

Cultural Values Presented in the Movie "Wandering Earth 2": Creating the Chinese Science Fiction Industry

GUO MEICHEN

Taylor's University

guomeichen@sd.taylors.edu.my

CHENG YU*

Hebei Institute of Communications

18633088106@163.com

*Corresponding Author

Date Received: 24 January 2023 Date Accepted: 5 February 2023 Date Published: 28 February 2023

ABSTRACT

Chinese science fiction movies have been steadily growing and progressing in terms of number and quality, following in the footsteps of international science fiction movies. Its science fiction expression with cultural values of Chinese characteristics, released in the New Year of 2023, has earned the recognition of audiences at both domestic and international all the time, prompting the eager attention of people from all walks of life to Chinese science fiction movies. Since then, "Wandering Earth 2" has formally kicked off the industrialization of Chinese movies. The concept of "A COMMUNITY WITH A SHARED FUTURE FOR MANKIND," which is a cultural value of Chinese cinema, has given rise to ideas and possibilities for future Chinese science fiction movies. We conduct cultural values transmission via the dream of science fiction with Chinese elements. This study investigates the movie's cultural, aesthetic, and social values, with the goal of determining how to use the movie's cultural values to provide audiences with a higher level of aesthetic experience, to improve Chinese science fiction movies, and to improve the industrialization of Chinese movies.

Keywords: Cultural Values; Chinese; Science Fiction

INTRODUCTION

"Wandering Earth 2" in 2023 set off the industrialization of Chinese filmmaking. This study expands on the movie's cultural, aesthetic, and social values, with the goal of demonstrating how to use cultural values in science fiction movies to provide audiences with a higher level of aesthetic experience, mature Chinese science fiction movies, and improve the industrialization of Chinese movies.

STATE OF CHINESE SCIENCE FICTION MOVIES

With the aid of policies, funds, and technology, China's science fiction movies have grown rapidly in recent years, enriching the industry chain, increasing the production capacity and industrialization capability of local science fiction original works, and the science fiction industry has enormous growth potential. In 2019, "Wandering Earth" delivered China's original science fiction movies to audiences, creating the "movie era" of China's science fiction industry and sparking a boom in its development (Chen, 2020).

According to the "2020 China Science Fiction Industry Report," published by the China Science Fiction Research Center and the Southern University of Science and Technology's Research Center for Science and Human Imagination, the output value of China's science fiction industry increased rapidly from 2015 to 2019, reaching 65.871 billion yuan in 2019.

The total box office of Chinese science fiction movies in 2019 was 19.511 billion yuan, with "Crazy Aliens," "Wandering Earth, City of Light, and Shanghai Fortress totaling 2.12 times the box office of Chinese science fiction movies in 2018, accounting for 30.36% of mainland Chinese theatres' annual box office and 30.36% of total science fiction movie box office in 2019(China Science Fiction Industry Report in 2020).

EVOLUTION OF CHINESE SCIENCE FICTION MOVIES

The growth of Chinese science fiction movies is gradual until 2019. Science fiction movies took little attention due to ideological concepts, societal backdrop, economic level, and other aspects. Among these, the typical "Yangtze River Seven" (shown in 2008) gradually integrated traditional Chinese values of sacrifice and dedication into science fiction movies, which was a major accomplishment in the foundation of Chinese science fiction movies' cultural values.

China's science fiction movie system has gradually improved and matured, and the overall scale of science fiction movies has gradually expanded, with the rise of the science fiction boom in the 2019 movie market. Until February 20, 2019, Wandering Earth 1's domestic box office 2019 topped 4 billion yuan, and the foreign box office exceeded \$5 million. "Wandering Earth 1" movie is a significant stage in the history of Chinese science fiction movies and the artistic practice of Chinese movies achieving a higher degree, fully representing the cultural confidence of Chinese movies.

The year 2023 marks the beginning of a new era in Chinese moviemaking, with Chinese science fiction movies reaching previously unheard-of heights. "Wandering Earth 2" was shown on January 22, 2023, at 00:00 (BST), and the total box office in China was 34,594,650 RMB as of February 8, 2023, at 0:00 (BST). Guo Fan is also the director of "Earth 2", and Liu Cixin is the producer of "Earth 2". The movie stars include Wu Jing, Li Xuejian, Sha Yi, Andy Lau, and so on. The story is about the sun's impending destruction, and humans build giant thrusters on the earth's surface to find a new home, and then the road to the universe is full of crises, to save the earth, drifting out of the earth's youth come forward once more, and the battle of life and death begins (Shen & Tan, 2023).

