

## **Panel 6**

### **Reconfiguring Cultural Figures: Nezha, Sang Nila Utama, and Gu Shan**

**Boy, Son, and Deity:  
Nezha at the Threshold in Criticism and Fiction**

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Bakhtin writes that the threshold chronotope is a space of crisis, transformation, and decision-making, which is “always metaphorical and symbolic”. In this paper, I examine Nezha’s origin story in *Fengshen Yanyi* (《封神演义》, *Investiture of the Gods*), focusing on Chapters 12 to 14 through close reading and original Chinese-to-English translations. Nezha’s identities as boy, son, and deity emerge from threshold moments of rupture and reconfiguration, inviting reflection on rebellion, filial piety, and ethical autonomy. These passages, rich in imagery and symbolic motifs (for example, his birth from a ball of flesh and rebirth from lotus roots), evoke an intermedial intensity that straddles the literary and the visual.

This paper incorporates creative writing to reimagine Nezha’s metamorphoses in a contemporary context. Drawing from my novel-in-progress set in a Sinophone global city like Singapore, I present speculative vignettes that respond to the original myth. These fragments, drawn from the perspective of a protagonist trapped in a time loop, mirror Nezha’s confrontation with fate and transformation. In merging critical analysis with fiction, this paper explores how narrative can both reflect and reshape cultural mythology across mediums, offering an embodied response to the threshold as both symbol and narrative strategy.

#### **Biography**

Lin Xin Er is a writer and aspiring translator with a BA in Philosophy and a MA in Creative Writing from Nanyang Technological University. Her work engages with both creative and critical approaches to fiction, focusing on fantasy and science fiction, where she explores narrative form, imagination, and cultural exchange.