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THE FUSION OF MYTHOLOGY AND SCIENCE FICTION: INTERPRETATION OF THE MYTHOLOGICAL NARRATIVE STYLE OF LIU CIXIN'S THE THREE-BODY PROBLEM

Annotation

In the creation of The Three-body Problem Problem, the famous contemporary science fiction novelist Liu Cixin not only drew on the explicit forms (symbols, metaphors) unique to myth, but also went deep into the implicit forms of myth expression (such as using myth as a method of thinking), thus getting involved in thinking about social forms and the future development of mankind, these new changes in the narrative level illustrate the infinite possibilities contained in myth itself, and literature and art are only one aspect of creating these possibilities. Therefore, this article attempts to explore the commonalities between myth and science fiction and new research perspectives through text analysis.

Key words: Myth, science fiction, plot, character archetype, mythological narrative, Mythical thinking

СЛИЯНИЕ МИФОЛОГИИ И НАУЧНОЙ ФАНТАСТИКИ: ИНТЕРПРЕТАЦИЯ МИФОЛОГИЧЕСКОГО ПОВЕСТВОТЕЛЬНОГО СТИЛЯ ПРОИЗВЕДЕНИЯ ЛЮ ЦЫСИНЯ "ЗАДАЧА ТРЁХ ТЕЛ"

Аннотация

При создании "Задачи трёх тел" известный современный писатель-фантаст Лю Цысинь не только использовал эксплицитные формы (символы, метафоры), уникальные для мифа, но и углубился в имплицитные формы выражения мифа (такие как использование мифа как метода мышления), таким образом вовлекаясь в размышления о социальных формах и будущем развитии человечества; эти новые изменения на уровне повествования иллюстрируют бесконечные возможности, содержащиеся в самом мифе, а литература и искусство - лишь один из аспектов воссоздания этих возможностей. Поэтому в данной статье посредством анализа текста предпринята попытка рассмотреть общие черты между мифом и научной фантастикой и новые перспективы их исследования.

Ключевые слова: Миф, научная фантастика, сюжет, архетип персонажа, мифологический нарратив, мифологическое мышление.

MIFOLOGIYA VA ILMIY FANTASTIKA UYG'UNLIGI: LIU TSISINNING "UCH TANA MUAMMOSI" ASARINING MIFOLOGIK HIKOYA USLUBINI TALQIN QILISH

Annotatsiya

"Uch tana muammosi" ni yaratishda taniqli zamonaviy fantastika yozuvchisi Liu Tsin nafaqat afsonaga xos bo'lgan aniq shakllardan (ramzlar, metaforalar) foydalangan, balki afsonani ifodalashning yashirin shakllariga (masalan, afsonani fikrlash usuli sifatida ishlatish) chuqur kirib borgan va shu bilan insoniyatning ijtimoiy shakllari va kelajakdagi rivojlanishi haqida mulohaza yuritgan; hikoya darajasidagi ushbu yangi o'zgarishlar afsonaning o'zida mavjud bo'lgan cheksiz imkoniyatlarni aks ettiradi va adabiyot va san'at bu imkoniyatlarni qayta tiklashning bir jihati hisoblanadi. Shuning uchun ushbu maqola matnini tahlil qilish orqali afsona va ilmiy fantastika o'rtasidagi umumiy xususiyatlarni va ularni o'rganishning yangi istiqbollarini ko'rib chiqishga harakat qiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: Afsona, ilmiy fantastika, suujet, xarakter arxetipi, mifologik rivoyat, mifologik fikrlash.

Introduction. Contemporary myth theory refers to the theory that recognizes the objective existence of myth and mythological thinking in modern social life and studies it. Academic circles sometimes refer to contemporary myth theory as "Modern Myth". Contemporary myth theory believes that myth will not die out in modern society or even in post-modern society, but it has changed its existence form from that of previous myths, and even uses modern technology as the constituent elements and masks of myth. An important component of contemporary mythology is the myth of science and technology. Technological myths continue to appear in various scenes in the real world, and are especially active in science fiction novels and science fiction movies.