"Earth 2" provides a breathtaking and thrilling audiovisual experience, a sophisticated and thorough narrative framework, a massive and profound science fiction issue, and a strong performance in all elements of special effects, story, characters, and ideas. The movie tells a story with Chinese cultural elements, ponders the Earth's future fate, and investigates the planet's mysteries, symbolizing the tenacious spirit of the Chinese people from ancient times.

According to Wang Yichuan, dean of Peking University's School of Arts, "the movie rejects the American science fiction paradigm of escaping from Earth, instead opting for a new paradigm of exploring the Earth and expressing great affection for it. This paradigm can be said to be deeply rooted in Chinese cultural traditions, inheriting the tradition of defending the motherland represented by myths such as Yugong Yishan and Jingwei Reclamation, while also embodying a distinct imagination and resolution of science fiction propositions about the future world.

CULTURAL VALUE

Cultural values are the spiritual compass that directs human existence and social development. Cultural values are embodied in the expressions of ever-changing artworks and shown in the brilliant and colorful movie pop culture as the dominant social ideology progressively evolved in long-term practical activities.

Commodities exist to meet the demands of users, which may be basic bodily needs or social or psychological aspirations. A general product's use value is its functional value, whereas a cultural product's use value is its cultural value (Xiang, 2014). The object's cultural worth is

defined as the spiritual aesthetic experience it provides. Cultural value lacks a defined accounting unit and is complicated, multifaceted, and volatile (Hutter & Throsby, 2008.). Spiritual, aesthetic, social, historical, realistic, and symbolic elements are thought to be important in cultural value systems.

Cultural values are the fundamental orientations of a nation, a country, and a culture, which are reflected in lifestyles, social ideals, and spiritual beliefs, and which determine people's basic judgments of right and wrong, good and evil, beauty and ugliness in political, social, ethical, and artistic fields. Because of differences in subject matter, genre, and selection, the cultural values expressed in Chinese movies are not always consistent on a spiritual level, but in terms of overall value orientation, Chinese movies' expression of traditional Chinese culture and identification with traditional cultural values are an important part of our analysis of the cultural experience of Chinese movies.

When analyzing the artistic objective, social responsibility, and cultural function of cinema, we cannot ignore its economic responsibilities. If these movies effectively communicate positive cultural values, they will have made a significant contribution not just to the historical development of Chinese cinema, but also to the long-term development of Chinese culture.

AESTHETIC VALUE

The aesthetic value of science fiction movies is concentrated on the cooperation between the director and the actors, which makes the plot of the movie with the image of the characters and the beauty reflected in the personalisation of the characters. The creative value of science fiction movies consists of the composition of the movie, the beauty of the colour of the overall tone of the movie, the music in science fiction movies, the written dialogue, and so on.

The space elevator that rises into the air at the beginning of "Earth 2" amazes the audience. This 10,000-meter space elevator flies straight up into the sky and leaps from land into space at the beginning of the movie, discreetly demonstrating the connection between Earth and space. Tens of thousands of drones leap up like a crowd, human warplanes, and their conflicts, buildings on the ground crumble, and space stations crash to Earth as these visual effects sequences go into overdrive.

Machine aesthetics in the 1920s and 1930s reflected the technological features represented by the era of the machine. Space elevators, space stations, and MOSS to preserve the Earth are likewise the ultimate dreams of post-industrial machines. All of these are great creations of industrial civilization, but the sci-fi protagonist of MOSS epitomizes mechanical beauty wonderfully.

Art in science fiction movies symbolizes the original humanization and emotional aspect, transforming cold machines into robots with feelings, temperature, and thoughts, which is an anthropomorphic and humanized mode of production in and of itself. In the movie "Earth 2", the characters "Tu Yaya" and "Tu Hengyu" have a delicate and deep human attachment and moral imagination wrapped in affection, but they also have the coldness of machines and a strong conviction in the breakout of warmth. They humanize the machine and bring people closer together for the benefit of human survival so that the artistic beauty of the look also reflects the emotional beauty of the original humanization.

SOCIAL VALUE

The movie's ontological significance is an enlightening function. Science fiction movies, as a genre of cinematic art, differ from other movies in that they use fantastical narratives to reflect on current and future society. Human self-destruction and salvation appear frequently in Cameron's science fiction movies, expressing his ultimate contemplation of human fate,

complete with transcending self-reflection(Magerstädt, 2014). Science fiction movies are dramatic occurrences set in a fictional but theoretically schematic universe(Pan, 2020).

