Dangerous Fictions
Reinventing Xiaoshuo in the Age of the Internet

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Abstract  Throughout much of Chinese history, the category of xiaoshuo has been subject to moralising and repression, written off as leftover history, gossip of the alleys or a source of immorality that threatens the social order. Recent online discourse reflects these longstanding negative attitudes at the same time as it embodies the renewed energies of fiction writing at the most “popular” end of the spectrum. This talk examines some of the ways of defining and categorizing xiaoshuo that are gaining ground in the age of the internet, exploring how users of digital media are helping to reinvent fiction in light of individual desires and shared technological, social and political imaginations.

Dr. Heather Inwood is Lecturer of Chinese Cultural Studies at the University of Manchester, where she teaches on modern and contemporary Chinese literature, media and culture. Her research focuses on interactions between culture and media in the People’s Republic of China, with particular concern for the impact of digital media on the production and reception of poetry and popular fiction. Her first book, Verse Going Viral: China's New Media Scenes, was published by the University of Washington Press in 2014.