A DIVE INTO CHINESE SCIENCE FICTION

A Language of the *Chinese Dream*

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

This thesis investigates an emerging international wave of fantastical writings that surfaced roughly a bit over a decade ago, the globalization of Chinese science fiction (SF or sci-fi). Underdiscussed in overseas modern discourses and always overshadowed by the worldwide glorification of Western SF works, the distinctive history, culture, social values, and political drives of the "Chinese Dream" (中国梦) ideology present alternative thinking and speculation for the collective visions of tomorrow. Focusing mainly on the study of literature, this thesis unravels the unique and complex elements of Chinese SF through theoretical, historical, political, cultural, and social analyses. Henceforth, the boundless prospects of human civilization are explored through a divergent lens of imaginative contemplation, with a specific focus on the architectural notion of dwelling in the home and the city.

A significant portion of this thesis will be a review of literary case studies of Chinese science fiction short stories via theoretical, historical and political, and socio-cultural discussions. Subsequently, corresponding reflective illustrations will be created to serve as an experimental vehicle to communicate sophisticated analyses through utilizing drawing as a research tool and narrative methodology. Although the thesis is predominantly concerned with the discourse of Chinese SF, commentaries regarding Western SF concepts and theories will be included for supportive reference, since the historic timing of Chinese science fiction did follow that of Western science fiction. Although particular ideas, themes, and speculations are universal commonalities within the global science fiction community, the research of this thesis is mainly dedicated to realizing the uniqueness of Chinese SF, and its alternative perspectives regarding humanity's future dwelling landscapes. Ultimately, the thesis question is: *If architects and designers interrogate the rich ingredients of Chinese science fiction, how can the ideology of the "Chinese Dream" upon which it is largely based, influence future universal architectural discourses regarding the home, the city, and the act of dwelling?*

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Introduction

When I was eight years old, I immigrated to Canada with my parents. It was an age where I had spent just the right amount of time in China to have fairly vivid memories of my grandparents, friends, elementary school, and my home. It was also just the right moment for me to experience a few years of childhood in Canada as well. Similar to the two halves of my childhood, I grew up belonging to two cultures at the same time. Ironically, I also felt that I did not belong anywhere. Through years of mental struggle, it has been a long journey in finding my identity. A desire to fit in; I endured bullying from others, I became a bully myself, and oftentimes, I felt satisfied with my life, but instantly would be lost again.

When I first arrived in Canada around Grade 3, the principal of my new school suggested that I repeat a school year, because my English was so bad. My parents worried that being a year older than my classmates would make it even more difficult for me to fit in, and that I will fall behind compared to the children that are the same age as me. Although the suggestion was declined by my parents and I began the new school year with the 'right' crowd, it probably made absolutely no difference to the amount of bullying that happened afterwards. My classmates laughed at me for not knowing how to spell my own name, nobody cared to notice that it was my birthday (not even the homeroom teacher), and during recess, I was only called to pick up the rubber ball that rolled too far from the Four Squares. I often did not eat the lunch that my mom thoughtfully packed for me, because the kids at school were unfamiliar with the smell of Chinese food. I tried my best to not tell my parents the details of my day at school, because back in China, I had so many friends, and I felt embarrassed about my situation. I remember my dad staying up with me till late at night, helping me with my homework and teaching me English, even though he was already so exhausted from his own work schedule. I remember my mom telling me that she secretly visited my school during recess. She saw all the children playing together and I was standing by myself in the doorway of the school. I remember her telling me that she cried that day. Although everything started to get better immediately after Grade 3 as I quickly picked up the English language, that anger of being bullied kept building up

inside me until it changed me.

In middle school, I was a different person. I never looked for other people's attention, because as a bully myself, I already had all the attention. Others started to listen to me, value my opinions, and oftentimes, I was even a leader. Unfortunately, in standing up for myself to stop being bullied, I became extremely aggressive. Perhaps that was the instinctive action of being defensive. I knew many peers thought I was a mean individual, but I would rather have people be afraid of me than to feel left out ever again. It was not until a relationship ended that I realized I was really not a nice person to be around.

Right before I began high school, I moved to another city. The community was much smaller, but it was a place of acceptance. My group of friends included people from five different cultural backgrounds, and as people grew older, they became more open to diversity. I never felt the need to be aggressive anymore, and for the first time since immigrating to Canada, I felt that I comfortably belonged somewhere. For me, high school was a four years healing process, and most of that was thanks to my dearest friends.

The start of undergrad was intimidating. As I eventually started friendships with classmates, students outside of my program, and students from other secondary institutions, the crisis to define my own identity became even more confusing. I could not completely embrace the Canadian culture. I was also not exactly like the international students, and I did not solely belong with the Canadian-born Asians or the Asians that grew up here. I did not perfectly fit in with any group, because I wanted to be and was essentially part of all of them. University freed me to love and enjoy every aspect of myself. Yet, I never predicted that this personality variance would transcend to the absolute indecisiveness of my Master's thesis.

I felt torn about my thesis topic since the start of my final undergraduate term. It was a repetitive cycle of knowing and not knowing, and of finding and losing. Initially, I wanted to focus on my Chinese background, but it was difficult to ignore my Western upbringing. Then, I contemplated on switching to my Canadian background, but I could not abandon my native identity. My thesis began with an interest in designing contemporary reinterpretations of traditional Chinese architecture in Beijing. Although it was a fascinating study at first, it felt all too 'realistic'

passion. It was also a thesis topic that has been done many times at this architecture school. I wanted to deviate away from the design studio ways of working, which I have been accustomed to for the past five years, and truly use this opportunity to embrace a research work that represents who I am. Suddenly, a significant moment came to me. During Grade 10, I decided that I was going to go to architecture school, even though all my peers and teachers suggested that I should apply for art school. That was one of the biggest decisions of my life. As a result, I gave up and lost a huge part of myself. When I use to be obsessed with visual arts, I had a particular passion for *Surrealism*; an abstraction, a montage, and a juxtaposition of reality and fiction. Thus, speculative architecture automatically made so much sense, and my thesis topic to study science fiction was determined. Instead of perceiving the fragments of my identity as a nuisance, the synthesis of different cultural perspectives made this journey even more fascinating.

This thesis begins with the global familiarity of Western science fiction as a gateway into deeply dissecting and understanding the complexities of Chinese science fiction, which is still in the stages of maturation. Although certain concepts overlap, the main objective is to highlight the uniqueness of Chinese SF. Henceforth, extracting alternative insights for viewing the architecture and urbanity of the global future. Since it is quite impossible to discuss Chinese SF without involving Chinese politics, which can become extremely sophisticated, the following chapters aim to establish a gradual process of understanding and analyses.

Part One is predominantly a theoretical chapter, aiming to define the worldwide cultural phenomenon of science fiction. Through discussions of Western SF literary concepts coined by Darko Suvin and ancient Chinese ideologies, the similarities and differences between science fiction creations from opposing cultures are revealed.

Part Two, proceeding with the exploration of the fundamental ideological drive of Chinese science fiction, is a historical chapter that intensely explores the evolution of Chinese science fiction from the Dynastic period to contemporary time. This section concludes with the identification of modern trends in Chinese science fiction for the purpose of clearly comprehending the next chapters.

Part Three is a cultural chapter that introduces the architectural lens of the thesis. In contemplating the concepts of the home, the Chinese city, and the act of dwelling, this section reveals the meanings behind these architectural notions. Beginning with the philosophies of Martin Heidegger, and then transgressing into another cultural perspective of the ancient Chinese way of design thinking.

Part Four is a collection of Chinese SF case studies. Through the combined application of theorical, historical, political, social, and cultural studies, the chosen narratives become more dynamic in terms of literary comprehension and richer in terms of graphic representation. Each case study will begin with a summary of the story. Throughout the investigation of each story, corresponding analytical illustrations are integrated for further visual speculations, exploration of complex relations, and graphic experimentation in information and analyses representation. Although the drawings are presented by segments at first, ultimately, they all stitch together into one large scroll (13 meters) synthesizing humanity's future city envisioned through the ideology of the *Chinese Dream*.

Part Five is an archive documenting the final scroll piece. The seven segments corresponding with the seven case studies merge into one long scroll, with moments where the illustration transforms. In eradicating the static condition of conventional drawings, the final illustration is a contemporary reinterpretation of traditional Chinese scroll painting that plays with transformation and temporality.

Throughout the reading, it is imperative to note that cultural appropriation in terms of analytical perspective is highly important. As the Chinese may be unfavorable towards particular Western ideals, it is absolutely natural that foreigners may view the ideology of the Chinese Dream with extreme ill prejudice. However, this thesis aims to illuminate the inspirational alternatives of the global future through an exploration of the values of Chinese SF architecture, that are fundamentally established by the concepts of the Chinese Dream. Thus, the following reading is encouraged to be contemplated through the Chinese perspective, which regards the Chinese way as hopeful, proud, powerful, and a determined pathway towards a brighter future.



Fig. 1.1 "Guizhou" by Jon Juarez (2017).

01

A fluid blend of tradition and modernity. A complimenting juxtaposition of orientalism and Western style. A harmonious coexistence between the continuity of life and temporality.

Here lies a strange newness evaporating from the calm water, cascading from the sky above, and dissipating into the forest and mountains below. This is humanity's shifting *Zero World* subjected to perpetual renewal and rebirth. This duality between familiarity and alienation recalls the nostalgia of the past and anticipates the possibilities of the future. Such a clash between heritages and timeframes represents the genre of science fiction, that is a cultural artefact archiving the transformations of humankind, their homes and cities, and ultimately, their societies.

1.1 In the Eyes of the World

Everything is becoming science fiction. From the margins of an almost invisible literature has sprung the intact reality of the 20th Century. What the writers of modern science fiction invent today, you and I will do tomorrow.[1]

~ JG Ballard, *Fictions of Every Kind*

The early beginning of science fiction originated from the creative imagination of literature, in which writers harnessed the power of the literary genre for thoughtful contemplation. However, the rise of the film industry brought upon by modernity, has established worldwide misconception towards the *true* essence of science fiction. The technological wonders of moving pictures instinctively undermined the speculative values of science fiction, (un)intentionally reducing a revolutionary cultural phenomenon into merely a source of entertainment. As a result, in contemporary time, a majority of the global population naturally imposes extreme oversimplification on the significance and gravity of the science fiction genre. By no means is this statement critical of mass ignorance, especially when humanity relies and will continue to rely heavily on the agency of entertainment in their everyday lives. Humanity's growing biological need of 'to be entertained' constantly finds inexhaustible resources in the science fiction genre, which is overflowing with perpetually unlimited inventiveness. Therefore, the dilemma lies within modern humanity's blindness towards the authentic values of science fiction as rapid changes in cultural paradigms continue to shift perspectives, desires, and thinking. Nonetheless, if one were to simply eradicate the superficial misconception, perhaps even the infuriating insult, that science fiction is solely for entertainment purposes, anyone can easily arrive at the conclusion that science fiction has everything to do with the entirety of the legitimate universe. Science fiction is a worldwide cultural phenomenon that instinctively merges reality and dream. It will never be

1 JG Ballard, "Fictions of Every Kind," JG Ballard Non-Fiction (Books & Bookmen, February 1971), www.jgballard.ca/non_fiction/jgb_fictions.html.

bound by any space-time continuum, and naturally harnesses the super ability to be the past, the present, the future, or all at once. Science fiction is a creation of humankind. Thus, it is only justifying when humanity can *properly* appreciate, understand, and practice thoughtfully with this powerful instrument at hand.

The discourse of recognizing the relevancy and significance of science fiction continues as a universal debate till the present time. So, although science fiction has existed for a long time (since the beginning of human civilization), there is still not a uniformly accepted definition. The most simplified and widespread contemporary understanding of science fiction (shortened as sci-fi or SF) is a genre of speculative fiction that deals with the impact of existing or imaginary advanced science and technology on society or individuals.[2] In the West, sci-fi was notably popularized around the 1920s by American publisher Hugo Gernsback, who also invented the worldwide famous *Hugo Award* in 1953.[3] The *Hugo Award* is an annual literary award for the best science fiction or fantasy works and achievements from the previous year, given at the *World Science Fiction Convention*.[4] Due to these significant achievements, Gernsback is considered by many in popular culture as "The Father of Science Fiction".[5] In modern time, science fiction is an individualized genre categorized into an ongoing collection of subgenres including, but not nearly limited to: *Utopian*, *Dystopian*, *Space opera*, *Cyberpunk*, *Steampunk*, *Nanotechnology*, *Alien invasion*, *Alternate history*, *Time travel* and so on. However, prior to the existence of this recognition and classification system, SF thrived as the underlying framework in other more developed literary genres since the oldest stories of human history, such as *Folklore*, *Myths*, *Pastorals*, and *Fantasy*.[6] Thus, although the SF genre was popularized around the 1920s, it existed long before that formalized recognition took place. Ultimately, it was the Industrial Revolution's trigger of technological and scientific momentum that resulted in the prevailing divergence of science fiction into its own unique genre.

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2 Bruce Sterling, "Science Fiction," Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., April 7, 2022), www.britannica.com/art/science-fiction.

3 "Gernsback, Hugo," The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction (SF Encyclopedia, September 12, 2022), sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/gernsback_hugo.

4 "The Hugo Awards," The Hugo Awards (World Science Fiction Society, November 30, 2017), www.thehugoawards.org/about/.

5 "Gernsback, Hugo," The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction (SF Encyclopedia, September 12, 2022), sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/gernsback_hugo.

6 Darko Suvin, *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), pages 3-4.



Fig. 1.2 "Loose Ends: A Literary Supercut of Sci-Fi Last Sentences" by Elena Lacey (2019).

In the Western context, science fiction originated from the natural human desire to understand the workings of the world. The earliest stage of academic pursuit regarding science fiction began in the field of social sciences, leading to the development of *Critical Theory* from the Frankfurt School in Germany.[7] Max Horkheimer, a German philosopher and sociologist, wrote in his 1937 essay, *Traditional and Critical Theory*, that critical theory "… must explain what is wrong with current societal reality, identify the actors to change it, and provide both clear norms for criticism and achievable practical goals for social transformation."[8] Science fiction embodies every essence of such a statement, because its fundamental purposes include critiquing the past and the present, challenging the normative social order, and bringing forth possible solutions derived from logical scientific and technological theories. In Carl Freedman's *Critical Theory and Science Fiction*, he praised science fiction to be one of the most theoretically informed genres of all literature, and that the discourse of science fiction overlaps greatly with the concepts of critical theory in such that they even feed into one another.[9] It is also no surprise that science fiction has and is still undergoing shifting paradigms depending on the changing values and perspectives of society during different

7 Sanjay Somanath, "Chapter 1 - What Is Science Fiction," Sanjay Somanath, 2020, sanjaysomanath.com/chapter-1-what-is-science-fiction.

8 James Bohman, "Critical Theory," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Stanford University, March 8, 2005), plato.stanford.edu/entries/critical-theory/.

9 Carl Howard Freedman, *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2006).

time periods. As a result, favorable subgenres rise, less relevant subgenres fall, new subgenres emerge, and it becomes a never-ending pattern entangled with evolving social realities. For instance, according to Darko Suvin (an important figure of Western SF literature that I will go into more detail later on), science fiction (of the West) initially started from a prescientific approach of premature social critiques, which during the Nineteenth Century associated greatly with natural and human sciences.[10] Then, in the 20th Century, sci-fi gravitated more towards anthropological and cosmological thinking, becoming "a diagnosis, a warning, a call to understanding and action, and–most importantly–a mapping of possible alternatives."[11] Since every era is different and every culture is different, it is impossible to precisely predict the future trends of science fiction. However, SF is about the entirety of the human race and the world, and to only investigate the progress of SF from a Western point of view is hardly sufficient.

Before diving into deeper dissection of the science fiction genre, I would like to clarify a common misconception, and that being the differentiation between *Science Fiction* and (*Science*) *Fantasy*. In modern times, these two genres often collide to create works that are not solely SF, but are also not solely fantasy. Many resources even utilize the categorization of *Science Fiction Fantasy* works. Nonetheless, despite their undeniable overlaps, it is imperative for the purpose of this thesis to understand the distinction between SF and fantasy so that the powerful agency of SF is not undermined. Science fiction challenges the status quo through the application of satire, embedded warnings, controversial commentaries, and social critiques that are grounded in reality and logic. Fantasy, on the other hand, lacks grounding in scientific reality and logic, because they always employ otherworldly orders and phenomenon without any basic elaborations on origin and reason (ex. *Harry Potter*, *Star Wars*, *Marvel*, *Lord of the Rings*, etc.). Therefore, fantasy forces the audience to nonchalantly accept conditions of alienation instead of effectively utilizing alienation to rethink social reality, which is the crucial role that *true* SF takes on. In Darko Suvin's book, *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction*, he criticized fantasy as being "…inimical to the empirical world and its laws…the fantasy is insignificant insofar as it is impure and fails to establish a superordinated maleficent world of its own, causing a grotesque tension between arbitrary supernatural phenomena

10 Darko Suvin, *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), page 12.

11 Ibid.

and the empirical norms they infiltrate."[12] Thus, science fiction's unbreakable affiliation with reality and scientific reasoning distinctively sets the genre apart from its commonly mistaken association with fantastical narratives, rendering SF to be far more relevant to the legitimate developments of the real world.



Fig. 1.3 "Dulle Griet" (Mad Meg) by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1564). The front cover illustration on Darko Suvin's contemporary version of Metamorphosis of Science Fiction. Originally a painting, it depicts Mad Meg who is a figure of Flemish folklore leading an army of angry women on a mission to rob Hell.

12 Darko Suvin, *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), page 8.

1.2 Darko Suvin

> *The importance of science fiction (SF) in our time is on the increase…This is a significant cultural effect which goes beyond any merely quantitative census.*[13]
>
> ~ Darko Suvin, *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction*

Darko Suvin is an academic, writer, SF critic, and one of the earliest scholars to work on the poetics of science fiction.[14] Although Suvin's research regarding SF is predominantly within Western context, particular concepts are still extremely relevant to the global science fiction franchise. One of his greatest works about SF is the book, *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre*, which introduced one of the most fiercely debated definitions of science fiction amongst scholars and critics in the contemporary Western world. He defined science fiction as "a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment."[15] Correspondingly, Suvin's most significant contributions to the SF community are his concepts of *Cognitive Estrangement* and *Novum*, which he suggested are indispensable from the science fiction genre. Through further discussion, it will become apparent that these theories, although coined by a Western scholar, are fundamentally applicable to Chinese SF and the universal SF society.

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13 Darko Suvin, *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), page 3.

14 "Suvin, Darko," The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction (SF Encyclopedia, September 12, 2022), sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/suvin_darko.

15 Darko Suvin, *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), pages 7-8.

Cognition

The first essential ingredient is *Cognition*. According to Suvin, cognition is derived from naturalism or empiricism, meaning that science fiction identifies with the factual workings of reality, such as the current knowledge in nanotechnology, the established law of gravity, recorded historical epochs and so forth. Although SF envisions the near or distant future while still including many unknown variables, SF "…does not at all mean committing it to scientific vulgarization or even technological prognostication, which it was engaged in at various times (Verne[16], the United States in the 1920s and 30s, USSR under Stalinism)."[17] SF's cognitive nature through presenting empirical environments establishes stronger connections and relatability with the audience, rendering responses of progressive change much more effectively. For instance, a sci-fi narrative situated in the future X year, the audience is familiar with the name of the lake, the ornamentation on the architecture, the described aroma of the native food, and the current knowledge of scientific theories. However, the story contrasts these cognitive factors with unfamiliarity, such as new sea monsters lurking in the waters, a different building configuration, a future spin on the aesthetic presentation of the dishes, and never seen before advanced technologies. Through this strategic method of storytelling, the year in which the story takes place does not even need to be specified, because the combination of familiarity and alienation already tells the audience that the setting is in the future. The presence of cognition automatically encourages the audience to question why things are the way that they are, to wonder how society can reach that certain point, to contemplate on how society and humankind evolved, and most importantly, to reflect on their own social realities. A major element of familiarity in SF's cognitive landscape is the references and technical explanation of scientific and technological innovations, which fortifies SF's credibility in being legitimately useful to the real world. Suvin suggested that science fiction can even be considered as a historical genre, because the exploration of imaginative possibilities is based on the injection of real contingencies and the factuality of reality.[18]

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16 Referring to Jules Verne, a 19th Century French author who is famous around the world for his revolutionary science fiction novels.

17 Darko Suvin, *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), page 9.

18 Darko Suvin, *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979).

Estrangement



Fig. 1.4 "Mother Courage and her Children" by Bertolt Brecht (1939), a prime example of Epic Theatre.

Suvin's next concept is *Estrangement*, inventing the term from German theatre practitioner, playwright, and poet, Bertolt Brecht. Instead of calling it estrangement, Brecht initially coined the term "The Alienation Effect" (*Verfremdungseffekt*) in his invention of *Epic Theatre* during the early mid-20th Century.[19] Brecht had a desire to write plays for a scientific age, and he defined the attitude of estrangement or alienation in his *Short Organon for the Theatre* as both cognitive and creative: "'A representation which estranges is one which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time

19 Darko Suvin, *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), page 6.

makes it seem unfamiliar.'"[20] Brecht's idea clarified that cognition (familiarity) and estrangement (unfamiliarity) come hand in hand. This theory of duality holds true for Suvin's speculations of the science fiction genre, because instead of stating that SF cannot be without cognition and estrangement, Suvin suggested that SF cannot be without *Cognitive Estrangement*. Analogous to the previous section where the explanation of cognition cannot avoid discussions of alienation, it is also apparent that one cannot grasp the meaning of estrangement without understanding cognition. Conclusively, estrangement develops from cognition and cognition predisposes the attitude of estrangement, and their co-dependent teamwork establishes the fundamental framework of SF. Cognition solidifies groundings in reality from which relevant alienation factors manifest to provoke innovative and alternative thinking. On the other hand, estrangement in science fiction must to some degree be rooted in the empirical world to prevent the genre from being downgraded to the "creative suicide"[21] of fantasy and other genres alike.

Cognitive Estrangement

The synthesis of cognition and estrangement is *Cognitive Estrangement*, and it results in a "strange newness" that Suvin called *Novum*. Novum is the defamiliarization and alienation of known concepts brought into existence by the interactive exchanges between methodical cognition and purposeful estrangement.[22] Acting as a mediator between "literary and extraliterary, fictional and empirical, formal and ideological domains"[23], novum is essential to the SF genre, because it instills the necessary grounding of cognitive novelty. The dependent partnership in cognitive (real) estrangement (fiction) can be considered as a critical practice of "localized daydream[ing]",[24] where the dreamer, through nostalgic memories, current social realities, and imagined possibilities, generates phenomena of novum to challenge existing familiarities.

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20 Darko Suvin, *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), page 6.

21 Ibid., page 8.

22 Darko Suvin, *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979).

23 Ibid., page 64.

24 Darko Suvin, *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), page 6.

The deliberate application of familiar and unfamiliar duality is a fundamental narrative methodology in the science fiction works of every culture. It does not only pertain to Western SF. The concept of novum can be specific to the science fiction genre, but can also be inherent in subject matters of a much broader scale such as the field of architectural design. In erecting buildings, infrastructures, and urbanities, novum is driven by the architects and designers who are constantly subjected to re-evaluating societal realities. Through the combination of the traditional that is cognitive and familiar, and modern that is estranging and unfamiliar, architects innovate to interrogate the status quo. Similar to authors inspiring societal transformations through written texts, artists through brushstrokes, musicians through melodies, scientists through technological innovations, architects propagate strange newness through built landscapes. Thus, novum is key to the framework of science fiction, but also to the field of architectural and urban design. Through cognitive novelty, one can dream and speculate on infinite possibilities, and gradually bring them into attainable reality.

Zero World

Additionally, I would like to briefly comment on another concept by Suvin, which is also indispensable to the universal science fiction franchise, as well as being extremely relevant to the architectural lens of this thesis. In *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction*, Suvin introduced the term *Zero World*, and it is the "empirically verifiable properties around the author"[25] or the author's naturalistic environment. Clarifying that "zero" is a "central reference point in a coordinate system"[26] or representing the "control group in an experiment."[27] Zero world can mean many things: the author's reality; the protagonist's fictional environment; a population's home city; or even planet Earth and this known cosmos. Whether the referenced zero world exists or is fictional, it is a material form of novum with heavy architectural connotations. It echoes memories of home, visions of cityscape, and murals of the universe. It is the point of departure and

25 Darko Suvin, *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), page 18.
26 Ibid.
27 Darko Suvin, *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), page 18.

arrival, the room of desire and longing, the place of acceptance and empathy, the space of intimacy and solitude, and even the enclosures of oppression, violence, and fear. Positive or negative, throughout SF narratives and reality, there is always a common theme embedded into humanity's meaning of life, and that is the protecting and destroying, fighting for and losing, searching for and finding one's zero world. Zero world touches on the most intimate thresholds of a home, to the most public spaces of a city, and exists in the past, present, and future of reality and fiction. The cognitive and estranging duality of zero world enables the audience to distinguish between empirical realties and the new worlds of SF, which ultimately sets into motion possible societal transformations. Henceforth, science fiction is rising to be one of the most critical genres of literature, because it estranges "…the reader from familiar and usually contemptible shores, dissolving his umbilical connections with old and firm earth (or Earth), preparing him to accept the marvelous beyond seven seas and galaxies."[28]

28 Darko Suvin, *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), page 22.

1.3 On the Other Side of the Planet

Science fiction hypothesizes the future of the world, in that it includes all countries, all cultures, and all peoples. Therefore, it logically follows that a more inclusive examination of the science fiction genre would be beneficial. For centuries, the world has fetishized over SF works authored by Euro-American hegemony. Currently, Western science fiction is highly developed, but that does not mean that Eastern science fiction is inferior, or that the creation of Eastern science fiction occurred later in time. In truth, Eastern SF (more specifically for this thesis, I am referring to Chinese SF) may appear less advanced than Western SF mainly due to the technological lag in their film and animation industries, this is being easily overcome with the rapid developments in these industries. In the contemporary era, the rise of Western SF triggered the accelerated development and maturation of Chinese SF. However Chinese SF has existed since the ancient times. Henceforth, being a much older civilization than the West, Chinese SF might potentially have a longer history than Western science fiction.

The rising universal fame of Chinese science fiction notably began after Liu Cixin, a prominent Chinese SF author, received the 2015 Hugo Award for his novel *The Three-Body Problem*. It is the first volume of a successful trilogy called *Remembrance of Earth's Past* (*地球往事*). Translated into English by American author, Ken Liu[29], in 2014, *The Three-Body Problem* was praised by many readers overseas, such as George R.R. Martin, Mark Zuckerberg, and Barack Obama.[30] Prior to 2015, Chinese science fiction

29 Ken Liu is an American author of science fiction and fantasy, and a famous translator of Chinese science fiction into the English language. The three books utilized for the case studies in Part 4 contain in total 39 Chinese SF short stories, which are all translated by Ken Liu for English readers.

30 Alexandra Alter, "How Chinese Sci-Fi Conquered America," *The New York Times Magazine* (The New York Times, December 3, 2019), www.nytimes.com/2019/12/03/magazine/ken-liu-three-body-problem-chinese-science-

materials were never completely invisible to the rest of the world. But Chinese SF lacked greatly in international exports, mainly due to accessibility issues because before the modern era, China mostly remained to itself behind closed doors.[31] It was difficult for things to come in and things to go out. Nevertheless, in roughly thirty-five years, China has transformed itself from a backward thinking, impoverished country into the world's second largest economic powerhouse. Leapfrogging through a rapid industrial revolution period which took the British nearly two hundred years to complete[32], and the United States fifty years, modern China's rise to international dominance is both aspiring and terrifying. The Chinese nation is an ancient civilization finally waking up from its hundred years of slumber, ready to take over the globe through its own ideologies and ultimately, re-equalize China's position in the world.



Fig. 1.5 "Remembrance of Earth's Past" trilogy by Liu Cixin (2008-2010).

In contemporary times, the growing popularization of Chinese SF has sparked a straightforward yet complex question: *What are the differences between Chinese science fiction and Western science fiction?* There is no simple answer to this debate. Xia Jia, a prominent female Chinese SF writer, commented with the following, "Contemporary Chinese science fiction writers form a

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fiction.html?searchResultPosition=1.

31 "Closed Doors" is a political term referring to China breaking off connections with the outside world (mainly the West and Westernized countries), and retreating behind the walls of its own nation. The *Closed Door Policy* was adopted by the Qianlong Emperor in 1757, and lasted for approximately twenty years. Although in 1978, Deng Xiaoping announced the *Open Door Policy*, which is the direct opposite, modern day China is still in many ways reserved behind its closed doors.

32 "China's Industrial Revolution: Past, Present, Future," Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, September 22, 2021, www.stlouisfed.org/dialogue-with-the-fed/chinas-industrial-revolution-past-present-future.

community full of internal differences. These differences manifest themselves in age, region of origin, professional background, social class, ideology, cultural identity, aesthetics, and other areas."[33] The modern wave of Chinese SF incorporates many common themes of the universal science fiction franchise, as do SF works from any country. Nevertheless, there is one eminent distinction of Chinese SF that will only ever belong to Chinese SF, and that is the ancient national ideology called the "Chinese Dream" (中国梦).

During early 2013, *The Economist*, a British weekly newspaper, credited *The New York Times* American columnist, Thomas L. Friedman, as the leading individual responsible for popularizing the term, Chinese Dream, in China with his October 2012 article titled "China Needs Its Own Dream".[34] Freidman accepted the honorable praise, but also decided to be somewhat modest by giving partial acknowledgement to his friend, Peggy Liu, who utilized the Chinese Dream as the motto of her NGO in introducing the concept of sustainability to China.[35] Freidman's said article criticized and undermined the Chinese Dream as almost a copycat of the American Dream by stating, "Does Xi have a 'Chinese Dream' that is different from the 'American Dream'? Because if Xi's dream for China's emerging middle class–300 million people expected to grow to 800 million by 2025–is just like the American Dream (a big car, a big house and Big Macs for all) then we need another planet."[36] Subsequently, James Fallows of *The Atlantic* pointed out earlier references to the Chinese Dream from other foreign writers before Freidman's article.[37] Fallows also made sure to highlight his own contributions by mentioning his wife's book, *Dreaming in Chinese* (written in 2010) and his own essay, *What is the Chinese Dream?* (written twenty-two months before Friedman).[38]

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33 Xia Jia, "What Makes Chinese Science Fiction Chinese?," *Tor.com* (Tor Books, July 22, 2014), www.tor.com/2014/07/22/what-makes-chinese-science-fiction-chinese/.

34 Ryan Mitchell, "Huffpost," *Huffpost* (blog) (BuzzFeed, December 6, 2017), www.huffpost.com/entry/clearing-up-some-misconce_b_8012152.

35 Isaac Stone Fish, "Thomas Friedman: I Only Deserve Partial Credit for Coining the 'Chinese Dream,'" *Foreign Policy Magazine* (The Graham Holdings Company, The Slate Group, May 3, 2013), foreignpolicy.com/2013/05/03/thomas-friedman-i-only-deserve-partial-credit-for-coining-the-chinese-dream/.

36 Thomas L Friedman, "China Needs Its Own Dream," *The New York Times*, October 2, 2012, www.nytimes.com/2012/10/03/opinion/friedman-china-needs-its-own-dream.html.

37 Ryan Mitchell, "Huffpost," *Huffpost* (blog) (BuzzFeed, December 6, 2017), www.huffpost.com/entry/clearing-up-some-misconce_b_8012152.

38 James Fallows, "Today's China Notes: Dreams, Obstacles," *The Atlantic* (Emerson Collective, Atlantic Media, The Atlantic Monthly Group, May 3,

The concept of the Chinese Dream in modern China was notably promoted by Xi Jinping in November 2012 when he became part of the top Communist Party post.[39] However, the propaganda storm began when Xi Jinping officially incorporated the revolutionary slogan into his vision of China's glorious future when he became president in 2013.[40] It definitely does not help that Xi Jinping's national declaration indeed came to light after Freidman's and Fallow's claims. However, "the idea of a 'China Dream' was old, celebrated, and packed with meaning well before the English language even existed. It should probably not be considered as a mere calque, or word-for-word translation on loan from a country found millennia after its first usage."[41] Freidman, Fallows, and the other foreign individuals that debate over who is responsible for coining this 'new' term should at most only be credited as the ones to popularize and spread the term in Western context. It is crucial that the appropriate origin and history of the Chinese Dream is understood, for that is the proper way to respect a culture's ancient ideological identity.

In November 2012 (five months before Xi Jinping became president of the People's Republican of China), Xi Jinping visited an exhibition called *The Road to Rejuvenation* (*复兴之路*) at the Chinese National Museum in Beijing.[42] The exhibition featured artifacts showcasing China's defeat from the Opium Wars in the 19th Century to the Qing Dynasty's overthrow in 1911.[43] The Opium Wars consisted of two armed conflicts during the mid-19th Century between the Western countries and the Qing Dynasty. The first war occurred from 1839-1842, and was fought between China and Britain, because the Chinese government campaigned to enforce prohibition against illegal opium trafficking by foreign traders (primarily British).[44] The second war took place from 1856-

2013), www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/05/todays-china-notes-dreams-obstacles/275544/.

39 "What Does Xi Jinping's China Dream Mean?," BBC News (BBC, June 5, 2013), www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-22726375.

40 Ibid.

41 Ryan Mitchell, "Huffpost," *Huffpost* (blog) (BuzzFeed, December 6, 2017), www.huffpost.com/entry/clearing-up-some-misconce_b_8012152.

42 Manoranjan Mohanty, "Xi Jinping and the 'Chinese Dream'," *Economic and Political Weekly* 48, no. 38 (September 21, 2013): pages 34-40, www.jstor.org/stable/23528539.

43 Benjamin Carlson, "The World According to Xi Jinping," *The Atlantic* (Emerson Collective, Atlantic Media, The Atlantic Monthly Group, September 21, 2015), www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/09/xi-jinping-china-book-chinese-dream/406387/.

44 Kenneth Pletcher, "Opium Wars Chinese History," Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.), accessed November 5, 2022, www.britannica.com/topic/Opium-Wars.

1860 (also known as the Arrow War or the Anglo-French War), and was between the forces of Britain and France against China, due to the European countries demanding more trade rights to import opium into China.[45] The Chinese government and the Chinese people strongly opposed. In both wars, the superior military forces of the foreign countries easily defeated the Chinese military, and China was forced to sign unequal treaties that benefitted the Western countries.[46] From the Chinese perspective, the first Opium War marked "…the beginning of the end of late Imperial China, a powerful dynastic system and advanced civilization that had lasted thousands of years."[47] The Opium Wars also initiated China's "Century of Humiliation", as the defeat from both wars, the signing of unfavorable treaties, and the continual trade of opium brought upon many serious social consequences in China, such as internal rebellions, addiction, and taxes.[48] This humiliation greatly undermined the legitimacy and power of the Chinese State, especially in the eyes of other countries.[49]

In the Chinese language, China is written as 中 (middle) 国 (state or kingdom). Subsequently, the terms "Middle Kingdom" or "Central Kingdom" were used to describe the powerful Chinese State before the invasions of Western hegemony. Imperial China considered itself as the center of the world, and the concept of the middle kingdom came from the idea that "…Chinese universality is inseparable from a certain idea of civilization, with a center shining upon surrounding regions."[50] Radiating outwards to influence other countries to adapt to the Chinese way also justifies the importance of the symbol of the Sun (太阳) in Chinese culture. The Sun is depicted as a yellow circle surrounded by five stars on the Chinese flag, and during the Cultural Revolution, Mao Zedong was persistently drawn into the Sun in propaganda posters to represent righteousness, hope, vitality, and power. For

45 Kenneth Pletcher, "Opium Wars Chinese History," Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.), accessed November 5, 2022, www.britannica.com/topic/Opium-Wars.

46 Ibid.

47 Jack Patrick Hayes, "The Opium Wars in China," Asia Pacific Curriculum (Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada), accessed November 5, 2022, asiapacificcurriculum.ca/learning-module/opium-wars-china.

48 Ibid.

49 Jack Patrick Hayes, "The Opium Wars in China," Asia Pacific Curriculum (Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada), accessed November 5, 2022, asiapacificcurriculum.ca/learning-module/opium-wars-china.

50 "Is China Really the 'Middle Kingdom'?," Chula Global Network, accessed November 5, 2022, www20100324.chula.ac.th/chulaglobal/is-china-really-the-middle-kingdom%E2%80%8B/#:~:text=The%20notion%20of%20China%20as,centre%20shining%20upon%20surrounding%20regions.

thousands of years, China thought of itself as an almighty ancient civilization with rich history and culture, and unsurmountable power and greatness.[51] Henceforth, the nation kept to itself and remained untouched by foreign influences. However, with the birth of the Century of Humiliation, such a proud national belief of the Chinese people was completely shattered. In addition to the double defeats of the Opium Wars, when China was introduced to industrialization (early 1900s), the once powerful State realized that in keeping to itself behind closed doors, it was no longer a match for the advancing developments of Europe, America, and Japan.[52] Fuming the anger that China had towards the Western world even more was when the Japanese (a Westernized country) humiliated China once again during the Second Sino-Japanese War from 1937 to 1945. Although this time, China won, it will forever be recorded in Chinese history as an event that undermined the greatness of the Chinese nation alongside many other events of humiliation, all initiated by Western powers. The Century of Humiliation was a period of immense struggle engraved into the minds of the Chinese people and the unforgettable history of the nation.[53]

The Road to Rejuvenation exhibition embodied the essence of the Chinese Dream, which is a dream of anger, longing, hope, and greatness. The Chinese Dream is about the revival of the lost glory of imperial China, through the reestablishment of wealth, leadership, and global dominance. This is precisely where Xi Jinping's patriotic rhetoric came to be. During the visit, Xi Jinping even suggested the following: "每个人都有理想和追求，都有自己的梦想。现在，大家都在讨论中国梦，我以为，实现中华民族伟大复兴，就是中华民族近代以来最伟大的梦想。"[54] This translates to "Every single person has ideals and aspirations, and their own dreams. Now, everyone [in China] is talking about the Chinese Dream, and I believe, the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, is modern China's most glorious dream." Thus, as Xi Jinping's first references to the Chinese Dream took place during

51 Michael O'krent, "The Language of Chinese Dreams Is Science Fiction — And Sometimes They'Re Nightmares," *Tor.com* (Tor Books, May 17, 2022), www.tor.com/2022/05/17/the-language-of-chinese-dreams-is-science-fiction-and-sometimes-theyre-nightmares/.

52 Ibid.

53 Benjamin Carlson, "The World According to Xi Jinping," *The Atlantic* (Emerson Collective, Atlantic Media, The Atlantic Monthly Group, September 21, 2015), www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/09/xi-jinping-china-book-chinese-dream/406387/.

54 "习近平这十段话定义中国梦内涵," 新华网, November 29, 2017, www.xinhuanet.com//politics/2017-11/29/c_1122031311.htm.

the exhibition in 2012, subsequently, the concept became China's official reformative slogan in 2013.

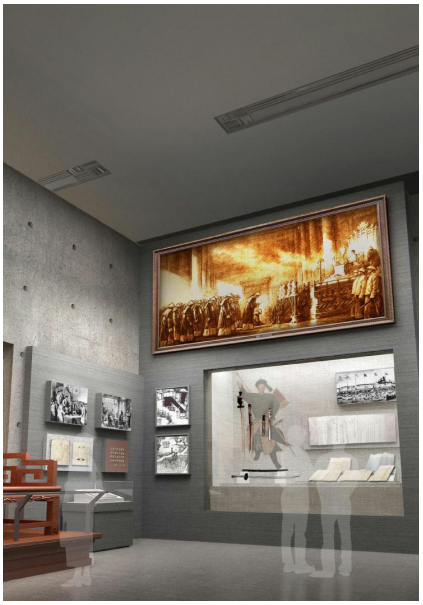


Fig. 1.6 Rendering of "The Road to Rejuvenation" exhibition in Beijing (2012).

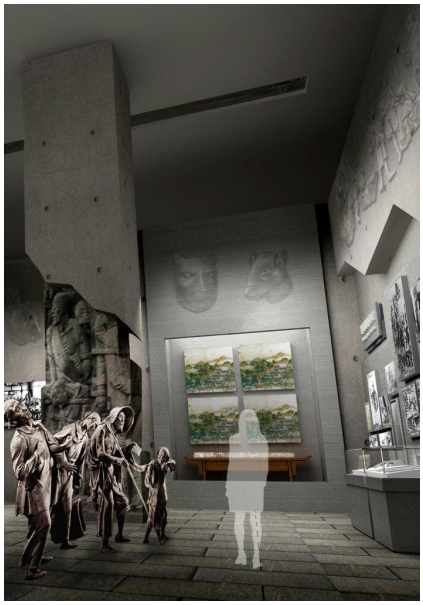


Fig. 1.7 The exhibition focused on telling the Chinese history of violent invasions by Western hegemony.

Nevertheless, 2012 was nowhere near the actual origin of the Chinese Dream ideology. The very first prominent usage of the concept dates back to 1932, when a publication called *The Eastern Miscellany* (*东方杂志*) asked its readers and various Chinese intellectuals to respond with their own visions of the Chinese Dream.[55] As many responders submitted their hopes and ideas for China's future, there was a huge diversity in subject matter, ranging from territorial encroachment by Japan, the increasing unequal economic and political treatments of the Western powers, and even China's own internal chaos.[56] The vast spectrum of opinions was directly caused by Xi Jinping never being explicit about the specifics of what the Chinese Dream truly entailed. However, it is common knowledge (amongst the Chinese people) that the Chinese Dream is about respect for ancient culture, Chinese prosperity, collectivity, socialism, and national glory.[57] Ultimately, no matter the details, every thought comes down to the core of the dream mission, and that is every

55 Ryan Mitchell, "Huffpost," *Huffpost* (blog) (BuzzFeed, December 6, 2017), www.huffpost.com/entry/clearing-up-some-misconce_b_8012152.

