



Research of Utopia in Chinese New Generation Science Fiction Literature

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ABSTRACT

Chinese new generation science fiction refers to the science fiction after the 1990s because of their diverse creative concepts, aesthetic values and new narrative modes. This paper summarizes the development of Chinese science fiction literature, and analyzes the utopias in Chinese new generation science fiction. The types of utopias in new generation science fiction can be divided into two aspects: temporal and spatial utopias and technological utopias. The characteristics of Chinese new generation's utopia include extraordinary Imagination, new and different ways of thinking. The functions of Chinese utopia are mainly reflected in the affirmation of ultimate values and the criticism of reality. The creation of new generations has brought new hope to Chinese science fiction literature, but in general, Chinese science fiction literature has a long way to go.

KEYWORDS: science fiction; utopia; human civilization; technological utopias

INTRODUCTION

Science fiction literature is a genre of literature that is both scientific and humanistic, with a broad spatial and temporal orientation, a blend of scientific spirit and artistic beauty, and a deep concern for social life, making it scientific aesthetics and philosophical. Modern science fiction literature originated in Britain. After the budding period, the Golden Age, the New Wave movement, and cyberpunk, it has been fully developed in the United States, France, Germany, Russia, Japan and China (Jing, 2018). Currently, American science fiction and science fiction creative products are becoming more and more popular and increasingly important in popular culture, and Hollywood science fiction movies have gained the love of audiences all over the world.

Science fiction literature has experienced both boom and bust in China in the past decades. In the 1990s, Chinese science fiction literature revived again, and the science fiction that emerged during this period were called "new generation science fiction" by science fiction critics because of their diverse creative concepts, aesthetic values and new narrative modes (Li Ke, 2017). Science fiction literature has become a force to be reckoned with in Chinese literature, and a large number of science fiction works are published every year, but there are few corresponding research, and there is a lack of research on science fiction from a utopian perspective.

The purpose of this paper is to comprehend the development

and evolution of Chinese science fiction, and analyze the types, characteristics, and functions of utopia, to comprehensively grasp the utopia in the new generation of Chinese science fiction.

From the perspective of "utopia", the new generation of Chinese science fiction from the 1990s to the present are sorted out, analyzed, and summarized. It is important to examine Chinese science fiction, especially the new generation of Chinese science fiction, from the perspective of "utopia". The development of Chinese science fiction has been closely related to the development of Chinese society in the 20th century, and the "utopian" genre of science fiction has been one of the most important genres. Through the perspective of "utopia," we can not only understand more deeply the development process of mutual adaptation and mutual exclusion between Chinese science fiction and Chinese social development, but also deeply understand the political and cultural functions and social criticism of the new generation of science fiction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the birth of science fiction literature, there have been many different opinions about the nature, attribution and textual interpretation of science fiction literature (Lin, 2017). From structural analysis of texts and symbolic metaphors of characters, to a series of postmodern theories introduced into science fiction literature criticism, feminism, identity, discourse, power, and politics, the analysis of science



fiction literature has become more and more in-depth and specific, and its value elements have become more and more numerous, while its essential attributes have become more and more blurred.

Research of science fiction literature in the West

It is generally believed that the creation of science fiction literature in the West has experienced the space opera era, the cyberpunk era and the new wave movement, which emerged along with the industrialization of the West, and continues to present new faces with the process of modernization(Yang,2017). The study of science fiction literature in the West started early and formed a more systematic research landscape, such as Dakshuin's theory of strangeness and Asimov's theory of science fiction creation, which focus on the textual research of science fiction literature and lay a solid theoretical foundation for science fiction literature and have a milestone significance(Liu,2017). In contemporary society, the study of foreign science fiction literature has become an important part of its cultural research, and scholars focus on the cultural criticism perspective, and carry out deep pattern excavation of science fiction literature. Karen Cadella(2018) from the United States researched and analyzed the concept of cyberpunk as a near-utopia in science fiction, and focused on the characteristics of feminist cyberpunk fiction(2018). Peter Gistelman(2020) uses Tom Moylan's concept of "critical anti-utopia" to examine the reality of anti-utopia and the expectation of utopia.