In *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, Peter Fox defines the core of science fiction as “conceptual breakthroughs” and traces science fiction’s quest for “conceptual breakthroughs” back to Prometheus and Dr Faustus, who predate the birth of cultural modernity in industrial societies, or maybe it’s like the deep-rooted mythological mother lode of Adam’s thirst for knowledge when he ate the apple, a perpetual adolescent longing[1]. Darko Suvin defines science fiction literature as: “A literary type or language organization whose necessary and sufficient conditions lie in the presence and interaction between alienation and cognition. Its main strategy is to replace the imaginative framework of the author’s experience environment”[2]. Science fiction is one of the most common forms of science fiction literature. Its name comes from the translation of English Science Fiction, which is a fictional work that uses scientifically based imagination. It is a literary concept and a cultural phenomenon. Northrop Frye gave this positioning of science fiction in *The Anatomy of Criticism*: “Science fiction is a kind of legendary novel that inherits a strong color from ancient mythology”[3]. In the overall literary view and literary cycle theory advocated by Frye, science fiction happens to assume the transitional function from winter to spring, that is, from irony to divine return. Therefore, it can be said that mythological thinking and mythical prototypes, the deep structure and narrative mode of myth can provide valuable materials and creative basis for science fiction (literature or film and television).

Literature review. Since the publication of *The Three-body Problem*, it has continuously set new overseas sales records for Chinese contemporary literature, allowing the Western world to see the historical imagination of the Chinese people in their long civilization. According to search statistics from the global online bibliographic database WorldCat, as of the end of October 2021, *The Three-body Problem* was collected by 1,341 libraries around the world, which is the highest collection record of contemporary Chinese literary translations in history[4].

At present, the research results of *The Three-body Problem* are relatively outstanding, mainly in the following aspects: First, the research on the translation and dissemination of *The Three-body Problem*. For example, Liu Kang’s “Research on the Translation of Science Fiction Novels from the Perspective of Hermeneutics - Taking the English Translation of *The Three-body Problem* as an Example[5]”, Zheng Miao, “The Combination of Domestication and Foreignization—The Translation Strategy of *The Three-body Problem* from the Perspective of Reception Aesthetics[6]” etc. They respectively examined the translation of *The Three-body Problem* from the perspectives of hermeneutics, Flotto’s second paradigm, domestication and foreignization. Second, in the analysis of the characters in *The Three-body Problem*, heroism is the focus of the analysis. Third, the analysis of anthropological research, ideological tendencies, and philosophy of *The Three-body Problem*. For example, in *The Humanistic Feelings and Ideological Philosophy of China’s Phenomenal Science Fiction Masterpiece *The Three-body Problem**[7], the humanistic feelings and ideological philosophy in Luo Ji’s image and content of the work are analyzed. Judging from the above research results, more and more scholars have joined the study of *The Three-body Problem* and have opened up many new interpretations and research perspectives.

Research Methodology. This paper mainly adopts the method of combining elucidation research and myth archetypal criticism, and comprehensively uses basic research methods such as text analysis, summary and induction, and literature research. On the basis of sorting out and summarizing the research on *The Three-body Problem*, it refers to mythology theory and literary theory. Analyze the relationship between mythology, science fiction, and literary creation. The creation and ideological connotation of *The Three-body Problem* will be analyzed taking into account the historical and cultural background to explore the meaning of the text.

Analysis and results. Since the beginning of the new century, as the globalization of Chinese society has deepened significantly, science fiction realism has not only re-entered the vision of science fiction creators and commentators, but has also become the main theme of Chinese science fiction literary creation and research. The science fiction novels of science fiction writer Liu Cixin focus on the issues of all mankind across civilizations and races. Whether it is mythology (past) or science fiction (future), mythological stories and science fiction novels as cultural texts have become the concrete embodiment of human fantasy expression. The expression techniques and spiritual pursuit of the “authenticity” of fantasy in science fiction realism are exactly the same as those of the most traditional realism. The “real effect” of its imagination must also be achieved through the practice of language.

There is no doubt that myth, as the core of ancient cultural traditions, is inextricably linked to the “fantasy” of fantasy literature. Especially for contemporary people after the Enlightenment, myth, as a realistic “parallel world”. Although it points to the past, it is a natural bridge between reality and fantasy. Therefore, science fiction and mythology not only have a profound connection in the way of thinking, but also express the same human themes and work together to influence human realistic choices.

一、The influence of *The Three-body Problem*

Liu Cixin is one of the most important contemporary science fiction writers in China. His *The Three-body Problem* novel trilogy (2006-2010) has won him widespread reputation at home and abroad. When the book was published, it was praised by critics as “single-handedly raising Chinese science fiction literature to a world-class level”[8]. Harvard University professor Wang Dewei marveled that Liu Cixin’s *The Three-body Problem* has a “Kantian majesty and magnificence: the struggle between man and infinity is rare in recent decades[9]” and even ranked him with Lu Xun. In 2014, the English translation of *The Three-body Problem* was published in the United States. In 2015, it won the 73rd Hugo Award for Best Novel.