56 Ibid.

57 石 毓智, "中国梦区别于美国梦的七大特征," 人民网, accessed November 5, 2022, web.archive.org/web/20130520192733/http:/www.qstheory.cn/zz/zgtsshzyll/201305/t20130520_232259.htm.

single Chinese person must do something for their country.[58] On the other hand, although the American Dream was initially coined in 1931 in James Truslow Adam's book *The Epic of America*, which technically was before *The Eastern Miscellany* publication, this did not establish the idea of the Chinese Dream at all.[59] Prior to the invention of the American Dream, the Chinese Dream has already been referenced many times in relation to discourses regarding the restoration of the Chinese nation. For instance, in 1915, a student from a women's college watched a play titled *The China Dream*, which encompassed the exact same ideas as the Chinese Dream that will become a nationwide obsession a century later.[60] But even earlier still, the concept of the Chinese Dream existed before the fall of the Qing Dynasty (1911). For example, in 1904, a patriotic serial novel was named *Dream of China's Flourishing or Failure*.[61] The ideology also surfaced many times during the severe national crisis caused by China's defeat in the 1895 First Sino-Japanese War.[62]

In fact, the Chinese Dream is so ancient that its roots are older than America, England, Christianity and Confucius.[63] The earliest recorded usage of the Chinese Dream ultimately dates back to six centuries ago (approximately six hundred years) when the Southern Song Dynasty failed to reclaim territory lost to the northern Jurchens, and was overwhelmed by the Mongol conquest.[64] The Song Dynasty (960-1279) ruled parts of China for more than three centuries, which came to an end when the Jurchen people overran the Song in 1127.[65] As the Jurchens set up their new dynasty called the Jin in Northern China, the Song fled to the South, and thus, created the Southern Song.[66] However, during the 1260s, the Genghis Khan led the Mongol people towards

58 "What Does Xi Jinping's China Dream Mean?," BBC News (BBC, June 5, 2013), www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-22726375.

59 Ryan Mitchell, "Huffpost," *Huffpost* (blog) (BuzzFeed, December 6, 2017), www.huffpost.com/entry/clearing-up-some-misconce_b_8012152.

60 Ibid.

61 Ryan Mitchell, "Huffpost," *Huffpost* (blog) (BuzzFeed, December 6, 2017), www.huffpost.com/entry/clearing-up-some-misconce_b_8012152.

62 Ibid.

63 Ryan Mitchell, "Huffpost," Huffpost (blog) (BuzzFeed, December 6, 2017), www.huffpost.com/entry/clearing-up-some-misconce_b_8012152.

64 Ibid.

65 "Oxford University Press Blog," *Oxford University Press Blog* (blog) (USA Higher Education., March 19, 2012), blog.oup.com/2012/03/song-dynasty-mongols-conquest-china/.

66 "Oxford University Press Blog," *Oxford University Press Blog* (blog) (USA Higher Education., March 19, 2012), blog.oup.com/2012/03/song-dynasty-mongols-conquest-china/.

great expansion and defeated the Jin State.[67] After the conquest, the Mongols, under the leadership of Kublai Khan, threatened to take over Southern Song as well.[68] In March of 1279, the Mongol navy destroyed the Song fleets "and China --- for the first time in its history --- was entirely in foreign hands."[69]

During this time, a poet by the name of Zheng Sixiao (郑思肖), mentioned in his writing the following famous line: "一心中国梦，万古 *下泉*诗"[70], which translates to "Heart full of the Chinese Dream, the ancient poem *Flowing Spring*".[71] Therefore, the true origin of the Chinese Dream dates back to Zheng Sixiao's reference to an ancient Chinese poem called *Flowing Spring* (*下泉*)[72], a piece included in one of the oldest collections of Chinese literature, *Shi Jing---The Book of Odes*, compiled around the 7th Century.[73] The poem talked about an individual waking up repeatedly with anger and longing, as they have just dreamt once again of the lost glory of the former Western Zhou Dynasty (1045 BCE-771 BCE).[74] Thus, the significance of national pride, power, and dominance is deeply embedded in the Chinese culture and identity, because China lost its dream countless times due to the ruthless invasions of outsiders: the Jurchens, the Mongols, the Japanese, and the Western powers. The Chinese Dream is about the revival of rising greatness, which calls upon the absolute necessity of Chinese collectivism. Although this call for national rejuvenation was part of Mao Zedong's ideals during his launch of the Cultural Revolution, which was unsuccessful, the attitude of restoring the great and proud Chinese nation still carries on till today. To wake up from its ancient slumber, to reclaim face[75]

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67 "Oxford University Press Blog," *Oxford University Press Blog* (blog) (USA Higher Education., March 19, 2012), blog.oup.com/2012/03/song-dynasty-mongols-conquest-china/.

68 Ibid.

69 "Oxford University Press Blog," *Oxford University Press Blog* (blog) (USA Higher Education., March 19, 2012), blog.oup.com/2012/03/song-dynasty-mongols-conquest-china/.

70 "德佑二年岁旦·其一," 古诗文网, accessed November 5, 2022, so.gushiwen.cn/shiwenv_4ec081642bb6.aspx.

71 Ryan Mitchell, "Huffpost," *Huffpost* (blog) (BuzzFeed, December 6, 2017), www.huffpost.com/entry/clearing-up-some-misconce_b_8012152.

72 Ibid.

73 "詩 經 Shi Jing – The Book of Odes," 溫故知新, accessed November 5, 2022, wengu.tartarie.com/wg/wengu.php?m=nozh&l=Shijing.

74 Ryan Mitchell, "Huffpost," *Huffpost* (blog) (BuzzFeed, December 6, 2017), www.huffpost.com/entry/clearing-up-some-misconce_b_8012152.

75 In Chinese culture, the term "face" (面子) refers to the amount of dignity and respect an individual has. So, the phrase "saving face" means to avoid other people from losing respect of oneself and to not embarrass oneself. Whereas, "losing face" means a loss of respect from others and being subjected to embarrassment.

after so many accounts of humiliations, and to re-centralized its presence to the rest of the world, Chinese science fiction is a way to readdress these fundamental missions of the Chinese Dream. Henceforth, Chinese science fiction is a language of the Chinese Dream. In conclusion, the concept of the Chinese Dream was not "invented by an American writer, nor one in the contemporary PRC, nor even anyone familiar with the American Dream. Nor, ultimately, anyone alive during a period of time in which there was an America."[76]



Fig. 1.8 An illustration of poet Zheng Sixiao, one of the very first Chinese to coin the Chinese Dream terminology.

76 Ryan Mitchell, "Huffpost," *Huffpost* (blog) (BuzzFeed, December 6, 2017), www.huffpost.com/entry/clearing-up-some-misconce_b_8012152.

"冽彼下泉，浸彼苞稂。
忾我寤叹，念彼周京。
冽彼下泉，浸彼苞萧。
忾我寤叹，念彼京周。
冽彼下泉，浸彼苞蓍。
忾我寤叹，念彼京师。
芃芃黍苗，阴雨膏之。
四国有王，郇伯劳之。"[77]

~ 无名氏, *曹风·下泉*

"Cold come the waters down from that spring,
And overflow the bushy wolf's-tail grass,
Ah me! I wake and sigh,
Thinking of that capital of Zhou.
Cold come the waters down from that spring,
And overflow the bushy southernwood,
Ah me! I awake and sigh,
Thinking of that capital of Zhou.
Cold come the waters down from that spring,
And overflow the bushy divining plants,
Ah me! I awake and sigh,
Thinking of that capital-city.
Beautifully grew the fields of young millet,
Enriched by fertilizing rains.
The States had their sovereign,
And there was the chief of Xun to reward their princes."[78]

~ Anonymous, *Cao Feng·Flowing Spring*

77 James Legge, tran., "下泉 - Xia Quan," Chinese Text Project, accessed November 5, 2022, ctext.org/book-of-poetry/xia-quan.

78 Ibid.

Although Xi Jinping never elaborated on the specific implications of the Chinese Dream, it is clear that the Chinese Dream is about the collective efforts of the Chinese people (this includes Chinese citizens inside China and also abroad), which in turn will make the nation great again through the Chinese way, and with a glorious country, automatically comes happiness for its people. The Liyuan Style is inspired by China's First Lady, Peng Liyuan, who is considered the symbolism of the triptych visions of the Chinese Dream: Modern China, which refers to technological advancement, economic development, and socio-political transformation; Global China, which refers to openness in learning foreign ways of thinking and projecting China outwards into the rest of the world; and finally, Civilizational China, which refers to the renewal and revitalization of Chinese aesthetics and Chinese classical culture (ex. architecture, design, fashion, arts, etc.).[79] Further specification regarding the Chinese Dream is Xi Jinping's official proposal of the Two Centenaries (两个百年), which encompasses two definite goals (两重任务).[80] The dual tasks are closely related, and there are even websites in China that keep track of the days until the goals are supposed to be reached. The deadline for goal number one has already passed and has been achieved, and it is to build a moderately well-off society by 2021 (全面建成小康社会)[81], which also marked the 100th anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party[82]. Goal number two is yet to be achieved with its deadline in 2049, and it is to establish a fully developed and powerful modern socialist China (全面建成社会主义现代化强国)[83], which also is the 100th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic.[84]

On March 17, 2013, Xi Jinping became president and mentioned the Chinese Dream nine times in his speech at the first meeting session of the 12th National People's Congress in

79 David Gosset, "Huffpost," *Huffpost* (blog) (BuzzFeed, July 22, 2013), www.huffpost.com/entry/the-china-dream-and-the-l_b_3317354.

80 "人民日报：什么是中国梦，怎样理解中国梦," *人民网*, April 26, 2013, opinion.people.com.cn/n/2013/0426/c1003-21285328.html.

81 "兩個一百年," 维基百科, October 28, 2022, zh.m.wikipedia.org/zh-hans/%E5%85%A9%E5%80%8B%E4%B8%80%E7%99%BE%E5%B9%B4.

82 Robert Lawrence Kuhn, "Xi Jinping's Chinese Dream," *The New York Times*, June 4, 2013, www.nytimes.com/2013/06/05/opinion/global/xi-jinpings-chinese-dream.html.

83 "兩個一百年," 维基百科, October 28, 2022, zh.m.wikipedia.org/zh-hans/%E5%85%A9%E5%80%8B%E4%B8%80%E7%99%BE%E5%B9%B4.

84 Robert Lawrence Kuhn, "Xi Jinping's Chinese Dream," *The New York Times*, June 4, 2013, www.nytimes.com/2013/06/05/opinion/global/xi-jinpings-chinese-dream.html.

Beijing.[85] He also stated the following: "中国梦就是要实现国家富强、民族振兴、人民幸福；实中国梦必须走中国道路、弘扬中国精神、凝聚中国力量（三个必须）"[86], which translates to: "The Chinese Dream is to realize the prosperity of the country, the rejuvenation of the nation, and the happiness of the people; to realize the Chinese Dream, one must follow the Chinese path, carry forward the Chinese spirit, and gather together the Chinese strength (three musts)". The most detailed consensus about the particular steps in achieving the Chinese Dream within the Two Centenaries can be summed down to the following: One Belt One Road (一带一路); Judicial Justice (司法公正); Party Discipline and Anti-corruption (党纪反腐); Green Energy and Environmental Protection (绿能环保); State-owned Enterprise Reform (国企改革); National Defense Reform (国防改革); and Population Reform (人口改革).[87] None of these were officially proposed by Xi Jinping, and are simply some of the major interpretations of the Chinese Dream by the general Chinese public. The true beauty of the Chinese Dream is that in being so loosely defined, it can essentially mean almost anything.[88] Furthermore, in a short CGTN (China Global Television Network) documentary video, many Chinese people were interviewed to express their own visions of the Chinese Dream,[89] furthering solidifying that the ideology can translate into many different meanings and goals. However, every vision always ultimately comes down to Chinese rejuvenation and Chinese pride.

Hubei Province, China
农民："我的梦想是找一个好一点的农业项目，带领老百姓发家致富。"
Farmer: "My dream is to find a better agricultural project, to help our villagers become rich together."

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85 "中国梦," 维基百科, accessed November 5, 2022, zh.m.wikipedia.org/zh-hans/%E4%B8%AD%E5%9C%8B%E5%A4%A2#:~:text=%E6%96%B0%E7%95%B6%E9%81%B8%E4%B8%AD%E5%8D%8E%E4%BA%BA%E6%B0%91%E5%85%B1%E5%92%8C%E5%9B%BD,%E3%80%81%E6%B0%91%E6%97%8F%E6%8C%AF%E5%85%B4%E3%80%81%E4%BA%BA%E6%B0%91%E5%B9%B8%E7%A6%8F%E3%80%82.

86 Ibid.

87 "中国梦," 维基百科, accessed November 5, 2022, zh.m.wikipedia.org/zh-hans/%E4%B8%AD%E5%9C%8B%E5%A4%A2#:~:text=%E6%96%B0%E7%95%B6%E9%81%B8%E4%B8%AD%E5%8D%8E%E4%BA%BA%E6%B0%91%E5%85%B1%E5%92%8C%E5%9B%BD,%E3%80%81%E6%B0%91%E6%97%8F%E6%8C%AF%E5%85%B4%E3%80%81%E4%BA%BA%E6%B0%91%E5%B9%B8%E7%A6%8F%E3%80%82.

88 "What Does Xi Jinping's China Dream Mean?," BBC News (BBC, June 5, 2013), www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-22726375.

89 *Why China Can Fulfill the Chinese Dream*, *YouTube* (YouTube, 2019), www.youtube.com/watch?v=RGnRsPvwmMA&ab_channel=CGTN.

Beijing, China (in the wilderness)
国际救护人员：“我的梦想就是全国人民都能够提高自救互救的意识和能力。每个人都能健康快乐的生活。“
International rescuer: “My dream is that the people of the whole country can improve their awareness and ability to save themselves and others. Everyone can live a safe, healthy, and happy life.”

Beijing, China (in the city)
研究员：“我的中国梦是成为半导体事业的一颗螺丝钉，为中国半导体事业贡献自己的一份力量。“
Researcher: “My Chinese Dream is to become a ‘screw’ in the semiconductor industry, to contribute to the cause of China’s semiconductor industry.”

Beijing, China (in the city)
警察员：“祝我的祖国繁荣昌盛，国泰民安。“
Policewoman: “I wish my China prosperity, and that the people live in safety.”

Yunnan Province, China
山里的小学同学：“我的梦想就是成为一名歌星，唱歌给全世界听。像一颗海草 海草 海草随风飘摇。“
Primary school student in the mountains: “My dream is to be a singer, and to sing to the world. Like a seaweed, seaweed, seaweed (Chinese pop culture reference), fluttering in the wind.”

Melbourne, Australia
移民：“我的梦想啊　中国能强大，我们在这边也强大一点就可以了。“
Overseas Chinese: “My dream is that China will be stronger, and we can then be stronger and more confident here.”

Shanghai, China
百姓：“我的梦想是希望父母家人身体能健健康康的。我想对中国说：加油中国！你一定能行！“
Commoner: “My dream is that I hope my parents and family can stay healthy. I want to say to China: Carry on China! You can do it!”

Tibet, China
银行员工：“我希望我们的祖国繁荣昌盛，然后也希望人民能平安喜乐。“
Bank staff: “I hope our country can be prosperous, and hope that the people will be safe and happy.”

Sichuan Province, China
士兵：“祖国我爱你！中国加油！“
Soldier: “My motherland, I love you! Go for it China!”

Henceforth, the Chinese Dream is a straightforward yet highly complex national ideology that represents the essence of modern China and its treasured ancient values. These responses by the Chinese people in different regions of China and even outside of China demonstrate that the Chinese Dream is a dream of national rejuvenation (民族复兴的梦); a dream passed down from generations (代代相传的梦); a dream of the pursuit of happiness (追求幸福的梦); a dream of the youths (青年一代的梦); a dream rooted in the hearts of the Chinese people (植根民心的梦); a dream of safety (国泰民安的梦); a dream of one heart (同心同德的梦); a dream of world development (世界发展的梦); a dream of the pursuit of peace (追求和平的梦); a dream that must come true (必将实现的梦).[90] When Xi Dada (*Dada* means Uncle in Chinese and many people refer to Xi Jinping as Xi Dada because they adore him so much) first officially introduced the Chinese Dream, everyone in the world wondered about how it will be achieved. However, with the first centenary goal already successfully completed, China’s leapfrogging into the second centenary is showing no signs of slowing down. Now, it is not about how China will make its dream come true, but what will happen to the world when China finally fully wakes up from its ancient slumber?

90 “习近平这十段话定义中国梦内涵,” 新华网, November 29, 2017, www.xinhuanet.com//politics/2017-11/29/c_1122031311.htm.



Fig. 1.9 Xi Jinping giving speech at the celebration of 100th year anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China held in Tiananmen Square, Beijing (2021), motivating the Chinese people through the national mission that the Chinese Dream must come true.

1.4 Universality and Divergence

> *Whenever the topic of Chinese science fiction comes up, I often hear Anglophone readers ask: "How is Chinese science fiction different from science fiction written in English?"*
>
> *Any broad literary classification tied to a culture---especially a culture as in flux and contested as China's---encompasses all the complexities and contradictions in that culture. Attempts to provide neat answers will only result in broad generalizations that are of little value or stereotypes that reaffirm existing prejudice.*[91]
>
> ~ Ken Liu, *China Dreams: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction*

Certainly, there are overlapping ideas within the universal science fiction community, such as the discovery of aliens, space warfare, time travel, memory transplantation, genetic modification, global disasters, interstellar migration, and so on. However, the transformations, values, and complexities of every culture are different. Thus, even if the themes or visions of the future in SF works around the world do not differ greatly sometimes, the process in which they came to be is culturally unique. But oftentimes, every society's personal hopes and dreams do generate distinctive imageries of future cities and landscapes. The most straightforward example is to compare and contrast Western SF works and Chinese SF works. For instance, despite their commonalties such as similar predictions of future events and civilizations, Chinese SF focuses on the power of the collective and the importance of national glory, whereas, Western SF encourages individuality and highlights singular heroism. As a result, Chinese SF emphasizes the prosperity of an entire country,

91 Ken Liu, "China Dreams: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction," *Clarkesworld Science Fiction & Fantasy Magazine* (Wyrm Publishing, December 2014), clarkesworldmagazine.com/liu_12_14/.



Fig. 1.10 Photograph of Chinese rice farmers working in the rice field. Unison labour of the collective people all working towards the same goal and same dream of a better life.



Fig. 1.11 Illustration of communal living for workers in rural China. Although these facilities were decentralized in the early 1960s, the core concept of collective living carries on.

and Western SF usually centers around individual prosperity. Chinese SF trends toward bright, hopeful futures which are rooted in the positive outlook of the Chinese Dream. Contrastingly, majority of Western SF is dark and heavily dystopic, and instead of focusing on hope, it centers around concepts of danger and fear. The Chinese Dream must be realized by the Chinese people themselves. As a reuslt, Chinese SF often highlights the nation rising to glory through the unifying efforts of its own people, while Western SF often incorporates the resources of others to achieve success. Since China is an ancient civilization spanning five thousand years, a deep sense of history is a fundamental subject matter in Chinese SF. However, the focus on history is not prominent in Western SF, especially American works because the history of America is only about two to three hundred years.

Henceforth, through the simple comparison between some of the distinct differences between Chinese SF and Western SF, despite the oftentimes commonalties regarding themes and aesthetics that they may have with one another, it is evident that the foundation in which the SF products arise from are contrastingly unique to their own cultures. Ultimately, the crucial presence of the Chinese Dream that is fundamental to the Chinese culture, fabricates alterative ideas about the future and emphasizes differing societal values. As China continues to strengthen its international presence, the nation's views of the future become increasingly more relevant to study. Chinese science fiction is one of modern China's most precious cultural exports, and should be closely examined, because it might too strongly influence the future of the world.



Fig. 2.1 "Installing Electric Lights in the Cooperative" by Zhang Yuqing (1957), the Chinese people's sense of collectivism.

02

A collective moment of rural electrification as generations of Chinese people come together for the installation of light bulbs in their home village. The children, the adolescence, the adults, and the elderly, all participating in this significant event of modernization.

Futurism is core to science fiction, and in its most basic sense begins with the modernization of the countryside. The traditional Chinese clothing, the detailed oriental screen door, the serene courtyard garden, and the tidy arrays of *wa* (Chinese rooftiles) laid out on the roof of the entry doorway, this illustration is the rudimentary essence of Chinese modernity: a simple life *augmented* by technology.

2.1 From an Ancient Civilization

Science and technology constitute a primary productive force.[92]

~ Deng Xiaoping, dialogue during a meeting with Czech President Husak in 1988

Analogous to the beginnings of science fiction in many cultures, the historical roots of Chinese science fiction trace back to ancient native tales.[93] Currently, two origin stories are recognized by scholars. The earliest one dates back to 450 BCE to 375 BCE, in one of the classics of Daoism, *Liezi* (*列子*).[94] In the chapter *The Questions of Tang* (*汤问*) was the narrative of *Yanshi* (*偃师*).[95] Yanshi was a skilled mechanic who utilized wood and leather to engineer an automated dummy with astonishing resemblance to a living, breathing human being.[96] To showcase his incredible talent, Yanshi presented the robot to the king, who believed it to be a real person.[97] Thus, the king ordered Yanshi to take it apart for proof that it was indeed an automation.[98] This marked the earliest prototype of modern robots in Chinese history. At present, the Chinese government is highly supportive of the development of artificial intelligence as one of the nation's main foundational pillars in the rapid march towards ultimate technological modernity. The later one is from the 16th Century of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) with a local official

92 "'Science and Technology Are Primary Productive Forces' in 1988," *China Daily*, October 30, 2008, www.chinadaily.com.cn/bizchina/2008-10/30/content_7169055.htm.

93 "万虎," 百度百科, accessed November 5, 2022, baike.baidu.com/item/%E4%B8%87%E8%99%8E/744125.

94 Ken Liu, trans., "A Brief Introduction to Chinese Science Fiction and Fandom," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation,* (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 324.

95 Ibid.

96 Ken Liu, trans., "A Brief Introduction to Chinese Science Fiction and Fandom," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation*, (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 324.

97 Ibid.

98 Ken Liu, trans., "A Brief Introduction to Chinese Science Fiction and Fandom," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation*, (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 324.

named Wang Hu (万虎), who had an obsession with observing the sky and the stars.[99] Therefore, he invented the first 'rocket': a wooden chair with forty-seven fuses attached to its bottom.[100] Putting on his imperial finery and strapping himself down, Wang Hu's forty-seven servants torched the ignition and, based on the logic and science of fireworks, he blasted off into the vastness of space to try and reach Heaven.[101] Wang Hu never returned.[102] As preposterous as a space shuttle may have sounded during that time (the term itself did not even exist then), technological progress has enabled China to send the first Chinese astronaut, Yang Liwei (杨利伟), into space merely centuries later in 2003. In both origin stories, events told as purely fantastical myths were eventually made into reality through the development of science and technology. This is precisely the brilliant nature of science fiction: to bring about the possibilities of the impossible. The future of humankind is an unimaginable abyss. When confronted with the bottomless chasm between *reality* and *dream*[103], science fiction has always been and will continue to be humanity's most precious tool in bridging that incredible gap.

Nonetheless, the official birth of modern Chinese science fiction is recognized to have occurred immediately after the 19th Century, specifically 1902 to 1904 during the late Qing Dynasty (1644–1911).[104] Initially sparked by Western science fiction, and then heavily influenced by the socialist realism of Soviet SF works, contemporary Chinese science fiction is still in the process of gradually forming its own unique voice. It is like a "Hidden Army"[105]

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99 Stephan Raab and Jie Li, "The Success of Sino Science Fiction or Chinese Conceptions About Change," European Guanxi (European Guanxi, January 31, 2022), www.europeanguanxi.com/post/the-success-of-sino-science-fiction-or-chinese-conceptions-about-change.

100 Stefan Andrews, "Chinese Official Was the World's First Astronaut, According to an Ancient Legend," The Vintage News, June 21, 2017, www.thevintagenews.com/2017/03/11/chinese-official-was-the-worlds-first-astronaut-according-to-an-ancient-legend/?chrome=1.

101 Ibid.

102 Stefan Andrews, "Chinese Official Was the World's First Astronaut, According to an Ancient Legend," The Vintage News, June 21, 2017, www.thevintagenews.com/2017/03/11/chinese-official-was-the-worlds-first-astronaut-according-to-an-ancient-legend/?chrome=1.

103 Ken Liu, trans., "What Makes Chinese Science Fiction Chinese?," *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction*, (London: Head of Zeus, 2017), page 295.

104 Tianyi Xia, "The Development History of Chinese Science Fiction from Liu Cixin's Science Fiction," *International Journal of Languages, Literature and Linguistics* 6, no. 3 (2020): pages 136-141, doi.org/10.18178/ijlll.2020.6.3.265.

105 Ken Liu, trans., "A New Continent for Chinese Scholars: Chinese Science Fiction Studies," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation,* (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 337.



Fig. 2.2 Mechanic showing the robot to the emperor, on the left is the robot, on the right is the emperor, and on the far right is the mechanic.

waking up from centuries of deep ancient slumber, and advancing forward to find the rightful place for the Chinese people within the global future. The development of Chinese SF has never been a continuous journey, but a treacherous path fragmented by political dangers and shifts in cultural paradigms. So far, it is distinguished by three periods of transformation and, in many ways, *rebirth*: After the Qing Dynasty (1902–1966); The New Era (1976-2000); and The 21st Century and Onward (2000–present). Each period began with a sudden boom in sci-fi development in China, and was then always followed by a series of dormant years where the literary genre was either disregarded, politically deviated, or nationally abolished. For that reason, Chinese SF is viewed as having multiple points of origin, because with each reoccurrence, a new wave of writers joins the franchise to create works of their own generational imaginations.[106] Chinese SF writers also have limited access to previous Chinese SF works due to fractures in history, creating a mass population born into a long timeline of torn generations.[107] Therefore, the history of Chinese science fiction has various cycles of rebirth, where new frontiers of authors step forth to new horizons.

Chinese SF writers, like all SF writers around the world, implement the duality of cognitive estrangement into their works to establish strange newness in novum thinking. However, many Chinese SF narratives depict a traditional, simple lifestyle augmented by advanced technology. For example, *The Three-Body Problem* depicted many instances of village life alongside interstellar alien invasion, *Folding Beijing*'s described imageries of cramped yet humble city life in a mechanical landscape, *Taking Care of God* illustrated typical suburban families looking after aging 'Gods' that arrived to Earth on spaceships. This interpretation of zero world by the Chinese authors, which communicates a simple life augmented by futuristic technology, is extremely powerful because it renders the fictional new world as naturalistic. That the new zero world depicted in these Chinese SF narratives can absolutely become the norm of the future. Thus, bridging the gap between reality and dream, and taking another vital leap forward in merging fiction into the real world.

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106 Mingwei Song, "Chinese Science Fiction Late Qing and the Contemporary," *RENDITIONS A Chinese-English Translation Magazine* 77-78 (2012), www.academia.edu/46595278/Chinese_Science_Fiction_Late_Qing_and_the_Contemporary_Guest_Editor_Mingwei_Song_This_issue_is_published_with_the_aid_of_The_Wing_Lung_Bank_Fund_for_the_Promotion_of_Chinese_Culture.

107 Ibid.

Chinese science fiction has always had a persistent undertone of optimistic utopianism due to the nation's undying evolutionary thinking and cultural belief of national rejuvenation.[108] Unable to completely deviate from its initial and traditional purpose of political propaganda, Chinese SF works that incorporate excessive social critiques are not only not approved by the government for publication, but are also viewed by many mature Chinese audiences as dangerous. Thus, opposite to Western SF's current focus on dystopia, Chinese SF predominately focuses on a brighter future associated with China's rise to international dominance, the myth of the nation's rapid development, and the posthuman utopia of technologies.[109] Although there is a new wave of Chinese science fiction works that explore the contrasting dynamics between utopia and dystopia through strategically conducted political and social commentaries (this wave is partially due to Chinese SF authors following the current trend of Western SF), the fundamental nature of Chinese SF is still deeply rooted in Xi Jinping's revolutionary slogan of the Chinese Dream: the future rise of a prosperous China as a global superpower–"To realize the Chinese road… [to] spread the Chinese spirit, which combines the spirit of the nation with patriotism as the core and the spirit of the time with reform and innovation as the core."[110] The Chinese Dream advocates for China to awaken from its "five-thousand-year-old dream of being an ancient civilization"[111], and aims to reunite its citizens on a collective march towards a technological revival of the nation in the modern era.

108 Mingwei Song, "After 1989: The New Wave of Chinese Science Fiction," *China Perspectives*, January 2015, pages 7-13, doi.org/10.4000/chinaperspectives.6618.

109 Ibid.

110 "What Does Xi Jinping's China Dream Mean?," BBC News (BBC, June 5, 2013), www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-22726375.

111 Ken Liu, trans., "What Makes Chinese Science Fiction Chinese?," *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction*, (London: Head of Zeus, 2017), page 295.

2.2 After the Qing Dynasty

During the late Qing Dynasty, an individual who is considered one of the most influential figures in the political reformation of modern China, Liang Qichao (梁啓超), and his teacher Kang Youwei (康有为), also a political thinker and reformer of the late Qing Dynasty, proposed the *Hundred Day's Reform* or *Wuxu Reform* (*戊戌变法*) in 1898. Presented to the Guangxu Emperor, it called for the nation's "self-strengthening" through various institutional and ideological changes that advocated for Western-style modernization. Met with massive dispute, the reform was condemned as being too radical and, as a result, Liang Qichao was forced to flee to Japan and ended up studying there for fourteen years.[112] During his stay in Japan, he came across a magazine called *New Novel* in October of 1902.[113] A written piece called *Submarine Travel*, which was categorized under science fiction, captured his attention.[114] Being a young intellectual and like many other youths, Liang Qichao believed that science fiction was the genesis of new revolution.[115] *New Novel* published many foreign SF narratives, but their Western philosophies were not widely accepted by China authorities at the time as they were strictly against the spread of imported ideologies. Nevertheless, in 1902, Liang Qichao still proceeded to write the first ever Chinese science fiction tale called, *The Future of New China* (*新中国未来记*). Another significant Chinese SF work which appeared in 1904, is credited by many as the earliest work of original science fiction in Chinese. It is the unfinished novel, *Lunar Colony* (*月球殖民地小说*), by an unknown author under the pen name Old Fisherman of the Secluded River (荒江釣叟)[116].

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112 Joshua A. Fogel, *The Role of Japan in Liang Qichao's Introduction of Modern Western Civilization to China* (Berkley, CA: Insitute of East Asian Studies. University of California, 2004).

113 Tianyi Xia, "The Development History of Chinese Science Fiction from Liu Cixin's Science Fiction," *International Journal of Languages, Literature and Linguistics* 6, no. 3 (2020): pages 136-141, doi.org/10.18178/ijlll.2020.6.3.265.

114 Xu Guoqi, "A Great Revolution of the Mind," Echowall, July 18, 2019, www.echo-wall.eu/china-and-world/off/great-revolution-mind.

115 Ibid.

116 Nathaniel Isaacson, "Science Fiction for the Nation: Tales of the Moon



Fig. 2.3 "Lunar Colony" by Old Fisherman of the Secluded River (1904).

Subsequently, initial Chinese SF materials were essentially foreign SF narratives translated into Classical Chinese, such as Liang Qichao's 1903 translation of Jules Verne's *Two Year's Vacation* (Chinese version is called *Fifteen Little Heroes*)[117], and Lu Xun's translations of *From the Earth to the Moon* in 1903 and *Journey from the Center of the Earth* in 1906, which were also by Jules Verne.[118] However, the rewritten versions were never whole as Chinese writers eliminated any content whose sole purpose was to contribute to the excitement of the stories.[119] The Chinese were only interested in the direct texts regarding scientific logicality and technological knowledge. For instance, Lu Xun's translation of *From the Earth to the Moon* had fourteen chapters when the original novel contained twenty-eight, and his translation of *A Journey to the Center of the Earth* had twelve chapters instead of forty-five.[120]

Zhou Shuren (周树人) who was better known by his pen name, Lu Xun, was indeed another leading figure of modern Chinese literature. He was interested in translating Western SF stories from Japanese to Chinese. Amongst many other Chinese literary intellectuals during this time, he was advocating for a new

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Colony and the Birth of Modern Chinese Fiction," *Science Fiction Studies* 40, no. 1 (March 2013): pages 33-54, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5621/sciefictstud.40.1.0033.

117 Tianyi Xia, "The Development History of Chinese Science Fiction from Liu Cixin's Science Fiction," *International Journal of Languages, Literature and Linguistics* 6, no. 3 (2020): pages 136-141, doi.org/10.18178/ijlll.2020.6.3.265.

118 Cory Doctorow, "A History of Chinese Science Fiction, from 475 BC to Cixin Liu," Boing Boing, November 9, 2016, boingboing.net/2016/11/09/a-history-of-chinese-science-f.html.

119 Ken Liu, trans., "A Brief Introduction to Chinese Science Fiction and Fandom," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation*, (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 325.

120 Ibid.

revolution through the agency of SF writing. But Chinese science fiction still has a long treacherous journey ahead. Lu Xun once wrote that "Science fiction [in China] is as rare as unicorn horns, which shows in a way the intellectual poverty of our times."[121] The birth of sci-fi in China did not simply introduce a modern branch of literature, but initiated a major step forward in fighting for the freedom of thought, expression, and creation.

Following the collapse of the Qing Dynasty (1912), science fiction in China was affected tremendously by the dramatic social and political transformations of the Republican Era (1912-1949). Established in 1907 in Shanghai, the first Chinese SF periodical, *Forest of Fiction* (*小说林*), gained nationwide popularity.[122] It published translated copies of foreign SF stories and native science fiction writings such as *A Tale of New Mr. Braggadocio* (*新法螺先生谭*).[123] One notable SF novel written during this period of intense cultural and political upheaval was Lao She's (舒庆春) novel, *Cat Country* (*猫城记*), a 1932 satirical sci-fi story dedicated to social criticism of China's political authority and corruption.

After the Chinese Civil War (1949-1966) and the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the development of the Chinese SF genre lost momentum when modern Chinese literature became mainly associated with realism.[124] This was a significant moment in time that introduced a new wave of Chinese SF which differed greatly from previous works in China. Under a newfound societal and cultural value, Chinese science fiction began to follow the literary pathway of the Soviet SF franchise, and obsessed over the ethos of promoting a bright national future of social realism.[125] SF works that did not fall into this category transitioned into a subgenre of children's literature, and instead of being called its previous name, *ke xue xiao shuo* (科学小说), which literally translates to science (*ke xue*) fiction (*xiao shuo*),

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121 denton.2@osu.edu, "Rise of Chinese Science Fiction," MCLC Resource Center, December 1, 2019, u.osu.edu/mclc/2019/01/17/rise-of-chinese-science-fiction/.

122 "小说林," 百度百科, accessed November 5, 2022, baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%B0%8F%E8%AF%B4%E6%9E%97/2494011.

123 "求民国小说徐念慈《新法螺先生谭》," 书格, March 23, 2021, new.shuge.org/meet/topic/21113/.

124 Mingwei Song, "Chinese Science Fiction Late Qing and the Contemporary," *RENDITIONS A Chinese-English Translation Magazine* 77-78 (2012), www.academia.edu/46595278/Chinese_Science_Fiction_Late_Qing_and_the_Contemporary_Guest_Editor_Mingwei_Song_This_issue_is_published_with_the_aid_of_The_Wing_Lung_Bank_Fund_for_the_Promotion_of_Chinese_Culture.

125 Ibid.

Chinese SF was renamed to *ke xue huan xiang xiao shuo* (科学幻想小说) meaning science (*ke xue*) fantasy (*huan xiang*) fiction (*xiao shuo*), or in other words, it became more 'children-friendly'.[126] *Ten Thousand Reasons Why* (*十万个为什么*) was a widely popularized children's book series distributed in China starting from 1962 to, surprisingly, even now.[127] Every child in China has had a copy, or has at least encountered one, at some point in their lifetime. Similar to an encyclopedia, the books were filled with playful graphics and an overarching theme of spreading 'popular science' and historical education to a much younger audience than traditional science fiction aimed for. The book series contained corny narratives and 'dumbed-down' explanations, severely undermining and devaluing the true potentials of science fiction.



Fig. 2.4 "Ten Thousand Reasons Why" first edition (1961).

126 Mingwei Song, "Chinese Science Fiction Late Qing and the Contemporary," *RENDITIONS A Chinese-English Translation Magazine* 77-78 (2012), www.academia.edu/46595278/Chinese_Science_Fiction_Late_Qing_and_the_Contemporary_Guest_Editor_Mingwei_Song_This_issue_is_published_with_the_aid_of_The_Wing_Lung_Bank_Fund_for_the_Promotion_of_Chinese_Culture.

127 Ibid.

2.3 The New Era

During the Cultural Revolution, which spanned from 1966 to 1976, the publication and distribution of non-revolutionary literature were suspended. Thus, Chinese SF achieved little to no progress as it essentially disappeared from mainland China. During this time, anyone who fostered or spread Western beliefs and ideas was declared a traitor of the State. Science fiction was of absolutely no exception as the Chinese government strongly viewed SF as the embodiment of Western influences. As a result, many suffered immediate employment discharge, jail time, public humiliation, torture, or even execution. These punishments were highly common amongst university scholars and intellectuals in the scientific community, rendering the practice of SF literature extremely dangerous. As the Cultural Revolution concluded, the second period of Chinese science fiction arose and blossomed. Many view this boom as part of the Golden Age[128] of science fiction (the term Golden Age here is referencing the universal era of SF, identified in the Western perspective as being the early 1930s to the late 1970s)[129] or the springtime in the history of Chinese SF.[130] This peak period of Western science fiction contrasting with the flowering adolescence of Chinese science fiction reveals that the Chinese SF industry was a few decades behind its foreign competitors. Nevertheless, when the first National Science Conference in Beijing commenced in March 1978, the following revolutionary proclamation was made:

> "The key to the *Four Modernizations* (*四个现代化*) [in the terms of agriculture, industry, defense, and science and technology] is the modernization of science and technology. Without modern science

128 John Clute and Peter Nicholls, *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (London: Orbit, 1999), page 258.

129 "Golden Age of SF," The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction, June 23, 2021, sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/golden_age_of_sf.

130 Tianyi Xia, "The Development History of Chinese Science Fiction from Liu Cixin's Science Fiction," *International Journal of Languages, Literature and Linguistics* 6, no. 3 (2020): pages 136-141, doi.org/10.18178/ijlll.2020.6.3.265.

> and technology, it is impossible to build modern agriculture, modern industry or modern national defense. Without the rapid development of science and technology, there can be no rapid development of the economy. The Central Committee of the Party (CCP) decided to call this national science conference in order to bring home to the Party and country the importance of science, to map out a program, to commend advanced units and individuals and to discuss measures for speeding up the development of science and technology in China… May science flourish and grow!"[131]

Under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, a greater enthusiasm for scientific and technological advancement was established in China. Thus, Chinese science fiction was gloriously revived, even though it was mainly for political purposes of reform---still serving as an agent of national propaganda. Similar to SF's role in the Soviet Union during that time, science fiction in China strictly remained as a tool to promote and popularize scientific knowledge among the mass public, and was all mainly driven by the ultimate dream of national rejuvenation. Evidently, although the Chinese Dream officially became China's national ideology in 2013, the idea of the Chinese Dream has dug deep into the history of China long before Xi Jinping became president. Henceforth, the spirit of the Chinese Dream has always been inherent in Chinese SF even though the terminology for it has not fully developed yet. Moreover, there has always been some degree of utilitarian deviation in Chinese science fiction, which greatly limited the creativity factor in SF development, and directly restricted the masses' complete acceptance and further understanding of the unimaginable powers of science fiction.[132]

In spite of the literary norm, a new generation of writers emerged during this era to bring about dramatic cultural and sociological change in the Chinese SF industry. The authors of this secondary boom brought forth the audacity and urgency for novel ways of thinking. This new league of authors, whether from a new generation or mature authors who survived the

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131 "Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the National Conference on Science," 中国网, accessed November 5, 2022, www.china.org.cn/english/features/dengxiaoping/103390.htm.

132 Tianyi Xia, "The Development History of Chinese Science Fiction from Liu Cixin's Science Fiction," *International Journal of Languages, Literature and Linguistics* 6, no. 3 (2020): pages 136-141, doi.org/10.18178/ijlll.2020.6.3.265.

Cultural Revolution, were invested in fresh theoretical creativity, ultimately influencing a major shift in the direction of Chinese science fiction. They suggested that Chinese SF should be focused on the truth of society through investigations of modern and current reality instead of fetishizing about the technological future. Therefore, science fiction in China transitioned from social sciences to humanities and reality.[133] Reverting back to being more concerned with realism and mass cognition, concepts of technological creativity in Chinese SF literature took a backseat for a short period as assessments of reality's future were devoted primarily to the investigation of current societal conditions.[134]

In 1979, a new magazine based in Chengdu, Sichuan, named *Scientific Literature* (*科学文艺*), rose to popularity and on a monthly basis, it distributed translated Western science fiction and native SF works.[135] Another magazine publication was created in the same year, also with its headquarters in Chengdu, *Science Fiction World* (*科幻世界*). Currently, *Science Fiction World* is considered one of the oldest SF magazines in China and the world's largest science fiction magazine in terms of circulation.[136] In the following year of 1980, *Death-Ray on the Coral Island* (*珊瑚岛上的死光*) became the first Chinese science fiction film, marking another glorious moment in the history of Chinese SF because development in moving pictures is a monumental step in the modernization of the science fiction franchise. Even in the present time, many believe that Chinese SF's inferiority to Western SF is mainly due to the technological lag in their film and animation industries, and that in order for China to close the gap, they must first overcome a huge technological leap in moviemaking. Unfortunately, during the 1980s, Chinese SF suffered another momentary drawback from the ruling party fighting against Deng Xiaoping's modernization and liberalization policies.[137] They opposed any foreign imports, and science fiction was inevitably categorized under Western ideologies. For this reason, science

133 Tianyi Xia, "The Development History of Chinese Science Fiction from Liu Cixin's Science Fiction," *International Journal of Languages, Literature and Linguistics* 6, no. 3 (2020): pages 136-141, doi.org/10.18178/ijlll.2020.6.3.265.