Science fiction literature research in China

For a long period of time, domestic science fiction literature research has only fragmented perceptive criticism, which is not in the grand hall of mainstream literature research. Wu Yan of Beijing Normal University divides the study of science fiction literature in China into three different periods: the period of cultural advocacy, the period of writers' and readers' perceptions, and the period of standardized research (Wu Yan, 2017). In the 1990s, along with the linguistic turn and the rise of cultural studies, Chinese science fiction literature researchers studied Western critical and theoretical discourse and devoted themselves to theory construction and innovation. Wang Fengzhen(2018) from Beijing Normal University have translated and published Selected Essays on Foreign Science Fiction, which contains twelve essays on the latest theories and achievements in foreign science fiction literature, providing an accurate and comprehensive description of the mainstream trends in the development of foreign science fiction literature, and rich theoretical resources for the criticism of science fiction literature. In terms of utopian studies of science fiction literature, Professor Wang Dewei(2019) gave a lecture entitled "Utopia, Vicious Utopia, Heterotopia - From Lu Xun to Liu Cixin" at Peking University, and some other writers also published a series of papers on the relationship between science fiction literature and utopian literature. However, these studies mostly start from the utopian content of science fiction literature and

focus on analyzing the aesthetic characteristics of science fiction literature, while systematic studies on science fiction literature about utopia are still relatively lacking(Zhang, 2018).

METHODOLOGY

In terms of research methodology, this paper firstly adopts a comparative approach, comparing the new generation of science fiction with foreign science fiction and other stages of Chinese science fiction, so as to study the new generation of science fiction since the 1990s in the context of the cultural fusion between East and West . Secondly, the paper adopts literature research method to conduct a close reading of the science fiction utopias constructed by the new generation from the 1990s to the present, so as to have a deeper and more detailed grasp of the thematic connotations of specific texts; Additionally, the paper applies narratological and structuralist approaches to interpret the narrative art of different types of utopias in the new generation science fiction, so as to summarize the achievements and shortcomings of the new generation science fiction narratives. Finally, this paper combines the overall and local studies, internal and external studies, to analyze the influence of the new generation science fiction. Based on the research and development status of Chinese new generation science fiction and the existing theoretical achievements in science fiction theory, this paper examines Chinese new generation science fiction from the perspective of utopia, analyzing the types, nature and functions of utopia.

THE TYPES OF UTOPIAS

Compared with the science fiction utopias before the 1990s, the utopian works of the new generation of science fiction show diversified characteristics. A clear and detailed classification of them helps us to comprehensively and deeply understand the thematic connotations and textual characteristics of the new generation of science fiction. While the utopias, anti-utopias, vicious utopias and etopias constructed by Western science fiction have emerged or formed sequentially with the development of the times and the progress of technology, the utopias constructed by the new generation of science fiction have emerged in the period from the 1990s to the present, under the influence of classic Western science fiction. The types of utopias in nascent science fiction literature can be divided into two aspects: temporal and spatial utopias and technological utopias.

Temporal Utopia and Spatial Heterotopia

In terms of the spatio-temporal setting of utopia, the works of the new generation of science fiction writers not only focus on the present and the future, but also aim at history. Under the support of parallel worlds and multidimensional cosmology, reconstructing history with scientific consciousness, especially recreating the mythological era, has become an important part of the creation of the new generation of science fiction writers. As a result, three genres of historical

utopias, future utopias and realistic heterotopias have been formed in their creations.

