

Difficulties in Constructing a Local Narrative System of Chinese Science Fiction Film and Television Literature and Innovative Paths for Integrating Traditional Cultural Elements

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Abstract: After experiencing breakthrough development marked by works such as *The Wandering Earth* and *The Three-Body Problem*, Chinese science fiction film and television literature has gradually shifted from a stage of scale expansion to a stage of intensive development with greater emphasis on content and connotation. Accelerating the construction of a localized narrative system for science fiction film and television literature is not only an inherent requirement for industrial upgrading but also an inevitable choice for establishing cultural confidence. However, for a long time, science fiction film and television literature has been dominated by Western narratives, while also facing the shortcomings of insufficient exploration and integration of traditional cultural elements. The advancement of localized narratives still encounters many practical difficulties. Based on this, this paper systematically analyzes and explains the dilemmas in constructing a local narrative system of science fiction film and television literature from the perspectives of external environment and internal factors, and proposes innovative development paths by integrating traditional cultural elements. It is hoped that this study can provide certain references for Chinese science fiction film and television literature to overcome the constraints of Western narratives and homogenization, accelerate the construction of a science fiction film and television literature narrative system with traditional culture as its core, and promote its further development.

Keywords: science fiction film and television literature; local narrative; narrative system; traditional culture; integrated innovation

1. Introduction

Since entering the new era, with China's economic and technological strength reaching a new level, Chinese science fiction films and television works have witnessed explosive growth, producing a number of original works represented by *The Wandering Earth* and *The Three-Body Problem*. These works have not only achieved great success domestically but have also gradually entered the global market. As the textual foundation and narrative core of science fiction film and television creation, science fiction film and television literature determines the ideological depth, cultural texture, and communicative vitality of science fiction works. However, for a long time, global science fiction narrative discourse has been dominated by Western narrative systems represented by Hollywood, with narrative patterns such as individual heroism, universal values, and apocalyptic salvation becoming core templates for global science fiction creation. These patterns have also exerted a profound influence on the creation of domestic science fiction literature.

In recent years, taking the *The Wandering Earth* series as a representative example, Chinese science fiction works have adhered to the guidance of Chinese civilization and traditional Chinese culture, constructing a worldview narrative of "taking the Earth on a journey of wandering," highlighting cultural characteristics such as Eastern collectivism and attachment to homeland, and achieving new breakthroughs within the Western narrative system. However, from the perspective of the industry as a whole, Chinese science fiction film and television literature still objectively faces internal and external challenges, including the Westernization of local narratives, weak cultural foundations, and insufficient integration of traditional cultural elements. The localized narrative system has not yet been effectively established. In the new era, further exploring the spiritual essence of China's excellent traditional culture, promoting the deep integration of traditional cultural elements with science fiction film and television narratives, achieving creative transformation and innovative development, and creating a localized narrative system of science fiction film and television literature with Chinese characteristics have become key issues for the development of the industry. Accelerating the construction of a localized narrative system is of great value and significance for shaping the competitiveness of China's science fiction film and television industry, promoting the inheritance and overseas dissemination of China's excellent traditional culture, enhancing international discourse power, and strengthening national cultural soft power.

2. Practical Dilemmas in Constructing a Local Narrative System of Science Fiction Film and Television Literature

2.1 External Environmental Level: Systematic External Constraints Compressing the Growth Space of Local Narratives

2.1.1 Western Science Fiction Narrative Hegemony and Path Dependence in Industry Development

The hegemony of Western science fiction narratives constitutes the primary external structural obstacle to the construction of China's local science fiction system. Due to its first-mover advantage and long-term external cultural dissemination, the Western narrative system represented by Hollywood has occupied an absolute dominant position in the global science fiction narrative system. Under the influence of classic settings such as apocalyptic disasters, alien invasions, and cyberpunk, it has gradually formed established narrative templates and value orientations, including individual heroism, human-centered confrontation, and interstellar migration and escape, which have long dominated the global science fiction creative context. Against this broader background, China's domestic science fiction film and television industry has also been deeply influenced, regarding the "Westernization of science fiction narratives" as the standard, and has developed long-term path dependence in terms of market aesthetics and cultural cognition. This discourse monopoly has made the development of non-Western narrative approaches extremely difficult. Localized narrative methods and the integration of traditional culture are easily labeled by the industry as "non-typical science fiction" or "alternative," resulting in a significant reduction in development space.

