

# Research on Soft Science Fiction Films Based on the Movie Dune

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**Abstract:** *In October 2021, Dune, a science fiction novel that has made countless directors fail, was finally successfully put on the big screen. Its huge world outlook and soft science fiction content left a deep impression on the audience. Since the new century, problems and advantages coexist in the development of soft science fiction films in China. This paper studies the soft sci-fi film based on the film Dune, analyzes the significance of science fiction and soft sci-fi, and how the film Dune presents science fiction. Based on these, it summarizes the development strategies and ways out of Chinese soft sci-fi films: making full use of strengths and avoiding weaknesses, breaking the pattern of landscape films; Establish self-confidence and develop Chinese soft science fiction.*

**Keywords:** *Science fiction, Soft science fiction, Film*

## 1. Introduction

If the way of grasping the world in daily life is understood as from small to big, from near to far, then the way of grasping the world in science fiction movies is the opposite, at least those movies that contain the content of world outlook construction [1]. The latter often looks at the starry sky first, fantasizing about the cross-celestial interaction in the future era, and even conceiving various incredible cosmic communities [2]. The American film Dune is one of the latest examples. Dune was released in mainland China on October 22nd, 2021. It is a science fiction, adventure and action film. The director Villeneuve once directed the science fiction film Blade Runner 2048. The film Dune is adapted from the novel of the same name by Frank Herbert, an American science fiction writer. USA-Today praised "the film has many wonders in technology... as well as the cosmic army and the Galaxy political drama".

In carrying out cross-cultural narrative communication, film art needs to be based on cultural "convergence points", transcend cultural boundaries, and form cultural consensus [3]. Directed by Denis Villeneuve and starring Timothy chalamet, the sci-fi film Dune tells the sci-fi story of the Eritrean family, after encountering internal betrayal, Paul, the heir, accepts the guidance of fate and completes revenge. The film integrates and collides the science fiction theme with the real world. By taking a series of hot social topics such as family games, land desertification, water scarcity and personal destiny as the narrative basis, and adopting surreal performance techniques, it tells a mysterious and "touching" hero story.

Throughout history, the foundation of science fiction films in China is very weak, with few mature high-level works and no sub-genre system of a certain scale [4]. Although The Wandering Earth has opened the door to Chinese hard science fiction movies, there is also a huge contingency behind the inevitability of its success. Facing the weak foundation of science fiction films in China, it is the development path to respect the objective law to focus on developing soft science fiction films and high-quality hard science fiction films on a certain basis. Therefore, the development of soft science fiction is crucial.

## 2. Science Fiction and Soft Science Fiction

People usually associate science fiction with special effects, big scenes and high costs. If a network drama wants to make a science fiction film, it is inevitably too difficult to achieve [5]. Soft science fiction themes pay more attention to the expression of human values and story lines. It realizes the transformation of people's inherent concepts of science fiction, and also means that a science fiction film can be achieved without a strong post production team.

**2.1. Science fiction concept**

Science fiction films are fantasies and fictions based on science [6]. With the wings of "science fiction", creators can explore outer space, alien life, superpowers, time travel, etc. as a branch of genre films, science fiction films are one of the most popular film types.

In Ci Hai, the "science fiction" is explained as follows: according to the new discoveries and achievements in science and technology, as well as the predictions that may be achieved on these bases, it is a novel that describes in a fantasy way that human beings use these new achievements to accomplish some miracles. It can be seen that works that are not afraid of "scientific basis" do not belong to "science fiction", but works that are only scientific and lack of "fantasy" are only scientific stories, and only works that combine science and fantasy can be called "science fiction" works.

The classification of science fiction films that the film industry agrees with is mainly "hard science fiction" and "soft science fiction". As shown in Figure 1.