Science fiction writers' fictionalizations of historical utopias range from the mythical world of the "Shanhaijing" to the fate of the family and nation of the Qin emperor and the Han dynasty, demonstrating a grand historical perspective and an overall concern for the fate of humanity. Qian Lifang's "The Will of Heaven" is a representative work of historical science fiction. Under the interference of extraterrestrial intelligence, our ancient civilization developed rapidly during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period, and the establishment of the Qin Empire was like a huge utopia, with the same track for cars, the same text for books, and the same traffic for strangers, all the order behind which was hidden a shocking conspiracy, where the development of civilization went and where the truth of history was nowhere to be found. In her novels, Qian Lifang shows the sober reflection of a historical observer and her questioning of human destiny. The imagination of future utopia has always been the mainstream of science fiction literature, among which the positive utopian imagination can be found in Han Song's early science fiction works, such as "In the Days of the Future World" and "The Journey to the West". Although these works do not lack dystopian plots, the great development of technology has completely liberated human beings from manual labor and greatly facilitated clothing, food, housing and transportation, showing a hopeful image of the future world. In his vision of the future society, a small number of elites occupy the majority of the world's resources, they control the operation and development of the entire world, and they use technology to realize the various visions of paradise in human history. Realistic heterotopias often use absurd writing to reflect on and criticize life through the alienation of reality. Han Song's "metaphorical reality" novels are an example of realistic heterotopia. In the "subway" running to foreign lands, time becomes meaningless, and the closed carriage is a small heterotopia, which evolves different social forms, and all of them go to destruction. The ending is full of tragic spirit, the rebel who opened the window to escape found nowhere to go, and had to return to the original carriage, and was swallowed by the passengers who had degenerated into ants, becoming the sustenance of that alienated society. Speed is a keyword of modern technology and civilization. Han Song used a derailed train as a metaphor for our modern civilization, which is constantly accelerating and expanding, but without direction, forming a distinct symbol of today's rapidly developing civilization. The worlds of Han Song's works are often closed and chaotic, with countless imagery intermingling to present diverse and complex themes, which are not only metaphors for modern society, but also represent the new generation of science fiction writers' quest for the nature of the world and metaphysical thinking about the value of life.

Technical Utopia and Idyllic Utopia

The construction of utopia shows the many possibilities

of human civilization. With the same scientific core, some science fiction writers are optimistic in technology, constructing a blueprint of utopia from a scientific perspective, while others, with romanticism, look back to an idyllic life and fight against the alienation of technology with ecological civilization. In a broad sense, all the technology-mediated world-building in science fiction literature can be categorized as technological utopias. Liu Cixin is a great advocate of technological utopia, and his classical sentiment and technological optimism are intertwined. Although science and technology carry many problems, it is an important means for human beings to fight against the great power of nature, and it is also a concentrated expression of human creativity. Therefore, only technology can lead people to the utopia of the future. However, technology is a double-edged sword, and the construction of technological utopia requires a comprehensive grasp and profound discernment of the development of science. Liu Cixin's "Three Bodies" demonstrates his strong structural ability, as the "three-body civilization" expands from a classical problem in physics to a grand idea of a highly developed technological civilization, while the quantum superposition world in "Spherical Lightning" is a bold and magical vision of multidimensional space, fully demonstrating his rigorous and passionate technological imagination. In contrast to technological utopia, some writers believe that human beings are too dependent on technology and eventually become slaves of technology, so they focus on the construction of an idyllic utopia as a way to rethink technological civilization. The search for a spiritual home is an important value of modern utopia. The rapid development of technology in modern society no longer serves man, but man is more likely to be carried along by technology, and all romantic illusions have been abolished and replaced by the norms of technical rationality. In any case, how to better develop technology in the future will be an eternal direction for science fiction literature. In terms of society, the new generation of science fiction writers focus on the current environment of China, and develop their own criticism and imagination on many realistic issues such as income distribution, education, and medical care. According to Bloch, human beings naturally have the impulses of self-preservation and outward expansion, and it is the positive impulse of expansion that is driving the progress of human civilization.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHINESE NEW GENERATION'S UTOPIA

The science fiction literary works of the new generation in China are deeply influenced by Western culture, but they inherit the humanistic and critical spirit of the West, writing about the experiences of the times and personal lives. Their texts do not dissolve meaning, but always persist in the search for future values. Science fiction literature reproduces the tension between the textual world and real life through fantasy. In the wave of deconstruction of contemporary Chinese literature, the creation of new generation science

fiction literature is unique and presents distinct aesthetic characteristics.