2.1.2 Short-Term Profit Orientation of Industrial Capital, Limited Local Narrative Resources and Insufficient Internal Momentum

The logic of capital operation is an important industrial factor restricting the deep cultivation of a local narrative system. Compared with the simplicity, convenience, and predictability of production and creation under Western frameworks, constructing localized narratives, integrating traditional culture, and establishing an Eastern worldview require not only high investment and long production cycles but also long-term refinement, iteration, and optimization. Moreover, such projects often have slower returns and unstable expectations, making it difficult to obtain sufficient capital investment and industrial resource support. External capital is also more inclined to invest in works with Western narrative styles that feature short production cycles, low risks, and rapid returns driven by market attention. In addition, the current incubation system for domestic science fiction IPs remains immature, with insufficient textual resources. The "one-person science fiction phenomenon" centered on Liu Cixin has created an overly prominent head effect, while the supporting creative forces remain weak and lack sufficient internal momentum. The attention of readers, platform traffic, and capital choices are overwhelmingly concentrated on proven phenomenon-level IPs, which is unfavorable for the overall development of the industry.

2.1.3 Westernized Industry Evaluation Standards and Difficulties in Cross-Cultural Communication

The refinement of industry evaluation and communication standards is an important external factor contributing to the difficulties faced by localized narratives. Influenced by external environments, the industry evaluation, academic criticism, and market promotion systems of domestic science fiction film and television literature still largely follow Western evaluation standards. The main evaluation indicators remain concentrated on the presentation of science fiction spectacles, expressions of advanced technology, and the tension of individual narratives, while the integration of traditional culture and the expression of Eastern values receive relatively limited attention. The overall evaluation system has not fully reflected Chinese characteristics and the features of local narratives. Under this evaluation orientation, science fiction texts based on localized narratives find it difficult to gain academic recognition, industry approval, and market exposure. In addition, science fiction works with localized narrative styles face similar challenges in overseas dissemination and cross-cultural communication. Science fiction film and television literature dominated by Eastern philosophical concepts and local narrative logic has relatively low acceptance among foreign audiences, which, to some extent, also restricts the construction and development of a localized narrative system.

2.2 Internal Factors: Structural Internal Shortcomings in Textual Narratives and Industry Paradigms

2.2.1 Structural Westernization of Narrative Paradigms and the Absence of Underlying Local Narrative Logic

China's science fiction film and television literature started relatively late, and during its development process it has long been influenced by Western narrative approaches and discourse power. As a result, it has become highly dependent on Western systems in terms of narrative frameworks, story logic, and conflict settings, while the underlying logic of local narratives remains generally absent. Currently, relatively mature science fiction narrative frameworks in China, including

the subject logic of individual heroes saving the world, the conflict logic of binary opposition between humans and nature, and narratives of apocalyptic escape and interstellar migration, still contain obvious Western characteristics. In terms of creative approaches, localization is mainly achieved through replacing settings with local scenes and incorporating traditional symbolic elements. Except for a few benchmark works such as *The Wandering Earth*, which have broken away from the escape narrative and constructed a collective narrative centered on homeland preservation and national responsibility, the underlying rules of world-building, character behavior logic, and crisis resolution strategies in most science fiction texts still follow Western paradigms. The underlying logic of local narratives has not yet been established.

2.2.2 The Localized Value Narrative Has Not Yet Taken Shape, Resulting in Insufficient Ideological Depth and Spiritual Connotation

Successful science fiction film and television literature cannot be separated from mature value narratives and profound spiritual connotations. After a century of development, Western science fiction has formed a stable and mature value system. In contrast, domestic science fiction creation still demonstrates a tendency of “emphasizing technological spectacle while neglecting humanistic spirit.” Most texts focus on the superficial expression of disaster scenarios, technological effects, and dramatic conflicts, while lacking Eastern philosophical reflection and the expression of local values. The industry has not yet refined and established a traditional core value system suited to the context of localized science fiction, nor has it transformed Eastern spiritual and cultural concepts such as “family and nation consciousness,” “harmony between humanity and nature,” and “harmony and inclusiveness” into the underlying rules and value narratives of science fiction world-building. This situation has also resulted in domestic science fiction film and television texts lacking distinctiveness, ideological depth, spiritual connotation, and value guidance. They have been unable to form a local narrative value system different from that of the West, leaving the construction of the narrative system without core support.