二、The plot structure and character archetypes of *The Three-body Problem*

The Three-body Problem uses a magnificent imagination of technological development to promote the plot in the process of setting up suspense - promoting suspense - exaggerating the atmosphere - ultimately solving the puzzle. The work opens with a composition of a cold and huge metal building and Yang Dong’s slender figure, praising Yang Dong’s fragile but tenacious vitality like a delicate flower. It also compares the nano project reaction black box to a womb, and then compares the entire universe to a “narrow womb” , expressing the emotion that the universe is vast and nurtures all things in the world, but it is beyond the comprehension of human wisdom. Liu Cixin used the writing method from small to large to gradually connect women, the womb, and the universe, endowing the women in the article with primitive and mysterious energy, and laying the foundation for the original and mysterious mother goddess worship for the work.

In addition, the author directly points out that the recurring image of “cradle” is the continuation of the mother’s womb, and even the life of literary images is born in the writer’s “womb of thought”. The Great Mother Goddess Ye Wenjie is essentially Liu Cixin’s philosophical explanation and poetic understanding of the birth of the universe and the origin of all things. Liu Cixin regained cultural tradition, especially in the creation of character prototypes. We find that the female images mainly represented by Ye Wenjie and Cheng Xin in the works. Ye Wenjie’s act of sending a message to the Trisolaran civilization tells us her choice between life as a walking zombie and death as a new order. Taoism constructs a system of gods, mortals, and ghosts to strengthen people’s ability to deal with life’s problems. The gods symbolize the good that saves and guides mortals, the ghosts symbolize the evil that brings disasters, and mortals are the recipients and victims of good intentions and disasters. *The Three-body Problem* focuses on the Great Mother Goddess Ye Wenjie as the giver of good and evil, and regards all mankind as the recipients of good intentions and the recipients of evil intentions, replace and transform the traditional Taoist god, monster, and human modes into Ye Wenjie and human modes. Focusing on Ye Wenjie and using Ye Wenjie’s words and deeds to promote the development of the plot, the structure is more compact and the characters are more three-dimensional and profound. Women headed by Ye Wenjie act as guardians or judges, taking the Great Mother Goddess religion as the prototype, sensing and calling for the return of tradition, and absorbing the powerful vitality from the original energy.

In traditional mythology, the creation and destruction of the world is an eternal theme. The Western myth of God’s creation of man and the flood, and the Chinese myth of Pangu’s creation of the world and Nuwa’s patching up of the sky. After being told repeatedly, these myths have long become the collective memory of mankind. In *The Three-body Problem*, Liu Cixin reverses the order of creation and destruction. Because the starting point of science fiction narratives is often the real world of mankind. When external crises come, this world is turbulent, and the human world either disappears in this turmoil, or continues through other means. The invasion of the Earth by the Trisolarians in *The Three-body Problem* is a crisis that humans encounter in the real world. However, Liu Cixin’s brilliance lies in that he did not regard the Trisolarians as uninvited invaders, but rather as Arriving at the “invitation” of the people on earth, this leads to the story of Ye Wenjie, as well as her experiences and changes during the Cultural Revolution. In the eyes of many people, Ye Wenjie pressed the button to destroy the world, and she became the natural destroyer. However, Ye Wenjie’s choice was precisely out of disappointment with the human world order, so she invited the Trisolarians to come. The original intention is just like the God in Western mythology who was inspired by the corruption of human morality and used floods to destroy mankind. Therefore, such a story about a world destroyer has more realistic elements, and myth plays a more symbolic role in it.

The mythical narrative space of *The Three-body Problem* is integrated with technology

What cannot be ignored is that the reason *The Three-body Problem* is praised both inside and outside the “hard science” community is because the author’s logical deduction of the future development of science and technology has convinced many people. Under the astronomical framework of the Big Bang and the collapse of the universe, the book explores the order of power and morality in terms of light-years and elementary particles, and creates a real future in which the reader can be immersed in a

literary way with a logical and rational scientific thinking.