In "Wandering Earth 2," Liu Peiqiang is a lottery winner who joins the terrestrial realm, although his wife, Han Duo Duo, is not so fortunate and suffers from cancer. Liu Peiqiang took part in the Navigator space station astronaut selection process in order to become an astronaut. The 550w in charge of the evaluation believed that Liu Peiqiang's best option was to relinquish his position to his father-in-law, Han Zion so that he could care for his son, Liu Qi, as his wife only had 80 days to live, which caused Liu Peiqiang to lose his emotions for a while. Liu Peiqiang's car was damaged in an accident during the bombing operation.

When 300 pilots were assigned to execute blasting missions on the moon. Chinese space squadrons and space teams from other countries, as well as pilots over the age of 50, emerged one after the other. They willingly opted to make the sacrifice in order to protect the Moon and thereby mankind. "There is no limit to the number of descendants," claims the Chinese. Concerning the nuclear bomb detonation involving the fate of mankind, it is valuable to discuss fairness at a specific point in time, but looking at the common fate of mankind from the entire timeline, it is clear that manual detonation by people over 50 is more appropriate, and this level of discussion has long gone beyond a certain level of fairness. In Chinese social value structures, the importance of the community immortality narrative takes precedence over individual immortality.

The science fiction genre is a moviemaker's representation of a future social scenario that arose from humanity's fear and deep vulnerability to its existence. It is caused by environmental degradation and a loss of spiritual virtue. The portrayal of society in science fiction movies can be imaginative, while still balancing the necessity for rigorous internal and external logic, as well as deep social thinking." The "Earth 2" crew wrote a more than a 100,000-word outline of the worldview, more than the original movie, and the content involves a considerable lot of contemplation about the future world.

A COMMUNITY WITH A SHARED FUTURE FOR MANKIND

In contrast to the Western worldview structure and Hollywood science fiction works, the spiritual codes inscribed in Chinese in the movie "Earth 2" include the effort to create miracles and the strength that comes from unification. In China, the emphasis on peace, mutual benefit, and win-win situations to promote peaceful development has been passed down from generation to generation.

When world forces disagreed, even clashed, over which option to choose in the movie, the Chinese representative advocated the "Mountain Moving Plan," hoping to maximize the protection of all fellow humans and the Earth's original home by pushing the Earth to escape the solar system and find a new galaxy. Zhou Chezhi claims "There is only duty in times of crises. Solidarity is not inexpensive." Dare to be the first and act positively, which has been China's constant style of big power diplomacy throughout its history, shines in reality(Li, 2023).

"Earth 2" takes an alternative approach to "heroism," emphasizing the inner strength of regular individuals of many races, nations, and identities who carry their beliefs forward (Zhao, 2019). Human civilization is at stake, not for wealth or calculating, but for the strong energies that emerge when love and faith are restored and walls and prejudices are erased.

Beyond the universe's dreams, Chinese moviemakers have a strong sense of humanity. Looking back over the last few years, all countries around the world have faced barriers and issues as a result of diseases and smoke, making it all the more important to develop a sense of human destiny and work together to overcome them.

CHINA'S SCIENCE FICTION MOVIES INDUSTRY PROCESS

"Wandering Earth 2" has amassed a wealth of production expertise over 3 years and 1447 days of planning and movieing. With over 20,000 actors, 6-7 international teams movieing simultaneously, and 1189 staff members participating in the production. This is the secret to China's movie industry's high-quality development and the endogenous strength of its development.

In "Earth 2," new movie industry technologies may be employed not only to "display muscles" - to exhibit the most dazzling and spectacular sights - but also to "show feelings" - to use technology to compensate for flaws and pay honor to the dead. Wu Mengda, who starred in "Wandering Earth" and died in 2021, was revived using computer-generated imagery to appear at Liu Peiqiang and Han Duo Duo's wedding reception. Li Xuejian, who played the Chinese envoy of the United Government, was hoarse owing to an illness-related vocal cord injury. "Earth 2" opted to use artificial intelligence restoration to restore his original voice characteristics and line style, allowing the performing artist to optimize his style.

The mental foundation for science fiction movies is provided by China's world-advanced J-20 jets, aircraft carriers, space stations, and other spacecraft capable of landing on the moon and Mars. As a global box office powerhouse, China already has the market infrastructure in place to accommodate big-budget science fiction movies. Chinese science fiction writers' work, particularly that of Liu Cixin, has received international praise.