2.2.3 Superficial Integration of Traditional Culture and the Creative Inertia of “Emphasizing Symbols While Neglecting Essence”

From the perspective of integrating traditional culture, domestic science fiction film and television literature currently demonstrates a structural creative tendency of “emphasizing symbols while neglecting essence” in the application of traditional cultural elements. The phenomenon of superficial integration is particularly prominent. Many works fall into structural misunderstandings such as the accumulation of surface-level symbols and the disconnection from deeper cultural spirits. For example, some works simply use traditional-style architecture, cultural totems, and classical poetry as scene decorations or visual embellishments, mechanically inserting them into science fiction texts without exploring the traditional cultural meanings behind them. As a result, cultural elements become disconnected from world-building, thematic expression, and civilizational logic. In addition, there is also a tendency within the industry to commercially and sensationally transform traditional philosophy, ancient myths, and folk culture, neglecting their cultural essence and merely extracting superficial cultural elements to serve plot highlights and visual spectacles, which deserves particular attention.

3. Innovative Paths for Integrating the Local Narrative System of Science Fiction Film and Television Literature with Traditional Culture

3.1 Continuously Optimizing the External Environment and Breaking Systematic Constraints from Industry, Market, and Evaluation Systems

3.1.1 Reshaping the Industry Evaluation System and Eliminating the Monopoly of Western Narrative Discourse

In response to the long-term Western dominance of science fiction literary narratives and the insufficient internal momentum in constructing China’s local narrative system, it is recommended to begin with top-level design. Led by local cultural authorities, efforts should adhere to both problem-oriented and result-oriented approaches, accelerate the establishment of an exclusive evaluation and communication system suited to Chinese-style science fiction, reduce the industry’s dependence on Western narrative systems, and counterbalance the influence of Western narrative hegemony. In the evaluation of science fiction film and television literature, academic assessment, and industry awards, Western evaluation methods and standards should be further reformed. Greater weight should be given to indicators such as local narrative innovation, depth of traditional cultural integration, expression of Eastern values, and construction of Chinese aesthetics, thereby establishing a clear evaluation orientation and laying a solid foundation for promoting the integration of traditional culture into science fiction film and television literature and constructing a local narrative system. Secondly, it is recommended to mobilize the strengths of mainstream media and core internet communication platforms to establish a localized communication matrix for science fiction film and television literature. Local science fiction works that promote concepts such as harmony between humanity and nature, mutual learning among civilizations, and a community with a shared future for mankind should be

comprehensively promoted and disseminated, gradually reversing the blind admiration for Westernization in the market and weakening the Western-style dominant system within the science fiction film and television literature industry.

3.1.2 Optimizing Industrial Capital Allocation and Improving the Local Science Fiction IP Incubation Ecosystem

In response to external problems such as short-term capital orientation and imbalanced resource supply, it is first recommended that local government cultural departments take the lead in guiding capital toward local narrative works through policy guidance and mechanism optimization. Special funds for the science fiction film and television cultural industry should be established to provide targeted support for science fiction enterprises and projects that are rooted in localized narrative systems and deeply explore traditional culture, thereby forming a leading effect driven by high-quality projects. Enterprises that focus on promoting local narratives and traditional culture should be provided with certain policy support to reduce the market risks of creative production. Secondly, efforts should be made to encourage and cultivate a group of creative talents in science fiction film and television literature, continuously expanding the backbone of the industry and forming a high-quality development pattern characterized by strong leading forces and solid support from emerging creators. Finally, leading platforms and literary websites should be encouraged and guided to establish local science fiction IP incubation mechanisms, comprehensively and deeply explore the cultural connotations of traditional Confucian and Taoist philosophy, folk culture, mythology, and other cultural resources, and reserve diversified and systematic Eastern science fiction text IPs. This can reduce the industry's dependence on Western narrative IPs and a small number of leading authors, enrich local narrative supply from the source of the industry, and optimize the overall external industrial ecosystem.

3.1.3 Guiding the Upgrade of Market Aesthetics and Cultivating a Local Science Fiction Consumption Context

In response to issues such as the Westernization of market aesthetics and difficulties in overseas dissemination, market principles should be respected. Audiences naturally “vote with their feet” for the works they prefer. However, due to the long-term influence of worldviews and values shaped by Western science fiction works, audience aesthetics and appreciation patterns have also developed certain tendencies. Therefore, mainstream media and internet platforms should play a guiding role in an orderly manner, increase the publicity and promotion of science fiction works based on local narratives, and guide the diversified upgrading of public science fiction aesthetics. Through the influence of works, film and television productions, and related products, a market consumption context compatible with Eastern science fiction and traditional cultural narratives should be gradually cultivated. As local narratives gradually gain public recognition and market popularity, industrial capital and creative markets will be driven to shift toward deeper local exploration, forming a positive and sustainable development cycle.