134 Ibid.

135 "科学文艺," 百度百科, accessed November 5, 2022, baike.baidu.com/item/%E7%A7%91%E5%AD%A6%E6%96%87%E8%89%BA/2124198.

136 Zhiling Huang, "Science Fiction Conference Held in Sichuan," *China Daily*, November 12, 2017, www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201711/12/WS5a0d2a79a31061a738409868.html.

137 Lavie Tidhar, "In China, This Is Science Fiction's Golden Age," *New Scientist* (Daily Mail and General Trust, February 27, 2017), www.newscientist.com/article/2122794-in-china-this-is-science-fictions-golden-age/.

fiction was campaigned against on a nationwide scale as "spiritual pollution".[138] Yet, after a few years of disappearance, once again Chinese SF was revived by the sudden resurgence of *Science Fiction World* magazine. Finally in 1989, China's leader, Deng Xiaoping emphasized the cruciality of scientific and technological progress as essential factors in the advancement of society during his meeting with Czech President Husak by making the following revolutionary statement: "Science and technology constitute a primary productive force."[139]

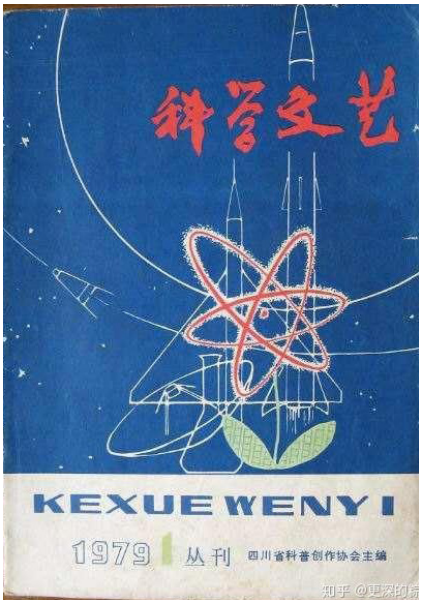


Fig. 2.5 "Scientific Literature" magazine cover (1979).



Fig. 2.6 "Science Fiction World" magazine cover (2020).

Chengdu, the capital of Southwest China's Sichuan province, is regarded by the Chinese SF community as the capital of Chinese SF. Home to a massive presence of SF professionals and the famous publishers of SFW (*Science Fiction* World) magazine who established the annual *Galaxy Awards* in 1985, it is the most crucial territory for the rapid development of science fiction film and television, gaming, and animation. In 1990, Yang Xiao, the editor of SFW, and Xiang Jichun, the arts editor for *Science Literature,* won the bid against Poland and Yugoslavia at the

138 Lavie Tidhar, "In China, This Is Science Fiction's Golden Age," *New Scientist* (Daily Mail and General Trust, February 27, 2017), www.newscientist.com/article/2122794-in-china-this-is-science-fictions-golden-age/.

139 "'Science and Technology Are Primary Productive Forces' in 1988," *China Daily*, October 30, 2008, www.chinadaily.com.cn/bizchina/2008-10/30/content_7169055.htm.

Worldcon in the Netherlands called ConFiction.[140] They managed to secure the hosting position for the 1991 International Science Fiction and Fantasy Conference which was to be held in Chengdu, Sichuan.[141] The year 1991 was also the end of the Cold War and had a major impact on Chinese SF, causing the franchise to once again steer away from hopeful visionaries of future modernization and focus more on assessing current complex social realities.

On a side note, to further emphasize the importance of the city of Chengdu in modern Chinese SF development, during the 2017 China Science Fiction Conference, the mayor of Chengdu, Luo Qiang, announced that China's first science fiction town (中国科幻城) would be built in his home city (Chengdu) with an investment of 12 billion yuan (approximately $1.8 billion).[142] With the goal of popularizing and educating science fiction to the masses, "the town will consist of a base for the production of science fiction films and television programs, an incubator for science fiction authors and a so-called science fiction paradise. It will create between 6,000 to 8,000 jobs and draw 12 million visitors a year."[143] Unfortunately, aside from a reported research team getting assigned to the planning and development of the town back in 2011[144], no other details about the project have been revealed. Nonetheless, this project declared the growing significance of science fiction in China as not only a creative literary practice, but also as a fundamental branch of society that contributes to the nation's expanding economy. Although by the end of the 20th Century, government policies of literary appropriation still existed, the old restrictions on Chinese SF works began to dissolve, thrusting China into the third phase of SF development: which is the current era.

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140 "China," Fancyclopedia 3, accessed November 5, 2022, fancyclopedia.org/China.

141 Ibid.

142 Zhiling Huang, "Science Fiction Conference Held in Sichuan," *China Daily*, November 12, 2017, www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201711/12/WS5a0d2a79a31061a738409868.html.

143 Ibid.

144 "中国科幻城," 百度百科, accessed November 5, 2022, baike.baidu.com/item/%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E7%A7%91%E5%B9%BB%E5%9F%8E/22202244.



Fig. 2.7 Aerial perspective render of Chengdu's Science Fiction Town project.



Fig. 2.8 Render of the streets and buildings in Chengdu's Science Fiction Town Project.



Fig. 2.9 Render of the interior of public spaces in Chengdu's Science Fiction Town Project.

2.4 The 21st Century and Onward

This [21st Century] was the moment that modern science fiction was born.[145]

~ Chen Qiufan, *during an interview with Will Dunn*

Despite the many hardships and growth that Chinese science fiction experienced prior to the 21st Century, I believe that this third phase (the current era) of Chinese SF is the leading breakthrough period. The reasons being: the introduction of the internet which brought upon a new wave of Chinese SF and introduced globalization; an unprecedented comeback for Chinese SF literature and film; a dramatic shift in the mass public's view on the science fiction genre; and finally, the establishment of new terminologies associated with Chinese futurism dominating the global SF community.

Firstly, with the emergence of the Internet in the late 1990s, a new platform was established for literature creativity as a modern generation of authors began to assemble large nationwide fandoms through writing online SF stories.[146] Gaining great attention from mainstream media, these authors sparked the third boom of Chinese science fiction; otherwise referred to as "New Wave SF".[147] Although there is government censorship and surveillance all over the internet in China, the boundaries of the digital world are limitless. Advances in government control

145 Will Dunn, "How Chinese Novelists Are Reimagining Science Fiction," *New Statesman*, February 13, 2019.

146 Mingwei Song, "Chinese Science Fiction Late Qing and the Contemporary," *RENDITIONS A Chinese-English Translation Magazine* 77-78 (2012), www.academia.edu/46595278/Chinese_Science_Fiction_Late_Qing_and_the_Contemporary_Guest_Editor_Mingwei_Song_This_issue_is_published_with_the_aid_of_The_Wing_Lung_Bank_Fund_for_the_Promotion_of_Chinese_Culture.

147 Ibid.

are equally counteracted by smarter and more capable individuals that can work around it. Therefore, to have total oversight of the unimaginable and expanding digital world can potentially be argued as becoming harder and harder to manage. For instance, even now, to break through the "Great Firewall of China" is not so difficult. It simply requires the easy installation of VPNs in digital devices that can be done by children. Thus, the introduction of the internet provided freedom for Chinese SF development as cultural and ideological exchanges coming into and leaving China became more accessible, ultimately leading to the current globalization period of Chinese SF works.

In a 2019 *New York Times Magazine* article, Ken Liu, an American author who specializes in the translation of Chinese SF into English, revealed that the originality of one of the most popularized Chinese SF novels, *The Three-Body Problem*, was able to be restored to its former self due to the possibility of aboard publication.[148] The Chinese version of the novel had a chaotic timeline, erratically jumping between present-time, the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, and a distant future doomed with alien invasion, making the overall narrative structure difficult to comprehend and flow smoothly.[149] This confusion was due to the author (Liu Cixin) being forced to alter the plot sequence of the story, so that commentaries on sensitive matters such as the Cultural Revolution were not the dominant part of the narrative. The mentioning of the brutalities and bloodshed of the Cultural Revolution was written as less significant, less graphic, and thus, less truthful to the actual event. The controversial subject was also cast into later chapters of the book. However, before the translation into English process took place, Ken Liu proposed a rearranged order of the chapters to Liu Cixin, who reacted with "'That is how I wanted it originally!'"[150] Ken Liu suggested to begin the novel with recollections of the events of the Cultural Revolution as Chapter One, and as a result, *The Three-Body* Problem English version literally starts off with the time stamp "China 1967".[151] The English version of the book is heavily

148 Alexandra Alter, "How Chinese Sci-Fi Conquered America," *The New York Times Magazine* (The New York Times, December 3, 2019), www.nytimes.com/2019/12/03/magazine/ken-liu-three-body-problem-chinese-science-fiction.html?searchResultPosition=1.

149 Ibid.

150 Alexandra Alter, "How Chinese Sci-Fi Conquered America," *The New York Times Magazine* (The New York Times, December 3, 2019), www.nytimes.com/2019/12/03/magazine/ken-liu-three-body-problem-chinese-science-fiction.html?searchResultPosition=1.

151 Ibid.

centered around technological theories, scientific development, and highly sensitive political content. Much of Liu Cixin's works are influenced by and address the Cultural Revolution. The sociopolitical movement began when he was only three-years-old and it had torn apart his family.[152] In the authentic version of Liu Cixin's *The Three-Body Problem*, the Cultural Revolution is central to the story and is mentioned right away at the beginning of the book. But due to concerns with government censorship, he moved the event into later chapters spread throughout the novel in smaller fragments, so that it was less prominent. This decision alleviated the political centrality of the story, which may have hindered it from getting publication approval from the Chinese government. But it also rendered the narrative less powerful. Thus, the opportunity of overseas publication gave Chinese SF new territories of freedom. To explore with ideological diversity, acquire expanded fields of inspiration, and most importantly, to freely be itself, and all of this was made possible by the invention of the internet and its product of globalization.

Secondly, the 21st Century marked the most dramatic comeback for the Chinese science fiction franchise. Many Chinese SF literary works receiving worldwide praise are from this time period. To name a few: Liu Cixin's *The Wandering Earth* (2000) and *The Three-body Problem* trilogy (2008), Hao Jingfang's *Folding Beijing* (2012) and *Vagabonds* (2016), Chen Qiufan's *Waste Tide* (2013), and the *Broken Stars* series (2016) and *Invisible Planets* series (2016).

In the contemporary period, China has also made astonishing progress in the film industry. Although still not quite equal to the moviemaking skills of the West, China's leapfrogging into modernity foreshadows promising future developments in film technology. The year 2019 marked a new beginning for China's film industry as two Chinese SF movies competed for the title of best SF movie in the country. Unfortunately, *Shanghai Fortress* did not live up to its expectations but *The Wandering Earth* was considered as a monumental success just like its novel version. Not only was it popular in China, it even became available on Western Netflix. It is anticipated that Netflix will be releasing the film adaptation of *The Three-Body Problem* in 2023[153], and *Folding*

152 Alexandra Alter, "How Chinese Sci-Fi Conquered America," *The New York Times Magazine* (The New York Times, December 3, 2019), www.nytimes.com/2019/12/03/magazine/ken-liu-three-body-problem-chinese-science-fiction.html?searchResultPosition=1.

153 "Netflix Will Release an Adaptation of the Book the Three-Body Problem in

Beijing will also be made into a movie in 2022[154]. Although 2022 is about to end, there are no further updates about the progress of the *Folding Beijing* movie. Nevertheless, the emergence of the 21st Century ignited the third boom of Chinese SF through an unprecedented wave of admirable Chinese SF literature and films gaining international attention.

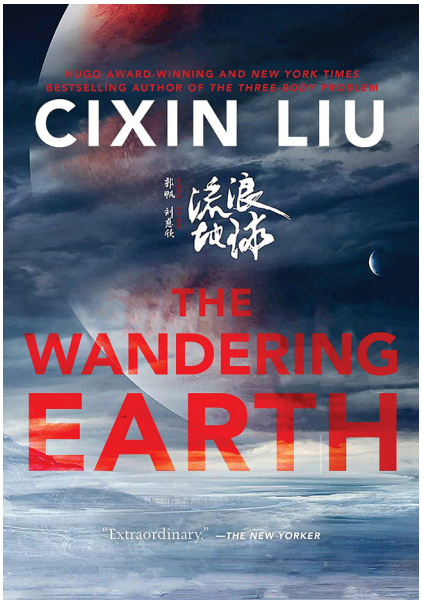


Fig. 2.10 "The Wandering Earth" by Liu Cixin, book cover (2000).



Fig. 2.11 "The Wandering Earth" movie poster (2019).

Furthermore, unlike the previous two periods where Chinese SF was heavily influenced and dictated by traditional state ideologies, contemporary SF in China demonstrates prominent inspirations from post-war American and British trends in the SF industry.[155] From being condemned as a highly sensitive and even juvenile practice in China for roughly a hundred years, the 21st Century brought unparalleled transformation to the Chinese public's old backward perspectives on SF. This drastic change in societal mindset was greatly sparked by one question:

2023 ," Mezha, September 26, 2022, mezha.media/en/2022/09/26/netflix-will-release-an-adaptation-of-the-book-the-three-body-problem-in-2023/.

154 "Chinese Author's Award-Winning Novelette to Be Adapted into Film," *China Daily*, September 22, 2020, global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202009/22/WS5f69526fa31024ad0ba7aeb8.html.

155 Mingwei Song, "Chinese Science Fiction Late Qing and the Contemporary," *RENDITIONS A Chinese-English Translation Magazine* 77-78 (2012), www.academia.edu/46595278/Chinese_Science_Fiction_Late_Qing_and_the_Contemporary_Guest_Editor_Mingwei_Song_This_issue_is_published_with_the_aid_of_The_Wing_Lung_Bank_Fund_for_the_Promotion_of_Chinese_Culture.

> "One afternoon in June 1999, more than three million Chinese school children took their seats for the Gaokao, the country's national college entrance exam. Essay subjects in previous years had been patriotic – 'the most touching scene from the Great Leap Forward' (1958) – or prosaic – 'trying new things' (1994) – but the final essay question of the millennium was a vision of the future: 'what if memories could be transplanted?'"[156]

According to Chinese SF writer, Chen Quifan, who is published in the West under the name Stanley Chan, "this was the moment that modern Chinese science fiction was born."[157] Evolving from a forbidden literature of "spiritual pollution" to the final college entrance exam question for the country's youths, Chinese SF has finally stepped into a recognized, admirable, and glorified era of prosperity. The increasing popularity of *Science Fiction World* magazine also altered the minds of the Chinese public. As a result, parents began to think that reading science fiction would benefit their children's chances of being accepted into universities and exceling in their academic studies.[158] Chinese SF was no longer classified as children's literature and attracted a modern wave of new readers and writers.

Although contemporary science fiction in China is gradually establishing a positive reputation alongside the nation's rapid modernization, new challenges are still arising to hinder the genre's success as traditional restrictions dissolve. For instance, societal progress introduced many new technologies for the Chinese government to insidiously monitor its people on a national level. To provide context to this, here are some common examples of modern day oppression in China: WeChat automatically blocking messages that indicate any discontent with the regime; Google helping China to develop a search engine that reports users asking the 'wrong questions'; a rumored secretive project under the code name "Dove" that manufactures robotic birds with built-in HD cameras to track the mass public; and an entire country of 1.4 billion people not being able to freely mention a cartoon character, Winnie the Pooh, because it might be offensive towards Xi Jinping

156 Will Dunn, "How Chinese Novelists Are Reimagining Science Fiction," *New Statesman*, February 13, 2019.
157 Ibid.
158 Will Dunn, "How Chinese Novelists Are Reimagining Science Fiction," *New Statesman*, February 13, 2019.

who has previously been compared to it in online memes.[159] If ordinary everyday conducts of living are secretly monitored by the Chinese government, one can only imagine that Chinese SF, even after a hundred years of evolution, will only continue to encounter further state resistance in the future. However, unlike the previous periods of development where Chinese SF did a poor job at severing itself from political deviation and heavy state brainwashing, the current era of Chinese SF is executed with definite intentions of controversial reflection, social criticism, and a sharp defiance against many of the country's traditional ways of conduct and thought. This modern rebellious attitude does not mean that the Chinese Dream is no more, but that the Chinese Dream shifts with the societal paradigms of the nation, similar to Chinese science fiction. In fact, with the third boom of Chinese SF, the nationwide ideology of the Chinese Dream was finally coined as an official concept. The contemporary era has gradually transformed the Chinese people's ill thoughts about science fiction, which has been harnessed for decades.



Fig. 2.12 Close-up photograph of a "dove" used for China's secret project.



Fig. 2.13 Spotting out a "dove" amongst a group of real doves.

Finally, although Chinese SF includes some aspects that reflect Western influences, the current trend of the worldwide SF community is an emerging presence of futuristic Asian aesthetic tropes. As foreign science fiction works, especially films, continue to take China by storm, many fail to register that ironically, Chinese futurism has lurked in many great Western SF movies for a long time. For example, *Blade Runner* (1982), *Ghost in the Shell* (2017), *The Matrix* series (1999-2021), and various episodes of the Netflix series *Love Death Robots* (2019-2022). Also referred

159 Will Dunn, "How Chinese Novelists Are Reimagining Science Fiction," *New Statesman*, February 13, 2019.

to as the period of "Yellow Peril"[160] in science fiction, the 21st Century of Chinese SF introduced new terminologies within the global SF community. At first, Asian aesthetics in SF works were seen as secondary, supportive, additive, and certainly less significant within a cultural phenomenon that many considered as predominantly a Western production. Nevertheless, in the current era, orientalism is gradually becoming an individualized subgenre of SF. The following terms are heavily rooted in Asian aesthetics, foreshadowing a future where the East transcends to global superpower: *Sinofuturism* (*中华未来主义*), which literally translates to Chinese (中华) future (未来) dominance (主义); *Techno-Orientalism*, which is "the idea of using Eastern cultures to represent the near-future"[161]; and *Silkpunk*, which is a new SF subgenre coined by Ken Liu that is essentially a parody of *Steampunk*, but with a traditional Asian aesthetic in terms of science and technology.[162]

In a 2012 *Los Angeles Times* article, Han Song, the author of *2066: Red Stars Over America*, a famous Chinese SF novel written in 2000 about a near future where China triumphs over America and becomes the world leader, stated the following:

> "'I went to America to present my ideas [regarding his book 2066: Red Stars Over America], but they thought that the portrayal of China's superpower status was an exaggeration. Americans think that America cannot be destroyed. They laughed at this idea. They didn't believe in me.'"[163]

Throughout history, the West has always claimed itself as the leader of the world. Ironically so, in the rapidly changing times of the contemporary epoch, the West still fails to acknowledge the global phenomenon initiated by the third boom of Chinese SF, and that is the cultural dominance of orientalism transgressing into Western SF. The modern period of Chinese SF is not mainly

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160 George Yang, "Orientalism, Cyberpunk 2077, and Yellow Peril in Science Fiction," *WIRED* (Condé Nast, December 8, 2020), wired.com/story/orientalism-cyberpunk-2077-yellow-peril-science-fiction/.

161 "Orientalism & Technology: A Primer on the Techno-Orientalism Debate," Elif Notes, April 6, 2022, elifnotes.com/techno-orientalism/.

162 Ken Liu, "What Is 'Silkpunk'?," Ken Liu Writer, accessed November 5, 2022, kenliu.name/books/what-is-silkpunk/.

163 Clarissa Sebag-Montefiore, "Cultural Exchange: Chinese Science Fiction's Subversive Politics," *Los Angeles Times*, March 25, 2012, www.latimes.com/entertainment/la-xpm-2012-mar-25-la-ca-china-culture-20120325-story.html.

defined by foreign influences anymore, but is dedicated to the international propaganda of the Chinese way. "In reading Western science fiction, Chinese readers discover the fears and hopes of Man, the modern Prometheus, for his destiny, which is also his own creation,"[164] and now with the prominent rise of Chinese SF, "perhaps Western readers can also read Chinese science fiction and experience an alternative, Chinese modernity and be inspired to imagine an alternative future."[165] The future of humanity should not only abide to a British-American literary canon[166], and the international spread of Chinese SF introduces a whole new spectrum of alternative, plausible futures. As modern China is amidst the pivotal moment of awakening, Chinese science fiction is the metaphorical language of the nation's longed becoming.

164 Xia Jia, "What Makes Chinese Science Fiction Chinese?," *Tor.com* (Tor Books, July 22, 2014), www.tor.com/2014/07/22/what-makes-chinese-science-fiction-chinese/.

165 Ibid.

166 Karissa Chen, "Audible Blog," *Audible Blog* (blog), February 24, 2017, www.audible.com/blog/the-dazzlingly-different-worlds-of-chinese-vs-asian-american-sci-fi.

2.5 An Ongoing Struggle

The current era is the pinnacle of Chinese SF development, but it cannot be without its challenges. Major problems plaguing the SF community in China today are the scarcity, sparseness, and often short-lastingness of supporters and fan base. Fei Dao, the same individual that compared Chinese SF to a "Hidden Army" (for specific text, refer to Part 2.1), also alluded the literary genre to the planet of Pluto –

> "I'm reminded of little Pluto, which was unknown until 1930, and which then enjoyed a brief few decades of attention before scientist mercilessly ejected it from the ranks of the planets – [Chinese] sci-fi authors will simply shrug and return to their hidden base, away from the bright and fickle beam of public attention, and continue to let their imaginations roam."[167]

He proposed that the third boom of Chinese SF, although an unprecedented success, does not guarantee that the genre will continue on this exponential climb in the future. The development of Chinese science fiction does not model the continual growth of Western science fiction, because it was born in a country extremely prone to unexpected historical fragmentation.

Analogous to the rebirth and disappearance of SF in Chinese history, the scarce and temporary group of Chinese fans is also a huge obstacle. Regina Kanyu Wang introduced the "Bus Theory" in her essay, *A Brief Introduction of Chinese Science Fiction and Fandom,* which described the Chinese SF fandom's short-termed love for original Chinese SF. Similar to taking a bus, fans get on the ride when they are young.[168] As they get older, they have reached

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167 Ken Liu, trans., "A Brief Introduction to Chinese Science Fiction and Fandom," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation*, (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 346.

168 Ibid., page 331.

their 'destination', and they get off the bus.[169] Henceforth, the majority of science fiction fans in China are middle school, high school, and university students. Mature fans are more interested in foreign SF works.[170] Furthermore, most fandoms exist within university organizations and clubs, which are dispersed and repeatedly prosper and decline as students graduate from the institutions.[171] Currently, there are no regular national "cons" and it is difficult to find any fanbase in China with a long history.[172] This poses a great challenge for modern Chinese SF, because the lack of a stable and diverse audience could potentially be a tremendous threat to its future growth.

Today, the "Big Four" authors of Chinese SF are Liu Cixin (刘慈欣), Wang JinKang (王晋康), Han Song (韩松), and He Xi (何夕). Along with other notable younger writers such as Chen Qiufan (陈秋帆), Fei Dao (飞氘), Baoshu (宝树), Zhang Ran(张冉), Jiang Bo (江波), and A Que (阿缺).[173] China also has many influential female SF authors, such as Zhao Haihong (赵海虹), Ling Chen (凌晨), Chi Hui (迟卉), Xia Jia (夏笳), Hao Jingfang (郝景芳), Chen Qian (陈茜), and Tang Fei (糖匪).[174] Additionally, there are very few Chinese SF authors who are solely devoted to the professional literary practice of writing science fiction. Most authors have their personal daytime occupations, such as engineer, university instructor, science researcher, judge, entrepreneur, and so on.[175] SF writing is similar to a hobby and not fully considered as a legitimate career, and there are many reasons to this. For instance, political complications, limitations of societal reality, and the income of the profession. A major cause is that many contemporary Chinese SF authors achieved their fame through the common beginning of writing SF short stories online, which were then spotted by media platforms and magazine

169 Ken Liu, trans., "A Brief Introduction to Chinese Science Fiction and Fandom," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation*, (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 331.

170 Ken Liu, trans., "A Brief Introduction to Chinese Science Fiction and Fandom," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation*, (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 331.

171 Ibid.

172 Ken Liu, trans., "A Brief Introduction to Chinese Science Fiction and Fandom," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation*, (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 331.

173 Ibid., page 333.

174 Ken Liu, trans., "A Brief Introduction to Chinese Science Fiction and Fandom," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation*, (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 333.

175 Ken Liu, trans., "Science Fiction: Embarrassing No More," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation*, (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 346.

publications. This classified Chinese SF writing as a secondary side job, and oftentimes not taken seriously.

In the historical teachings of Western literature, occasionally, names of science fiction authors appear. They are considered intellectuals and are often praised for their brilliant technique in science fiction writing, calling it a form of "literary experiment".[176] However, in China, it is extremely difficult to find any academic references of the 'seriousness' of SF literature.[177] A literature student in China would never find any information on SF authors in their textbooks.[178] Although there are many foreign scholars studying the rise of Chinese SF, there are not many Chinese intellectuals that do the same. In China, there is only one individual who has a professional academic accreditation to advise Ph.D. students on projects regarding sci-fi, Wu Yan (吴岩).[179] He is a professor at Beijing Normal University, which has a master's program on science fiction.[180] Analogous to the nationwide banning of certain contents on the web and television, modern day China has many forbidden topics for science fiction and fantasy literature such as, grave robbery, time-travel, and Daoism immortality-chasing.[181]

176 Ken Liu, trans., "Science Fiction: Embarrassing No More," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation*, (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 344.

177 Ibid.

178 Ken Liu, trans., "Science Fiction: Embarrassing No More," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation*, (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 344.

179 Ken Liu, trans., "A New Continent for China Scholars: Chinese Science Fiction Studies," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation*, (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), pages 339-340.

180 Ken Liu, trans., "A Brief Introduction to Chinese Science Fiction and Fandom," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation*, (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 334.

181 Ibid., pages 323-324.

2.6 Trends in Chinese Science Fiction

> *Our [the Chinese people] stories are written primarily for a Chinese audience. The problems we care about and ponder are the problems facing all of us sharing this plot of land. These problems, in turn, are connected in a thousand complicated ways with the collective fate of all of humanity.*[182]
>
> ~ Xia Jia, *What Makes Chinese Science Fiction Chinese?*

In the present time, there is an immense struggle in determining the 'appropriate' representation of China, and the nation's rightful image and place within the global SF community.[183] Still in its infancy of international fame, contemporary Chinese SF is the mirrored reflection of "…a society in the transition stage when old illusions have collapsed but new illusions have not yet taken their place; this is the fundamental cause of the rips and division, the confusion and the chaos."[184] There are ongoing debates about ways to combine the late Qing utopian visions with the rapidly changing reality of present-day China, resulting in continuous re-evaluations of the prospective directions of Chinese SF.[185] Since Chinese science fiction has always been rooted in the national dream of reform and rejuvenation, its long history of optimistic utopianism contradicts with the current trend of

182 Ken Liu, trans., "What Makes Chinese Science Fiction Chinese?," *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction*, (London: Head of Zeus, 2017), page 299.

183 Mingwei Song, "Chinese Science Fiction Late Qing and the Contemporary," *RENDITIONS A Chinese-English Translation Magazine* 77-78 (2012), www.academia.edu/46595278/Chinese_Science_Fiction_Late_Qing_and_the_Contemporary_Guest_Editor_Mingwei_Song_This_issue_is_published_with_the_aid_of_The_Wing_Lung_Bank_Fund_for_the_Promotion_of_Chinese_Culture.

184 Ken Liu, trans., "The Torn Generation: Chinese Science Fiction in a Culture in Transition," *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction*, (London: Head of Zeus, 2017), page 293.

185 Ibid.

Western SF works that predominantly focus on dystopias. Having followed the footsteps of foreign SF materials throughout history, contemporary Chinese SF authors are conflicted between whether to follow the direction of a darker future or stay true to their own cultural ideology of a brighter future. Nevertheless, its shifting political entanglement, sharper social criticisms, emerging duality of utopianism and dystopianism, and progressive scientific and technological discourses have established unique distinctions to an once niche and community-orientated subgenre.[186] Some even refer to Chinese SF as "China's greatest cultural export since kung fu".[187] Since Chinese SF is deeply rooted in the Chinese Dream, collective effort of the Chinese people, revival and renewal of the Chinese culture, respect of the Chinese history, rapid modernity through technological progress, and national revitalization, greatly influence the trends of contemporary Chinese SF materials. Conclusively, these trends of modern Chinese SF include a sense of collectivism, the traditional belief of repeated history, the myth of universal balance, the optimism of technological utopia, the cult of national rejuvenation, and the necessity of practical purposefulness.

Collectivism

Throughout history, the terms *ren min* (人民) meaning the People, min zu (民族) meaning collectives of people, zhong hua min zu (中华民族) meaning the Chinese collective, tong zhi men (同志们) meaning comrades, wo guo (我国) meaning my/our country, and many more similar expressions are always utilized in every political speech. Collectivism is a core attitude of the people, and it is deeply rooted in centuries of sociocultural dedication towards nationalism. It is an ancient societal value so powerful in its political and (re)unifying agency that any terminologies associated with it have been persistently used during the Dynastic times, the Cultural Revolution, the Reform Movement, and even

186 Mingwei Song, "Chinese Science Fiction Late Qing and the Contemporary," *RENDITIONS A Chinese-English Translation Magazine* 77-78 (2012), www.academia.edu/46595278/Chinese_Science_Fiction_Late_Qing_and_the_Contemporary_Guest_Editor_Mingwei_Song_This_issue_is_published_with_the_aid_of_The_Wing_Lung_Bank_Fund_for_the_Promotion_of_Chinese_Culture.

187 Gautham Shenoy, "Telling the China Story: The Rise and Rise of Chinese Science Fiction," FactorDaily, February 26, 2020, archive.factordaily.com/china-science-fiction/.

till present-day, to fortify, inspire, or challenge the existing status quo. In contrast to the cliché of Western SF, which focuses on the development of individualism and singular heroism, Chinese SF puts emphasis on the collective. The contemporary trend of Chinese SF is always a finale about the unifying efforts of the people. Oftentimes, it seems as though the protagonist of the story is on his/her own, but eventually through some reason or situation, an inspirational speech or monologue about collectivism takes place. As a result, the lonely struggles of the individual are emphasized as even more powerless, as the ending of the narratives present hope only when the people decide to finally come together and face the perils of the future together. For instance, in one of the most popularized Chinese SF works, *The Wandering Earth* (referring to the movie instead of the written story, there are some differences in the plot), in the finale, a fourteen-year-old girl named Han Duoduo makes a global broadcast asking for the return and reunited help of all the taskforce teams that abandoned the main Earth Engine control center. As Earth is pulled into ultimate destruction by Jupiter's gravitational field, Duoduo's message of collectivism reached the ears of every Earth Engine member across the planet. It demonstrated the leadership and heroism of China transcending all countries, which is a direct indication of the Chinese Dream as the Chinese people become the central figures in motivating and inspiring global collectivity. In asking for help, Duoduo spoke the following:

> "昨天老师还在问我们：'希望是什么？'在这之前，我根本不相信希望这种东西。但现在我相信。我相信希望是我们这个年代像钻石一样珍贵的东西。希望，希望是我们唯一回家的方向。回来吧，加入我们，一起战斗。点燃木星，救回我们的地球！"[188]

> "Yesterday my teacher asked me: 'What is hope?' Before this, I never believed in hope. But now I do. I believe that for our generation, hope is as precious as diamonds. Hope is our only way home. So come back, join us, and let us fight together. Let us ignite Jupiter and rescue our planet Earth!" (My translation)

188 *The Wandering Earth*, directed by Director Frant Gwo (China Film Group Corporation, 2019), 1:34:38. Netflix.

To have a young girl address to the world that ultimate collectivism is the only hope in saving humanity is extremely powerful. It showcases that the idea of collectivism is a common belief amongst the Chinese people, and it is a traditional value engraved into even the minds of children in China. In an exaggerated sense, the monologue showcased that China is the only country that would not cower away when confronted with the apocalypse, because the Chinese people have this undying attitude of collectivism.

Repetitive History

The long history of China is defined by a repetition of reunifications. The rise and fall of rulers, national rejuvenation, and social reform seem like a never-ending circle spanning from the ancient times of emperors to the contemporary era. In Chinese history, the Dynastic Cycle (朝代循环) is a political theory that describes the repetitive pattern of each dynasty rising to power and then descending from the throne to another dynasty due to eventual corruption and failure.[189] Although the continuous renewal of rulers is a universal political system, China's repetitive phases are always marked by attempting something new, because the previous lacked success. This pattern holds true for the annihilation of the dynastic periods, the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution, and the creation of the *Open Door Policy*.

However, Chinese SF authors believe that repetitive history is a reality that is inherent in all cultures, not just in the history of China. Chen Qiufan explained this theory through the principles of Nietzsche's eternal reoccurrence by stating,

> "If we pull back far enough to view human history from a more elevated perspective, we can see that society builds up, invents, creates utopias – sketches of perfect, imagined futures – and then, inevitably, the utopias collapse, betray their ideals, and turn into dystopias. The process plays out in cycle after cycle."[190]

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189 "China's Dynastic Cycle," Stratfor, January 15, 2013, worldview.stratfor.com/article/chinas-dynastic-cycle.

190 Ken Liu, trans., "The Torn Generation: Chinese Science Fiction in a Culture in Transition," *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Science*



Fig. 2.14 Teacher and students talking about the meaning of hope, classroom scene from "The Wandering Earth" movie.



Fig. 2.15 Facing the perils of the frozen Earth together, elevator scene from "The Wandering Earth" movie.



Fig. 2.16 Han Duoduo broadcasting international message to reunite humanity, control center scene from "The Wandering Earth" movie.



Fig. 2.17 People from every country working together to save Earth, control center scene from "The Wandering Earth" movie.

Chinese SF authors emphasize this vicious cycle by writing parodies of previous historical events or reviving past figures and contextualization in their narratives. For example, in *The Three-Body Problem*, the resurrection of ancient figures, monuments, and societies are foundational to the framework of the VR game called *The Three-Body*. The game is essential to the storyline. Through resurrecting various Chinese historical figures such as King Wen of Zhou (Count of Zhou during the late Shang dynasty in ancient China, 1112 BCE-1056 BCE), Mozi (Chinese philosopher, 470 BCE-391 BCE), Confucius (Chinese philosopher and politician, 551 BCE-479 BCE), Qin Shi Huang (founder of the Qin Dynasty and the first emperor of a unified China, 259 BCE-210 BCE), Fuxi (a culture hero in Chinese legend and mythology), and also many historical Western figures such as Pope Gregory I (540 BCE-582 BCE), Albert Einstein (German-born theoretical physicist, 1879-1955), Aristotle (Greek philosopher and polymath, 384 BCE-322 BCE), Galileo (Italian astronomer, physicist, and engineer, 1564-1642), Leonardo da Vinci (Italian polymath, 1452-1519), Giordano Bruno (Italian Dominican philosopher, mathematician, poet and cosmological theorist, 1548-1600), Isaac Newton (creator of the principles of modern physics, 1643-1727), and John von Neumann (Hungarian-American mathematician, physicist and computer scientist, 1903-1957), the narrative is heavily dependent on learning from past intellectuals as a major building block in saving humanity from oncoming alien invasion. The story also alluded to lost ancient civilizations and their architecture, such as the pyramids of Egypt, the temples of the Aztec, the great cities of ancient Greece and ancient Rome, and the Imperial Palaces from the Zhou Dynasty, Han Dynasty, and Qin Dynasty.

These rigorous recollections of past figures and urban contextualization, and then projecting them into the present or future emphasize Chinese SF's trend of historical resurrection and repetitive history. The Chinese Dream advocates for the revival and renewal of the Chinese culture, and utmost respect for Chinese history. Thus, the theme of repetitive history in Chinese SF is a direct resurrection of the Chinese way, and a narrative method to honor the nation's legacy. In a conversation between Fei Dao (a Chinese science fiction author whose real name is Jia Liyuan, Fei Dao is his penname)[191] and an arthouse director that he admired, the director said, "'exploration of history and the present already

Fiction, (London: Head of Zeus, 2017), page 292.

191 "Fei Dao," *Clarkesworld Science Fiction & Fantasy Magazine* (Wyrm Publishing), accessed November 5, 2022, clarkesworldmagazine.com/author/fei-dao/.

encompasses within it anticipation for the future.'"[192] Therefore, Chinese SF's trend of repetitive history is deeply rooted in the fundamental values of the Chinese Dream, which calls for the ultimate respect of Chinese history in the future.



Fig. 2.18 The Dynastic Cycle of the Imperial Era was dominated by warfare, conquest, bloodshed, and violence.

Universal Harmony

The Yin and Yang symbol indicates the importance of harmony, balance, and unity in Chinese culture. It is an ancient Chinese philosophical concept indicating the togetherness of opposing forces. For instance, Yin represents the Earth, femaleness, darkness, passivity, and absorption, while Yang symbolizes Heaven, maleness, light, activity, and penetration.[193] According to traditional belief, the combination of these two components makes up the wholeness of the universe, or in other words, their absolute unity preserves the stable existence of the entire world, which humankind is a small part of. Without it, humanity will inevitably succumb to their own demise. However, with the rapid progress of contemporary China, it has been recognized long ago that countless insensitivities of modernization are threatening the

192 Ken Liu, trans., "Science Fiction: Embarrassing No More," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation*, (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 346.

193 "Yinyang," Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.), accessed November 5, 2022, www.britannica.com/topic/yinyang.

universal harmony that is core to the Chinese belief system. For example, the struggle of society to cope with the gap between reality and dream, a new generation tossed into a lifetime of exhaustion and anxiety, and most importantly, a violently divided nation of tradition versus modernity, all of these dilemmas are created by the country's hyper-accelerated development.[194] Since the Chinese Dream aims for the collective prosperity of the Chinese people, the concept of harmony and balance establishes the necessary unifying efforts to do so.



Fig. 2.19 An illustration of Yin and Yang in harmonious oneness with each other, despite being complete opposites.

Henceforth, another trend in Chinese science fiction is the exploration and restoration of universal balance. In Chinese culture, unity extends far beyond simply the natural and built environment, the landscape and living things, and the earth and the sky. Ultimate unity extends to cosmological oneness, where humanity is a speck of dust amongst unimaginably larger entities. The cosmic scale of Chinese universal harmony also justifies modern China and Chinese SF's obsession with space. Liu Cixin is the perfect example of a contemporary Chinese SF author who is strongly dedicated to investigating universal balance and realms beyond planet Earth. Whether it is his thick novels or his short stories, Liu Cixin always explored the possibilities of intergalactic migration, otherworldly beings, and space life, as well as the

194 Ken Liu, trans., "The Torn Generation: Chinese Science Fiction in a Culture in Transition," *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction*, (London: Head of Zeus, 2017), pages 289-293.

technological innovations to make them come true. He often emphasizes the smallness of humanity within the endless space and time of the cosmos, and criticizes humanity for thinking that they can meddle with the almighty existence of universal balance.

National Rejuvenation

Although the contemporary "New Wave SF" in China is gradually reorienting towards a modern paradigm of social criticism and evaluations of current reality (similar to Western SF), there is still a strong affiliation with traditional national rejuvenation. At the very beginning of the 21st Century, the novel *2066: Red Stars Over America* (written in 2000), imagined a near future where the aggressive expansion, political dominance, and technological triumph of a future China render the nation as the leading superpower of the world. In a complete reversal of roles, the United States becomes fearful of the Chinese and are forced to initiate a policy called *Biguan Suoguo* (*闭关锁国*), a closed-door policy exactly like the one adopted by the Qianlong Emperor during the 18th Century (repetition of history).[195] The original Chinese title of the book is called *火星照耀美国* (*Mars Over America*) where 火星 also means fire star, alluding to the five stars of the Chinese flag.

Additionally, the title is a parody of Edgar Snow's 1937 book, *Red Star Over China*, which is a positive account of the rise of the Red Army and their communist leader, Mao Zedong.[196] In its full essence, *2066: Red Stars Over America* or *Mars Over America* is a Chinese Dream story envisioning a future world under the ruling of Chinese leaders, under the Chinese flag, and under the absolute greatness of the Chinese nation. After many centuries of longing for greatness once again and the circulation of never-ending political propaganda, the Chinese Dream is far beyond simply a collective societal desire. It has gradually manifested into a national cult towards rejuvenation. Even if present-day China advocates for the eradication of backwardness thinking, the fundamental cultural ideology of national rejuvenation will never die, as long as China is determined for global supremacy.

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195 Mingwei Song, "Variations on Utopia in Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction," *Science Fiction Studies* 40, no. 1 (March 2013), www.depauw.edu/sfs/backissues/119/Mingwei%20Song.html.

196 Ibid.



Fig. 2.20 A satirical cartoon of Lord Macartney kneeling before the Qianlong Emperor presenting his "gifts", referring to the unfair treaties of the Opium Wars and the humiliation of China. The Century of Humiliation is a key driver of modern China's cult of national rejuvenation.

Technological Utopia

In the past few years, China's increasing political, military, and economic capabilities are becoming larger threats to the Western world, and is even more unnerving as the Chinese government continues to insist that the nation strives for a 'peaceful rise'.[197] The nation's leapfrogging into modernity is inevitably entangled with scientific and technological progress, which since 1980 were officially declared by Deng Xiaoping as the main apparatuses in achieving rejuvenation, self-strengthening, and universal power. Unlike the current Western SF trend that constantly emphasizes the anticipated dangers of advanced technology, China is mostly optimistic towards a future technological utopia. Although in some cases, contemporary Chinese SF do attempt to envision possible dystopian worlds, technology is never entirely depicted as humanity's enemy.