Due to the superb creative design ability in the set and props departments, as well as the visual technology effects section, the Earth 2 movie has a distinct tactile and futuristic vibe. The spacesuit props were made in one-off mass production using digital modeling, 3D printing, and digital lathes. With the assistance of modern equipment, technology, and manufacturing, China's strong manufacturing capabilities provided tools such as engineering vehicles and robots for the movie, the props department created realistic space suits and quantum computers, and the visual technology department provided advanced special effects support to create a unique and realistic future world (Yang, 2019). The team also investigated and established new methods and standards while filming, creating the groundwork for a full and modern movie industry system in China.

Industrialization is, first and foremost, a large-scale modernized division of labor with scientific, reciprocal information, and open transparency in all segments under a commercial trust mechanism, clear work standards and reward mechanisms for each type of work, and reasonable distribution mechanisms for movie funds and resources, all of which we are still far from achieving.

CONCLUSION

"Wandering Earth 2" shows a survival tale of a "community of human destiny" with a profound sense of "Chinese cultural values". The film shows Chinese cultural values such as post-industrial mechanical beauty and the aesthetic qualities of friendship and love in cinema, as well as social virtues of sacrifice and dedication passed down through generations in China. The film's popularity has had a significant influence on the industrialization of China's science fiction film industry. The industrialization process not only optimizes and enhances the science fiction picture production process, but it also creates a new scene in China's cultural and commercial industry.

Built on digital technology, the advent of Star Wars reconfigured the link between American movies and society, politics, technology, and culture (Zhou, 2023). A plethora of science

fiction movies was released, considerably increasing national confidence. China is now experiencing extraordinary economic instability and transformation in its century-long history. More science fiction movies are needed to take on this narrative role and value orientation, as well as to lead a high future-oriented mentality in order to establish a future in which technological advancement is the primary motor and to generate strong national self-confidence. *Wandering Earth 2* shows that we have the abilities and confidence to do so, but more science fiction movies are required to establish China's vision of cultural value.

REFERENCES

- Chen, X. K. (2020). Looking back at Chinese cinema 2019: "experience" and "transcendence", industry and aesthetics. *Modern Audiovisual (01)*, 83-84.
- Hutter, M., & Throsby, D. (Eds.). (2008). *Beyond price: Value in culture, economics, and the arts*. Cambridge University Press.
- Jia, L. (2014). Cultural values are presented in Chinese movies. *International communication of Chinese culture*, 1(1-2), 65-72
- Li, B. (2023). Confronting reality with courage and running to hope with perseverance. *China Art News*, 004.
- Magerstädt, S. (2014). *Body, Soul and Cyberspace in Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema: Virtual Worlds and Ethical Problems*. Springer.
- Pan, R. (2020). Body-subject-society: The "cyborg" imagination in classic European and American science fiction movies since the 1990s. *Journal of Shanghai Jiaotong University (Philosophy and Social Science Edition)* (03), 46-54.
- Shen, J., & Tan, S. (2023-02-06). What does the ∞ drawn by Ma Zhao represent? *China Youth Daily*, 004.
- Wang, Y. (2022). Towards the Sustainable Reproduction of Chinese Science Fiction Blockbusters--Review of the movie "Wandering Earth 2". https://www.zgwypl.com/content/details12_438943.html
- Xiang, Y. (2014). Cultural industry integration strategy: One source, multiple uses and whole industry value chain. *Frontline*, (06), 28-31.
- Yang, C. (2019). How science fiction directors are "made": An interview with Guo Fan. *Biographical Literature* (06), 47-57.
- Zhang, L. (2022). Chinese science fiction: a new rationale for the foreign dissemination of the discourse of human destiny. *Future and Development* (08), 1-7.
- Zhao, B. (2019). Chinese and American Heroism Culture in the Context of Movie Ideology - A Comparative Analysis Based on The Avengers Series and Wandering Earth. *House of Drama* (34), 76-77.
- Zhou, Y. (2023). Differences in the characteristics of "Hollywood" and "Huallywood" and the trend of integration: A comparative analysis based on the movies Avatar and Wandering Earth. *Media Forum* (01), 14-19.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Guo Meichen, (1988) is currently a PhD student in Taylor's University, Malaysia. She engages in researches of Media and Communication. She can be contacted by email at guomeichen@sd.taylors.edu.my.

Cheng Yu (1985) currently serves as a lecture in Hebei Institute of Communications, China. She engages in researches of Television Communication and many others. Her email is 1863308106@163.com.