3.2 Fully Addressing Internal Shortcomings and Constructing a Local Narrative System Integrating Traditional Culture

3.2.1 Reconstructing Underlying Narrative Logic and Establishing an Eastern Science Fiction Narrative Paradigm

Overcoming the Westernization and rigidity of industry narrative paradigms is the foundation and prerequisite for establishing a localized narrative system. It is necessary to consistently take China's excellent traditional culture as the foundation, systematically reconstruct the underlying narrative logic of science fiction texts, and establish an Eastern narrative paradigm distinct from Western narrative styles. Collective values, national identity, and the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind should replace the traditional Western narratives of individual heroism and universal values. Collective cooperation, shared responsibility for the homeland, and the continuation of civilization should become the core logic for resolving crises, achieving innovative development. Traditional concepts of harmony, coexistence, and inclusiveness should replace Western binary opposition and zero-sum game thinking, reducing conflict outcomes based on extreme confrontation, destruction, and conquest, while constructing an Eastern conflict resolution model characterized by civilizational reconciliation, symbiotic cooperation, and dynamic balance. The traditional life philosophy of continuous renewal and vitality should replace Western narratives of apocalyptic destiny and interstellar escape, maintaining the core values of homeland inheritance and civilizational continuity, and establishing an underlying framework for local narratives with distinctive Eastern characteristics.

3.2.2 Improving the Local Value System and Building an Ideological Framework with an Eastern Core

Constructing a local narrative value system and an ideological framework for Eastern science fiction is an important approach to escaping Western worldviews and value systems, as well as an effective measure to prevent local science fiction film and television literature from becoming merely “spectacle-oriented.” It is recommended that industry associations, leading enterprises, and renowned writers take the lead in accelerating the construction of a localized value system and ideological foundation. For example, the concept of harmony between humanity and nature can be used to construct science fiction ecological ethics, establishing the developmental concept that technology should follow natural laws and that humans and

nature should coexist harmoniously. The concept of “family and nation consciousness” can be used to construct narratives of civilizational continuity, establishing an Eastern civilizational stance centered on protecting homeland, inheriting civilization, and collective construction. The concept of harmonious coexistence can be used to construct narratives of interstellar communication, forming a cosmic narrative logic based on civilizational inclusiveness, equal mutual learning, cooperation, and shared prosperity. Through the establishment of a complete ideological and value system, the industry can fundamentally overcome the development dilemma of Westernized values and hollow cultural cores.

3.2.3 Deeply Exploring the Connotations of Traditional Culture and Promoting Creative Transformation and Innovative Development

To overcome the superficial integration of culture, it is necessary to start from both creative concepts and methods, promoting the deep integration of Chinese traditional culture with local science fiction works rather than merely using traditional culture as scene decoration or overall embellishment. Creative concepts should be innovated by extracting the worldviews and values embedded in traditional culture and transforming them into the internal operating logic of science fiction world-building. For example, the concept of “taking the Earth on a journey of wandering” in *The Wandering Earth* profoundly reflects the Chinese agricultural civilization’s attachment to homeland and the cultural sentiment of “cherishing one’s native land and being reluctant to leave it.” The material symbols and spiritual traditions of Chinese culture, such as mortise-and-tenon structures, bronze patterns, Confucian and Taoist philosophical ideas, and folk customs, should be reconstructed through technological and futuristic interpretations, allowing them to become important themes that drive narratives and shape values. For instance, the cyber-style fireworks in “Twelve Rings of the Spring Festival” and the poetic imagery of “People today cannot see the moon that illuminated the ancients, yet the moon we gaze upon today once shone over those who lived in the past” during the ignition of the lunar engine in *The Wandering Earth* integrate traditional poetic imagery with science fiction scenarios, endowing science fiction visuals with profound Eastern aesthetic significance.

4. Conclusion

The construction of a local narrative system for Chinese science fiction film and television literature represents a profound transformation with both industrial and cultural significance. It requires not only breaking through the discourse hegemony of Western science fiction at the level of overall narratives but also achieving creative transformation and innovative development in cultural expression. It requires both bold reform and innovation in models and approaches and firm adherence to the spiritual core of traditional culture. Through joint efforts and cooperation among all parties, it is hoped that a local science fiction narrative system featuring Chinese characteristics, Chinese style, and Chinese spirit can be constructed at an accelerated pace. More high-quality local science fiction film and television literature works with cultural depth, ideological insight, and aesthetic distinctiveness can be created, enabling Chinese science fiction works to produce a unique Eastern resonance on the global stage and further promoting the international dissemination of Chinese traditional culture.

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