In the *Three-Body Problem,* the threats to mankind and planet Earth come from the aliens that inhabit Trisolaris, the only planet in the Alpha Centauri system. The Trisolarans use native advanced innovations, such as Sophons (a proton-sized 11-dimensional supercomputer) to brainwash and infiltrate human civilization, and massive Interstellar fleets that can travel up to one-tenth the speed of light to migrate to and take over Earth. Henceforth, the majority of the dangers that humankind faced are caused by extra-terrestrials and their technologies, whereas most of humanity's innovations in the story aim to save humanity. The story is intensely elaborative on the explanation of the technological leap as humans develop advanced radio frequency systems to send intergalactic messages of help and peace, nano-material filaments about one-hundredth the thickness of human hair that can effortlessly slice through the metal ships of the enemy, and the creation of micro-universes for refuge, which required the re-engineering of living things from 3-dimensional to a flat 2-dimensional existence. The author, Liu Cixin, discussed existing scientific knowledge and theories regarding various highly complex concepts such as quantum entanglement, nuclear physics, hibernation technology, the Fermi paradox, gravitational wave transmitters, light-speed interstellar travel, expansion and collapse of dimensions, curvature propulsion, the creation of black holes, the three-body problem, and so on. All of these

197 Mingwei Song, "Variations on Utopia in Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction," *Science Fiction Studies* 40, no. 1 (March 2013), www.depauw.edu/sfs/backissues/119/Mingwei%20Song.html.



Fig. 2.21 Lieutenant Colonel Liu Peiqiang throws "moonshine" (a type of alcohol) at MOSS, a corrupted artificial intelligence that is preventing the Earth from being saved, control center scene from "The Wandering Earth" movie.



Fig. 2.22 Earth engines save humanity, scene from "The Wandering Earth" movie.

theories were dissected in a desperate attempt to save humanity, because in the story, the salvation of the human race is believed to be solely dependent on the advanced development of science and technology.

Liu Cixin's work, *The Wandering Earth*, also concluded with a dramatic finale of the Earth Engines saving humanity from ultimate destruction, even though the malfunction of the Earth Engine systems were initially caused by corrupted artificial intelligence. Therefore, although modern Chinese SF does envision future technological dangers similar to the current direction of Western SF, Chinese science fiction predominantly favors a positive and utopian anticipation towards scientific and technological process.

Practical Purposefulness

Lastly, unlike Western SF that oftentimes focus on metaphysics, Chinese SF is dedicated to exploring practical purposefulness.[198] Neither case is more superior than the other, and this statement only aims to emphasize that Western SF and Chinese SF have different ideas towards 'science' and different approaches to visualizing the future. For instance, in the discipline of astronomy, ancient China studied the movement of celestial bodies for the practical purpose of developing a calendar system. Whereas the West, analyzed the stars for forming astronomical laws and concepts, a much more theoretical favourability.[199] In January of 2022, through an exclusive interview with China News Service's "East West Quest", Liu Cixin stated the following:

> "When it comes to their differences [regarding Chinese SF and Western SF], I found that they focus on different matters. For example, Western science fiction frequently refers to racism, sexism, interethnic oppression, alienation to human by science and technology, and other concerns, while its Chinese counterpart pays more attention

198 Stephan Raab and Jie Li, "The Success of Sino Science Fiction or Chinese Conceptions About Change," European Guanxi (European Guanxi, January 31, 2022), www.europeanguanxi.com/post/the-success-of-sino-science-fiction-or-chinese-conceptions-about-change.

199 Ibid.

> on future development of mankind and how to enlarge the sphere of existence in outer space."[200]

Currently, Western SF works frequently question the meaning of life and address the idea of existentialism. In contrast, Chinese SF focuses on the practical purposefulness of scientific and technological advancement. In other words, it is dedicated to a certain degree of realism, which resonates back to Chinese science fiction's strong affiliation with the realism of Soviet science fiction during the late 60s. However, since the nature of science fiction genre is highly experimental, predictive, and oftentimes vague, there has always been a significant lack in concrete scientific explanation, and this is precisely the bottomless gap between *dream* and *reality* in which all of humanity is trying to fill. As Chinese science fiction greatly values practical purposefulness, this demonstrates that the Chinese SF community's main focus is to bridge the distance between dream and reality. Chinese SF has always been an agency in the spreading and popularization of scientific knowledge amongst the public, acting as mainly an educational tool for mass scientific communication.[201] Thus, Chinese SF focuses on practical purposefulness in its narrative development, in its character creations, and ultimately, in its whole existence. In China, hard SF is a huge genre due to its strong association with realism and practical purposefulness. Many Chinese and overseas readers even find some Chinese science fiction materials extremely difficult to digest, because they often incorporate complex scientific concepts and explanations that require a sophisticated level of professional knowledge. This would be true when reviewing Liu Cixin's *The Three-Body Problem* and *The Circle*, Xia Jia's *Goodnight, Melancholy*, and Chen Quifan's *A History of Future Illnesses.*

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200 "Liu Cixin: Has Chinese Sci-Fi Ushered in the Boom Age?," *China Daily*, January 5, 2022, global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202201/05/WS61d4e964a310cdd39bc7f12b.html.

201 Stephan Raab and Jie Li, "The Success of Sino Science Fiction or Chinese Conceptions About Change," European Guanxi (European Guanxi, January 31, 2022), www.europeanguanxi.com/post/the-success-of-sino-science-fiction-or-chinese-conceptions-about-change.

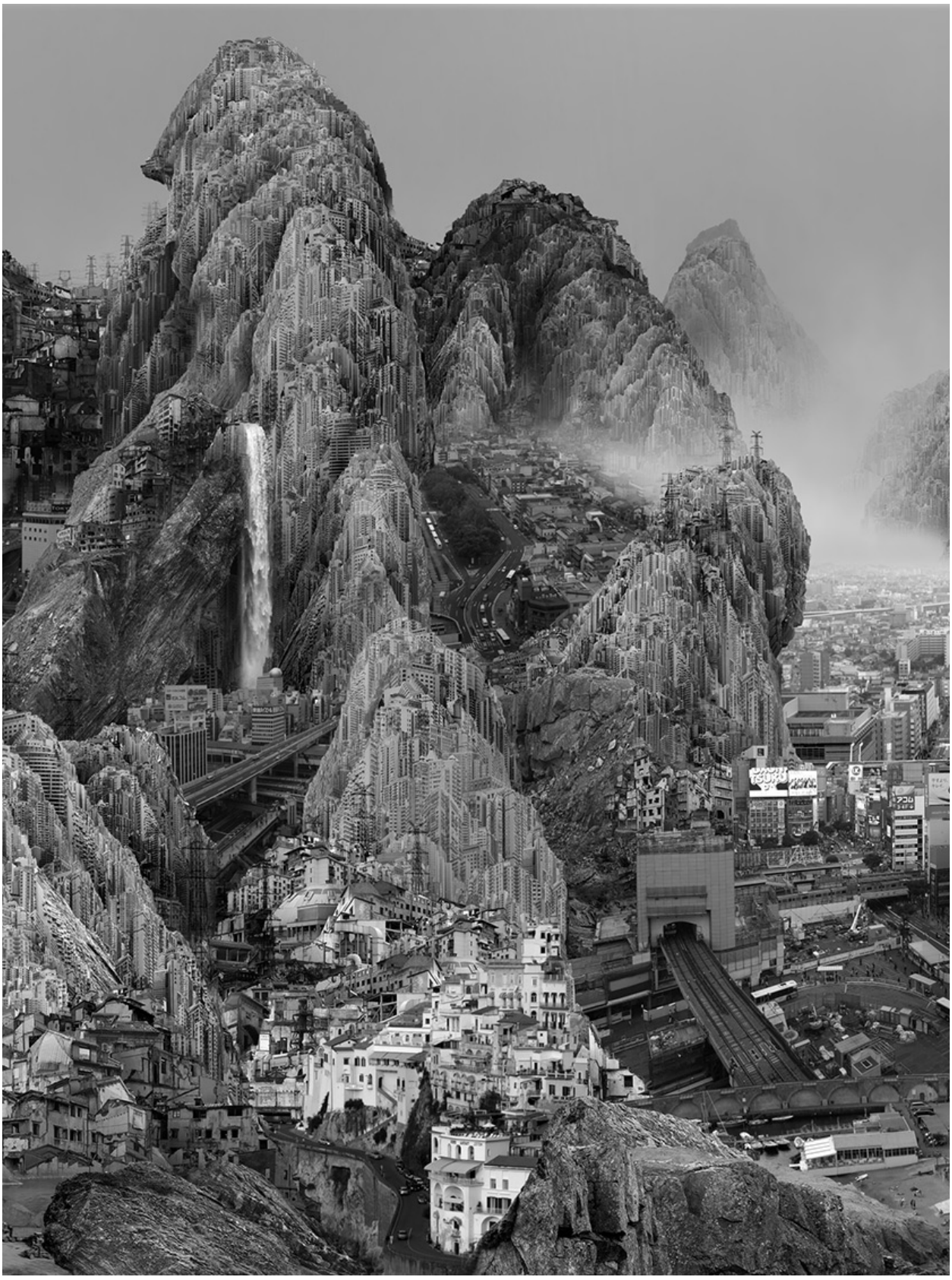


Fig. 3.1 "Endless Streams" by Yang Yongliang (2017), natural landscape completely dominated by urbanity.

03

The clashing of the waterfall on the rocks of the mountain range. The mellow fog gradually blanketing the endless urbanscape. The bustling of the busy citizens and traffic, and the occasional interludes of insects chirping.

This is an interpretation of the future natural landscape dominated by, yet existing, in harmony with the built environment as they seamlessly merge in one another. Somewhat distinctive and somewhat synthesized. As architecture populates every inch of the land, the earth also carves out the architecture in return. This would not be possible without the feats of advanced building technology. The boundless metropolis is peaceful and stands in complete grace.

3.1 Science Fiction Architecture

We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.[202]

~ T. S. Eliot, *"Little Gidding", Four Quartets*

With the international rise of a new wave of science fiction works from modern China, this thesis emphasizes that the world society should pay closer attention to the valuable contributions that Chinese SF has to offer. Given the continuous progression of Western SF, there are endless resources about the literary genre in Western context, which is extremely lacking for Chinese SF. Therefore, it is helpful to make use of some Western writings about the genre, as a means to begin to dissect and understand Chinese SF works. The consistent methodology of analysis is to understand the unknown through known territories, while at the same time, also highlighting individualities and shared ideas. This chapter introduces the architectural framework of the research, respectively being the gradual lens from home to city scale, and philosophies behind the notion of dwelling.

Science fiction is much more than entertainment, and it is a valuable resource that consciously represents, evaluates, and envisions the prospects of the real world. Normatively, the general public easily identifies science and technology, space exploration, and aliens as the apparent shared themes between all SF materials. However, many fail to note that architecture is also a crucial part of SF narratives, as it can establish the fundamental ingredients of cognitive and estranging forms, spaces, and landscapes. Often cast into the background of stories, the agency of architecture in science fiction should never be underestimated. Whether it is the details of an archway or the extensive scenery of a cityscape, the

202 T. S. Eliot, *Little Gidding* (London: Faber and Faber, 1944).

architectural elements in SF narratives aim to communicate the maximum quantity of information with the least amount of time to the audience.[203] Therefore, architecture is the prominent agent of cognitive estrangement, which establishes the manifestation of novum in science fiction. Using a simple gesture of visual cue, the architectural features within a science fiction work can convey the social and economic status of a city, the physical location of the story, and even the specific time period that the narrative takes place.[204] Through the absolutely necessary implementation of cognitive estrangement, the novum of the natural and built landscapes of science fiction stories embody humanity's aspirations and fears. Due to this sophisticated representation of cultural and societal constructs, it is essential that architects and designers become thoughtfully attentive to the inspirational novelties of SF architecture, as a deliberate design method that appeals to the real needs of the real world. However, such representational complexity differs greatly between SF literature and film. The challenges of clearly describing a futuristic setting in a written work is far more difficult than creating an immediately evident backdrop in a film, making architectural notions within literature richer.

To begin the discourse of the architectural manifestations of home and city, and the notion of dwelling in Western context, one particular individual comes to mind whose philosophies also overlap greatly with ancient core concepts of building in traditional Chinese culture. *Building Dwelling Thinking* by German philosopher, Martin Heidegger, is a phenomenological writing that discussed humanity's understanding of spaces and its relationships with humanity's true essence of being and universal balance. Before diving into the text, it is imperative to note that although the natural interpretation of Heidegger's "dwelling space" automatically illustrates a house, this thesis interprets his theories through the consideration of Suvin's zero world. Therefore, a dwelling space is viewed as an individual's or focused group of people's origin place, and not narrowly defined to simply a house. Analogous to a home not being specifically confined to the idea of a house, a "home" can technically be a range of spatial forms and configurations, such as a room enclosed by four walls, a multi-story apartment building, an open garden, or even an entire

203 Sanjay Somanath, "Science Fiction of Architecture - An Introduction," Sanjay Somanath, 2020, sanjaysomanath.com/science-fiction-of-architecture-an-introduction.

204 Ibid.

city. Since the notion of dwelling exists on various scales, the architectural lens of this thesis ranges from the private perimeters of home to the public interactions of the city, all governed through the action of dwelling.



Fig. 3.2 Heidegger living a quiet life away from the city.



Fig. 3.3 His humble cottage (writing 'hut') in Black Forest (Todtnauberg, Germany).

Heidegger proposed that modern humanity is suffering from an illness of the soul, that humanity is becoming distant and detached from the true reality of their Being (*Das sein*), and that humanity only realizes their connections with the surrounding world when they are confronted with The Nothing (*Das nichts*). In losing themselves, Heidegger suggested that humanity also forgot the authentic meaning of *to dwell* and the original essence of *dwellings*. Through a study of linguistics, he revealed that "to build" (*bauen*) and "to be" (*ich bin*) both originated from the lost old German word of "to dwell" (*buan*).[205] The relationship between the three terms fulfilled Heidegger's theory that the goal of *building* is *dwelling*, and that dwelling contains a certain emotional or psychological state of *Being* attached to it.[206] Then, Heidegger inserted the triad into a universal system he coined as the *Fourfold*, which embodied the relations between the world, architecture, and humans. The Fourfold encompassed four regions: the Earth, which is the serving bearer spreading into the

205 Martin Heidegger, Basic Writings: Building, Dwelling, Thinking (Washington University, 1993), pages 348-349.

206 Ibid., pages 348-350.

rocks and water, and growing into the plants and animals; the Sky, which are the weather, atmosphere, and galaxies; the Divinities, who are the messengers of God; and finally, the Mortals, who have a finite and unstable existence.[207] Humanity assists in maintaining the harmony of this universal oneness through the act of *proper* dwelling, which is instigated through the materiality of *things*, or in other words, the erection of architectural spaces. In criticizing modern humanity's "numbness" towards *to dwell*, of *dwellings*, and of *Being*, Heidegger strongly urged the revival of thoughtful (hence the term "thinking" in the essay's title) and proper conducts of dwelling and building practices.

Similarly, as Heidegger suggested that the balance of the universe is maintained through the fluid coherence between the Earth, the Sky, the Divinities, and the Mortals (which act through architecture), the earliest philosophy of Chinese urban planning used similar ideas of universal oneness. Urban planning in China dates back to the Neolithic Age, approximately around the time when the Yellow River valley began development.[208] The Longshan culture is the Chinese state's original ancestor, and their traditional numerology, astrology, geomancy, and cosmology determined the earliest methodology of Chinese urban planning.[209] The resultant synthesized system created Longshan's diagram of the cosmos, which placed Heaven, Nature, State, and Men in harmony.[210] Henceforth, traditional Chinese urban planning was derived from this oneness principle, and solely appealed to the significance of universal harmony and balance. From the Western perspective, Heidegger separated and emphasized the importance of the Sky and Divinities as they occupied half of the universal balance. Whereas, in Chinese culture, there was no distinction between such entities, and they were defined together under the single agency of Heaven. Instead, the Chinese replaced Divinities with the State, which represented the country, the city, and its built forms. Such a simple gesture holds monumental depth, emphasizing that the State, and thus, its architecture, is an independent contributor of universal balance, and not a sub-contributor awakened through the agency of humans.

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207 Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings: Building, Dwelling, Thinking* (Washington University, 1993), pages 351-353.

208 "Ancient Chinese Urban Planning System Essay," Bartleby Research, accessed November 5, 2022, www.bartleby.com/essay/Ancient-Chinese-Urban-Planning-System-PK5FHU5Z9C5Q.

209 Ibid.

210 "Ancient Chinese Urban Planning System Essay," Bartleby Research, accessed November 5, 2022, www.bartleby.com/essay/Ancient-Chinese-Urban-Planning-System-PK5FHU5Z9C5Q.

3.2 The Chinese Way

> *The Chinese city, in its insistence on its intellectual conceptions despite dramatic changes, offers not an alternative future, but a thinking space for new strategies of urban renovation.*[211]
>
> ~ Li Shiqiao, *Understanding the Chinese City*

To investigate the architecture of contemporary Chinese science fiction as a methodology in understanding the relations between the action of dwelling, built forms (ranging from home to city scale), and humanity, the Chinese Dream is a core principle that defines their coexistence. As the Chinese Dream is unique to the Chinese nation alone, it is absolutely necessary to analyze the architectural notions that come from it, and speculate for future alternatives. A compelling resource for this section is Li Shiqiao's book, *Understanding the Chinese City*. The text presented three imperatives of the Chinese city that are not derived from the West. The main intention of the writing is to expose and criticize that the commonly praised Western knowledge of city planning is only specific to a certain cultural context. Thus, it is an inadequate approach to assessing the Chinese urban form, which has its own particular city design framework and principles. In the current precarious age that constitutes the forming of "geoculture",

> "This contemporary condition certainly places the very discipline of architecture under enormous stress, as architecture today often plays a role in international finance that is far removed from those of traditional concerns for structure, function, tectonics, and intellectualization. However, beneath this common surface---the seemingly 'One World, One Dream' condition---there lie radically different ideals for the city."[212]

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211 Shiqiao Li, "Conclusion," *Understanding the Chinese City*, accessed November 5, 2022, sk.sagepub.com/books/understanding-the-chinese-city.

212 Ibid.

Abundance

Li Shiqiao suggested that the first imperative of the Chinese city is *Abundance*. He then subdivided Abundance into three divisions: *Quantity Control*, *The City of Maximum Quantities*, and the *City of Maximum Labour*. Alluding to the number of people and things within the city, modern societies struggle with the impossibility of quantitative control caused by many factors, such as migrants, sprawl, and slums.[213] Throughout history, cities have created various methods of conceptual quantitative regulations.[214] For instance, grid-iron New York and Renaissance Venice.[215] However, the Chinese city is shaped by an opposing perspective, and that is a regulatory principle of maximum quantity in city design.[216] In Chinese culture, abundance is grounded in the idea of fertility, and fertility is the "ultimate source of unlimited additional quantities".[217] The abundancy of the Chinese city targets all aspects, such as the quantity of the labour force, the construction of more buildings and roads, the economic and financial flow, and the excessive volume of material things. With the never-ending expansion of high-speed modernization, "the Chinese city is distinguished by its perpetual amalgamations of cacophonic fluidity".[218] Nevertheless, the fundamentality of maximum quantity in the Chinese city is heavily rooted in the principal goals of the Chinese Dream, which emphasizes the power of the great collective and the national obsession that China must become a global leader in the future. The restless bustling of the Chinese city depicts a highly concentrated mass of people grinding towards the same goal; a greater happiness and a greater motherland. Every individual is a screw in the almighty State system and perpetually contributes to the greater 'fertility' of the country. Even more so, the Chinese Dream is so deeply imprinted into the Chinese society and culture that a propaganda poster hung up inside the Beijing Railway Station with the phrase "Do not forget the mission" is positively crystal clear to every

213 Martijn de Geus, "Understanding the Chinese City; Holistic Conception, Instead of Western Dissection.," LinkedIn, August 3, 2018, www.linkedin.com/pulse/understanding-chinese-city-holistic-conception-instead-de-geus/.

214 Ibid.

215 Martijn de Geus, "Understanding the Chinese City; Holistic Conception, Instead of Western Dissection.," LinkedIn, August 3, 2018, www.linkedin.com/pulse/understanding-chinese-city-holistic-conception-instead-de-geus/.

216 Ibid.

217 Martijn de Geus, "Understanding the Chinese City; Holistic Conception, Instead of Western Dissection.," LinkedIn, August 3, 2018, www.linkedin.com/pulse/understanding-chinese-city-holistic-conception-instead-de-geus/.

218 Ibid.

Chinese person that passes by.[219] Even during morning commutes to work, the national mission must not be forgotten. Thus, the foundation of the Chinese city, the Chinese people's ways of being and living, and all involved material forms and built spaces of the Chinese society are profoundly influenced by the Chinese Dream, which encompasses the idea of maximum abundance to achieve ultimate fertility.



Fig. 3.4 Wangfujing snack street in Beijing showing abundance of people and commodities.



Fig. 3.5 Residential construction in Shenzhen showing abundance of infrastructure and industry.

Prudence

The second imperative is *Prudence*, and stems from the notion that China strives to be a self-sufficient stable entity on its own. Li Shiqiao referred to a statement by a local official of the late Ming Dynasty, Zhang Tao, who described the ideal family life in China as, "'every family was self-sufficient, with a house to live in, land to cultivate, hills from which to cut firewood and gardens in which to grow vegetables.'"[220] Prudence is divided into three sections: *The Body in Safety and Danger*, *Degrees of Care*, and

219 Michael O'krent, "The Language of Chinese Dreams Is Science Fiction — And Sometimes They'Re Nightmares," *Tor.com* (Tor Books, May 17, 2022), www.tor.com/2022/05/17/the-language-of-chinese-dreams-is-science-fiction-and-sometimes-theyre-nightmares/.

220 Shiqiao Li, "Introduction," *Understanding the Chinese City*, accessed November 5, 2022, sk.sagepub.com/books/understanding-the-chinese-city.

Antisepsis. Through the governing of self-resiliency, the Chinese city greatly values the safeguarding and care of its idealized city life and State system. Unlike the Greek notion of inevitable risk and danger, prudence in the Chinese way of life advocates for self-keeping stability through a ranked system of care.[221] In Western cultures, care is considered a public equality that everyone should have access to. For example, the Greek concept of *polis* which represents a sense of fairness in a community, and the Christian concept of *caritas* that translates to love for all.[222]

Contrastingly, the Chinese city possesses ranked levels of care, and their different degrees are depicted through the physical built forms of the city. The concept of walls in the Chinese city is crucial, transcending from ancient developments to contemporary urban contexts. Unlike Western developments that usually erect a singular exterior wall to protect the community from outside danger, the Chinese city deploys a series of exterior and interior walls throughout the entire city to enact different levels of care and safety. The Western way favors complete openness, while the Chinese way focuses on the significance of hierarchy through various thresholds. For instance, the diverse spatial conditions in traditional courtyard housing typologies, such as the many doorways, corridors, and the hierarchical layout of rooms. Thus, "the ranked care in public spaces in the Chinese concept originated from the ranks of care in familial bonds; most easily seen in the difference in the use of walls in the cities"[223], which varies from a wall around the city, a wall around a palace, a wall around a garden, a wall around a gated high-rise community, a glass enclosure around a front porch, and even the fenced bay-windows of every apartment unit.[224]

The concepts of the "protected home and the walled village"[225] are directly formulated from the Chinese value of prudence, in that "the prosperity, stability, and happiness of the Chinese empire [is] ensured [through the] dedication to the

221 Martijn de Geus, "Understanding the Chinese City; Holistic Conception, Instead of Western Dissection.," LinkedIn, August 3, 2018, www.linkedin.com/pulse/understanding-chinese-city-holistic-conception-instead-de-geus/.

222 Ibid.

223 Martijn de Geus, "Understanding the Chinese City; Holistic Conception, Instead of Western Dissection.," LinkedIn, August 3, 2018, www.linkedin.com/pulse/understanding-chinese-city-holistic-conception-instead-de-geus/.

224 Ibid.

225 Shiqiao Li, "Introduction," *Understanding the Chinese City*, accessed November 5, 2022, sk.sagepub.com/books/understanding-the-chinese-city.

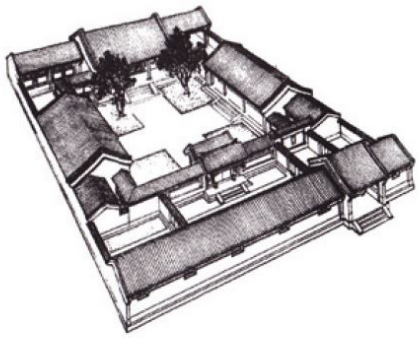


Fig. 3.6 Traditional Chinese courtyard housing typology: typical two-court configuration.

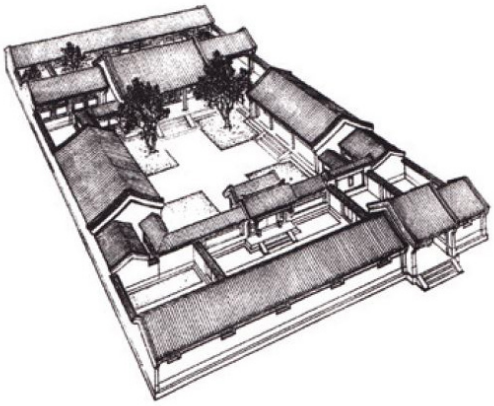


Fig. 3.7 Traditional Chinese courtyard housing typology: typical three-court configuration.

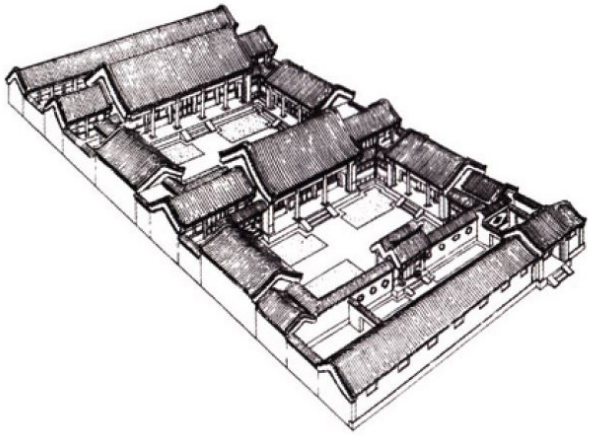


Fig. 3.8 Traditional Chinese courtyard housing typology: typical four-court configuration.

cultivation of [its own] land."[226] Henceforth, prudence is essential to the core of the Chinese Dream, because it embodies the idea that China becomes great by advancing its own abilities through only the Chinese way. It is also an independent endeavor as the Chinese nation highly values the governing and disciplining of oneself, which ultimately leads to self-resiliency through a complex system of care.



Fig. 3.9 Xi Jinping's Big White Books.

Additionally, the prominence of hierarchy in the different degrees of safekeeping is inevitably established by the communistic system of the country. As hierarchy has been fundamental to the Chinese society since the Dynastic times, the perpetual capitalistic ruling power is a major driving force behind the Chinese Dream. The Chinese people believe in the cause and contribute to it, because they believe in the visions of the nation, which will eventually bring them great success and happiness more than any other country in the world. In 2014, a three-volume series of cream-colored books called *The Governance of China* was published, and they contained 270 pieces organized thematically into 54 chapters to articulate Xi Jinping's thoughts and political philosophies.[227] The only image on the books' covers is a portrait of Xi Jinping, and the collection was translated into many languages including English, Arabic, French, German, Japanese, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian,

226 Shiqiao Li, "Introduction," *Understanding the Chinese City*, accessed November 5, 2022, sk.sagepub.com/books/understanding-the-chinese-city.

227 Jeffrey Wasserstrom, "From the Little Red Book to the Big White One," *The Times Literary Supplement* (News UK), accessed November 5, 2022, www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/little-red-book-big-white-one/.

Uyghur, Tibetan, Kazakh, Korean, Kyrgyz, Mongolian, Polish, and so forth.[228] An exact resemblance to Mao Zedong's *Little Red Book* that is an icon of Chinese communism and the power of Chinese propaganda, Xi Jinping's 'Big White Books' demonstrate the greatness of the Chinese Dream in the eyes of the Chinese people, the Chinese drive for self-resiliency through prudence, and the nation's dream to evolve through and spread the Chinese way to the rest of the world.

Figuration

Figuration is the third imperative, and it "concerns the way in which the Chinese writing system---through the strategy of mapping meaning with morphemic figures instead of phonetic alphabets---works as an archetype of human thought, both as a crystallization of the past and as a prophecy for the future."[229] Li Shiqiao distinguished Figuration into three sections: *The Empire of Figures*, *Memory without Location*, and *Colonies of Beauty and Violence*. Through analyses of semantics, the core idea of the third imperative is that "function follows figure"[230] in the establishment of Chinese city designs. Referring to the Chinese square word that emphasizes form prior to meaning, the built forms of the Chinese city are erected based on the allowable figurations of a desire for abundance and a dedication to prudence.[231] For instance, the significance in the meaning of form is evident in the physical appearance of the Olympic National Stadium and the National Swimming Center in Beijing.[232] In representing a bird's nest and heavenly circle, and a water cube and earthly square, "the cognitive understanding of the Chinese city [is] shaped by the figuration principle embedded in the writing system."[233] Unlike Western tradition, where Brunelleschi's Florence dome design

228 Jeffrey Wasserstrom, "From the Little Red Book to the Big White One," *The Times Literary Supplement* (News UK), accessed November 5, 2022, www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/little-red-book-big-white-one/.

229 Shiqiao Li, "Introduction," *Understanding the Chinese City*, accessed November 5, 2022, sk.sagepub.com/books/understanding-the-chinese-city.

230 Martijn de Geus, "Understanding the Chinese City; Holistic Conception, Instead of Western Dissection.," LinkedIn, August 3, 2018, www.linkedin.com/pulse/understanding-chinese-city-holistic-conception-instead-de-geus/.

231 Ibid.

232 Martijn de Geus, "Understanding the Chinese City; Holistic Conception, Instead of Western Dissection.," LinkedIn, August 3, 2018, www.linkedin.com/pulse/understanding-chinese-city-holistic-conception-instead-de-geus/.

233 Ibid.

was mainly dictated by the structural stability of the infrastructure to withstand gravity, the Chinese way prioritizes the meaning of form before technical construction thinking.[234]

For example, the traditional use of *dougong* (斗拱), a structural system of interlocking wooden brackets that joins pillar and columns to the frame of the roof, in the Hall of Supreme Harmony in Beijing's Forbidden City emphasizes the notion of righteousness in Chinese culture.[235] Although the use of diagonals is the instinctive strategy for achieving structural stability, in the Chinese language, diagonals are called *wai* (歪), meaning unstraightness, and alludes to moral degradation.[236] Thus, the dougong was designed because it is referred to as *zheng* (正), meaning uprightness, with its assemblage of perpendicular angles.[237] Henceforth, the Chinese city is defined by the meanings behind form and figuration, which is derived from an ancient history of the Chinese language. Although contemporary China is struggling between dilemmas of tradition versus modernity, the modern Chinese city still embodies many notions of indigenous culture in its architectural and urban designs. As the significance of figuration in Chinese city planning originated from the invention of the Chinese square word calligraphy, contemporary China still highly values its traditions even when bombarded with international influences of Western hegemony.

Conclusively, the unique cultural values and historical developments of the Chinese nation formulate unparalleled distinctiveness of the Chinese city. The concepts of abundance, prudence, and figuration are fundamental to governing the establishment of the natural and built spatialities in China. They are also intrinsically linked to the creation of the Chinese Dream, which in full essence represents the nationalistic core of traditional and contemporary China. Henceforth, the architecture and urban design of the Chinese city inevitably arise from the Chinese Dream ideology, which addresses maximum 'fertility', global superiority through self-governance, and national rejuvenation through the preservation of cultural practices and values.

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234 Martijn de Geus, "Understanding the Chinese City; Holistic Conception, Instead of Western Dissection.," LinkedIn, August 3, 2018, www.linkedin.com/pulse/understanding-chinese-city-holistic-conception-instead-de-geus/.

235 Ibid.

236 Martijn de Geus, "Understanding the Chinese City; Holistic Conception, Instead of Western Dissection.," LinkedIn, August 3, 2018, www.linkedin.com/pulse/understanding-chinese-city-holistic-conception-instead-de-geus/.

237 Ibid.

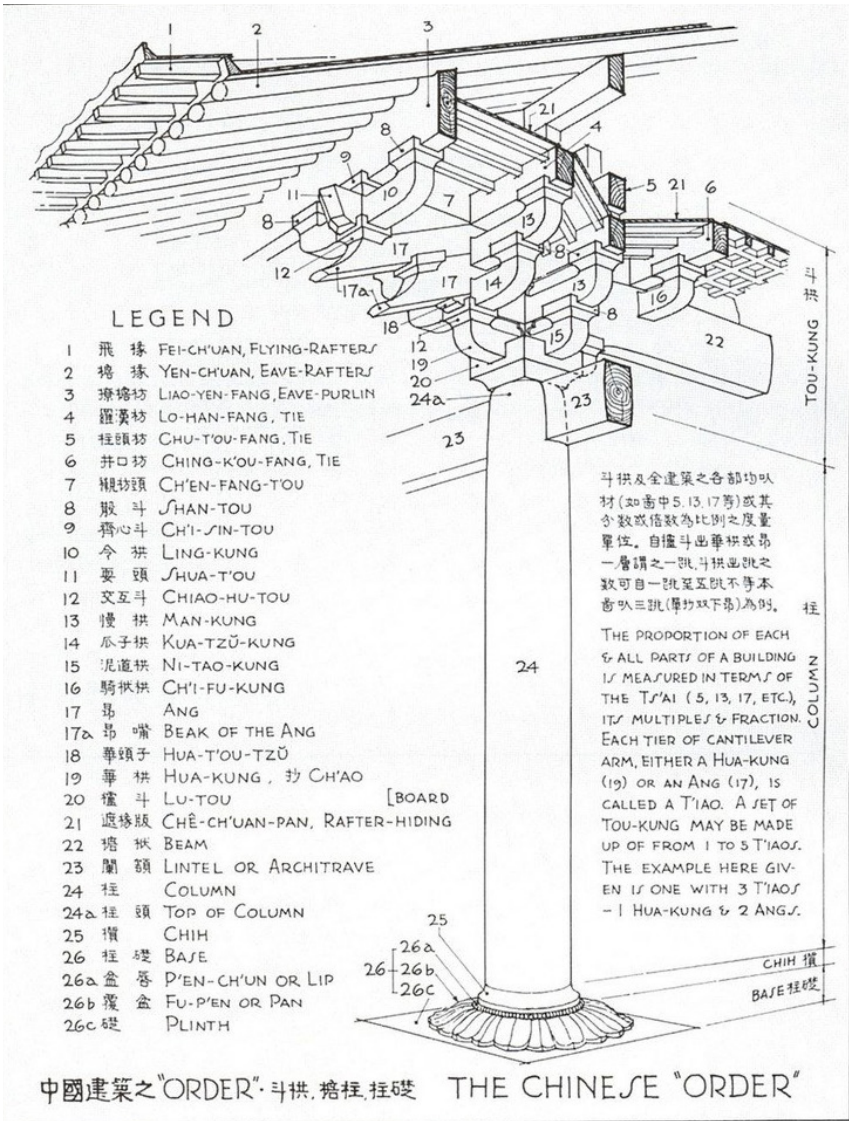


Fig. 3.10 Diagram of dougong showing the construction details of wooden brackets, columns and beams.

3.3 The Necessity of Dreaming

> *The most significant part of Xi's Chinese Dream is not how the West tries to define it, but rather that for the first time since Mao's victory in 1949, instead of endless self-sacrifice, Chinese are now encouraged to dream.*[238]
>
> ~ Winberg Chai and May-lee Chai, *The Meaning of Xi Jinping's Chinese Dream*

Although the Chinese Dream was never officially recognized or enacted upon as a government policy prior to Xi Jinping's rise to presidency in 2013, its fundamental concepts existed in the Chinese society for centuries. The Chinese Dream is a national belief, a national identity, a national goal, a national spirit, and has always influenced the development of China. The Chinese Dream has firmly situated itself in the hearts of the mass public in China. Lingering in the thoughts of the people, propagating through the smog-infused atmosphere, seeping out from the walls of the architecture, and overflowing from the pages of SF novels, the Chinese Dream is the synthesis of ancient China's nostalgia, present China's glorious rise, and future China's daunting greatness. So far throughout the thesis, there has been discussions about the "Chinese" (中 or 中国) character of the Chinese Dream (中国梦). However, the second character, "Dream" (梦), also holds monumental significance.

Before Xi Jinping's proposal of the Chinese Dream ideology, the term "Dream" had never been utilized by any Communist leader as a form of symbolism or political empowerment in the entire history of the People's Republic of China.[239] Nevertheless, every country and every individual dreams, because the act of dreaming is a natural phenomenon of the living subconscious, and is permanently encoded into the genetics of all beings.

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238 Winberg Chai and May-lee Chai, "The Meaning of Xi Jinping's Chinese Dream," *American Journal of Chinese Studies* 2, no. 2 (October 2013): pages 95-97, www.jstor.org/stable/44289022.

239 Ibid.

Dreaming is intuitive and hardly stoppable, if not entirely. Chinese philosophy, art, and literature are filled with endless dreaming, for the Chinese people *do* dream, but were never openly encouraged to dream until the official declaration of the Chinese Dream.[240]

Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, secured by Mao Zedong's revolution, the term "Dream" was never considered in any national policy guidelines.[241] Instead of dreaming, all citizens were subjugated to follow and obey ideologies, such as "Marxism Leninism or Mao Zedong Thought as Chinese society's guiding principles."[242] After Mao's death, the Chinese people were governed by Deng Xiaoping's ideology of "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics" (中国特色社会主义), and thereafter, Jiang Zemin's ideology of the "Three Represents" (三个代表).[243] Both theories aimed to redefine the goals of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), as Deng Xiaoping's approach represented Marxism Leninism and Jiang Zemin scientific system focused on three major initiatives: the development of the Chinese productive force, the orientation of China's advanced culture, and appealing to the fundamental interests of the majority of the Chinese people.[244] In addition, all policies ultimately followed the central Chinese government's "Five-Year Plan" (五年规划), which first began in 1953, and the current year (2022) is part of China's "14th Five-Year Plan" (中国人民共和国国民经济和社会发展第十四个五年规划), spanning from 2021 to 2025. Although each Five-Year Plan differed in terms of detailed initiatives defined by the specific time period, every single proposal ultimately supported the realization of the Chinese Dream. Prior to Xi Jinping's Chinese Dream, "The Chinese people were told to work, to study, but never to dream. The Party in essence served as China's 'Tiger Mom'."[245] The phrase 'Tiger Mom' alludes to a highly disciplinary mother figure who demands exceptional achievements from her children, and through meticulous and strict monitoring of activities, she asserts immense pressure on them to succeed. However, in

240 Winberg Chai and May-lee Chai, "The Meaning of Xi Jinping's Chinese Dream," *American Journal of Chinese Studies* 2, no. 2 (October 2013): pages 95-97, www.jstor.org/stable/44289022.

241 Ibid.

242 Winberg Chai and May-lee Chai, "The Meaning of Xi Jinping's Chinese Dream," *American Journal of Chinese Studies* 2, no. 2 (October 2013): pages 95-97, www.jstor.org/stable/44289022.

243 Ibid.

244 "Theory of Three Represents," China.org.cn, September 23, 2021, www.china.org.cn/m/english/china_key_words/2021-09/23/content_77769290.html.

245 Winberg Chai and May-lee Chai, "The Meaning of Xi Jinping's Chinese Dream," *American Journal of Chinese Studies* 2, no. 2 (October 2013): pages 95-97, www.jstor.org/stable/44289022.

the contemporary era, with the international rise of Chinese science fiction, the expanding freedom of future speculations, imaginations, innovations, and dreaming in China become ever so vivid and contagious. In a country where the act of dreaming was never a given freedom to the people, ironically, in the present time of great shifting cultural paradigms, the Chinese people cannot stop dreaming.



Fig. 3.11 Zhuang Zhou's having the Butterfly Dream.

The most famous and earliest record of dreaming in China dates back to an ancient Chinese text, *Zhuangzi* (莊子), written by Daoist philosopher, Zhuang Zhou (莊周), during the late Warring States period (476-221 BCE).[246] His Butterfly Dream (蝶梦) became the etymology of dream in China, and was about a changing state of consciousness between reality and illusion (物化). The storyline of the dream goes:

> "Zhuang Zhou once dreamed he was a butterfly, flitting and fluttering around, happy, and doing as he pleased. As a butterfly, he did not know he was Zhuang Zhou. All of a sudden, he awoke and found he was Zhuang Zhou, solid and unmistakably human. But then he did not know whether he was Zhuang Zhou dreaming he was a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming he was Zhuang Zhou."[247]

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246 Jingjing Chen, "中国的故事," *中国的故事* (blog), accessed November 5, 2022, www.thechinastory.org/yearbooks/yearbook-2019-china-dreams/forum-illusions-and-transformations-the-many-meanings-of-meng-%E5%A4%A2/zhuangzi-and-his-butterfly-dream-the-etymology-of-meng-%E5%A4%A2/#:~:text=IN%20ZHUANGZI%20%E8%8E%8A%E5%AD%90%2C%20an%20ancient,and%20doing%20as%2-0he%20pleased.

247 Ibid.

The shift from a human being to a butterfly, and vice-versa, corresponded with the two core values of Confucian Utopia, *li* (理) and *yue* (乐).[248] *Li* represents propriety or code of conduct, or in other words, the rules of social conduct, which are considered rigid and distinct.[249] Whereas, *yue* means music, and is defined by fluidity enacted through a necessity of mutual exchanges.[250] Confucius, a Chinese philosopher during the Spring and Autumn Period of Chinese history (770-481 BCE), witnessed and struggled through the fallout of the Zhou Dynasty. Consequently, Confucius attempted to provide answers regarding the restoration of social order and harmony, and he believed that the misuse and abuse of *li* and *yue* are the main causes of social chaos.[251] Confucius suggested that national unity can be achieved through the cultivation of the ruling leader's or party's virtue and moral excellence[252], which can be established through a conformity of *li* and *yue*; a balanced co-existence between "rigid and fluid states, right and wrong, [and] the individual amongst the collective."[253] Therefore, the earliest concept of dreaming in Chinese history was heavily associated with politics, the revival of a once great nation, and societal harmony. Till today, none of these values of the Chinese regime have changed. Although the freedom of dreaming has been highly discouraged, and oftentimes, even nationally banned, many times throughout the profoundly complex history and politics of China, Chinese science fiction has always risen over and over again to bring back the notion of dreaming. Despite all challenges, hopelessness, and despair, at the core of Chinese SF is the collective mission of rejuvenation, which is ultimately fueled by the courage to dream.