Analyzing some ancient myths in *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*, *Huainanzi* and other documents, we found that mythological stories have begun to have a science fiction color. For example, Hou Yi shoots the sun reflects ancient people's imagination of the reason why there is only one sun in the sky, and "Chang E flies to the moon" imagines the moon as a celestial body that is as habitable as the earth, "Pangu created the world" contains perceptual inferences about the origin of the universe. The science fiction color in ancient myths reflects the human understanding of all things in nature at that time and their advanced imagination. Liu Cixin's science fiction novel *The Three-body Problem* uses the unique imagination of ancient mythology and combines it with modern science and technology. It expresses the most essential concerns about human survival through the construction of a grand space, and examines how human beings have evolved from the invasion of alien civilizations. Regain your own subjectivity in a disaster.

The many epochs experienced by human beings in *The Three-body Problem* are themselves symbols of a myth. Such symbols can only occur within a long enough time frame, and the invention of human light-speed spaceships has realized the long-standing achievements of human beings. Time imagination, this is a scene that can only happen in mythology. In terms of space, Liu Cixin boldly depicts human beings' feelings when faced with four-dimensional time and space. According to the views of modern physics and astronomy, multi-dimensional space-time exists objectively, but only in the writings of writers can the scene of the four-dimensional space be accurately conveyed. The novel reads, "Such things as we call vastness and vastness in three dimensions are repeated infinitely in the fourth dimension, replicated infinitely in directions that do not exist in that three-dimensional world Feeling the higher dimensions is a baptism of the soul, a moment in which concepts like freedom, openness, profound, infinite and such concepts suddenly all take on a whole new meaning"[10]. Liu Cixin does not reject the role of science and technology, because in a rational era, rejection of technology is a kind of ignorance. He skillfully uses technology to present mythical scenes, thereby opening up a new space for human imagination. In Liu Cixin's works, mankind's destiny has been imagined in another way. Human beings can also gain an objective understanding of technology in this mythical metaphor, and the huge energy contained in human love and kindness is enough to change the direction of their own destiny.

As Yuan Ke said: "Myth is a non-scientific fiction that is linked to scientific fantasy. It is multidisciplinary in nature. It reflects reality through the prism of fantasy and adopts a revolutionary attitude towards reality"[11]. The scientific development of mankind is to a large extent the deepening of imagination, and mythology has also witnessed the entire process of human thinking from intuitive expression to rational cognition. As a narrative result based on human technological rationality, science fiction creation gives more romantic feelings to human technological imagination. As a result, there is a communication bridge between human sensibility and rationality. We found that science fiction creation is always related to factors such as science, imagination, technology, reality, etc., and ancient mythology is also an artistic refinement based on human beings' primitive survival. Therefore, the basic qualities of mythology and science fiction are consistent.

Conclusion. Through an in-depth analysis of *The Three-body Problem*, we find that ancient myths allow humans to intervene in the process of observing, explaining, understanding, and even transforming the world in an imaginative way, shaping humans' mythological thinking. This way of thinking intervenes in the development of modern human civilization in an ever-changing way. In the era of human science and technology, it has even achieved a deep integration with technology. This also means that the mythical imagination of human beings in primitive times has found a new way of existence in the technological era.

Science fiction literature offers the possibility of a modern revival of myth. Liu Cixin also agrees with the mythical nature of science fiction. In the postscript of *The Three-body Problem*, he pointed out that because science fiction is not completely divorced from reality, science fiction is "a modern myth rather than a fairy tale"[12]. The modern mythological nature of science fiction allows mankind to rediscover a kind of "humanity" and use it to find imaginary objects to construct a human community. Liu Cixin's science fiction novels express science fiction's value pursuit of focusing on the overall human being. His creation has become a representative of Chinese science fiction creation in terms of formal breakthrough and connotation expansion. It has reshaped the creative pattern of contemporary Chinese literature to a great extent and influenced the creative ecology of contemporary literature. At the same time, he also pushed Chinese science fiction literature to a new level that can dialogue with world literature.

It is precisely because of his profound understanding of the integration of mythology and science fiction that Liu Cixin boldly placed mythology in his science fiction narrative, and relied on this creation to form his strong epic style. The mythological narrative

of *The Three-body Problem* is a new discovery in the form of science fiction creation. Myth not only plays a structural role, but also becomes a booster for expressing human mental state and cultural form in a narrative way.

In short, mythology provides a steady stream of inspiration and imagination for science fiction, and science fiction gives mythology new vitality in modern society. Myths and science fiction jointly explore human yearning and exploration spirit, and jointly convey human wisdom and values. In the future, science fiction and mythology will continue to be intertwined and become part of mainstream culture.

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