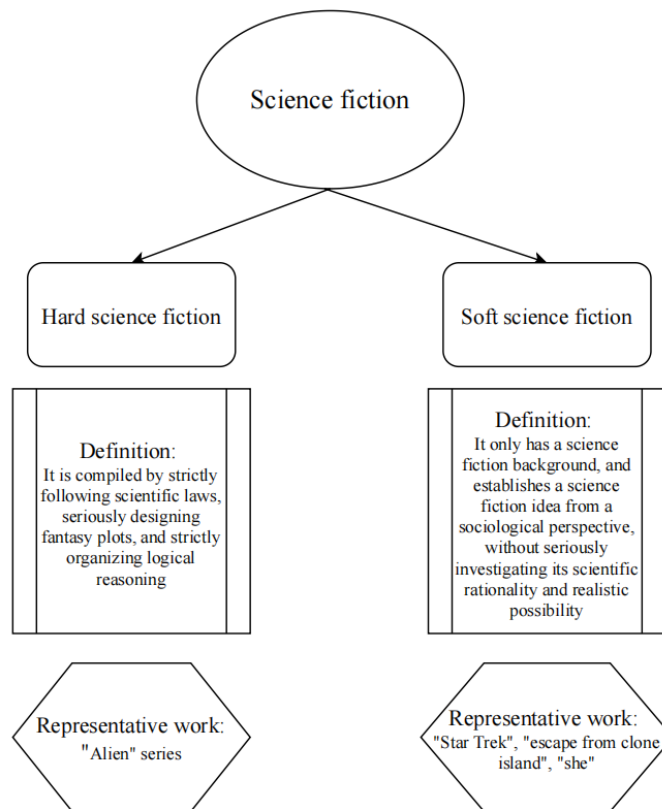


Figure 1: Classification of science fiction movies

Hard science fiction is a science fiction work based on Natural Science, which carries out illusion and inference, and reveals the future development direction of mankind by describing new technologies and inventions [7]. Such novels or films have strict logic and exquisite scientific basis, and many of them may become reality in the future. Soft science fiction is relative to hard science fiction. In the performance of the plot content, more attention is paid to the art of humanistic value and the expression of the plot. Such works often focus on showing human nature and reflecting on the present or future of mankind through science fiction media. The relative laws of science and physics tend to evade the important ones and pass them by. This kind of science fiction that pays attention to humanistic temperament is often called soft science fiction.

**2.2. The significance of soft science fiction**

Soft science fiction often describes the relationship between human beings, society and nature in the context of science fiction [8]. Guided by theory and values, it pays attention to humanistic care and social reflection, and its theme often involves the double-sided nature of science. Such works are more likely to gain readers' emotional resonance. Who was I before I was born, and who was I after I was born?

Facing the vast universe, the smallness and unpredictability of human beings often make us look up to the power of the sky; It is human nature to explore the unknown, while science fiction works use artistic expressions to express such predictions and prospects for the future and the past. The significance of soft science fiction to science fiction is not just a category, but a weight of science fiction works to think about and explain the destination of human civilization. Soft science fiction movies are born with the inherent skepticism of philosophy. They analyze contradictions in depth, and turn obscure philosophical torture into visual screen images and vivid and easy-to-understand storylines. This design intensifies the contradictions and conflicts of movies, highlights the portrayal of characters, and often generalizes the appeal of humanization among characters. This plot design, in which rationality and sensibility are interwoven and rendered, has enchanted countless movie lovers, and also led generations to think about fundamental questions that have no final answers.

### 2.3. Science fiction in the movie *Dune*

With the help of grand narrative scenes and magnificent narrative pictures, the movie *Dune* outlines a "Dune world" full of sci-fi. Using close-up shots, the film builds an imaginary Dune planet in a broad perspective, bringing the audience an epic viewing experience and visual imagination.

The movie *Dune* takes "dreams are information from the depths of the soul" as the starting point, connects the whole story line through different forms of dreams, shapes the characters with the help of the signifier chain of dreams, and uses the rhetorical logic hidden between dreams and reality to form a unique narrative strategy. *Dune*, as a sci-fi movie, its original space-time is fictitious, and the dream follows the singularity rule, while constructing a new reality. This new reality produces a dreamy aesthetic feeling through the shaping of images. Create a mysterious illusion through the space shape of fear and confusion [9]. Through audio-visual language, empathy is generated with the audience, and the boundary between reality and dream is blurred by the superposition of truth and illusion, virtual and real. The film *Shaqiu* has a fantastic aesthetic feeling through the shaping of its image.

"Science fiction film is a film type that builds a story world different from the real world on the basis of science or pseudoscience, tells fantasy stories and explores the unknown in a new world view." Obviously, the unfolding of sci-fi stories requires a spatial carrier for the unfolding of imagination, which is called the world view setting of sci-fi movies. From the perspective of imagination as the noumenon of sci-fi movies, it can also be said to be the temporization, spatialization and conceptualization of imagination. The concept map of world outlook is shown in Figure 2.