Since the notion of dreaming is essential to achieving the novums of the future, the architecture of the Chinese city also requires intense practice of dreaming. The three concepts of Chinese urbanism (abundance, prudence, figuration, for specific text, refer to Part 3.2) are inherent in the fundamental pillars of

248 Winberg Chai and May-lee Chai, "The Meaning of Xi Jinping's Chinese Dream," *American Journal of Chinese Studies* 2, no. 2 (October 2013): pages 95-97, www.jstor.org/stable/44289022.

249 Ibid.

250 Winberg Chai and May-lee Chai, "The Meaning of Xi Jinping's Chinese Dream," *American Journal of Chinese Studies* 2, no. 2 (October 2013): pages 95-97, www.jstor.org/stable/44289022.

251 D.W. Chan, "Confucianism," ScienceDirect, 2011, www.sciencedirect.com/topics/psychology/confucius.

252 Ibid.

253 Winberg Chai and May-lee Chai, "The Meaning of Xi Jinping's Chinese Dream," *American Journal of Chinese Studies* 2, no. 2 (October 2013): pages 95-97, www.jstor.org/stable/44289022.

the Chinese Dream, because in essence they represent ideas of a bigger and greater Chinese nation, an independent and powerful leader, and the protection of Chinese heritage. These crucial ingredients of the dream mission also correspond with the trends of Chinese science fiction, that is the embodiment of the act of dreaming. Thus, with a dive into Chinese science fiction narratives in the next part of this thesis, it will be an investigation into the architectural and urbanistic manifestation of the Chinese Dream through the conduct of dreaming, which is enacted upon through the dualism of cognitive estrangement.



Fig. 4.1 Street view of future Chinese city by 手指断了a (2018), inspired by Chengdu.

04

Neon lights of Chinese characters hanging from darkened facades. Holograms and Chinese lanterns fill the empty spaces between buildings. As the boatman steadily paddles his way towards the city in his rowing boat, he must travel under the magnificent oriental bridge to officially arrive at the Chinese city.

This is the depiction of the globalized world. An amalgamation of native Chinese architecture with their classic hanging roofs, and soaring super skyscrapers of international modernity. It is the dualism between tradition and futurism, past and future, East and West, familiarity and estrangement. This is the strange newness of the Chinese science fiction realm.

4.1 Of Multitudes

China is dreaming, and its dreams contain multitudes.[254]

~ Ken Liu, *China Dreams: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction*

Before diving into the exploration of contemporary Chinese SF stories and corresponding illustrative analyses, it is imperative to reiterate the cultural lens of speculation, and clarify the selection process of the case studies. From the Western perspective, the Chinese Dream does not have a glorifying reputation, as headlines such as the following proliferate the overseas internet: "China's Dream, the World's Nightmare"[255], "Inside China's Dystopian Dreams: A.I., Shame, and Lots of Cameras"[256], "The Dark Side of the Chinese Dream"[257], "Is the China Dream Really an Orwellian Nightmare?"[258], and many more foreign backlashes condemning the Chinese Dream as a failure. However, every country is different, despite the common universal saying that all humanity shares 'one dream', 'one future', and is 'one global community'. The world is an expanding mosaic glued together by distinctive pieces. Therefore, similar to the Chinese people denouncing various Western political and societal philosophies, it is absolutely natural that foreigners find it difficult to understand and appreciate a national ideology that is different from their own. As someone with a Chinese background and a Western upbringing, initially, the specific cultural lens of speculation was

254 Ken Liu, "China Dreams: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction," *Clarkesworld Science Fiction & Fantasy Magazine* (Wyrm Publishing, December 2014), clarkesworldmagazine.com/liu_12_14/.

255 Alan Dowd, "China's Dream, the World's Nightmare," Providence (Peter Meyer, March 30, 2021), providencemag.com/2021/03/china-dream-worlds-nightmare/.

256 Paul Mozur, "Inside China's Dystopian Dreams: A.I., Shame and Lots of Cameras," *The New York Times*, July 8, 2018, www.nytimes.com/2018/07/08/business/china-surveillance-technology.html.

257 Ma Jian, "The Dark Side of the Chinese Dream," Literary Hub, June 3, 2019, lithub.com/the-dark-side-of-the-chinese-dream/.

258 "Is the China Dream Really an Orwellian Nightmare?," Electric Literature, August 15, 2019, electricliterature.com/is-the-china-dream-really-just-an-orwellian-nightmare/.

unclear and conflicting. In recognizing the drawbacks of the Chinese Dream from a Western point of view, and sympathizing with the positive outlook from the Chinese perspective, there were cycles of mental struggle in choosing a particular side and to stay objective. The direction of my thesis became apparent when I stumbled upon the following commentary made by American author, Ken Liu, who authored the English translated versions of many contemporary Chinese SF novels (including the stories mentioned later for the case studies):

> "Given the realities of China's politics and its uneasy relationship with the West, it is natural for Western readers encountering Chinese science fiction to see it through the lens of Western dreams and hopes and fairytales about Chinese politics. 'Subversion' in the pro-West sense may become an interpretive crutch… Like writers everywhere today, Chinese writers are concerned with humanism, with globalization, with technological advancement, with tradition and modernity, with disparities in wealth and privilege, with development and environmental preservation, with history, rights, freedom, and justice, with family and love, with the beauty of expressing sentiment through words, with language play, with the grandeur of science, with the thrill of discovery, with the ultimate meaning of life. We do the works a disservice when we neglect these things and focus on geopolitics alone."[259]

Henceforth, the cultural lens of this thesis is to investigate the values of Chinese science fiction through the ideology of the Chinese Dream from the *Chinese* perspective. Instead of attacking the Chinese Dream through Western political frameworks that are essentially divergent, the core of the Chinese Dream is established by a specific societal identity. Thus, the Chinese Dream must be understood through the Chinese way. Only with the appropriate cultural lens, can the significance of Chinese science fiction be properly analyzed. Originating from the subconscious of the ancient China, the Chinese Dream is a nationwide mission that must come true, and it touches everything in modern Chinese society. Henceforth, the ideology is naturally embedded in the creations of

259 Ken Liu, "China Dreams: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction," *Clarkesworld Science Fiction & Fantasy Magazine* (Wyrm Publishing, December 2014), clarkesworldmagazine.com/liu_12_14/.

Chinese SF. Subsequently, the exploration of the future possibilities of the Chinese city is realized through investigating the manifestation of the Chinese Dream in Chinese SF architecture and urbanity.

Not all Chinese SF stories are dedicated to discussing the Chinese Dream. The chosen collection focuses on highlighting the characteristics of the ideology as fundamental to the progression of the narrative. There was also high regard for plot development and innovation, which aimed to include stories that do not simply conform to modern Western SF trends, but represent the uniqueness of Chinese SF ideas. In some cases, the specific built form is apparent. Whereas in others, architectural connotations are less straightforward and require a broader interpretation in deciphering the futurism of the Chinese city.

As previously stated, it is more challenging to create clear architectural and urban settings in literature than film. Some stories choose to elevate the significance of the setting. Others may hardly mention it. However, both scenarios are relevant in understanding the perceived importance of the architectural landscape. In Western SF, majority of narratives are set in an oftentimes dystopic future, and it is the architectural setting that is immediately used to establish that fact. Contrastingly, in Chinese SF, the insertion of architectural backdrop to instantly allude to a future setting is not as common. Without explicitly stating the year in which the narrative takes place or utilizing illustrative architectural and urban descriptions, Chinese SF often communicates future settings through other narrative techniques. For instance, the wear of a different style of clothing, the introduction of advanced technology, or a new form of collective organization and social activity. Chinese SF speaks through the alienating visualizations of society that are heavily dependent on descriptions concerning the *people*. The references to humanity and their activities and interactions with one another, as a literary method of establishing the timeframe of the story, is rooted in Chinese SF being a language of the Chinese Dream that focuses on the agency of the collective people.

Architectural connotations are also not as common in Chinese SF works possibly due to lag in the Chinese filming industry. The lack of advanced moviemaking technologies and techniques hinder the ability to vividly visualize imaginary landscapes, rendering elaborate text-based descriptions in novels to be even more difficult. Although the Chinese Dream does not always see a radically different architectural future compared to the West, the meanings and processes behind the formulation of China's visions

are relevant to the differing role that architecture may play in the future world. Stories without much architecture involved are not inferior, but simply stories which do include architectural notions are more relevant to this thesis.

Throughout this thesis, it has become clear that Chinese science fiction is profoundly sophisticated. Therefore, the methodology of drawing as a research tool is incorporated to explore an alternative way of representing complex relationships. It is easier to connect various elements when visually presented compared to pages of text. Although the scroll drawings are first showcased as separated segments corresponding with the case study of analysis, the final product is a seamless long scroll piece (13 meters in length to be exact). Having the ability to detach and reattach from one another indicates the distinctiveness of every Chinese SF story, but as a whole, they also all encompass the spirit of the Chinese Dream.

There are two layers to the scroll, the *Surface* and the *Reveal*. Whether to be reviewed in digital or physical presentation mode, the visual technique of a layered drawing aims to play with ideas of temporality and dimensionality, adding depth and transformability to static, flat conventional illustration. The scroll is read according to the tradition of ancient Chinese hand scroll painting (referring to the horizontal landscape layout and not the vertical portrait layout), which is from right to left. Weaving together a seamless and dynamic narrative through the play of different scales and perspectives, many illustrative components, and various timeframes and settings, the final scroll represents the rhizomatic universe of Chinese SF as it influences the Chinese society and the rest of the world.

This thesis investigates the agencies of the Chinese Dream ideology in the futurism architecture and urbanity of Chinese science fiction. Ultimately, there are no simple answers to define Chinese science fiction, but one conclusion is certain, that "China is dreaming, and its dreams contain multitudes."[260]

260 Ken Liu, "China Dreams: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction," *Clarkesworld Science Fiction & Fantasy Magazine* (Wyrm Publishing, December 2014), clarkesworldmagazine.com/liu_12_14/.



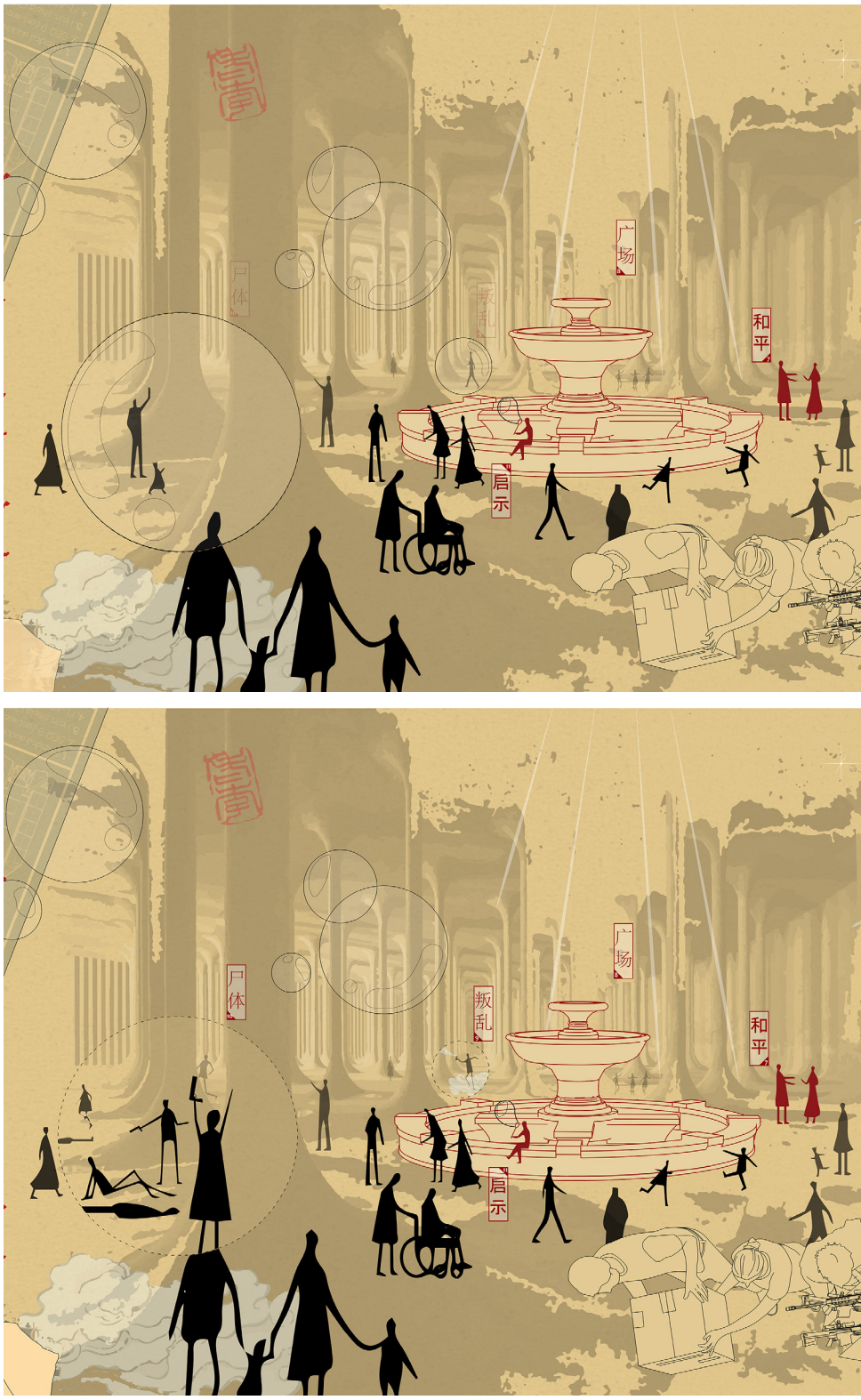
Fig. 4.2 "The Qianlong Emperor's Southern Inspection Tour", Scroll Six: Entering Suzhou along the Grand Canal (section 1, read from right to left). This hand scroll served as a major inspiration for the final illustration of the thesis.



Fig. 4.3 "The Qianlong Emperor's Southern Inspection Tour", Scroll Six: Entering Suzhou along the Grand Canal (section 2).



Fig. 4.4 "The Qianlong Emperor's Southern Inspection Tour", Scroll Six: Entering Suzhou along the Grand Canal (section 3).


广场
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广场
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叛乱
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启示

read from right to left ←

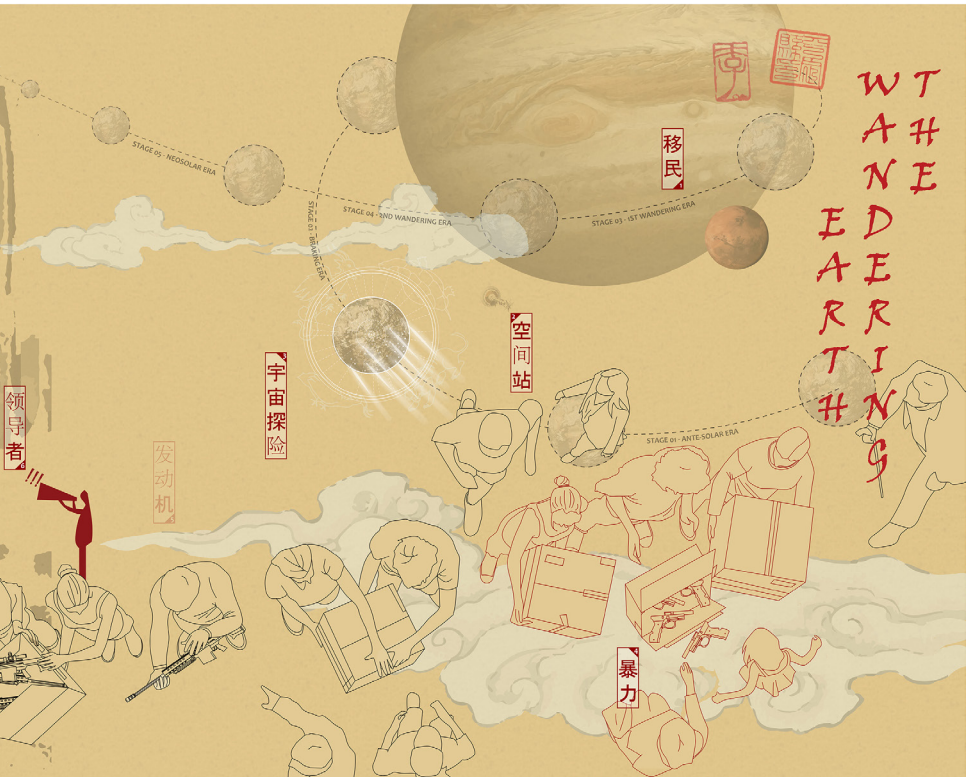


Fig. 4.5 The Wandering Earth scroll section (Surface).

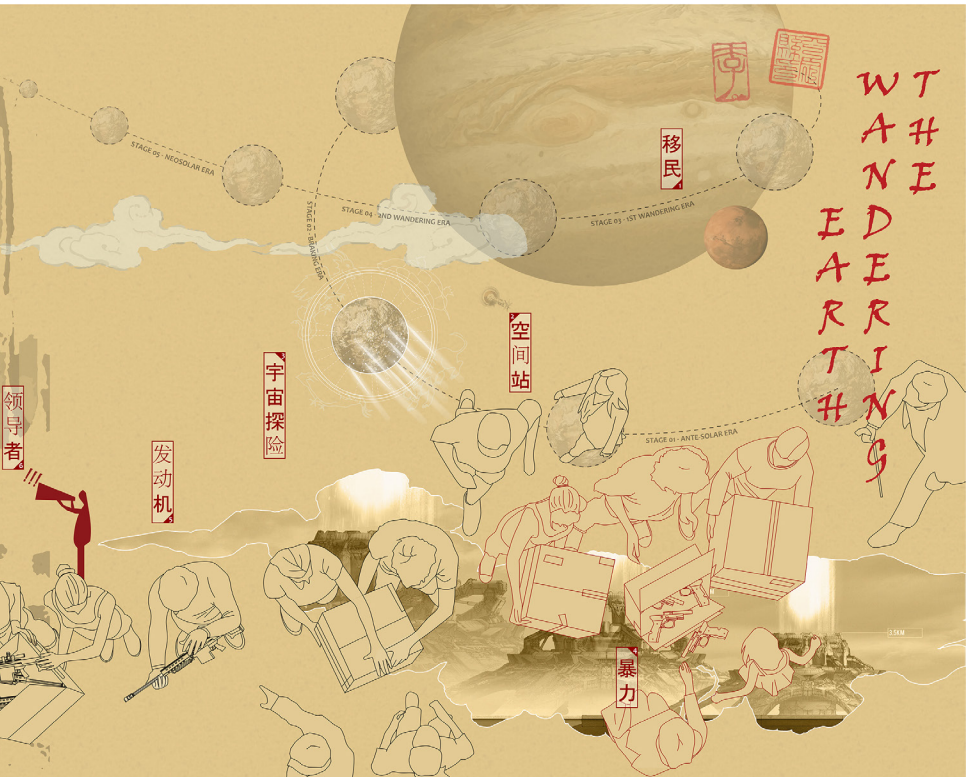


Fig. 4.6 The Wandering Earth scroll section (Reveal).

4.2 The Wandering Earth Series

4.2.1 *The Wandering Earth*

(Details in plot differ from the movie)

> *I have never seen the night. I have never seen the stars. I have never seen spring, fall or winter. I was born as the Braking Era ended, just as the Earth stopped turning.*[261]
>
> ~ Liu Cixin (translated by Ken Liu), *The Wandering Earth*

Set in Earth's near future, astrophysicists discover that the conversion rate of hydrogen to helium within the Sun is accelerating. After launching thousands of probes to investigate, and developing a mathematical model, supercomputers prove that the Sun is evolving away from the main sequence on the Hertzsprung-Russell diagram. As helium permeates the Sun's core, a violent explosion called a helium flash will occur, wiping out the entire solar system. As a result, the predicted solar catastrophe brings together the nations of the world, and they form the Coalition. The Coalition is an international organization that manages the interstellar emigration project, which is made possible by the invention of the Earth Engines. There are two types of Earth Engines, larger engines called "Mountains" and smaller engines called "Peaks". In total, there are 12,000 Earth Engines installed across Asia and North America, because these are the only locations on the planet where the tectonic plate structures can withstand the enormous thrust of the engines. During operation, the engines light up the sky with blazing plasma beams shooting into infinity.

Humanity's closet new home is located 4.3 light-years away in the star system of Alpha Centauri. The entire migration process will take 2,500 years, spanning over one hundred generations. The

261 Ken Liu, trans., "The Wandering Earth," *The Wandering Earth* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2017), page 3.

journey is divided into five steps. First, the Earth Engines will generate thrust in the opposite direction of Earth's rotation to halt planetary movement, this is called the "Braking Era". Then, the Earth Engines will accelerate the Earth until it reaches the required escape velocity to break away from the solar system. However, even operating at maximum capacity, all the engines will not be able to reach such demand. Thus, the Earth will have to circle Jupiter fifteen times, and utilize the gas giant's gravitational field to attain the desired escape velocity. This second step is called the "Deserting Era". The Earth will then continue to accelerate into outer space towards Alpha Centauri in the third step, called the "First Wandering Era". The fourth step is the "Second Wandering Era", where the Earth Engines decelerate the planet as it approaches the new star system and restart the Earth's rotation. The final step is called the "Neo solar Era" as the Earth finally enters orbit around Alpha Centauri, and humanity is safe at its new home.

A Story of Interstellar Emigration

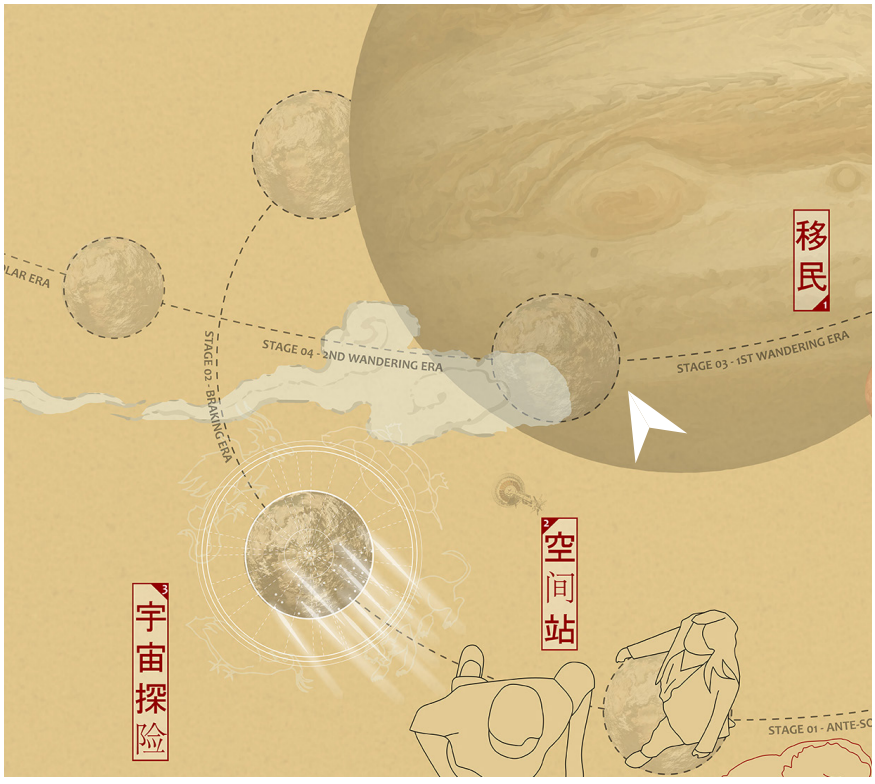


Fig. 4.7 The five steps of Earth's interstellar emigration.

The story contains heavy scientific, technological, and theoretical content to explain the cognitive novelty of interstellar emigration to another star system. In the narrative, the engineering of the Earth Engines, global cataclysm, worldwide underground civilization, different government systems, and the Sun representing the death of humanity instead of the symbol of all living things are unfamiliar (estranging) futuristic concepts and circumstances. However, they are grounded in the empirical world by familiar (cognitive) contemporary societal dilemmas, known cosmological knowledge, and the nostalgia of recognizable architecture and urban landscapes. Although underground civilization is a common theme in the worldwide SF franchise, the idea of underground living in contemporary times is nowhere near the degree of establishment visualized in SF. Embodying the idea of *national rejuvenation*, *collectivism*, and hope of a *technological utopia*, the story represents the Chinese Dream through imagining an evolutionary event striking similar to the Cultural Revolution. In many instances of daydreaming, the Chinese people's value of hope is emphasized with every encounter of despair. The Chinese spirit is amplified to rejuvenate the power and pride of the Chinese people, who becomes the ultimate savior of the world. In reinforcing the importance of home and the complexity of societal formation, a particular architectural space is mentioned many times throughout the narrative, the gathering openness of the plaza. By highlighting the loneliness of humanity within the infinite darkness of the unknown cosmos, the concepts of dream and hope that are inherent in the Chinese Dream become ever more absolute to humanity's survival.

> *The glow of the Earth Engines was no longer visible behind me, and I sped into the darkest part of the planet. My world was the boundless starlit sky and the ice that stretched in all directions to the ends of the universe---or perhaps this was the end of the universe. And in this universe of infinite stars and endless ice, I was alone! As an avalanche of loneliness overwhelmed me, I wanted to cry.*[262]
>
> ~ Liu Cixin (translated by Ken Liu),
> *The Wandering Earth*

262 Ken Liu, trans., "The Wandering Earth," *The Wandering Earth* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2017), page 25.

Chinese National Rejuvenation Saves the World

The Wandering Earth escalates the national rejuvenation of the Chinese Dream to the global rejuvenation of a worldwide dream. Pushing beyond the strengthening of only the Chinese people, the story emphasizes that collectivity and trust in advanced technology can empower all of humanity to save their home planet. Thus, the narrative aims at spreading the ideology of the Chinese Dream to the rest of the world. In the narrative, China is often emphasized as the prominent actor in the interstellar emigration process. For instance, the Earth Engines consume stones as fuel. After Earth finally travels away from Jupiter (completing the "Deserting Era"), "Asia's ten thousand Earth Engines roared to life again. They would operate at full capacity for the next five hundred years, constantly accelerating the planet. During those five hundred years, the engines would consume half of the mountains on the Asian continent as fuel."[263] Approximately 83 percent of the 12,000 Earth Engines are located in Asia, and during the longest step (the "First Wandering Era") of the journey, Asia will suffer tremendous loss to operate the engines. This tremendous act of heroism, responsibility, and self-sacrifice establishes Asia (mainly China, since most of the engines are situated in the Northern hemisphere) as a global leader in the story. The one that guided Earth to safety.

Recalling back to the concept of prudence in the Chinese city (for specific text, refer to Part 3.2), the crucial role that China takes on in the narrative is a representation of unwavering self-sufficiency and a stable entity of united, self-governance. This is illustrated many times throughout the story from an architectural perspective, as public, gathering spaces (plazas) are constantly mentioned to stress the idea of the collective power of the Chinese city, whether that be of violence or hope. The nation's leadership is core to the Chinese Dream, is essential to the Chinese people, and is fundamental to the Chinese city, because they all contribute to the expansion of Chinese pride and power, and to re-centralize China's status on the international stage. Henceforth, national rejuvenation is central to the narrative due to the many instances where China is portrayed as the chief commander in the execution of the interstellar emigration, and the leading protagonist in saving and (re)uniting humankind. The story emphasizes the future empowerment of the Chinese people, and the Chinese nation's rising capabilities to lead the rest of the world through the Chinese way.

263 Ken Liu, trans., "The Wandering Earth," *The Wandering Earth* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2017), page 36.



Fig. 4.8 China's global leadership.

The Good and Evil of Technology

The Chinese Dream emphasizes that scientific and technological progress are the main agents of a modern and better Chinese nation. As a result, China believes in the promises of a future technological utopia. However, that is not to say China completely disregards the dangers of advanced technology. Unlike Western SF that obsessively fears futuristic innovations, Chinese SF also explores the downfalls, but always ends on a hopeful note that amidst the evil, good will always rise up against it. For example, the Earth Engines are simultaneously the saviors and destroyers of the planet. On a 2,500 years mission to bring humanity to safety, the operations of the engines annihilated everything on the Earth's surface. The halt of planetary rotation, the cycles around Jupiter, the acceleration that hurled the planet through space like a gigantic comet, all of these magnificent feats resulted in endless global disasters, such as torrential storms, radiation, towering floods, sharp temperature changes, earthquakes, and meteoroid collisions. Humanity was forced to take refuge in underground cities around the world (each city holding about one million people), which were prone to catastrophic magma seepage as the engines disrupted the

equilibrium of Earth's iron-nickel core, resulting in frequent volcanic eruptions.

Despite realizing the faults of the engines, the narrative always reinforced the engines as a symbol of hope and light (literally and metaphorically) during moments of great despair. At the beginning of the story, the engines were referred to as "God's Blowtorches", because they were almighty and guided humanity through darkness and hopelessness. There was constant praise of the technological feat of the Earth Engines,

> "The great metallic mountain loomed over us, filling half of the sky. To the West, the Taihang mountain range seemed like a series of gentle hills. Some children exclaimed that it must be as tall as Mount Everest. Our head teacher…laughed and told us that the engine was eleven thousand meters tall, two thousand meters taller than Mount Everest."[264]

The blue-white light produced by the engine's massive beams were even described as an infinite assembly of massive columns holding up a vaulted ceiling (referring to the world), like an enormous palace. Later in the story, the Earth collided with an asteroid belt that destroyed one third of the engines. Although the remaining engines can still provide enough power for Earth to escape, the planet was enveloped in an endless gray. As the protagonist and his wife, Kayoko, embraced each other in fear on a plane ride that flew in complete darkness, they encountered a woman who was trying to stop her husband from committing suicide. During the panic, the reemergence of the Earth Engine's light brought back hope and their will to live:

> "There was nothing else left in the entire universe except for the plane and the enveloping darkness. Kayoko pressed herself tightly into my embrace. Her entire body felt ice-cold.
>
> Suddenly, there was a commotion at the front of the cabin and people began whispering excitedly. I looked out the window and saw a hazy light in front of the plane. The dust-filled night sky was uniformly suffused with a formless blue glow.

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264 Ken Liu, trans., "The Wandering Earth," *The Wandering Earth* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2017), page 5.

It was the light of the Earth Engines…

When I laid eyes on the dim blue light ahead, I felt like a deep-sea diver finally seeing the sunlit surface after a long ascent from the abyss. I began to breathe steadily again…
He (the man that attempted suicide) was staring at the blue light up ahead, tears rolling down his face. I knew he would live through this. Just as long as that hopeful blue light still shone, we would all live through this. I remembered my father's words of hope."[265]

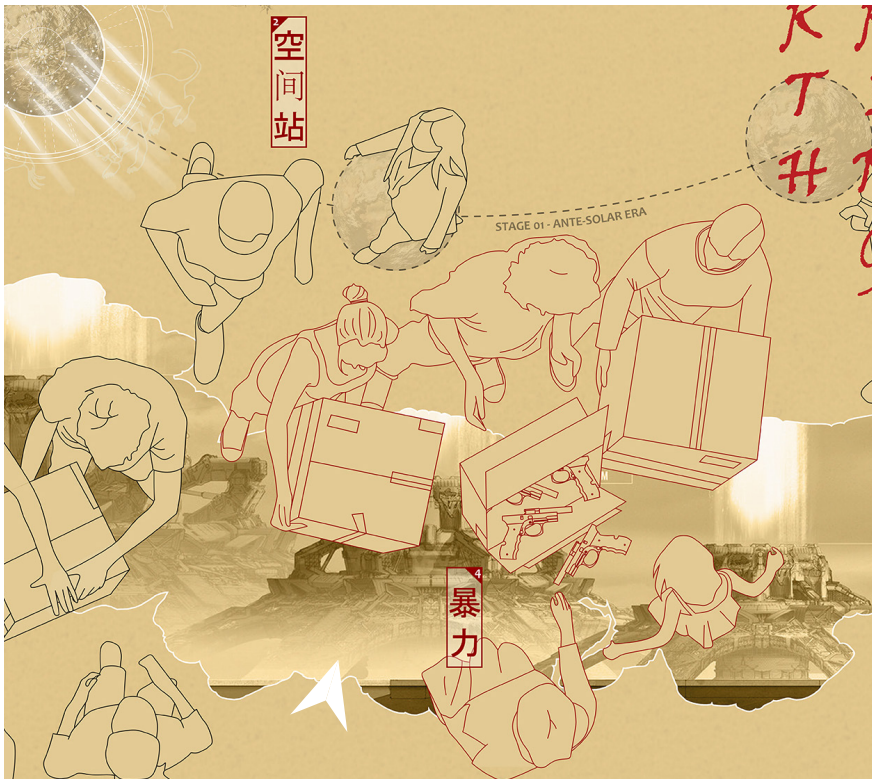


Fig. 4.9 Earth Engine technology saves the planet.

Collectivism and the Role of the Plaza

Furthermore, collectivism was also crucial in the narrative, showcasing the complex structure of human society through events

265 Ken Liu, trans., "The Wandering Earth," *The Wandering Earth* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2017), pages 31-32.

of collective enlightenment, peace and chaos. Collectivism is a fundamental pillar of the Chinese Dream, and in the story, was always accompanied with the backdrop of a specific architectural setting: open spaces, gathering spaces, or the plaza. From an architectural lens, the plaza symbolizes the realization of the powerful agency of the people, the greatness of the Chinese city through its value of collectivism, and ultimately, the justification of prudence being essential to Chinese society.

Since the initial creation of the emigration plan, civil upheaval brewed between the Takers, who believed in the mission and the Coalition, and refused to abandon Earth, and the Leavers,



Fig. 4.10 Peaceful unity at plaza, with a water fountain in the center and a dome above providing natural light (the underground city).

who wanted to build gigantic spaceships and leave Earth behind. The plaza always served as the location for the manifestation of collective unity and violence. For example, during the false assumption near the end of the story, where people thought that the helium flash was wrongly predicted and not going to happen, many sought to punish the members and supporters of the Coalition. In the underground city's central plaza, a man addressed the angry crowd while citizens distributed weapons to one another:

> "'Citizens! Earth has been betrayed! Humanity has been betrayed! Civilization has been betrayed! We are all the victims of a tremendous hoax…The Sun is entirely unchanged! It will not explode…What is explosive is the wild and insidious ambition of those in the Coalition! They have destroyed Earth! They have destroyed human civilization! Citizens, citizens of conscience! Take up arms and rescue our planet! Rescue human civilization! We will overthrow the Coalition! We will seize control of the Earth Engines and steer our planet from the cold depths of outer space back to its original orbit! Back to the warm embrace of the Sun!'"[266]

This climax eerily reflected the violence of the Cultural Revolution. Nothing stood in the way of 'bettering the nation'. Not friends, not families, and not lovers. Immediately preceding the speech in the central plaza, "Without a word, Kayoko[267] stepped forward to accept an assault rifle from one of the people handing out weapons, joining the column of armed citizens. She did not look back as she disappeared into the haze of the underground city alongside the ranks of her neighbors."[268] The call to serve her country made Kayoko forget the existence of her husband and son. The heartlessness of the civil war segregated humanity, and ironically, occurred in the central plaza meant for the positive unity of people.

Following the distribution of weapons amongst the citizens more violence ensued, and this took place in open, gathering spaces resembling a plaza. After defeating the Coalition, the organization's members surrendered and attempted to seek reconciliation on the Earth Navigation Platform. The sheer grandeur of the place was similar to a plaza, as the Chief Executive of the Coalition spewed his speech of peace. Unfortunately, it did not seize the anger of the rebels, and anyone who supported the emigration plan were arrested as prisoners. Their punishment was death. The rebels confiscated the nuclear batteries that powered the prisoners' thermal suits, and then cast out them onto the frozen ocean, which metaphorically, is a gigantic icy plaza. As they slowly succumbed to the subzero temperatures, their blackened bodies were huddled

266 Ken Liu, trans., "The Wandering Earth," *The Wandering Earth* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2017), pages 38.

267 Kayoko is the protagonist's wife.

268 Ken Liu, trans., "The Wandering Earth," *The Wandering Earth* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2017), page 38.

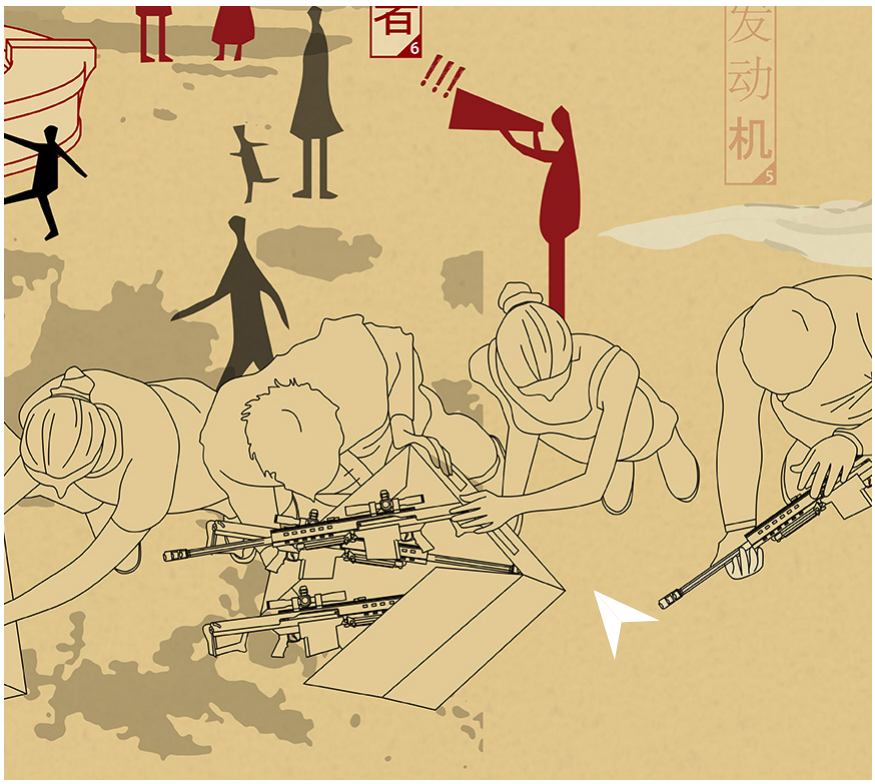


Fig. 4.11 Collective violence at plaza as citizens distribute weapons to each other.



Fig. 4.12 Civil upheaval and rebellion.

together in open space. This moment was the peak of collective violence in the story, as citizens spat at the prisoners before their execution, shamelessly oblivious to their murderous actions. Then, the rebels began to sing a cheerful song called "My Sun", as they relished in the sight of thousands of people freezing to death. A little girl even picked up a chunk of ice and hurled it at an old man who was minutes away from death.

Strikingly similar to the monstrosities of the Cultural Revolution, there was a great lack of morals and an obsessive dedication to the State, that resulted in horrendous acts of collective violence. The narrative also revealed that since the beginning of the emigration, the world society only focused on subjects useful to the mission of rejuvenation. For instance, schools only "… concentrated on science and engineering. Art, philosophy, and other subjects deemed inessential had been minimized or removed from the curriculum. Humanity had no time for distractions. It was the busiest era in human history. Everyone had work to do, and the work was never finished."[269] During this time, love and compassion meant nothing compared to the fascination with the current status of interstellar travel.

In contrast to the violence, the plaza also orchestrated collective unity, hope, and enlightenment. In the story, people often wandered to the underground city's central plaza during stressful times. On one occasion, the protagonist felt extremely restless, and naturally found himself beside the water fountain of his underground home's central plaza, underneath a domed ceiling glittering with the ripples of the water in the pool beneath. He saw his younger friend blowing soap bubbles there, and she exclaimed with extraordinary insight, "See? The Earth is a cosmic soap bubble. One pop, and it's gone. So what is there to be afraid of?"[270] The architectural design of open, gathering spaces instinctively inspired realization and enlightenment that often bring people together, a crucial part of any revolution. In this case, the revolution is humanity's pilgrimage to a new home. Whether the plaza united citizens through peace, relief, brutality, or forgiveness, it is the spatial representation of collectivism. *The Wandering Earth* story is the journey of Earth's and humanity's new homecoming. A future made possible through the undying spirit of rejuvenation, collectivism, and technological utopia, which also reveals that the

269 Ken Liu, trans., "The Wandering Earth," *The Wandering Earth* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2017), pages 16-17.

270 Ibid., page 21.

future architecture of the Chinese city is rooted in national revival of prudence, in representing the abundancy (for specific text, refer back to Part 3.2) of the united people, and in evolving with advanced technologies. The architectural notion of the plaza was essential to the storyline, because it provided a dwelling space for the manifestation of the Chinese Dream.

> *'There is Centaurus, and that is Proxima Centauri, our new home!' She began to cry, and we cried along with her…With tearful eyes, everyone gazed in the direction in which Ms Stella pointed, and the stars shimmered and danced. Only one star held steady; it was the beam of a distant lighthouse over dark and stormy seas, a flicker of fire beckoning to a lonely traveler freezing on the tundra. That star had taken the place of the Sun in our hearts. It was the only pillar of hope for one hundred future generations as they navigated a sea of troubles.*[271]
>
> ~ Liu Cixin (translated by Ken Liu),
> *The Wandering Earth*



Fig. 4.13 Moments of enlightenment as citizens gather at the central plaza (the underground city).

271 Ken Liu, trans., "The Wandering Earth," *The Wandering Earth* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2017), page 13.