Imagination

Imagination is the core quality of science fiction literature, and also a unique aesthetic feature of science fiction literature. The imagination of the new generation of science fiction literature is different from the previous science fiction literature and other literary disciplines, and its creation is more unconventional and unconventional than the previous generation of writers in terms of conception and writing. The images that appear in the new generation of science fiction texts are new because they dovetail with the most cutting-edge technology; they are condensed because they are set in a vast cosmic context; and they are profound because they concern the contemplation of human civilization. Such imagery is far beyond the science fiction literature of the socialized writing period in the 1980s, and it has a richer connotation, even with some philosophical and symbolic meaning. For example, Liu Cixin's "Spherical Lightning" uses the quantum state of "atomic bubbles" to explain spherical lightning, and He Xi designs the "six gates of life" to solve the population crisis, which not only reflects the concern for cutting-edge technology, but also provides another explanation for our world. The imaginary scenes are intercepted from different time and space, with the shadow of real life, but seemingly strange and detached. They are either fascinating or unsettling, making the readers think and gain something about the world and themselves.

Newness

Compared with traditional realistic literature, an important feature of the new generation of science fiction literature is "new and different", it also portrays real life, reflecting the current social life, but its portrayal is a more essential portrayal, is about the former illusion of life, rather than the simple abstraction of life experience. Realism expresses the phenomenal truth, while science fiction literature reflects the possible truth, and a more essential truth. The beauty of this "newness" is closely linked to the future vision of science fiction literature, which always holds the question of truth and value.

The "newness" of the new generation of science fiction literature is mainly reflected in its scientific core and magical imagination. First, in terms of content, the new generation of science fiction literature places more emphasis on the interplay of scientific spirit and artistic beauty. The creation of new generation science fiction writers is no longer limited to the traditional field of natural science, but is more focused on writing works based on social science, which require less strict scientific background but test the author's plot grasp and insight into life. The representative figure in this regard is Han Song, who has been handy in his works with theoretical materials on politics, economy, culture and history, and his works such as "The Red Ocean" supported by the theory of "Historical Cycle Theory", have been praised by mainstream

literature and even overseas media. Additionally, science fiction literature is rebuilding a dimension of value and hope. Through its imagination and new and different visions of the future, science fiction literature stirs up a spirit of hope in people to rebel against the meaninglessness of the world and the absurdity of life. The front-line consciousness connoted by science fiction literature makes it reject the zero narrative of a piece of land and reproduce the depth pattern of the text. The real life may be mediocre, monotonous and poor, and the pressure of survival and mental depression become synonymous with the meaninglessness of life in the eyes of the neo-realists, but in the world of the new generation of science fiction literature, all this has the possibility of change.

THE UTOPIAN FUNCTIONS OF CHINESE NEW GENERATION SCIENCE FICTION LITERATURE

The creation of new generation science fiction literature is an imagination and reconstruction of the development of technology and civilization in the context of China's modernization, and its texts contain something transcendent, i.e., a grasp of the universe, human beings and the true nature of reality. The whole purpose of Bloch's philosophy lies in the direction of a better life. He looks at humanity as a whole and, from a preconceived utopian consciousness, clarifies the possibility of freedom from the darkness of the present, that is, the principle of hope. Looking at the creation of the new generation science fiction literature in this way, it is not only the utopian function of the new generation science fiction literature, but also its ultimate value to grasp the future picture full of hope through scientific consciousness, so as to awaken people's feeling and pursuit of the true world which is still in the process. Therefore, the function of Chinese nascent utopia is mainly reflected in the affirmation of ultimate values and the criticism of reality.

Affirmation of ultimate value

Science fiction literature is a literature containing "not-yet-consciousness", with the ability to imagine the future in a gesture of hope. In his utopian philosophy, Ernst Bloch raises hope to an ontological level. Hope is the "not yet" consciousness rooted deep in the human mind, which assumes the most important function of utopia, that is, to provide positive pulling power for the present life, and eventually form the power of action toward a better future.

Critique of reality

Karl Mannheim's review of modern utopian thought is characterized by a critique of the real order. The pursuit of an ideal society by the new generation of science fiction writers is realized through the critique and reflection on reality. What they want to challenge is the existing rules and order, and what they want to reach is spiritual transcendence and freedom. In their critique of technological rationality, the new generation of science fiction literature has recreated the tension between "should" and "is", and has also rebuilt the dimension of hope. The dimension of hope. This is the

realistic utopian function of science fiction literature, which produces a critique of reality by looking at the ideal.

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