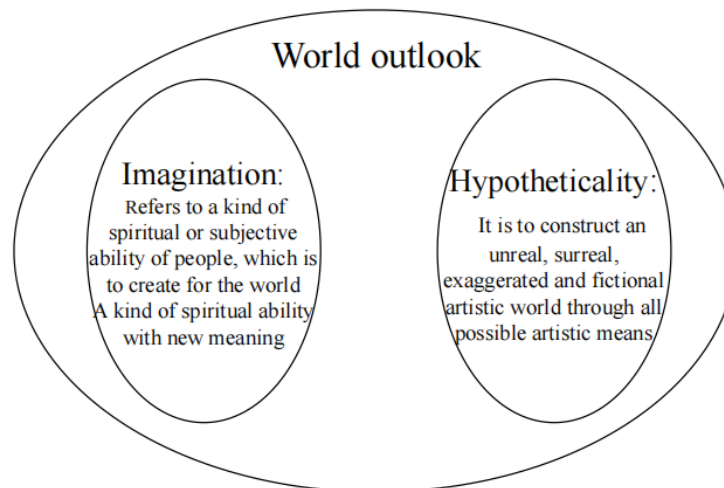


Figure 2: Concept map of world outlook

## 3. The development of Chinese soft science fiction films in the new century

### 3.1. Comparison of science fiction works at home and abroad

(1) Comparison of science fiction films at home and abroad

Hollywood is a well-deserved industry leader in today's science fiction films, and high-quality works

are born every year. However, Chinese science fiction movies have always been in an awkward situation. Because science fiction movies need strong technology, and the gap between China's film industry and Hollywood is very large, so looking at the films produced in mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, we can find that there are very few works with technical themes such as science fiction. As far as the subject matter is concerned, Chinese sci-fi films are still stuck in the old-fashioned subjects such as the future police and the crossing of ancient tombs, but there is also a qualitative gap with foreign countries in terms of film production [10]. For this reason, Chinese science fiction movies always linger on the edge.

#### (2) Comparison of science fiction at home and abroad

In foreign countries, not only science fiction novels have been adapted into movies, but also many science fiction comics have been changed, for example, many comics of Marvel have been moved to the screen. All along, science fiction in China has been suppressed like movies. Nowadays, there are a lot of science fiction works, but the quality is not high, and there are a lot of crude and pirated works. Therefore, to get rid of the dross and get the essence is what the Chinese sci-fi literature circle needs to pay attention to at present.

### 3.2. The development strategy and outlet of Chinese soft sci-fi films

In the analysis of the global localization of soft science fiction films in the new century, it is not difficult to find that there are some problems in the process of learning from Hollywood science fiction films in China, which has led to a number of low-quality films. A large part of the reason is the result of falling into the mire of Hollywood landscape movies, abusing special effects and ignoring characters, plots and connotations. However, the soft sci-fi in the new century in China shows unique content and style advantages in using the author's film + sci-fi element creation mode, using Chinese cultural symbols and paying attention to the observation of real life. These localization advantages are very conducive to closing the distance between the audience, expanding the market and reducing the risk. Therefore, we might as well just jump out of the pattern of landscape movies dominated by Hollywood, change the quick win mentality of trying to win the audience's attention by bombing audio-visual wonders, shift the focus to the essence of movies, and give full play to its many advantages in content. This is the healthy and long-term development of soft science fiction in China.

Since the new century, China's science fiction films have been integrated with Chinese cultural elements in the process of global localization, but most of the films themselves still borrow the framework model of Hollywood science fiction films. However, with the increasing strength of China's economy and politics, it is increasingly important and urgent to get rid of the shackles of western centralism in culture and establish a culture with Chinese subjectivity, which is the meaning of China's becoming a cultural power. This appeal is reflected in the field of science fiction movies, that is, to establish a purely Chinese science fiction movie mode.

## 4. Conclusions

The film *Dune* continues the creative style used by the director Denis Villeneuve. It combines color aesthetics, future imagination and space perspective, presents science fiction aesthetic scenes for the audience, and uses the method of relaxing narrative space to establish a continuous and in-depth emotional resonance and visual imagination between the audience and the film. At present, domestic sci-fi films are developing towards the "international" level. In order to achieve the cross-cultural communication goal of "going global", domestic sci-fi films need to take cultural characteristics as the basis, display local scenes as the core, actively integrate into the global cultural context, select recognizable landscape symbols, and build a sci-fi narrative paradigm with Chinese characteristics. On the basis of building a common imagination space for audiences, the ideal effect of film cross-cultural communication can be achieved by connecting national images with the world imagination.

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