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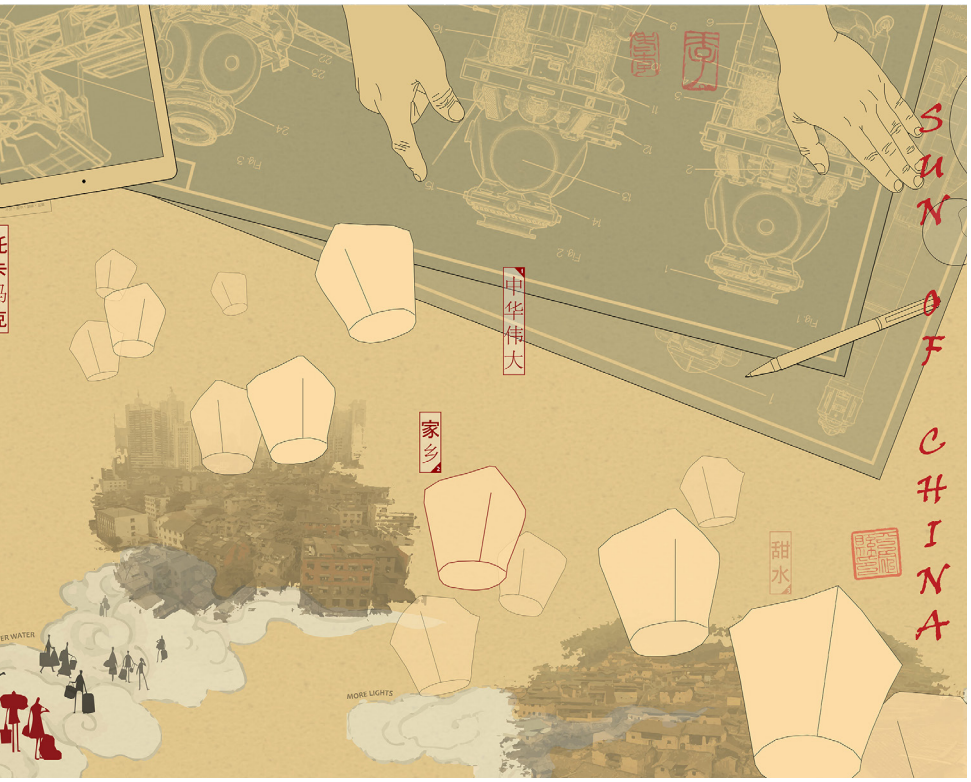


Fig. 4.14 Sun of China scroll section (Surface).

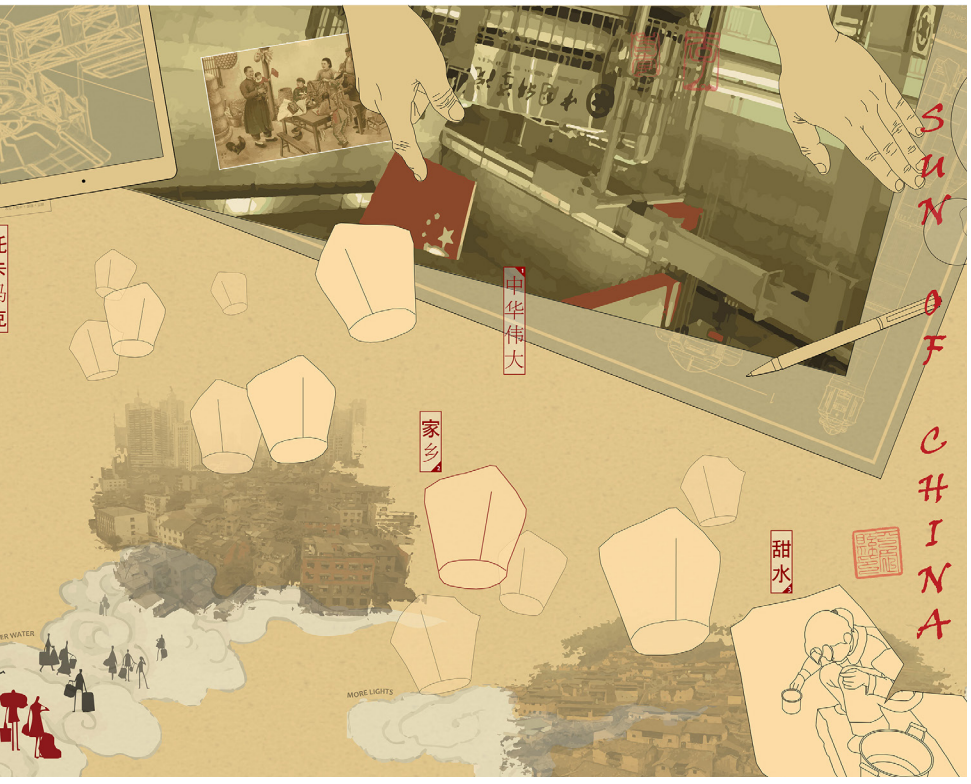


Fig. 4.15 Sun of China scroll section (Reveal).

4.2.2 *Sun of China*

> *Northern China stretched around him, a vast expanse of parched ocher, lined with cracks and gullies carved by erosion. Was the face of an old farmer any different? The trees, the soil. The houses, the people---everything was blackened, yellowed, wrinkled.*[272]
>
> ~ Liu Cixin (translated by Ken Liu), *Sun of China*

In an unspecified future, Northern China succumbs to drought, resource depletion, and extreme poverty, beginning and spreading from its countryside villages. Shui (the protagonist's name translates to water in Chinese), whose parents cannot afford to build him a house to secure a wife, decides to move to the city in search of brighter lights, sweeter water, and more money. He becomes a migrant worker. First, working in the mines outside of his hometown, then, becoming a shoe shiner in the city, and then, travelling to the capital, Beijing, where he receives an offer to become a high-rise window cleaner, otherwise known as a "Spiderman". Due to the incredible dangers of the occupation, the spidermen conducts their daily tasks with similar physical ability and skills requirement as astronauts spacewalking in orbit. As a result, after China completed The China Sun Project, Shui and his fellow window cleaners are recruited to become "Mirror Farmers", people that are sent up to space to live on the China Sun, and are responsible for keeping maintenance and overseeing operations. The China Sun Project is an ecological engineering project involving the construction of a secondary Sun to establish environmental and climate change. The technological endeavor is thought of by China, made real by China, operated and managed by China, and aims to save humanity and the planet, and provide other unimaginable opportunities. For example, becoming humankind's first manned interstellar spaceship to potentially explore Alpha Centauri (a triple star system, 4.3 light-years away from Earth), Sirius (a binary star system, 8.6 light-years away from Earth), Epsilon Eridani (a star in the Southern constellation of Eridanus, 10.5 light-years away from Earth), and 79 Ceti (a binary star system, 342.97 light-years away).

The first crew to board the China Sun consists of fifteen

272 Ken Liu, trans., "Sun of China," *The Wandering Earth* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2017), page 106.

members including Shui. Every working cycle lasts three months, and afterwards, another group of mirror farmers replaces the previous, and so on. During working hours in the 'wilderness', which is referring to the silver landscape of the China Sun, mirror farmers are susceptible to various means of death, such as micro-meteorites, space debris, and solar storms. After work, the mirror farmers take their liquid dinners and fall asleep suspended in the main control tower. After being a mirror farmer for twenty years, the artificial sun has become a second home for Shui and his older co-workers. The seams on the reflective mirror-like surface of the China Sun were interpreted as the longitudes and latitudes of Earth, and the mirror farmers assigned names of countries and oceans to particular regions. They also picked corresponding locations to represent their home villages, and those were the regions they cleaned the hardest. As newer technologies surfaced, the China Sun became inadequate and insufficient. Thus, the Ministry of Space industry decides to let it go. Originally, the afterlife of the China Sun was to be converted to a museum and aimlessly wander through the cosmos until rediscovery by interplanetary spaceships. However, due to the attachment of home that the mirror farmers have with the artificial sun, a million people volunteered, and Shui and nineteen others were chosen to board a never returning voyage of space exploration aboard the China Sun.

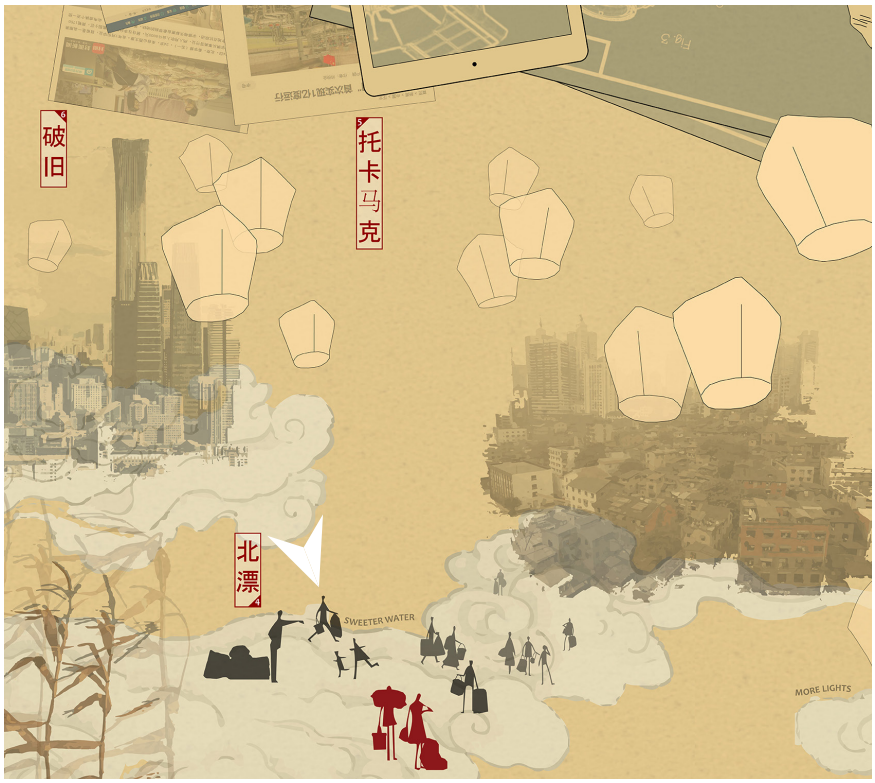


Fig. 4.16 The journey of migrant workers.

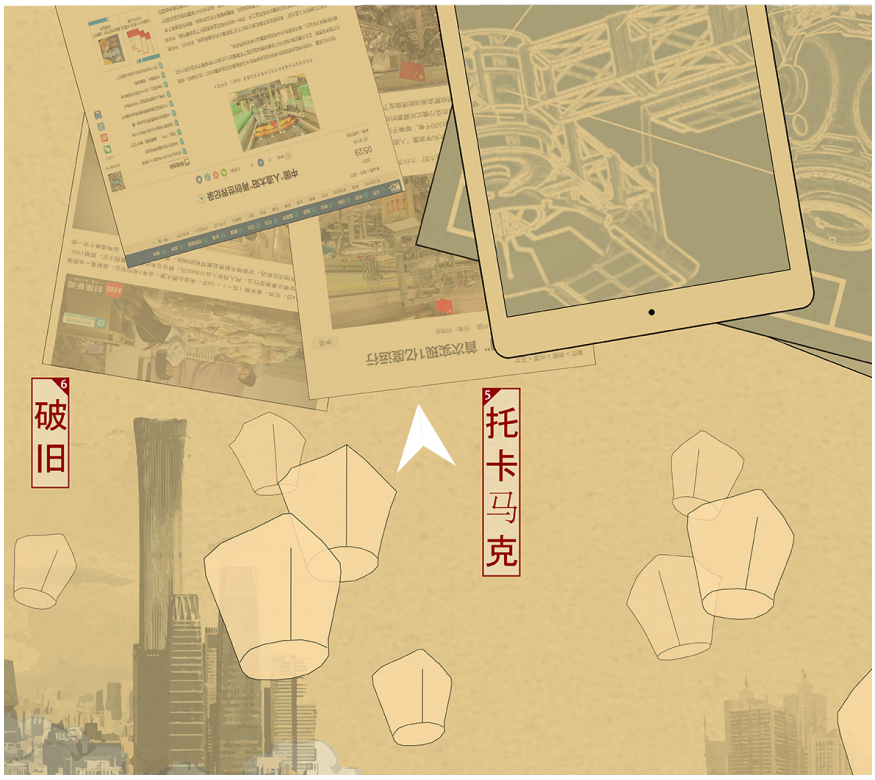


Fig. 4.17 Printed articles about the achievements of China's 'artificial sun' project.

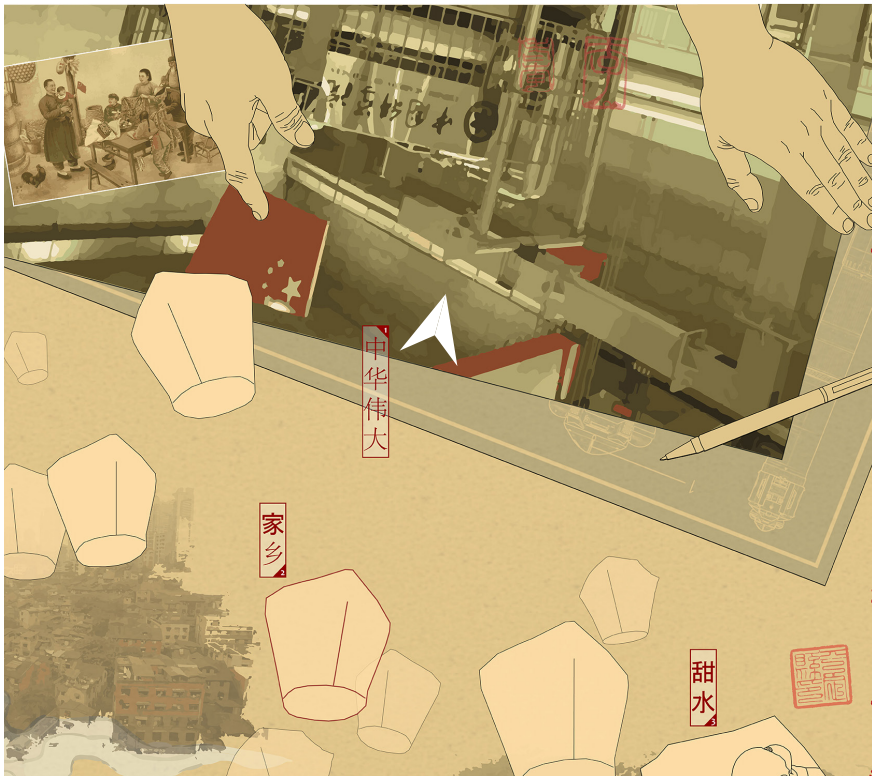


Fig. 4.18 Photograph of the Tokamak technology used for the 'artificial sun' project.

A Story of Space Industrialization

Throughout the story, the difficult journey of a migrant worker (Shui) rising to international recognition as a mirror farmer, the super-skyscrapers in the capital city that keep getting taller, the Chinese people's ambitions of space industrialization, weave together a narrative of the Chinese Dream. Whether explicitly or metaphorically shown, China's undying desire of *national rejuvenation* is key to driving forward the plot. After China saves the world, the nation continues to push forward as a collective. Through endless self-sacrifice and dauntless dreaming, the Chinese people vouched to bring more benefits for humanity. There is also a heavy notion of *technological utopia*, as the invention of a secondary sun saves humanity from the consequences of climate change. The only drawback of the innovation was the dangerous environment in which the mirror farmers had to work in, but these hazards can be avoided if safety measures are strictly followed. There are essentially no negative commentaries towards technological progress. The society in the narrative has complete trust in science and technology, and their dedicated belief is communicated all the way to the end of the narrative as the China Sun travels through the cosmos in search of new knowledge for humankind. Furthermore, the story reveals the construction of the China Sun with great scientific and theoretical explanation. From the materiality of the infrastructure, to the physics of its operation, to the technicalities of its afterlife, the implementation of *practical purposefulness* is fundamental to the story.

Although the specific year in which the narrative takes place is never defined, cognitive estrangement is successfully deployed through references of familiarity, such as the modern dilemma of climate change and migrant workers in China, and casting these cognitive elements into alienating settings established through technological novelty. The concept of a secondary sun is not fictional or new. In fact, China's 'artificial sun' project managed by EAST (Experimental Advanced Superconducting Tokamak), which uses nuclear fusion, is a legitimate engineering endeavor that currently holds the world record for burning at an unprecedented 120 million degrees Celsius for 101 seconds.[273] To give context to this for comparison, the core of the sun burns at 15 million degrees Celsius, which is only 12.5 percent of the Tokamak's

273 Ezgi Toper, "Everything We Know about China's 'Artificial Sun,'" *TRT World*, January 12, 2022, www.trtworld.com/magazine/everything-we-know-about-china-s-artificial-sun-53586.

current maximum heat. The project aims to provide humanity with unlimited clean energy. Thus, cognition is established with the present reality that a secondary sun is an existing experiment, but the estrangement is derived from the actual project being nowhere near the technological advancement described in the story.

> *Pa shouted into the phone, 'Wah [(meaning child in Chinese)], you are going somewhere far away?'*
>
> *'Yeah, Pa,' Shui replied from space. 'I am afraid I will not come home.'*
>
> *'Is it very far? Ma asked.*
>
> *'Very far, Ma,' Shui answered.*
>
> *'Farther than the moon?' Pa asked.*
>
> *Shui fell silent for a few seconds. Then, in a voice much lower than before, he said, 'Yeah, Pa, a little farther than the moon.'*[274]
>
> ~ Liu Cixin (translated by Ken Liu),
> *Sun of China*

Chinese Leadership and Heroism

National rejuvenation is apparent in various moments of the plot development. For instance, the protagonist, Shui, becoming invigorated with Chinese pride, because he is one of the first mirror famers to work on the China Sun. Later on, he becomes a crew member aboard humanity's first interstellar exploration mission. Shui is the individual that proposed the idea of utilizing the China Sun as an interstellar spaceship. He volunteered to pilot the mission and inspired the Chinese people to believe with him as the following revolutionary statement he makes is broadcasted to the world on television, "'This is not suicide, it is exploration…Maybe we will not even make it past the asteroid belt right in front of us, but maybe we will reach Sirius or beyond. If we do not try, how will we know?'"[275] In representing the leadership, bravery, and ambition of China, Shui is the symbol of national rejuvenation. He is the agent of hope, the unifier of the collective, the believer of dreams, and proof that a once uneducated farm boy can become the savior of

274 Ken Liu, trans., "Sun of China," *The Wandering Earth* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2017), page 151.

275 Ibid., page 149.



Fig. 4.19 Chinese astronauts, engineers, and scientists leading the world.



Fig. 4.20 Chinese astronauts, engineers, and scientists are common people from common upbringings.

humankind. Shui's drastic transition is similar to China being a once impoverished country to possibly the leader of the future world, which came true in the story. In many ways, at the core of China's national rejuvenation is the concept of prudence.

Additionally, the buildings in Beijing are described with shocking grandeur. Referred to as the super-skyscrapers, they pierce through the sky and watch over the city with a god-like presence. Shui recalled that

> "Sometimes, a skyscraper he was cleaning would push through the clouds. The world below his waist could be enveloped in a dark and dreary rainstorm even as the sun shined brightly overhead. Looking at the endless sea of clouds billowing beneath his feet, Shui always felt as though the howling winds above blew right through him."[276]

Therefore, the cityscape and architecture of Beijing visualized in the story is a direct metaphor of a perpetual action of 'reaching upward', or in other words, the increasing power and pride of China established through the vitality of prudence in the Chinese city. The spirit of national rejuvenation persists till the end of the story, indicating that China has achieved many great feats and will continue to achieve more.

The Technology of the China Sun

An optimism towards technological utopia is central to the story, as the invention of the China Sun resolves all the environmental issues caused by human-induced climate change. Before China's artificial sun, the Earth was plagued by drought, flooding, resource depletion, and a polluted atmosphere. However, with the placement of a secondary sun in the sky, the 'light spot' created by its reflective curved form can be adjusted by brightness, radius, and location, positively affecting areas of selection. The technology brought back economic and societal prosperity, as well as environmental security,

> "…slowing turning the yellow desert green…villages [that] would never lack rain or snow again, dry

276 Ken Liu, trans., "Sun of China," *The Wandering Earth* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2017), page 120.

> riverbeds on the outskirts of the villages flowed once more with clear, clean water.
>
> The China Sun deserved the credit for all of this. It had played a major role in the great campaign to transform the climate of northwestern China. Not only that, it also performed a number of innovative extracurricular activities: once it melted the snows of Mount Kilimanjaro to ease a drought in Africa; on another occasion it turned an Olympic host city into a city that truly never slept."[277]

Nanomaterial and Operations

Moreover, the Chinese people's value for practical purposefulness is expressed many times throughout the story, such as complex explanation of physics in relation to the operation of the artificial sun, the direct reference to China's Five-Year Plan development policy (for specific text, refer to Part 3.3), and an explicit statement reinforcing that humans are practical beings. The origin of the main material used in the construction of the China Sun came from an object called a solar cooker, invented by Shui's friends, Zhuang Yu. The initial purpose of the thin sheet was never meant to serve in the China Sun project. But through realization of the physical properties of the filament, the material was perfect for the technological endeavor. The filament is a type of nanomaterial, whose "surface finish possesses excellent reflective properties, and it is also very strong. Most importantly, it is soft and flexible under normal conditions but becomes rigid when a weak electric current is applied."[278] As the China Sun Project began its critical selection process for technologies, the nano mirror film material was chosen to build the reflectors of the secondary sun. The story also provides in-depth detail about the operation and management of the China Sun. For example,

> "As the China Sun moved in orbit, it was constantly reorientating itself. These adjustments were made by three thousand engines distributed across the back face of the reflector. The actual mirrored surface

277 Ken Liu, trans., "Sun of China," *The Wandering Earth* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2017), page 143.

278 Ibid., page 111.

> of the reflector was very thin, and it was joined to the whole structure with a great number of slender beams. When the engines fired, parts of the reflector surface could become overstressed. If the engine outputs were not corrected in time, or the location was not reinforced, the unchecked overstress could tear the mirrored surface…
>
> Apart from reorientation or reshaping periods, overstress was most likely to occur during an 'orbital haircut', or a 'Radiation Pressure and Solar Wind-Induced Drag Correction', as the operation was formal known."[279]

The preceding narrative discusses the exerted forces of solar wind and radiation on the silver surface of the China Sun, which could cause the infrastructure to drift out of orbit. There is also direct reference to China's governing policy, the Five-Year Plan, when Zhuang (after he became part of the China Sun Project) reveals that,

> "In the next Five-Year Plan, we have designated near-Earth space as a second Western frontier. The era of exploration had ended, and the aerospace industry will never again be the exclusive domain of an elite minority. Sending ordinary people into orbit is the first step toward the industrialization of space"[280]

during the choosing process of the China Sun's first cleaning crew. There is a great sense of practicality, because although the story is science fiction, it is rooted in existing scientific knowledge and provides legitimate steps to achieve. Later on, Shui asked an engineer why humanity does not visit the moon anymore or even attempt to set foot on Mars. To which the engineer replied, "'Humans are practical creatures. What was driven by idealism and faith in the middle of the last century was not viable in the long term…There's nothing with them per se, but economic interests are better.'"[281] Thus, practical purposefulness is essential to the narrative, to the genre of Chinese science fiction, and to the ideology of the Chinese Dream.

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279 Ken Liu, trans., "Sun of China," *The Wandering Earth* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2017), page 137.

280 Ibid., pg 131.

281 Ken Liu, trans., "Sun of China," *The Wandering Earth* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2017), page 143.

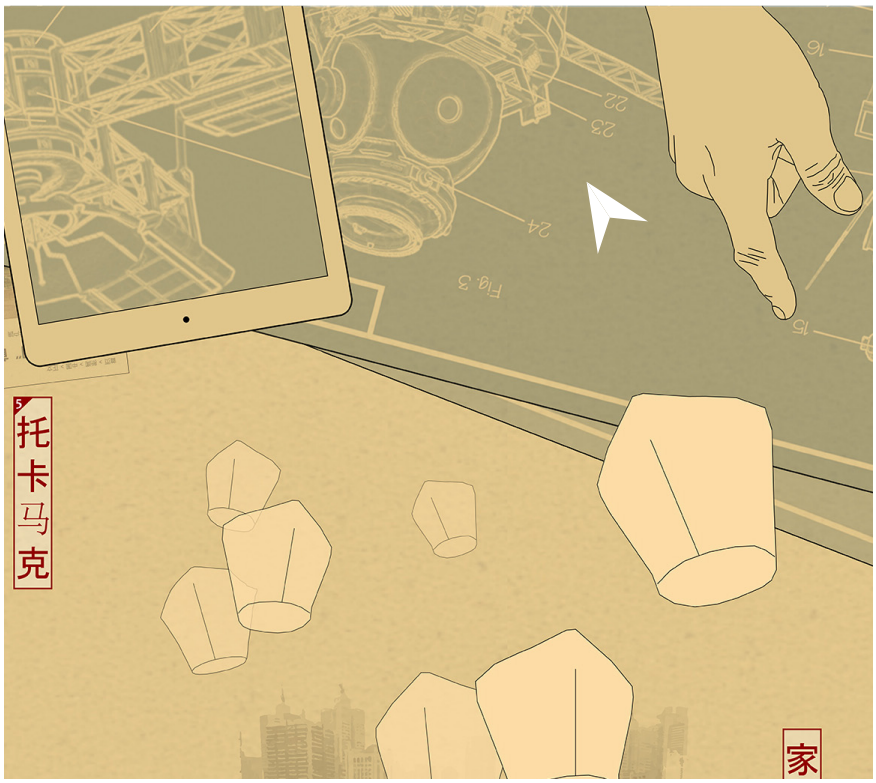


Fig. 4.21 Sun of China focuses on complex explanations of scientific theories and technological developments.



Fig. 4.22 Memories and longing of the home village.

To Preserve Heritage and Identity

Unlike the previous case study that alludes to a particular architectural space, this narrative is implicit about building and urban formations. Although the author utilizes in-depth descriptions of infrastructure and the city as a literary technique to visualizing the grandeur of Beijing, specific architectural motifs are less straightforward. Aside from the evident idea that futurist architecture is inseparable from climate change, and that naturally, with the growing population and shrinking land size, humanity must build taller, the story includes discussions of home and the significance of heritage preservation. The mirror farmers refer to the China Sun as their second home. However, this second home only becomes more 'home-like' when the cleaners started to integrate memories of their old home onto it. By assigning longitudes and latitudes to the seams of the reflector, by identifying different areas with the names of continents, countries, rivers and cities, these conducts of nostalgia illicit a sense of familiarity upon a place of unfamiliar dwelling. By inserting elements of cognition onto places of alienation, the strange newness of the novum environment becomes grounded in the minds of the mirror farmers. Hence, they get used to living on the China Sun, and in the end even become emotionally attached to it by addressing it as their second home.

Nonetheless, although the mirror farmers developed an attachment towards the China Sun, the image of their authentic homes were never lost. Every mirror farmer took a three months' leave after a three months' work period, and "the first thing that every one of them did was buy a high-powered monocular telescope. When they returned to the China Sun three months later, they used their new purchases to observe the planet below during the breaks between work. They most often turned their lenses toward home".[282] In many instances, the thought of home was mentioned, such as when Shui first started his job cleaning the China Sun, and when Shui was about to leave for the unknown universe. The constant recollection of home emphasizes the important role of culture and identity in the establishment of dwelling places. When referring to home, the story uses the term "village" instead of alluding to the modern cities, further reinforcing the importance of cultural identity, and that even when humanity no longer lives on Earth, they must not forget where they come from. So forth, the significance of tradition and identity echoes the concept of figuration

282 Ken Liu, trans., "Sun of China," *The Wandering Earth* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2017), page 137.

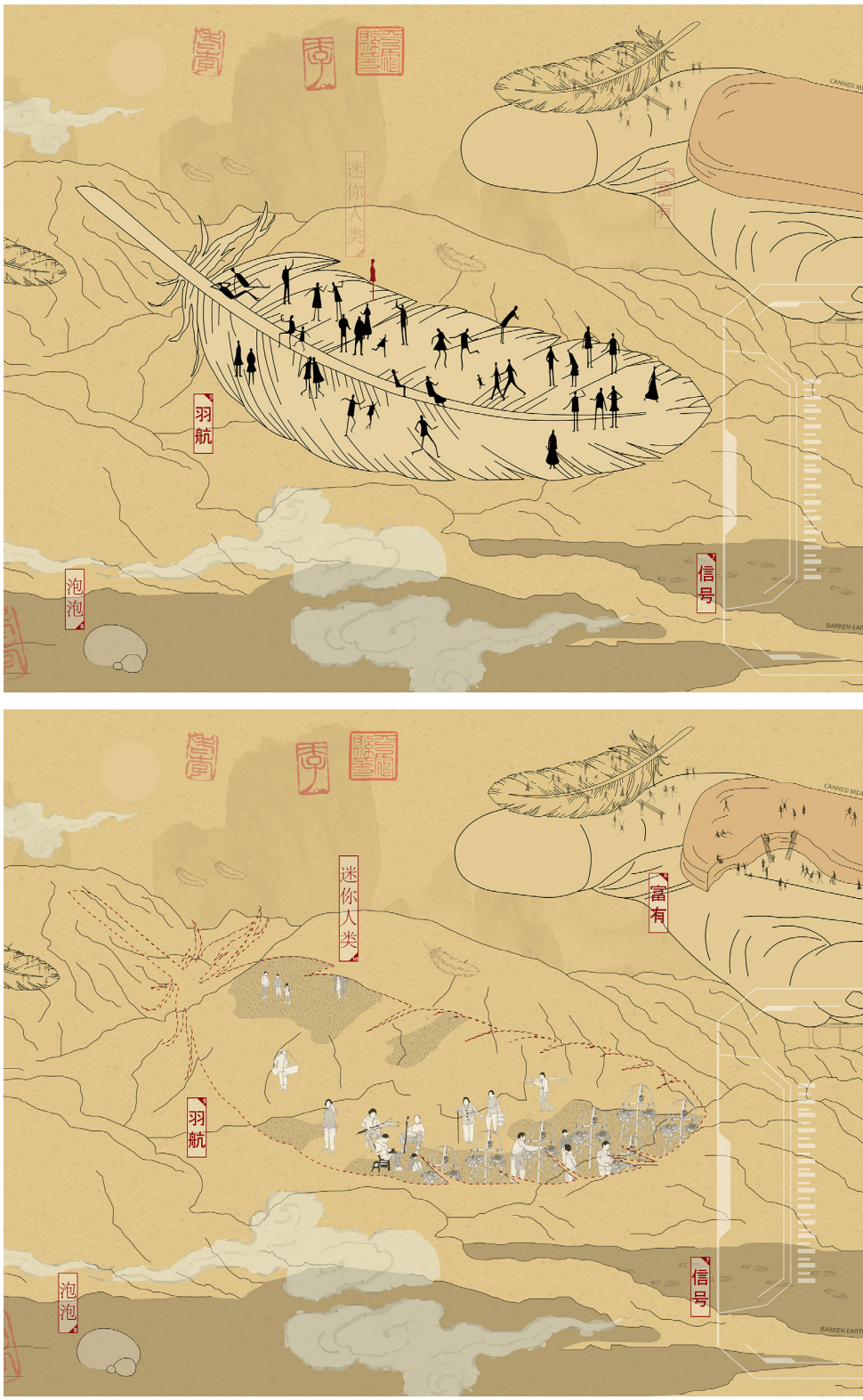
that is essential to the Chinese city. To never forgot one's origin; one's authentic home; and one's zero world. Although shifts to a new home is inevitable, it is important to preserve cultural meaning and value, which in the architectural sense can be accomplished through design practices that protect and revive heritage.

Daring to Dream

Ultimately, *Sun of China* encourages the will to dream. Analogous to the dusty road that led Shui out of his home village, to the super-skyscrapers that reach to the heavens, to the interstellar exploration into the vast cosmos, the narrative is a compilation of the many journeys that humanity undertakes due to the powerful agencies of dreaming and hope. The potentials of humankind become limitless as long as one dares to dream. Thus, the notion of dreaming is intertwined with the true realization of the Chinese Dream, which shapes humanity's future societies, built forms, and landscapes.

> *No matter what happened, Shui would always remember a country called China on his mother planet. He would always remember a little village in that country's arid northwest. He would always remember that path that led out of that village, the path on which his journey began.*[283]
>
> ~ Liu Cixin (translated by Ken Liu),
> *Sun o f China*

283 Ken Liu, trans., "Sun of China," *The Wandering Earth* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2017), page 153.


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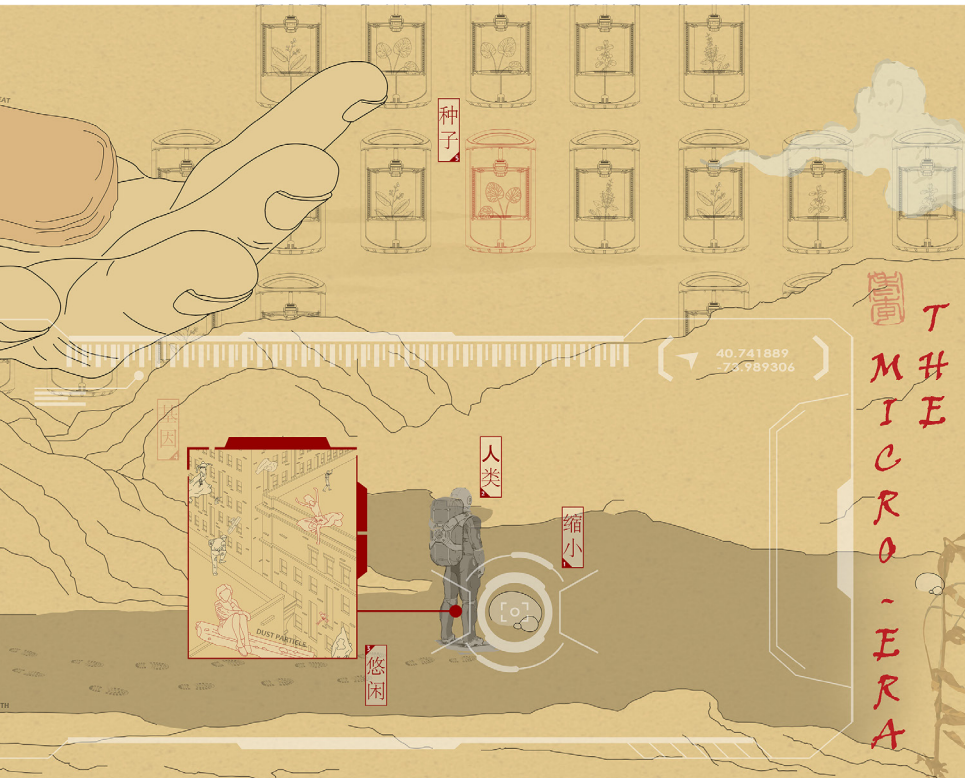


Fig. 4.23 The Micro-Era scroll section (Surface).

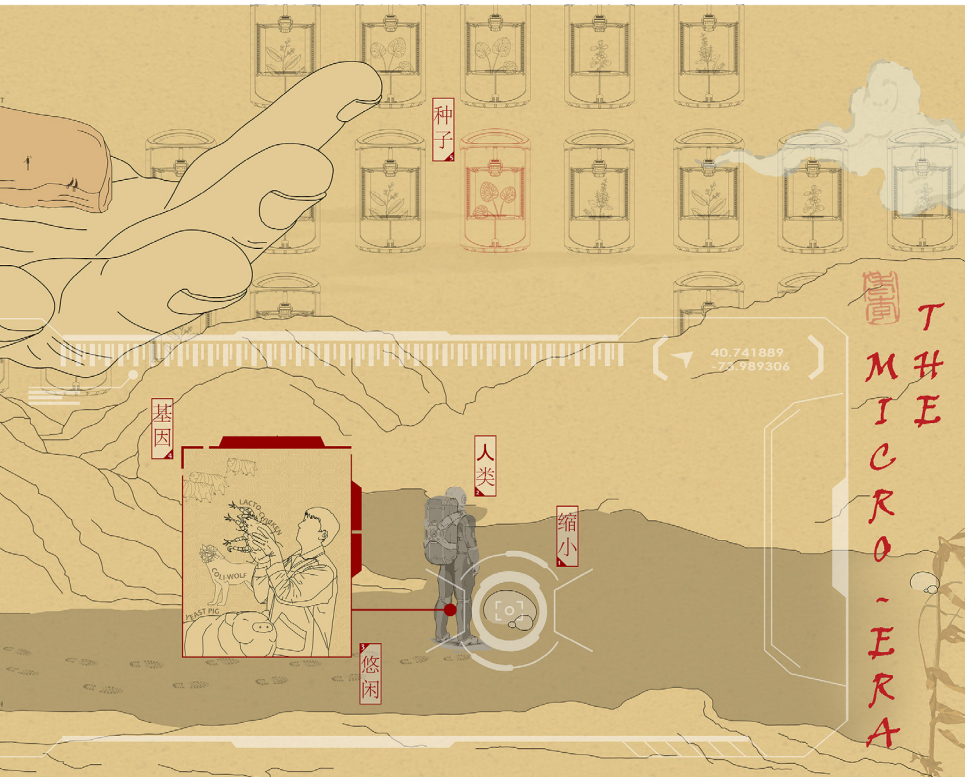


Fig. 4.24 The Micro-Era scroll section (Reveal).

4.2.3 *The Micro-Era*

> *This city was not virtual at all. It was a city just as real as any city twenty-five thousand years ago had been, only it was covered by a three-foot, transparent dome.*[284]
>
> ~ Liu Cixin (translated by Ken Liu), *The Micro-Era*

Astrophysicists determined that in the future, a short-lived energy flash will erupt from the Sun, and the star's mass will be reduced by five percent. Although the change means little to the Sun, the flash will have significant effects on the rest of the solar system. Mercury will dissolve, Venus's dense atmosphere will be stripped to nothing, the surface of Mars will melt away, and Earth will heat up to around seven thousand degrees for about a hundred hours. In an instant, oceans will evaporate and land will liquefy. Proceeding the flash, Earth's temperature will drop to about -80 degrees on average. As the melted surface quickly re-solidifies, the Earth will become a sphere of black and white; of black land and white oceans.

Upon realization of inevitable extinction, humanity has four to five hundred generations to find an alternative way of survival. After two centuries, the spaceship, *UNS Ark*, was built to travel into interstellar space and find humankind a new habitable planet. The crew of the *Ark* is called the Forerunners. The *UNS Ark* sailed for twenty-three years ("Ark Time") at nearly the speed of light, translating to twenty-five thousand years on Earth. They found nothing. During the flight, seven out of the eight crew members died. When the last Forerunner finally returned to Earth, the absolute devastation of his home planet sent him into utter loneliness and despair. He thought he was the last human being in the entire universe.

Suddenly, he receives a video signal and witnesses a peculiar city with strange people. The last Forerunner thought he was hallucinating along with some damaged technology of virtual reality, until a little girl in the video feed spoke to him. Following her directions, he arrives at a transparent dome merely three feet

284 Ken Liu, trans., "The Micro-Era," *The Wandering Earth* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2017), page 252.

in diameter. There were several similar domes scattered in the distance, roughly fifty to one hundred feet apart. Each microscopic city is populated with highly complex structures that resemble a dense assemblage of match sticks, and a modified species of humans the size of ten microns (0.01 mm) are riding on specks of dust particles. The little girl is the High Counsellor of Earth's Unity Government, and she narrates the past twenty-five thousand years of human history during which the last Forerunner was absent. After losing contact with the *Arks* (there were twelve others launched after the *UNS Ark*), and realizing that interstellar migrating is not plausible, humanity resorted to genetic engineering and nanotechnology. After shrinking the entire human race, the world retreated to underground civilization during the flash. Four hundred years after the catastrophe, microscopic humanity reemerges and constructs microscopic super-cities on the planet's surface. Due to the significant reduction in resources consumption and the tiny scale of the micro-societies, humanity's ability of survival on Earth is increased million times over. This is the greatness of the micro-era, and the last Forerunner is the only remaining survivor of the macro-era.

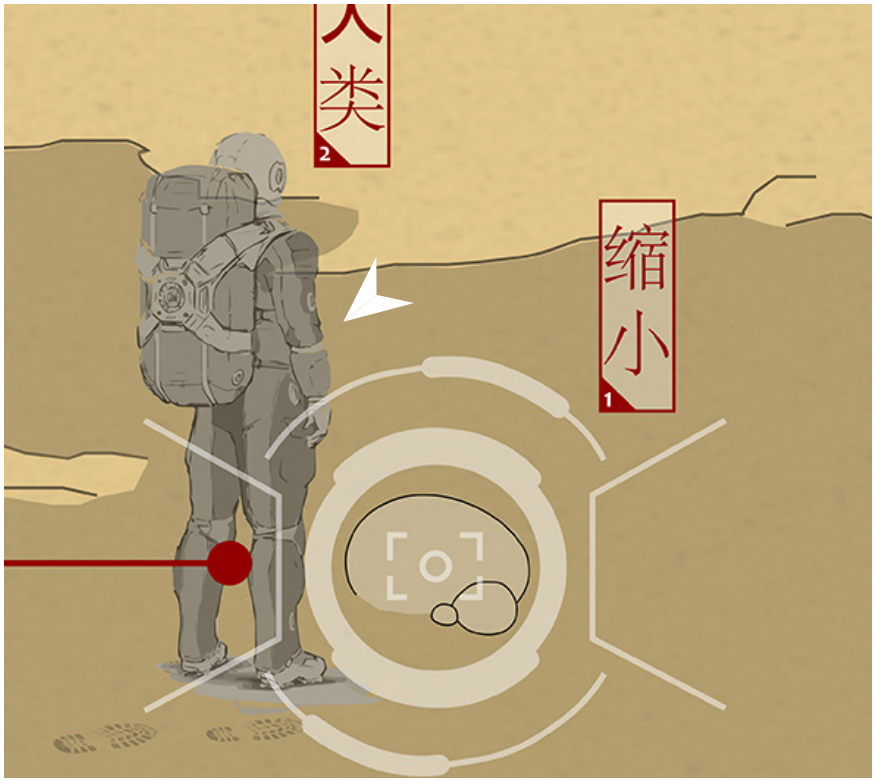


Fig. 4.25 The last macro-era human (the last Forerunner) discovering the new bubble city of the micro-era humanity.

