writers are flouting the conventions of “realistic” fiction by incorporating surrealism, myth, horror, and black comedy into their narratives. Four writers of compellingly weird and weirdly compelling fiction discuss the fabulist writing that inspires them, and how the reality of unreality allows them to push boundaries in their own work, dig deeper into the strange, fantastic, and absurd truths of female experience, and evocatively reflect how it feels to live in the world.

EVENT CATEGORY: Fiction Craft and Criticism

Event Organizer & Moderator:

Mimi Lok is the author of the story collection *LAST OF HER NAME*, published October 2019 by Kaya Press. The title story was a finalist for the 2018 Katherine Anne Porter Fiction Prize, and she is the recipient of a Smithsonian Ingenuity Award and an Ylvisaker Award for Fiction.

Event Participants:

Rita Bullwinkel is the author of the story collection *BELLY UP*, which won the Believer Book Award. She is a Contributing Editor of *NOON* and an Editor at Large for *McSweeney's*. She is a recipient of grants and fellowships from The MacDowell Colony, Bread Loaf, and The Sewanee Writers' Conference.

Anita Felicelli is the author of *CHIMERICA: A NOVEL* (WTAW Press) and the short story collection *LOVE SONGS FOR A LOST CONTINENT* (Stillhouse Press), which won the 2016 Mary Roberts Rinehart Fiction contest. She was born in South India and grew up in the Bay Area where she lives with her family.

Meng Jin's debut novel *LITTLE GODS* is forthcoming from HarperCollins in 2020. Her short fiction appears or is forthcoming in *The Threepenny Review*, *Ploughshares*, *The Masters Review*, and elsewhere. She is a Kundiman Fellow, David TK Wong Fellow, Elizabeth George Grantee, and Steinbeck Fellow.

Opening moderator remarks and housekeeping announcements.

Administrative and other panel introductory remarks TBD

Fabulist fiction has enjoyed a resurgence in recent years as well as recognition as a serious, thought-provoking literary form. This panel will bring compelling, innovative works in this genre to the attention of readers and critics; contextualize contemporary fabulist fiction writing within the larger tradition of Woolf, Borges, Calvino and others; and examine the evolution of this form as a way to explore--and reclaim agency of—marginalized female experiences across cultures. I'm thrilled today to be in conversation with these fantastic females, whose writing embraces fabulist fiction in a variety of innovative and compelling ways: Anita Felicelli, Rita Bullwinkel, and Meng Jin.

To get us started, can you each introduce yourself with a brief reading from your work, and let us know what you're reading from?

Participant readings.

Anita Felicelli reading

Meng Jin reading

Rita Bullwinkel reading

Mimi Lok reading

Moderator questions:

- 1) Can you each talk about your formative experiences with fabulist fiction—what are some of your favorite early examples of the form, and how have they influenced/inspired you?
- 2) Why are you drawn to this form in your own writing? What are some of the rewards and challenges?
- 3) In your experience as a reader and a writer, and for some of you, as an educator, what is unique to fabulist fiction as a way of exploring marginalized female experiences?
- 4) Can you share an example of a fabulist writer or work of fiction?

Q&A session