A Story of Downsized Urbanity

The Micro-Era is a story about downsizing, and the infinite advantages that genetic engineering and nanotechnology can bring to micro-humanity's perpetual survival and the resilience of their micro-cities. Although the narrative does not reveal in-depth scientific explanation regarding the technicalities and procedures of size modification, it emphasizes ideas of *collectivism*, *technological utopia*, and the importance of *universal balance*. When the entirety of humanity did not convert to microscopic size, global war waged between the macro-era and the micro-era people. Nonetheless, the battle proved that size does not equal greatness, as the only effective weapon the macro-era had against the micro-era was disinfectants. The micro-era people's imperceptible size rendered their attacks undetectable, and the macro-era societies quickly fell to defeat.

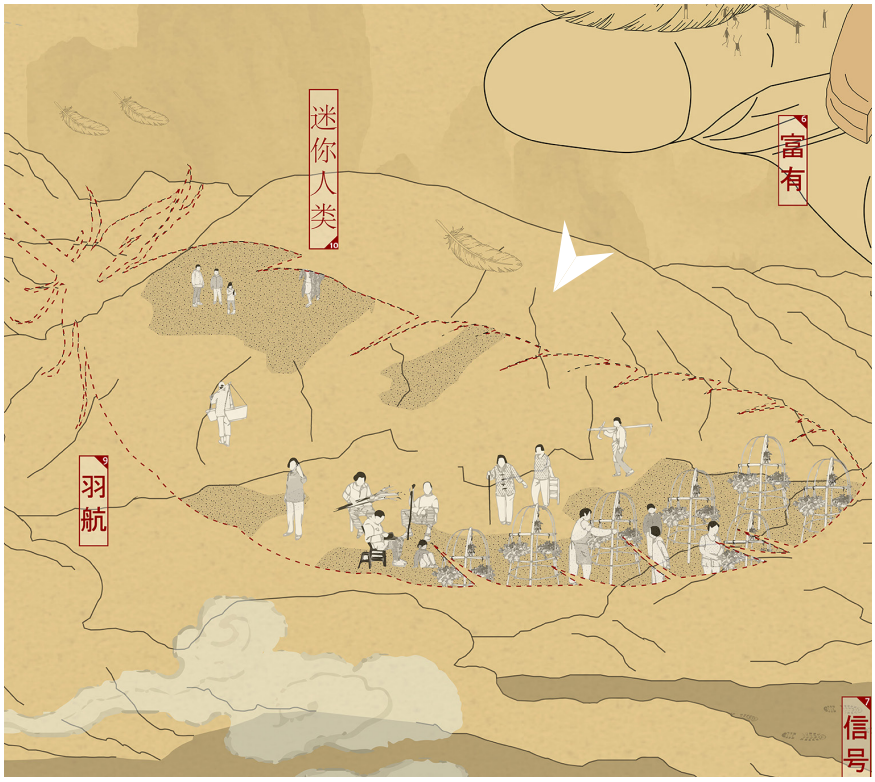


Fig. 4.26 Importance of clean energy harvesting and resilient management of natural resources.

After the micro-era gained global governance rights and all of humanity converted to microscopic size, true collective happiness was created through downsized societies that operated in complete unison. The ultimate unity would not have been possible without the technological feats of genetic engineering and nanotechnology.

In the story, advanced technologies made interstellar travel possible to search for other habitable planets. Although the *Arks* never found any, advanced science discovered an alternative way to humanity's survival. First, microscopic downsizing, second, migrate to underground cities, and lastly, coming back to the surface and erect sustainable, microscopic metropolises. None of these promises of hope and security would have been plausible without the development of futuristic high tech. Even though the concept of downsizing is not achievable as of present time, the narrative utilizes the idea of microscopic living as a metaphor to highlight the importance of universal balance. The story constantly reiterates that less consumption results in a happier and resilient ecosystem, due to the harmonious co-existence between humanity, the built environment, and nature. There are no specific architecture forms mentioned, but the narrative emphasizes the establishment of sustainable urbanities through the harvesting of clean energy and thoughtful management of resources, which ultimately result in abundance in the Chinese city.

> *'Evolution trends toward the small. Size does not equal greatness. Microscopic life has a much easier time coexisting with nature in harmony.'*
>
> *'...civilization has achieved much more than just survival; yours [Last Forerunner referring to the Micro-Era] is the true apex of civilization!'*[285]
>
> ~ Liu Cixin (translated by Ken Liu), *The Micro-Era*

To Act in Unison

The concept of collectivism is fundamental to the Chinese Dream, which the story demonstrates in a dramatic way. Aside from the citizens of the micro-city respecting the High Counsellor of Earth's Unity Government and literally following her every footstep as she gestures everyone to assemble onto these bizarre flying machines that resemble large, propeller-powered feathers, even the emotions of the micro-people are collectively the same. This exaggeration of national unity occurs in various instances, such as

285 Ken Liu, trans., "The Micro-Era," *The Wandering Earth* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2017), page 268.

when the Last Forerunner reveals that there are no women aboard the *Ark* and he is the only one, the girl (High Counsellor of Earth's Unity Government) starts to cry and "Around her, the people in the plaza were crying a sea of tears" as well.[286] When the girl sings a hymn about the macro-era, so does the people of the city. When the Last Forerunner arrives at the domed metropolis, and looks down at the microscopic civilization, the little girl exclaims, "'Oh, your eyes are as black as the ocean, so very, very deep… So deep with melancholy! Your melancholy shrouds our city. You should make them a museum!"[287] Once again, she starts to cry from distress, and "The others, too, [begin] to cry."[288] Although this peculiar phenomenon is explained in the narrative as a result of micro-era people's extremely miniature size causing rapidly shifting moods and emotions, the ultimate intent of the exaggeration is to emphasize the concept of collectivity and acting in unison.



Fig. 4.27 Micro-era humanity living together in harmony without violence and melancholy.

286 Ken Liu, trans., "The Micro-Era," *The Wandering Earth* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2017), page 246.
287 Ibid., page 257.
288 Ken Liu, trans., "The Micro-Era," *The Wandering Earth* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2017), page 257.

Genetic Engineering and Nanotechnology

Furthermore, there is apparent optimism towards technological utopia, because the redemption of humanity is solely dedicated to the greatness of scientific exploration and discovery. For example, the *UNS Ark* that brings the Last Forerunner back to Earth during his aimless drift through the lonely cosmos; the receiver on the Last Forerunner's spaceship and the transmitted video on his goggles, which leads him to the new cities of humanity during his darkest moments of despair; the downsizing science that built future resilient cities; and the *Ark*'s life eco-cycler that can sustain the Last Forerunner until the end of his natural life; all of these optimistic possibilities are established by the development of advanced technologies. Additionally, the High Counsellor reveals that after humanity concluded that interstellar migration was not feasible, due to the *Arks* not being able to locate other habitable planets, and the lag in spaceship technology which cannot even transport one-thousandth of humanity, the new plan

> "…relied on two types of technology. The first was genetic engineering: by modifying the human genome, humans would be reduced to the height of about ten microns, no larger than a single body cell. Human anatomy, however, would remain completely unchanged. This was a completely plausible goal. In essence, there is very little difference between genome of a bacterium and that of a human. The other piece of the puzzle was nanotechnology. This technology had been developed as far back as the twentieth century, and even in those days people were able to assemble simple generators the size of bacteria. Based on these humble beginnings, humanity soon learned to build everything from nano-rockets to nano-microwave ovens; but nano-engineering of ages past could have never imagined where their technologies would ultimately be put to use. Fostering the first batch of micro-humans was very similar to cloning; the complete genome was extracted from a human cell and then cultivated to form a micro-human that resembled the original in all ways except size."[289]

289 Ken Liu, trans., "The Micro-Era," *The Wandering Earth* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2017), page 254.

The transformation to micro-life also changes the application of various laws of physics on the human body. In the micro-cities, people can jump out of windows when exiting a building, because their bodies are so light that no matter the height, they are completely unharmed upon landing. Micro-humans can leap from the ground and rise to impressive heights, like they are "being pulled by invisible wires."[290] As a result, the buildings of micro-cities do not have doors, except windows for convenient entry and exit. Infrastructures and buildings also have strategically placed foot-holds that ran up the sides of the structures to make pushing off easier. Micro-humans are extremely tiny. Thus, their daily modes of transportation are floating dust particles. Even during collisions, no person can ever be harmed, because everything is so incredibly lightweight. Due to advanced science and technology that completely re-envisioned the workings of society, the micro-era is absolutely carefree. "The micro-era was an age without worries."[291]

Urban Resiliency

Although there are no specific architectural design connotations mentioned in the narrative, ideas regarding future city design are derived from the many references of urban resiliency, clean energy harvesting, reduction of transportation, proper resources management, and cumulatively, universal balance. The current condition of the Earth is rapidly running out of space and natural resources, tipping the once balanced scale of universal harmony. The concept of microscopic living emphasizes the significance of restoring that balance, which will create utopic metropolises, as depicted in the narrative. There are no modes of transportation that contributes to atmospheric pollution, because micro-humans can effortlessly drop and leap to their desired destinations. The only vehicles of the micro-era are drifting dust particles and feather-like ships that nonchalantly propel through the air. The reestablishment for clean air represents the restoration of universal balance in terms of humanity with the sky.

Humankind's microscopic size also leads to less consumption and an unprecedented surplus of goods, which addresses to the importance of abundance in the Chinese city. Abundancy refers to

290 Ken Liu, trans., "The Micro-Era," *The Wandering Earth* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2017), page 244.

291 Ibid., page 271.

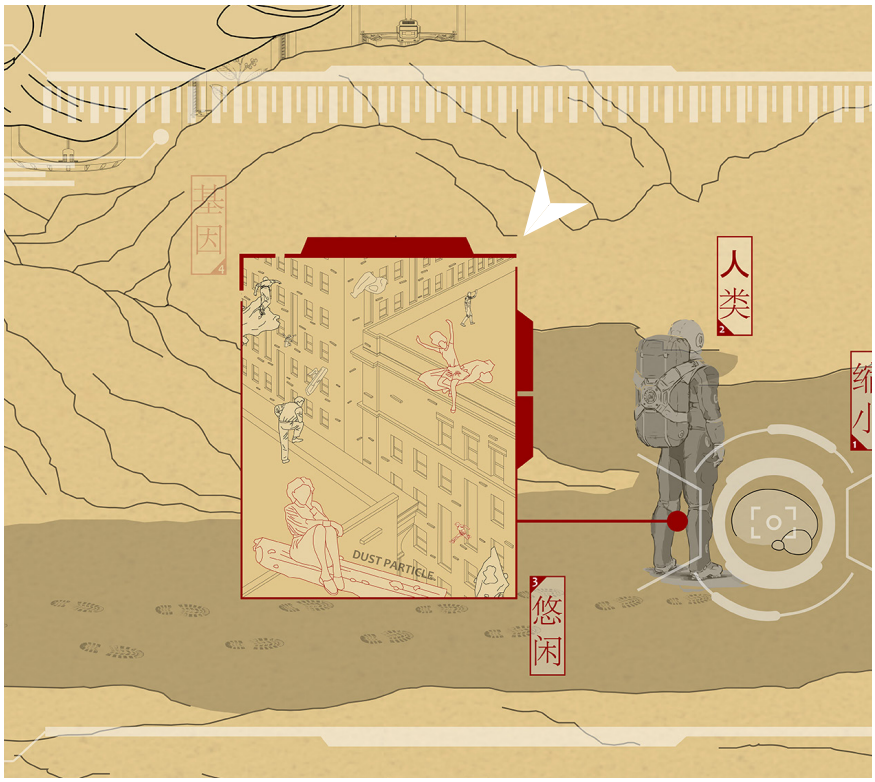


Fig. 4.28 Humans of the micro-era are essentially weightless and absolutely carefree, especially as they get older.

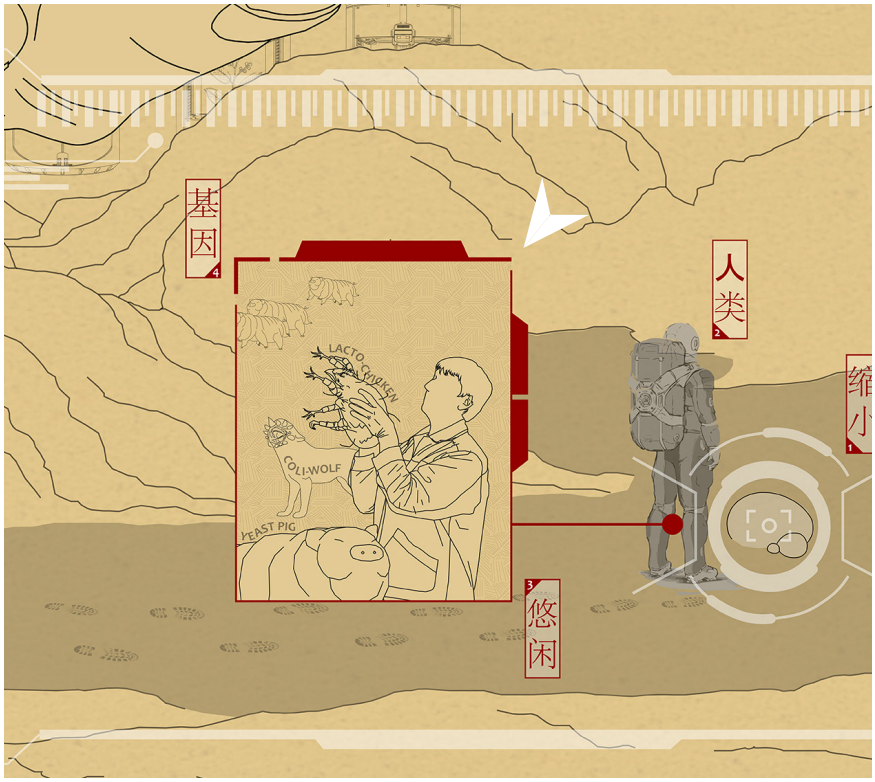


Fig. 4.29 Genetic engineering shrank humans and animals as well.

the population, the flow of the economy, the supply of food and resources, even the amount of labour. It is about establishing a city of maximum quantities in every aspect to obtain urban resiliency, and the narrative proposes the idea of downsizing to achieve it. For example, when the Last Forerunner took out a tin of canned meat from the *Arks* storage, and the High Counsellor says, "'the contents of that can you just opened could feed our entire city for two years. And the can itself could supply our city with all the metal it needed for those two years.'"[292] Later on, the Last Forerunner returns to his ship to retrieve seeds from the seed bank as gifts to the people of the micro-era, he contemplates the following:

> "If only one tenth of the planet's ecosphere could be restored to what it had been in the macro-era, the micro-era would become a heaven on Earth…he could picture the micro-humans' wild joy when they would first see a colossal green blade of grass rising to the heavens. And what about a small meadow? What would a meadow mean to micro-humanity? An entire grassland! What would a grassland mean? A green cosmos for micro-humanity!"[293]

The redistribution of micro-humans and the Earth's resources indict a restored balance of humanity with the land. The story focuses on defining alternative ways of living and manifestations of futurist architecture, forming resilient urbanities that can harmoniously co-exist with the sky and nature. Coincidentally, this central theme of universal balance corresponds with Longshan's diagram of the cosmos that includes Heaven, Nature, State, and Men in harmony with one another, and is the earliest methodology of Chinese urban planning (for specific text, refer to Part 3.1).

> *Indeed, one-trillionth of the Earth's ecological resources could easily support a micro-human population of a trillion!*[294]
>
> ~ Liu Cixin (translated by Ken Liu),
> *The Micro-Era*

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292 Ken Liu, trans., "The Micro-Era," *The Wandering Earth* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2017), page 267.

293 Ibid., pages 270-271.

294 Ken Liu, trans., "The Micro-Era," *The Wandering Earth* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2017), page 271.

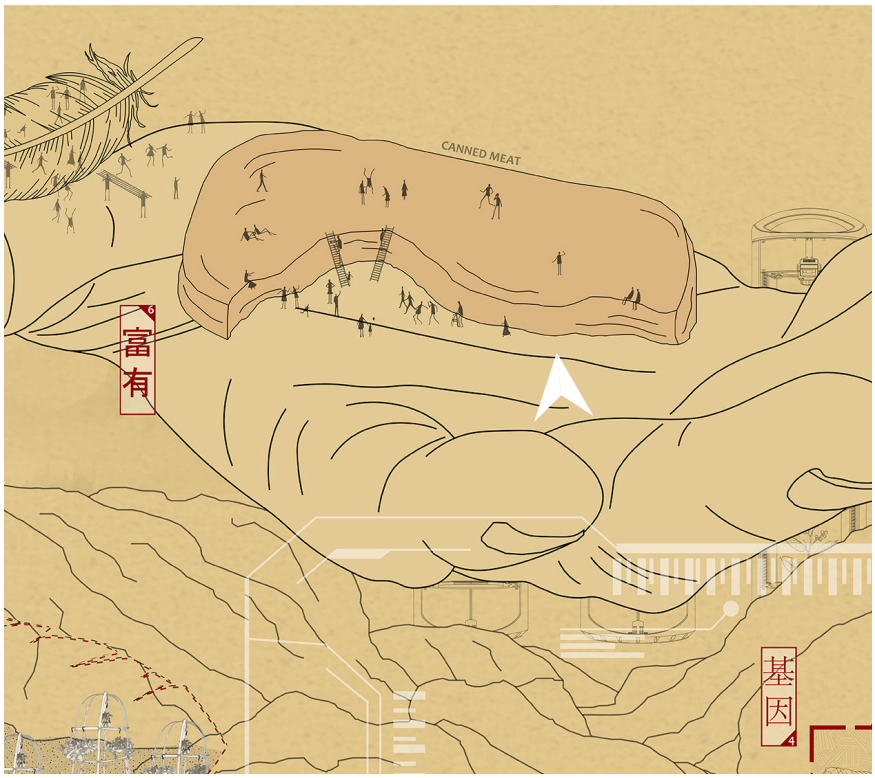


Fig. 4.30 A tiny piece of canned meat can feed an entire micro city.

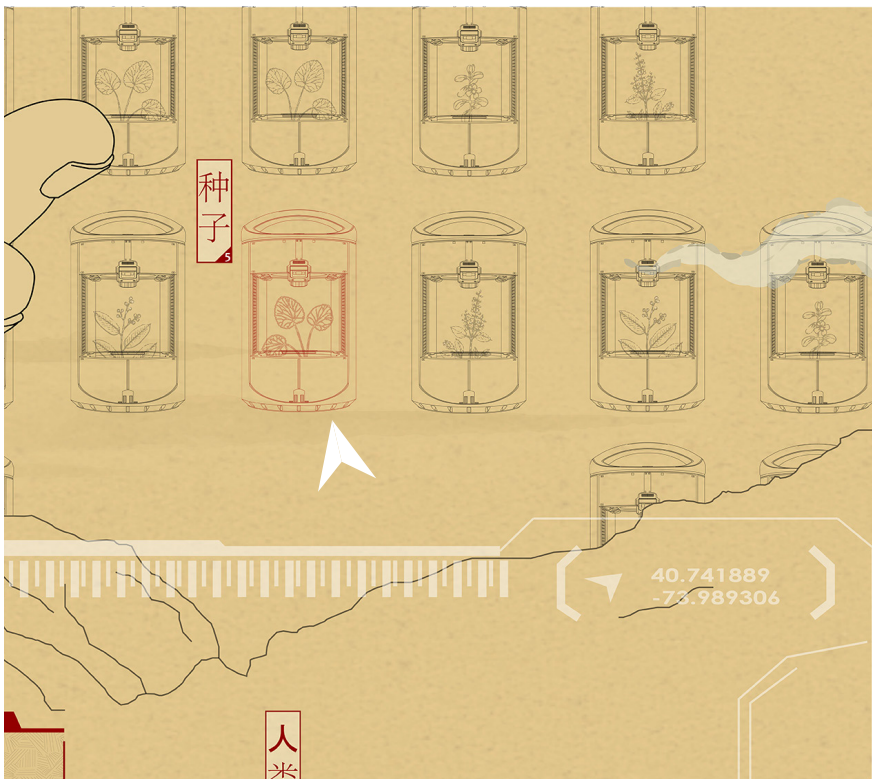


Fig. 4.31 The seed bank from the last Forerunner's spaceship that can provide endless resources for micro-humanity.


2123
2119
地点能
时空穿越
邮件
地下
DESTRUCTION OF EARTH'S MAGNETIC FIELD
GYROTRON
PURGE GAS
WAVEGUIDE
MILLIMETER WAVES


2123
2119
地点能
时空穿越
邮件
地下
DESTRUCTION OF EARTH'S MAGNETIC FIELD
GYROTRON
PURGE GAS
WAVEGUIDE
MILLIMETER WAVES

read from right to left



Fig. 4.32 Moonlight scroll section (Surface).

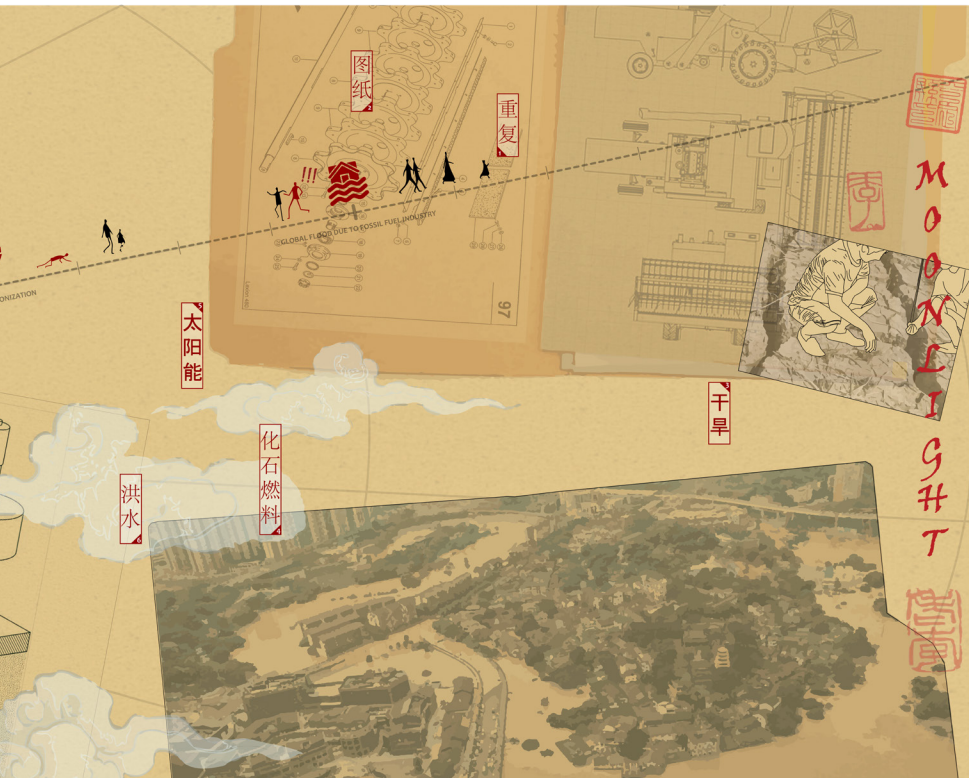


Fig. 4.33 Moonlight scroll section (Reveal).

4.3 Broken Stars Series

4.3.1 *Moonlight*

Mere mortals doing what needed to be done a hundred years earlier would have the same effect as divine intervention.[295]

~ Liu Cixin (translated by Ken Liu),
Moonlight

Set in the near future, on the night of the Mid-Autumn Festival, a Chinese man changes the course of human history three times. Mere hours ago, he was at Wen's wedding. He hid in the lobby and watched her in her wedding dress as she entered the reception hall holding another man's hand. Now, he sulks on the balcony of his single-occupancy apartment unit, hoping to enjoy a nice view of the full moon.

Suddenly, he gets a call from an unknown number. The voice on the other end sounds distant yet familiar, so he questions who is calling. The person is calling from the year 2123, and is the future version of the protagonist himself. His future self warns that if humanity does not stop the usage of fossil fuels, in the span of half a century, the sea will rise by twenty meters. More than three hundred million costal inhabitants will be displaced and forced to move inland. The world will descend into political and social chaos, and the economy will collapse. As a result, his future self sends documents of an advanced energy technology to his current self and hangs up the call. The new technology is called the silicon plow, which depends on the harvesting of solar power. As the current self proceeds to open the email and determines to carry out the development of the alternative energy source to save the planet

295 Ken Liu, trans., "Moonlight," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation* (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 51.

from future doom, another call comes. It is his future self again, but from the year 2119. His second future self reveals that although sea level did not rise, the silicon plow resulted in worldwide drought. Once again, humanity plunged into absolute disarray. To resolve this, his second future self suggests another new energy technology, ultra-deep drilling that uses geoelectricity extraction. After hanging up, his current self finds another email of research documents and technical drawings regarding ultra-deep drilling. As he reads through the materials, a third call comes. It is his future self from the year 2125, who warns his current self that geoelectric power will completely destroy Earth's electric field, which protects the planet's atmosphere and deflects solar wind. Without it, the oceans will burn away and the Earth's surface will be inflamed with radiation. In this future, humanity will have to retreat underground, and spend the rest of their lifetime restoring the Earth's magnetic field. His third future self proposes to delete the previous two emails, and revert back to the original timeline of fossil fuel dominance. After the third call ends, the night seemed like any other night.

A Story of Repetitive History

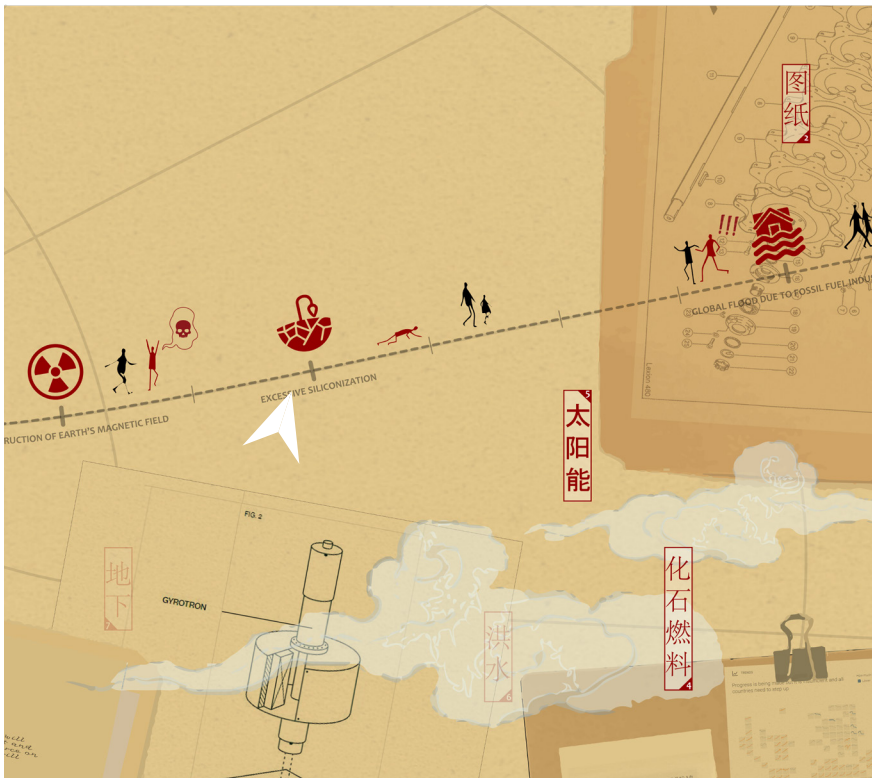


Fig. 4.34 A story of divergent, yet similar futures of humanity, all augmented by advanced technology and all ending in worldwide destruction.

Moonlight is a short narrative centered around *practical purposefulness* and *repetitive history*, which are both fundamental to the Chinese Dream. Through various explorations of advanced, alternative energy technologies, the story is rich with scientific and theoretical discussions regarding the dangers of contemporary fossil fuel industry, the destructions of excessive silicon plowing, and the horrors of drilling for geoelectric power. In addition to the extensive usage of technical engineering terminologies, the traditional Chinese belief of repetitive history is demonstrated through the three distinct timelines of humanity's destiny, that all ended with the catastrophic failure of energy technologies. The story does not mention specific architectural forms, since the living conditions of every future differs greatly from one another. However, the importance of searching for clean energy resources and technologies have significant impacts on the future design of resilient buildings and cities. The story is also dedicated to illustrating somewhat normalized futures that are not drastically different from contemporary time, except augmented by advanced technology.

> *By the time the reformatting had completed, it was just another ordinary night. The man who had changed the course of human history three times in a single night but who in the end had changed nothing fell asleep in front of his computer.*[296]
>
> ~ Liu Cixin (translated by Ken Liu), *Moonlight*

The Silicon Plow and Geoelectricity Extraction

Fossil fuel industry is the contemporary method of energy production. Due to mass familiarity with the technology, the story did not explain the technicalities of it. However, the proposals of the silicon plow from 2123, and the advanced machineries of ultra-deep drilling from 2119 are elaborated on with comprehensive details. Although the rudimentary science behind both futurist technologies is familiar (solar power and oil drilling), the advancement of them presented in the narrative is definitely estranging. In the narrative, the first call that the protagonist receives is from his future self in 2123. After relying the climate change disasters of the fossil

296 Ken Liu, trans., "Moonlight," Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 57.

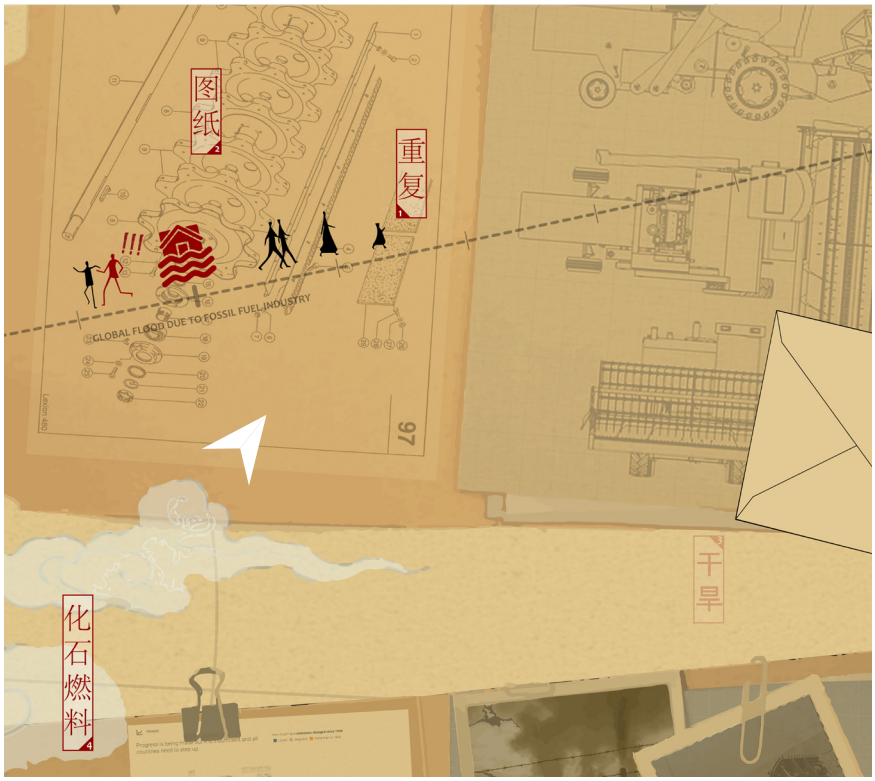


Fig. 4.35 Technical drawings sent through emailed documents showing the science behind the Silicon Plow technology.

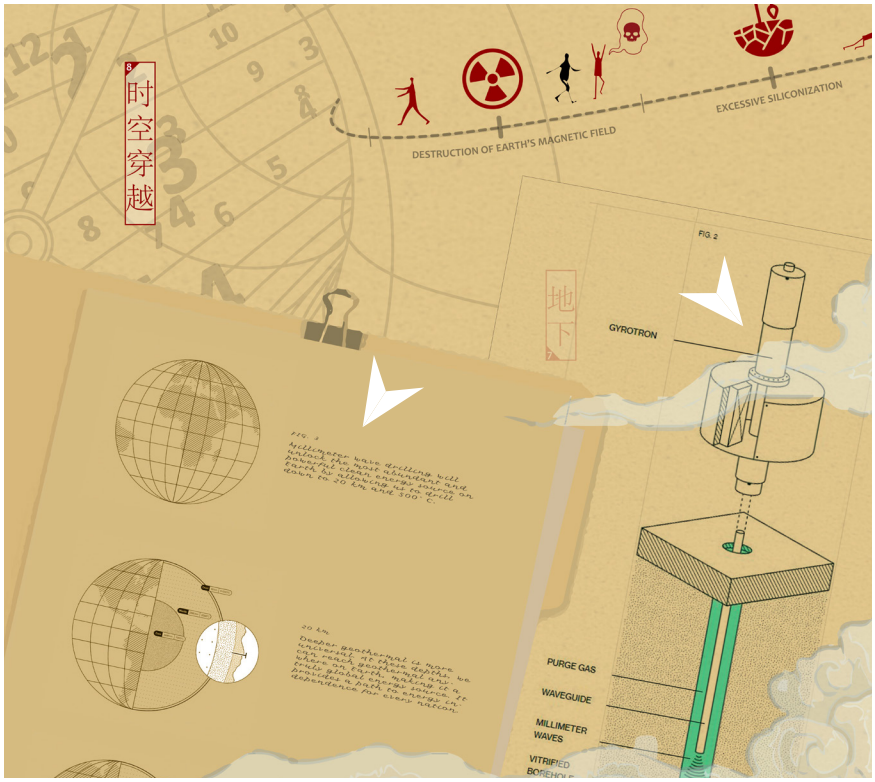


Fig. 4.36 Research papers sent through email explaining the technicalities of ultra-deep drilling.

fuel industry that resulted in drastic sea level rise, his future self suggests a new energy technology in hopes of saving humanity, and the innovation is called the Silicon Plow.

> "'Silicon is the most abundant element on Earth, and you can find it everywhere in sand or soil. A silicon plow cuts furrows in the earth just like a regular plow, but it extracts the silicon out of the soil and refines it into monocrystalline silicon. The land it processes turns into solar cells…Like a combine harvester. To start it, you need an external energy source, but then it relies on the power provided by the solar cells it leaves behind. With this technology, you can turn the whole Taklamakan Desert into a solar power plant…The plowed land will just look darker, but the conversion efficiency will be phenomenal. After the land has been plowed, you just attach wires to the two ends of the furrow to get a photovoltaic current.'"[297]

As the protagonist browses through the "detailed technical drawings and documents"[298] of the silicon plow, he also contemplates about the introduction, funding, and development process of the advanced technology into current society. Being a staff member of the Planning Office of the Ministry of Energy, he swiftly devises up a project plan. Firstly, to deliver a draft to the minister for approval. Then, to get the State Council to invest in the project, by securing funding from China's four-trillion-yuan stimulus package that responds to economic crisis. Lastly, to find a research lab and an appropriate company to develop the project. Every step of the process must be done gradually and meticulously, so that no one doubts the origin of the project idea. Under no circumstances can other people know that the technology comes from the future, because knowing such fact might result in behaviors that will change the course of human history. The conversations that the protagonist conducts with his future self, the detailed technical documents sent through email, and the deliberate planning of adopting the new energy technology indict a centralized focus on practical purposefulness. Later on, when the protagonist receives another call from himself in 2119, the concept of ultra-deep drilling technology is also explained with extensive details.

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297 Ken Liu, trans., "Moonlight," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation* (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 49.

298 Ibid., page 50.

> "'I'm not talking about drilling for oil. The wells I have in mind will reach a depth of over a hundred kilometers, penetrating the Mohorovičić discontinuity and boring into the liquid mantle. The Earth's powerful magnetic field is generated by strong electric currents deep within the planet, and we want to tap into them. Once the ultra-deep wells are drilled, massive terminals dropped into the wells will extract the geoelectric energy. We'll also give you the technology for electric terminals that can function under high temperatures.'"[299]

When the protagonist returns to his computer to find a second email packed with technical information, "he found that ultra-deep drilling used lasers instead of mechanical bits, and the molten rock was channeled up through the drill to the surface. The last attachment was another photograph of an open field studded with high-voltage transmission towers."[300] Once again, the protagonist devises up a plan to spread the new technology in his society. These instances of complex engineering explanations and thorough planning emphasize the importance of practical purposefulness in Chinese science fiction, which is influenced by the Chinese dream, and influences China's ideas of futuristic architecture and urbanity.

Divergent But Repeating Timelines

Repetitive history is another major concept throughout the narrative, presented through the three drastically different timelines of humanity's possible futures. Similar to the Dynastic Cycle (for specific text, refer to Part 2.6), a Chinese political theory that describes the repetitive pattern of the rise and fall of dynasties, the plotline of *Moonlight* mirrors the same model. In contemporary time, optimism towards the fossil fuel industry is declining. As a result, the silicon plow technology is introduced to reclaim economic prosperity and societal stability. However, the story quickly reveals the downfall of excessive solar energy harvesting.

> "'Starting in the 2020s, silicon plows transformed the face of every continent. After all the deserts had been

299 Ken Liu, trans., "Moonlight," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation* (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), pages 53-54.

300 Ibid., page 54.

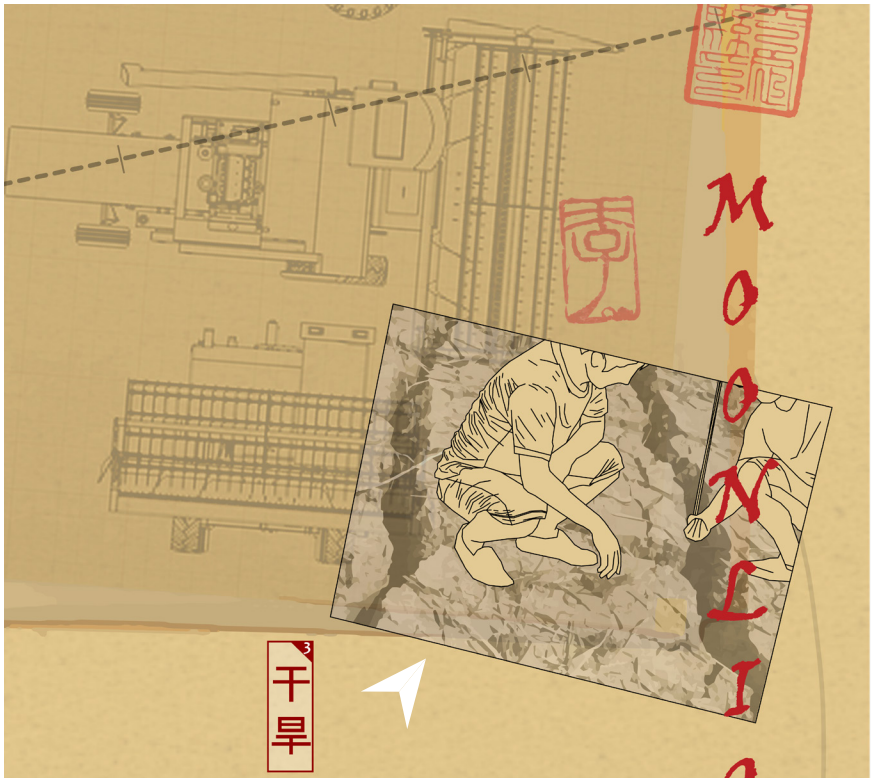


Fig. 4.37 The aftermath of excessive silicon plowing leads to global drought.

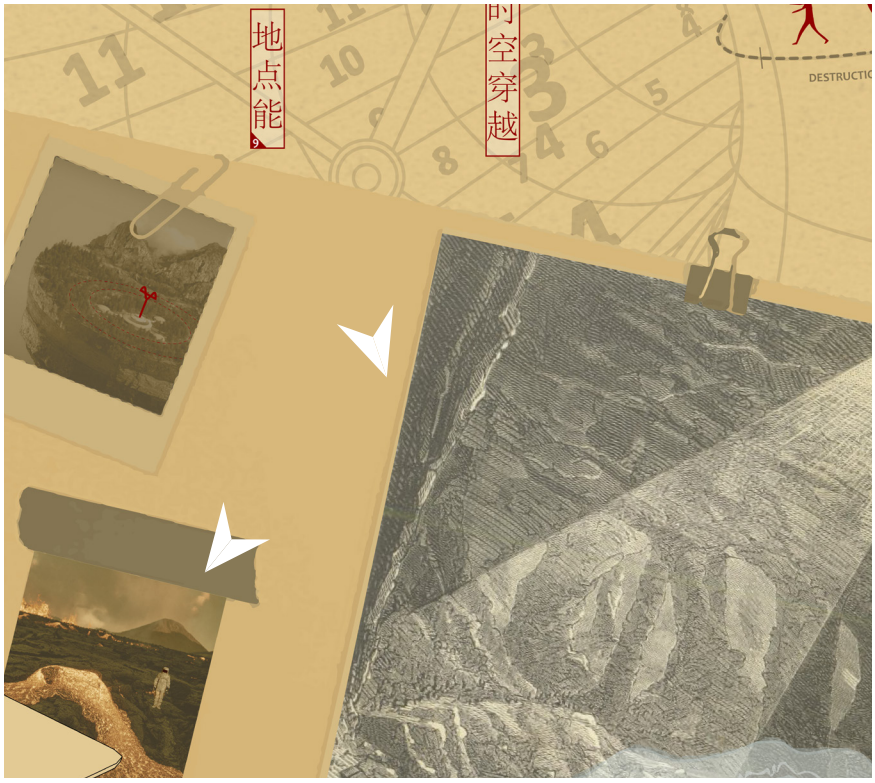


Fig. 4.38 Over-extraction of geoelectricity destroys the Earth's atmospheric shield (which protects it from the Sun) and thus, the Earth's surface is polluted with radiation. Humanity is forced to take refuge in underground cities.

> turned into solar fields, they began to devour arable land and vegetation cover. Now, every continent is suffering from excessive siliconization. The process had advanced far faster than desertification. The land surface of the Earth is now almost entirely covered by silicon solar fields.'"

Fearing the floods that would occur due to the extensive burning of fossil fuels, humanity searched for an alternative, cleaner method of energy production. Solar energy is supposed to "have the lowest environmental impact"[301], but in the end, caused worldwide drought. The subsequent proposal regarding geoelectric power attempts to avoid the devastation of the silicon plow project, as "'geoelectricity extraction is the greenest technology. It doesn't take up any land and doesn't generate any carbon dioxide or other pollutants.'"[302] Unfortunately, the hope for a bright future shatter once again when the protagonist's future self claims,

> "'At the beginning of this century, geoelectricity suddenly ran out. Compasses no longer pointed north. I'm sure you know that the Earth's electric field is our planet's shield. It deflects the solar wind and protects our atmosphere. But now, the Van Allen belts are gone, and the solar wind buffets the Earth like a petri dish placed under an ultraviolet light…This is only the start. Over the next three to five centuries, the solar wind will destroy Earth's atmosphere, boil away the ocean and all other surface water… We've finally achieved a breakthrough in controlled nuclear fusion, and together with the reconstructed oil and coal industries, humanity now possess inexhaustible sources of energy. Most of the power we generate, however, is pumped into the Earth to restart the magnetic field. So far, the results are not encouraging.'"[303]

Analogous to the economic rise of the Industrial Revolution, at the beginning of both supposedly 'more eco-friendly' energy technologies, the economy soared, society prospered, and the environment improved. However, the current global warming

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301 Ken Liu, trans., "Moonlight," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation* (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 52.

302 Ibid., page 54.

303 Ken Liu, trans., "Moonlight," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation* (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 56.

crisis brought upon by the Industrial Revolution, which marked the beginning of the fossil fuel industry, is the same situation as the rise and fall of the silicon plow project and the geoelectric energy project. Although the narrative presents three scenarios where advanced technology devastated the planet, modern China's overall optimism towards technological development is clearly evident. The story demonstrates the powerful agency of scientific progress, which can change the entire face of the planet, and amongst its infinite possibilities hold the solution for humanity's survival.

The Search for Clean Energy

The notion of cognitive estrangement is constantly applied along with the introduction of new energy technologies. Although the silicon plow and the ultra-deep drilling technique do not exist in present time, they are clearly developed from contemporary scientific knowledge. For example, the precedent of the silicon plow is solar panel technology, and the idea of geoelectric drilling originates from oil extraction. Cognition is the familiarity of the origin method in the energy production process, and alienation is the advancement of said method, establishing technical novelty. Additionally, there are no apparent architectural forms consistently mentioned throughout the narrative, because the urbanities of the three varying futures include different requirements of dwelling spaces and conditions: the flooded cities caused by the fossil fuel industry; the barren valleys created by excessive silicon plowing; and the underground civilizations as a result of ignorant geoelectric drilling, all three scenarios present completely divergent building designs and urban formations. Nonetheless, the rigorous exploration of alternative, clean energy sources and technologies highlights the significance of urban resiliency, as eco-friendly approaches to architectural and city design dominant the visions of Chinese futurism.

> *Dawn brightened the eastern sky. The world began another ordinary day. Nothing had happened, at all.*[304]
>
> ~ Liu Cixin (translated by Ken Liu), *Moonlight*

304 Ken Liu, trans., "Moonlight," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation* (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 57.

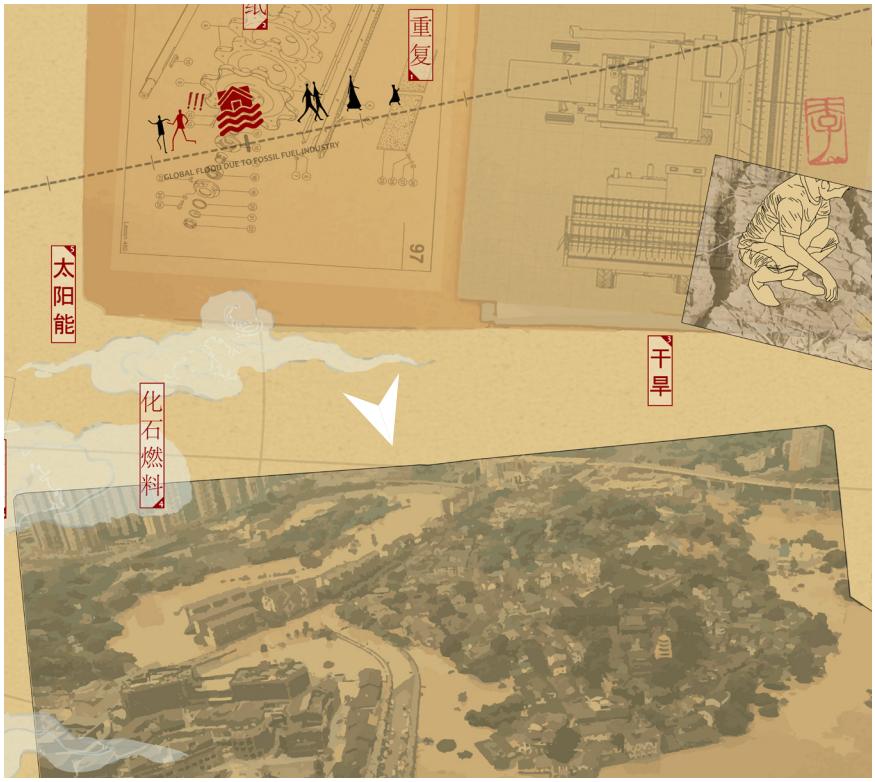


Fig. 4.39 The divergent futures exist because of the present era of fossil fuel industry, which will eventually result in worldwide flooding.



Fig. 4.40 Calls and emails from the future in search of clean energy resources.


IMPROVE
OUR CITY!!!
ENTERTAINMENT
AMENITIES!!!
娱乐场所
皇宫
秦始皇
游戏机
历史复活
明光大正

read from right to left



Fig. 4.41 The First Emperor's Games scroll section (Surface).



Fig. 4.42 The First Emperor's Games scroll section (Reveal).

4.3.2 *The First Emperor's Games*

> *…the emperor's choice of games would inevitably affect his governing philosophy, and that meant a great opportunity for the scholars to persuade the policymaker under the guise of entertainment.*[305]
>
> ~ Ma Boyong (translated by Ken Liu),
> *The First Emperor's Games*



Fig. 4.43 Emperor Qin trying out various video games.

In an alternative universe where the Qin Empire, led by China's First Emperor, Qin Shi Huang, is far more advanced than this reality, good video games are the ruler's primary concern. After conquering six states and establishing many successful and complicated reforms, such as getting all citizens to write in the same script, constructing all roads at the same width, standardizing units of measurement, and creating a universal encoding system for all

305 Ken Liu, trans., "The First Emperor's Games," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation* (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 251.

computers, the emperor is ready for a vacation. He wants to play some games. The news of the emperor searching for quality games spread throughout the nation, and everyone wants to bring forth their ideas, because the game that the emperor choses will likely influence his future governing policies and ideologies. As a result, many people lined up outside the palace with their demos the very next day.

The first game is *Civilization*[306], presented to the emperor by Li Si, the leader of the Legalist School of Thought. Due to the emperor's obsession with conquest and strengthening his military, he neglects micromanagement and the daily happiness of the NPCs (non-player characters) in his kingdom. The nation quickly falls to rebellion and invasion. The second game is *The Sims*[307], proposed by Kong Fu, the ninth-generation descendent of Confucius and the leader of the Confucians. In the simulated world, mutual respect, kindness, and strong social ties are key to the success of the game, which infuriates the emperor who refuses to please anyone. As a result, he bans the treasonous game, confiscates all the distributed DVDs, digs a huge pit in the ground, and lights it on fire with all the copies and their dealers in it. The third game is *Plants vs. Zombies*[308], brought forth by the leader of the Mohists. Once again, consumed with perpetual warfare, the defenses of the empire eventually collapse. Thereafter, came *Call of Duty*[309] by the School of Military; *Harvest Moon*[310] by the Agriculturalists; *Ace Attorney*[311] by the

306 *Civilization* is a strategy game that tasks the player with leading an entire human civilization through several millennia of exploration, urban development, government, trade, conquest, research, and military. Through establishing diplomatic relationships and going to war with other players, the ultimate goal is to build the most powerful empire.

307 *The Sims* is a life simulation game where players customize their own virtual characters ("sims"), and conduct daily activities in a suburb near a fictional city. The sims can have occupations, purchase clothes, groceries, and homes, have pets, interact with their neighbours, go out with friends, and even be in romantic relationships. The goal is to have a successful life.

308 *Plants vs. Zombies* is a tower defense game where players cultivate various types of vegetation to protect their homes from invading zombies. The lawn in which the warfare takes place is divided into a grid, with the house on the left side and the horde of zombies coming from the right side. Different types of plants have their own special powers, and different types of zombies have their own unique abilities and attacks.

309 *Call of Duty* is a first-person shooting video game. Predominantly about warfare, it is a worldwide popular series and each version is based on a different war setting. For example, World War II, the Cold War, futuristic worlds, and outer space.

310 *Harvest Moon* is a farm simulation role-playing video game from Japan. The main object of the game is to rebuild a rundown farm and make it successful again.

311 *Ace Attorney* is a series of visual novel adventure video games developed by Japan. Through the fashion of storytelling, players become defense lawyers and

School of Names (also known as the Legalists); and *The Legend of Sword and Fairy*[312] by the School of Yin-yang. Finally, Xu Fu visits the emperor, and presents an unfinished game still in its early stages of development. Xu Fu asks for the emperor's investment, promising to return soon with the best game ever. The emperor complies and later on, finds out that the name of the game is called *The* Real *Duke Nukem Forever* (*Duke Nukem Forever*[313] is an actual game, and holds the Guinness world record for the longest development of a video game, which is more than 14 years from 1997-2011[314]).

A Story of Historical Resurrection

Although the setting of the narrative takes place during the Qin dynasty (221 BCE–206 BCE), the existence of video games in human civilization during that time establishes alienating factors from this reality. Whether the setting is a future mirroring a remodeled past, or a past set in an alternative universe, the story is definitely not of this world. In a satirical way, contemporary video games are referenced and connected with historical Chinese figures and their ideological values, as a method of discussing insights into the establishment and management of a prosperous, peaceful society. Focusing on the importance of the collective, the story emphasizes the powerful agency of the people in an empire. As a result, the vital role of *collectivism* naturally translates to the necessary architectural and urban forms of a city in facilitating conducts of collectivity. The story also focuses on the resurrection of past influential Chinese figures, and the reinforcement of traditional Chinese belief systems, which highlights the preservation of heritage and cultural identity. As these values are literally reinstated by prominent Chinese figures in a futuristic setting, they represent the principles of the Chinese Dream transcending time and space. Through the multiple failed attempts to cultivate a healthy civilization, the emperor's constant ignorance of the social public establishes a pattern of *repetitive history*, all ending in 'game over'.

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are responsible for helping their assigned clients win at court trials.

312 *The Legend of Sword and Fairy* is a Chinese mythology-based role-playing video game developed by Taiwan. With a prominent oriental aesthetic, the game includes humans, deities, and demons as they confront one another in various combats.

313 *Duke Nukem Forever* is a first-person shooter game. Players take on the role of Duke Nukem, who comes out of retirement to battle an alien invasion.

314 Luke Westaway, "Duke Nukem Forever Finally Released after 14 Years, Isn't Very Good," CNET, June 16, 2011, www.cnet.com/tech/gaming/duke-nukem-forever-finally-released-after-14-years-isnt-very-good/.

> *Luckily, Li Si had had the foresight to eliminate the feature of the game that evaluated the player's performance against historical world leaders. Otherwise, it was likely that the emperor would have terminated more than the game.*[315]
>
> ~ Ma Boyong (translated by Ken Liu),
> *The First Emperor's Games*

Historical Figures and Their Ideologies

The revival of past Chinese figures demonstrates contemporary China's growing attention towards cultural conservation and the anticipation of spreading the Chinese way in the future. As the reappearance of each historical person led to another video game failing to impress the emperor, a consistent pattern of repetitive history is established. The story stresses the cruciality of learning from the mistakes of the past, because the emperor's persistent disregard of public opinions always resulted in failure of the games. For instance, the first game, *Civilization*, is presented by Li Si (李四), who was a Chinese philosopher, politician, and calligrapher during the Qin dynasty. A ruthless statesman, Li Si believed in the efficient ideas of the Chinese political philosophy of Legalism, and served as Chancellor under Qin Shi Huang. After handing the emperor the demo for *Civilization*, Li Si explained that the game "'contains the essence of Legalism'"[316], and that "'The player must assume the role of a great leader and rule with ruthless precision… [but also] …keep the big picture in mind without neglecting micromanagement. The emperor's will is also the fate of all the NPCs[317].'"[318] However, the emperor ignored Li Si advice, and became obsessed with expansion and dominating territories. Being constantly at war, "…every other civilization viewed him [Qin Shi Huang] as the enemy. He had no choice but to devote all his resources to military units and buildings. Cities rioted all over the map, protesting high taxes, lack of space, and the constant war. The fire of rebellion swept the empire."[319] As the emperor continued the cycle of violence, and ignored the wellbeing of the collective people

315 Ken Liu, trans., "The First Emperor's Games," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation* (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 252.
316 Ibid., page 251.
317 NPC stands for non-player character or non-playable character. They are the characters in the game that the players cannot control.
318 Ken Liu, trans., "The First Emperor's Games," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation* (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), pages 251-252.
319 Ibid., page 252.



Fig. 4.44 Character from the video game "Civilization".



Fig. 4.45 Character from "The Sims" video game.

(in this case, the NPCs in the video game), the nation became "… plagued by invasion and rebellion, [and] his empire collapsed."[320] Qin Shi Huang angrily terminated the game.

Soon after, Kong Fu (孔鮒), a ninth-generation descendent of Confucius, brought a game called *The Sims*. Kong Fu emphasized to the emperor that "'The heart of this game is the strengthening of social ties…' The lecture bored the emperor."[321] During the gameplay, the emperor refused to show any kindness and mutual respect for his neighbors, and struggled to understand their ill feelings toward him. Thus, he was unsuccessful at the game and declared it as "most definitely treasonous"[322], due to its requirement of being courteous of others. The emperor could not comprehend the logic of pleasing others, as he viewed everyone as his subjects. When none of his neighbors visited him in *The Sims* game, "The emperor could barely contain his rage. He was the emperor, and everyone else was his subject. Who ever heard of the almighty emperor having to bribe some barbaric tribe with gifts so they'd come to pay their respect? What an insult!"[323] Even in the game, *Civilization*, the emperor chose the deity setting for himself, and neglected the needs of his citizens, because he was only interested his own expenditures of conquest.

In both situations, the emperor failed to manage a sustainable society and be part of one. His eventual downfall came from the accumulation of ignoring the collective's opinions and needs. Similarly, when the leader of the Mohists presented *Plants vs. Zombies*, and the emperor selected infinity mode so that war between the plants and zombies would rage on forever, the fragmentation of collective harmony is a metaphor for societal instability. As long as there is no collective unity, society will eventually fall. Many other modern-day video games are mentioned afterwards, such as *Call of Duty*; *Harvest Moon, Ace Attorney*, and *The Legend of Sword and Fairy*, but the story did not elaborate on their unsuccessfulness at satisfying the emperor. However, it is interpreted as having similar reasons to the trial plays of the previous three games. Thus, the narrative stresses the importance of learning from past mistakes through a demonstration of repetitive

320 Ken Liu, trans., "The First Emperor's Games," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation* (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 252.
321 Ken Liu, trans., "The First Emperor's Games," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation* (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 253.
322 Ibid., page 254.
323 Ken Liu, trans., "The First Emperor's Games," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation* (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), pages 253-254.



Fig. 4.46 Left to right: "Ace Attorney", "The Legend of Sword and Fiary", "Plants vs. Zombies".



Fig. 4.47 Left to right: "Call of Duty", "Harvest Moon".

history, which is a fundamental value of the Chinese Dream.

Design for the Collective

As the negligence of collectivism resulted in the repeated failures of every game, the constant emphasis on the power of the people promotes architectural notions of city design that appeal to the livelihood of the public. During the play of *Civilization*, Li Si reiterated the necessity complying to the satisfaction of the people (NPCs) when the emperor's city faced societal chaos. Li Si warned the emperor,

> "'It would be helpful to pay attention to the happiness levels of the citizens in the cities. A few city improvements to promote entertainment may be necessary. Remember, micromanagement. Micro.' Qin Shi Huang brushed this advice aside. He was the emperor! How could he possibly be expected to lower himself to worry about the happiness of some plebians in a game? 'They are supposed to entertain me, not the other way around.' The emperor adjusted the entertainment expenditure slider all the way to zero, and then sacrificed a citizen to rush a catapult 'The people in the game are also my subjects. They should be glad to be sacrificed for the good of the empire!' Predictably, this kind of policy did not improve his position. Soon...his empire collapsed."[324]"

Refusing to allocate any funds to the erection of public infrastructures of entertainment, the dissatisfaction of the collective people (NPCs) resulted in societal upheaval, civil rebellion, and the collapse of the kingdom. The fault of not appealing to the needs of the people, which in the story is interpreted architecturally as not investing in the building of public projects, metaphorically highlights the necessity of public amenities in resilient city planning. As public spaces encourage collective gathering and a sense of open freedom, they are essential to the overall happiness of the citizens and the collectivism of a civilization. Later on, when the emperor attempted *The Sim*, the importance of being attentive to the needs of others

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324 Ken Liu, trans., "The First Emperor's Games," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation* (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 252.

in the 'neighborhood' was stressed to the emperor once again by Kong Fu:

> "'Your Imperial Majesty, first, you must create a character, and then guide him through a simulated world…You must visit your neighbors often to increase their friendliness toward you. As the Great Sage himself said, 'Broaden the respect you have for your own aged parents to the parents of others; expand the love you have for your own children to the children of others.' The heart of this game is the strengthening of social ties…You have to visit them [(the neighbors)] often and shower them with gifts to gradually bring up the level of your relationship. Only then will they come visit you. The game teaches us the importance of kindness and mutual respect… "[325]

In various instances of the narrative, influential Chinese figures suggested to the emperor that he must be mindful of the collective people in which he governs, or the collective people in which he interacts with. Positive collectivism is key to the stability and prosperity of a civilization, and architecture and urban design can establish the necessary spaces, places, and thresholds to reinforce these fundamental structures of a resilient society.

> *Wiping the cold sweat from his brow, Chancellor Li backed away from the emperor. He had thought the emperor might choose the Emperor difficulty setting; instead, the emperor had picked Deity without Hesitation. Well, that was a glimpse into Qin Shi Huang's character.*[326]
>
> ~ Ma Boyong (translated by Ken Liu),
> *The First Emperor's Games*

325 Ken Liu, trans., "The First Emperor's Games," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation* (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 253.

326 Ibid., pages 252-253.

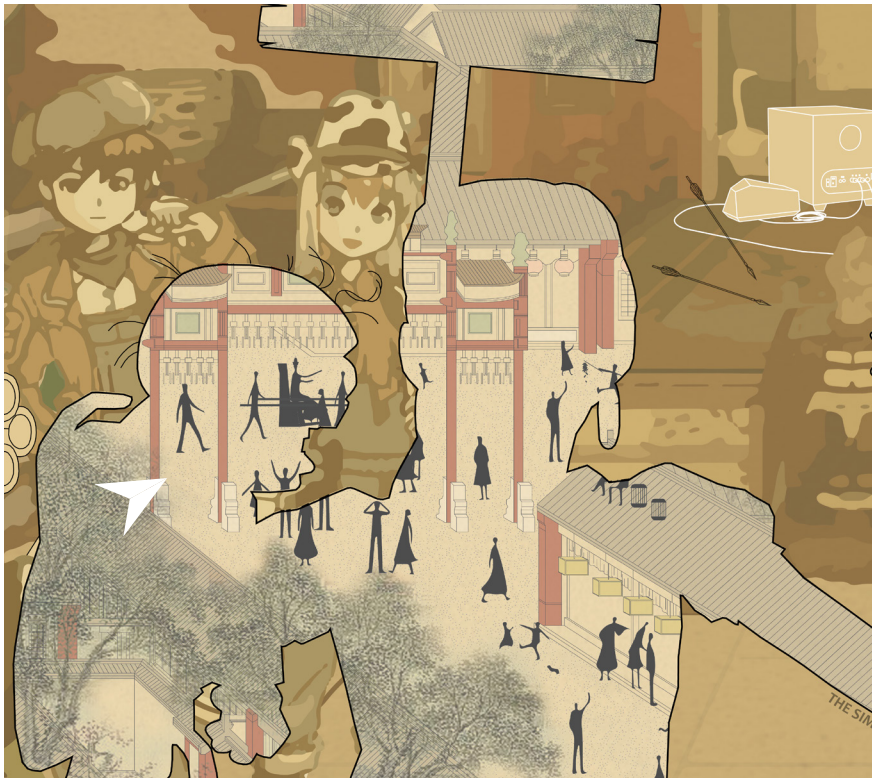


Fig. 4.48 The importance of entertainment amenities, and public, gathering spaces for healthy social interactions in urban design.



Fig. 4.49 A happy society equals the overall happiness of the plebians.


街头小吃
三等
街头小吃
三等

read from right to left



Fig. 4.50 Folding Beijing scroll section (Surface).



Fig. 4.51 Folding Beijing scroll section (Reveal).

4.4 Invisible Planets Series

4.4.1 *Folding Beijing*

> *The ground rose up. Lao Dao watched and waited until the fissure was wide enough. He crawled over the marble-lined edge onto the earthen wall, grabbing bits of metal protruding out of the soil. As the cleft widened and the walls elevated, he climbed, using his hands as well as his feet. At first, he was climbing down, testing for purchase with his feet. But soon, as the entire section of ground rotated, he was lifted into the air and flipped around.*[327]
>
> ~ Hao Jingfang (translated by Ken Liu), *Folding Beijing*

In an unspecified future, Beijing is physically divided into three classes, and sharing the same Earth's surface in every 48-hour cycle. One side of the earth belongs to First Space, with a population of five million whose allotted time lasts from six o'clock in the morning to six o'clock the next morning (24 hours). The flip side is shared by Second Space, with a population of twenty-five million whose allotted time lasts from six o'clock on that second day to ten o'clock at night (16 hours); and Third Space, with a population of fifty million whose allotted time is from ten o'clock at night to six o'clock in the morning (8 hours). When each Space finishes their time on the surface, the landscape they occupy is folded into the ground like origami, and everyone is put to sleep by a soporific gas automatically released from their beds. This mechanical transformation of Beijing's landscape through folding and turning is called the *Change*. Before the Change, trucks of the city's cleaning crew always patrol the streets to ensure that all citizens have returned home before the transition. Travelling between the Spaces is strictly prohibited and trespassers are arrested and sent to jail. The newly engineered

327 Ken Liu, trans., "Folding Beijing," *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction* (London: Head of Zeus, 2017), page 178.

landscape of Beijing is a product of the "Folding City Project", which was initiated by the Chinese government due to the urgent issue of lack of space hindering modern urban development. There is a break in the highway just outside the Seventh Ring Road, as all the ground rotation occurs within the Sixth Ring Road. From a distance outside of the city, Beijing looks like a floating island, collapsing, folding, rising, and turning in the calming sea.

The protagonist, Lao Dao, works at the waste-processing station in Third Space. One day, while sorting out garbage at work, he finds a bottle with a message inside. The note is written by a university student from Second Space, who has fallen in love with a woman from First Space. The student, Qin Tian, is looking for an individual to sneak into First Space and deliver a love letter and rose-shaped locket to the said woman, Yi Yan. If completed, the messenger will receive a hundred thousand yuan commission fee, and if a reply is brought back, two hundred thousand yuan. Lao Dao accepts the task, because he needs the money to pay for Tangtang's kindergarten tuition. Although Tangtang is not his actual daughter, she became the world to him the day he picked her up in front of the waste-processing station. After consulting an old friend, Peng Li, who has succeeded in sneaking into First Space from Third Space four times in his youth (he was caught the fifth time), Lao Dao embarks on his mission. Travelling to Second Space, then First Space, then back to Second Space, and finally, back home in Third, Lao Dao discovers the three different faces of the city, and the sophisticated society that he has ignorantly lived in all his life.

A Story of Engineered Landscape

Folding Beijing is a class stratification story that persistently utilizes architectural and urban visualizations as a method of contemplating perplexing social dilemmas, such as increasing cost of human labor, rising unemployment rate, and rapidly growing urban populations. Although these matters already exist in present Beijing, the narrative amplifies them into an alienating, futuristic setting, illuminating the everlasting effects of the Chinese Dream in future Chinese urban development. Being able to recognize cognitive societal issues projected into the estranging future emphasizes the urgency of contemplating these problems in the present era. From the single occupancy apartment unit situated in the crowded food vendor-filled street of Third Space, to the four bedrooms university-owned condo in the bustling corporate blocks of Second Space, and

to the empty boulevards lined with majestic ginkgoes and beautiful big houses in First Space, these differing depictions of home and city life are central to representing the societal multiplicity and the layered complexity of a future Beijing and its foundation of the Chinese Dream. The story embodies the elemental drives of the Chinese Dream, such as the power of *collective effort*, the mission of *national rejuvenation* in terms of unprecedented modernization and heritage preservation, and the hope of a *future utopia through technological advancement* are foundational to the innovation of Beijing's newly engineered urbanscape. The description of a typical worker's humble housing unit, the great desire to preserve the city's traditional built forms, and the indigenous concepts of urbanization transformed by globalization, *Folding Beijing* reveals the architectural manifestations of the Chinese Dream as it literally uproots and rebuilds the Chinese capital.

> *At the Change, the buildings of one space folded and retracted into the ground as the buildings of another space extended into the air, segment by segment, using the tops of the buildings of the other space as its foundation. The only difference between the spaces was the density of buildings.*[328]
>
> ~ Hao Jingfang (translated by Ken Liu), *Folding Beijing*

Collective Spirit: Blood, Sweat, and Tears

Before becoming a waste worker, Lao Dao's father was a construction worker. Along with more than 80 million other construction workers, they built the folding city. Driven by the common goal of a greater motherland and a better life for themselves and generations of Chinese people to come, the unified effort behind the impressive engineering feat indicates of the power of Chinese collectivism. The erection of the folding city was accomplished through endless devotion and sacrifice, as millions of Chinese workers' unwavering Chinese spirit overcame unimaginable hardships. To unearth and completely transform a modernizing capital metropolis, the strength of the Chinese people, the Chinese spirit, and the Chinese nation indicate a strong will to

328 Ken Liu, trans., "Folding Beijing," *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction* (London: Head of Zeus, 2017), page 182.

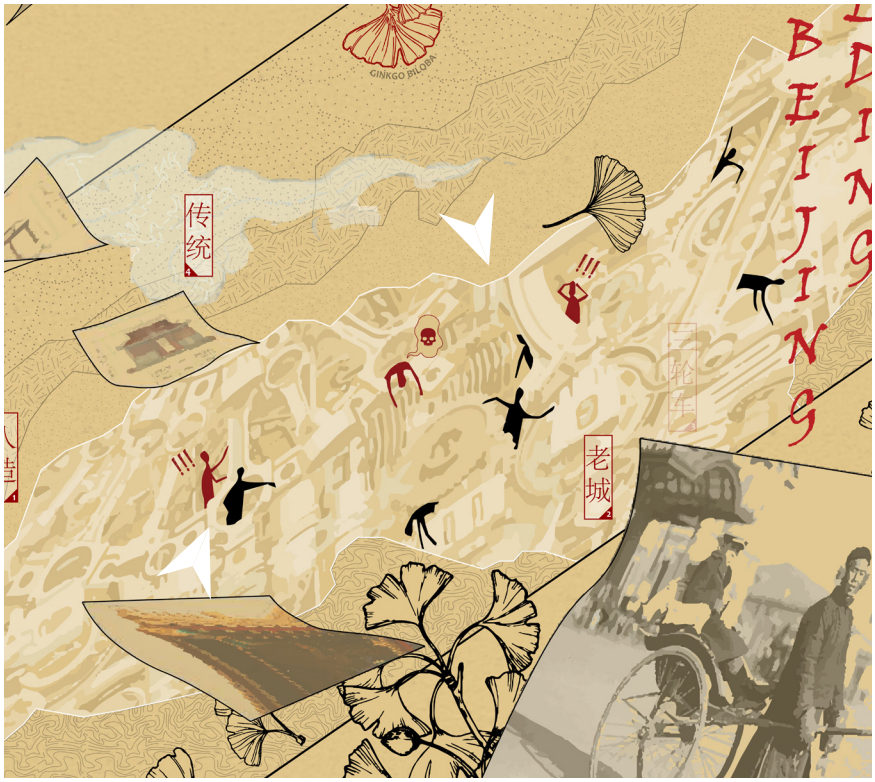


Fig. 4.52 The re-engineered mechanical urbanscape of Beijing and the theme of class struggle.



Fig. 4.53 The millions of construction workers (the common people) that erected the folding city through years of blood, sweat, and tears.

dream and have bold ambition. In the story, Lao Dao recalls that his father often reminisced the construction of the city with him, that

> "District by district, they had transformed the old city. Like termites swarming over a wooden house, they had chewed up the wreckage of the past, overturned the earth, and constructed a brand-new world. They had swung their hammers and wielded their adzes, keeping their heads down; brick by brick, they had walled themselves off until they could no longer see the sky. Dust had obscured their views, and they had not known the grandeur of their work."[329]

The blood, sweat, and tears that poured into the eventual existence of the folding city was only made possible through the undying flames of the collective Chinese spirit. That bit by bit, no matter the difficulty, treacherousness, and pain, the Chinese people assembled together to create "a brand-new world".[330] With the united outlook and hope for a greater country, all the impossibilities of a completely engineered urbanscape were eradicated through the collective dreaming of the Chinese people.

Revival of the Great Capital

The national rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is realized through the collective efforts and contributions of the Chinese people. The glory of the folding city transcends the citizens of the metropolis and outsiders, as many wish to live in the engineered city or cannot stop marveling at the city's magnificence. After the completion of the Folding City Project, people grappled at every small opportunity to remain in the city, especially the surplus of 80 million construction workers. The workers "realized what an honor it would be to live in such a city in the future"[331], but in the end, no more than twenty million were allowed to settle, and Lao Dao's father was amongst the selected population. Although his father's proceeding occupation was sorting through garbage at the waste-processing station, he never wanted to leave the city. Foreigners flock to the folding city every day to witness the great beast

329 Ken Liu, trans., "Folding Beijing," *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction* (London: Head of Zeus, 2017), page 180.

330 Ibid.

331 Ken Liu, trans., "Folding Beijing," *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction* (London: Head of Zeus, 2017), page 181.

transforming in the sea. On several occasions, the narrative vividly paints the grandeur of the mechanical city, which directly translates to a deep desire of national rejuvenation and greatness:

> "In the early dawn, the city folded and collapsed. The skyscrapers bowed submissively like the humblest servants until their heads touched their feet; then they broke again, folded again, and twisted their necks and arms, stuffing them into gaps. The compacted blocks that used to be skyscrapers shuffled and assembled into dense, gigantic Rubik's Cubes that fell into a deep slumber.
>
> The ground then began to turn. Square by square, pieces of the earth flipped 180 degrees around an axis, revealing the buildings on the other side. The buildings unfolded and stood up, awakening like a herd of beasts under the gray-blue sky. The island that was the city settled in the orange sunlight, spread open, and stood still as misty gray clouds rolled around it."[332]

The *Change* is also referred to as a cycle of "urban renewal", symbolizing the awakening of Chinese national rejuvenation. In the narrative, a celebration ceremony takes place in the story to praise the magnificence of the folding city even more. After Lao Dao met the woman (Yi Yan) and delivered the message, he befriended a past Third Spacer in First Space. The man's name is Ge Daping (Lao Dao calls him Lao Ge), and after retirement from the army, he joined an agency responsible for assisting in government affairs. Henceforth, Lao Ge was allowed to live in First Space. Using a fake identification card, Lao Ge snuck Lao Dao into the banquet hall hosting *The Folding City at Fifty* ceremony. The room was filled with large round tables that each had fresh flowers in the center, and a gigantic chandelier hung from the ceiling. A lectern was set up at the front and on the huge screen behind it

> "was an ever-shifting series of images of Beijing. The photographs were perhaps taken from an airplane and captured the entirety of the city; the soft light of dawn and dusk, the dark purple and deep blue sky,

332 Ken Liu, trans., "Folding Beijing," *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction* (London: Head of Zeus, 2017), page 179.

> clouds racing across the sky, the moon rising from a corner, the sun setting behind a roof."[333]

The glorification of the folding city showcases national rejuvenation through the invention of a new urban typology, and the futuristic, transformative architecture embodies Chinese pride and innovative thinking.

The Three Faces and Homes of the City

Through the various depictions of home and city within the narrative, each Space bears their own distinctive urban formation and indicate specific architectural and spatial debates for contemporary and future design initiates. By illustrating the dwelling space of a common worker's single apartment unit in Third Space, the congested streets of the cooperate community in Second Space, the empty and westernized boulevards of First Space, and the nostalgia of Beijing's ancient landscape, *Folding Beijing* critiques Beijing's current urban condition and warns for future city planning dangers. For instance, the story begins with a detailed description of Peng Li's single housing unit in Third Space:

> "His ordinary single-occupancy public housing unit was sparsely furnished: six square meters in area with a washroom, a cooking corner, a table and a chair, and a cocoon-bed equipped with storage drawers underneath for clothes and miscellaneous items. The walls were covered with water stains and footprints, bare save for a few haphazardly installed hooks for jackets, pants, and linens."[334]

Peng Li's six square meters home references the urgent issue of lack of space greatly hindering urban expansion and rapidly degrading the quality of adequate, affordable housing in modern cities. Similar to the living conditions of migrant workers, the citizens of Third space are densely packed into cramped apartment buildings with the bare minimum and no means of individuality. These dwelling places eradicate a sense of identity and livelihood as Peng Li and Lao Dao are often portrayed as dull individuals with no direction

333 Ken Liu, trans., "Folding Beijing," *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction* (London: Head of Zeus, 2017), page 196.

334 Ibid., page 174.

of purpose, no motivation, and no hopes for the future. Although getting the commission money to pay for Tangtang's kindergarten fee set Lao Dao on a journey to finally achieve something, after the mission was complete, Lao Dao immediately returned to the bleak lifestyle of a third spacer. Nonetheless, aside from the lack of adequate dwellings, Third Space is unique for its food vendor-filled streets clouded with the aromas of tradition and childhood. People crowded the roads every day after work,



Fig. 4.54 The food vendor streets of Third Space serving traditional foods and spreading the aroma of home.

> "…picking through local produce and bargaining loudly. Customers packed the plastic tables at the food hawker stalls, which were immersed in the aroma of frying oil. They ate heartily with their faces buried in bowls of hot and sour rice noodles, their heads hidden by clouds of white stream. Other stands featured mountains of jujubes and walnuts, and chunks of cured meat swung overhead. This was the busiest hour of the day---work was over, and everyone was hungry and loud."[335]

335 Ken Liu, trans., "Folding Beijing," *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction* (London: Head of Zeus, 2017), page 172.

Even after Lao Dao experienced the luxuries and finer foods of First Space, at the end of the narrative, his ultimate comfort came from an ordinary bowl of chow mein in Third Space, where his home and culture resided.

When Lao Dao arrived in Second Space to meet the sender of the message (Qin Tian), this face of the city was a significantly more refined community filled with aspirations and hopeful minds. Brimming with young office workers and university students,

> "The sidewalks were filled with people walking very fast, and from time to time some trotted and tried to shove their way through the crowd, causing those in front of them to begin running as well. Everyone seemed to run across intersections. The men dressed mostly in Western suits while the women wore blouses and short skirts with scarves around their necks and compact, rigid purses in their hands that lent them an air of competence and efficiency. The street teemed with cars, and as they waited at intersections for the light to change, the drivers stuck their heads out of the windows, gazing anxiously ahead."[336]

The wider streets, lower story and more spacious residence buildings, large windows, and arrays of sunlight were alienating to Lao Dao. But these basic design features of a city evidently inspired a sense of purpose and fulfillment for the second spacers. The positive influences of architectural and spatial configurations on the daily livelihood of citizens are also emphasized by the young generation that inhibits Second Space, a busy and ambitious population filled with hopes and dreams.

The urbanscape of First Space contrasts drastically with the environment of Third and Second Space. Large open parks and lakes, wide boulevards lined with tall trees on both side, and rare sights of moving vehicles and pedestrians. First Space is the most modernized face of Beijing, westernized into the imagery of a pastoral mural. However, Yi Yan (the receiver of Qin Tian's message) does not seem content living in First Space, not in the big beautiful house with the perfect lawn, not with her rich husband, and not with the Beijing that retains barely any traces of its Chinese heritage. The narrative

336 Ken Liu, trans., "Folding Beijing," *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction* (London: Head of Zeus, 2017), page 185.

inserts many nostalgias of tradition through the implementation of cultural artifact and the remembrance of ancient city planning. For example, in First Space, the cars are described as single-rider carts with "…two wheels and a canopy, and resembled an ancient carriage or rickshaw one might see on TV, except there was no horse or person pulling the cart."[337] Additionally, during the Folding City at Fifty celebration ceremony, the photographs projected onto the screen included "aerial shots [revealing] the magnificence of Beijing's ancient symmetry, the modern expanse of brick courtyards and large green parks that had extended to the Sixth Ring Road, [and] Chinese-style theatres".[338] Drastically influenced by globalization, the international style of First Space lacks the richness of indigenous culture, as material forms and the layout of the city barely resemble the old Beijing before the Folding City Project. Although the urbanscape is portrayed with peaceful sublimity, the atmosphere in First Space is unsettling and foreign. Conclusively, the invention of the folding city is rooted in the principles of the Chinese Dream, and the architectural and urban creations that are established through the Chinese Dream address critical dilemmas within in the contemporary and future world of city design.

Coincidentally, in discussing the three different faces of the city, they also respond to the three concepts of abundance, prudence, and figuration in the establishment of the Chinese city. For instance, Third Space is characterized by its abundance of people, Second Space is defined by the maximization of the working force, and First Space is privileged with excessive material things. However, as Lao Dao travels and dwells in each space, none of them are completely satisfactory. Each class have its own beauty and strength, but also misses pieces that belong to the other two classes. Henceforth, ultimate abundance of the Chinese city indicates the synthesis of every space's maximum quantity, which is the case for *The Micro-Era* story depicted as an age with no worries. The collective feat of the millions of Chinese construction workers that built the folding city demonstrates the strong spirit of prudence. Through self-strengthening, self-resiliency, and self-management, Beijing is reborn as a fantastical mechanical creature, respected by the people that live there and marveled by everyone that do not. As the narrative persistently brings back nostalgic memories of the beauty of the ancient Chinese city and its traditions, whether that be the reinterpretation of the rickshaw or the aroma of cultural foods,

337 Ken Liu, trans., "Folding Beijing," *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction* (London: Head of Zeus, 2017), page 188.

338 Ibid., page 196.

they allude to the importance of figuration which emphasizes the cruciality of heritage preservation.

> *As soon as the vendors along the pedestrian lane opened shop, he sat down at a plastic table and ordered a bowl of chow mein. For the first time in his life, Lao Dao asked for shredded pork to be added to the noodles, just one time, he thought. A reward.*[339]
>
> ~ Hao Jingfang (translated by Ken Liu),
> *Folding Beijing*

339 Ken Liu, trans., "Folding Beijing," *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction* (London: Head of Zeus, 2017), page 205.



Fig. 4.55 Old photograph of a traditional rickshaw.

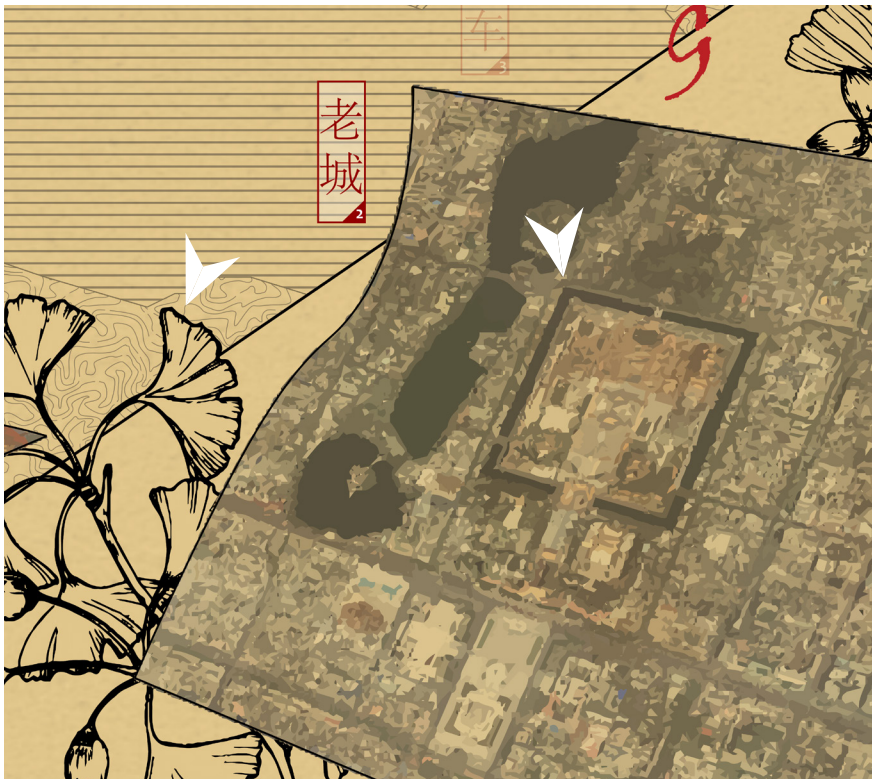
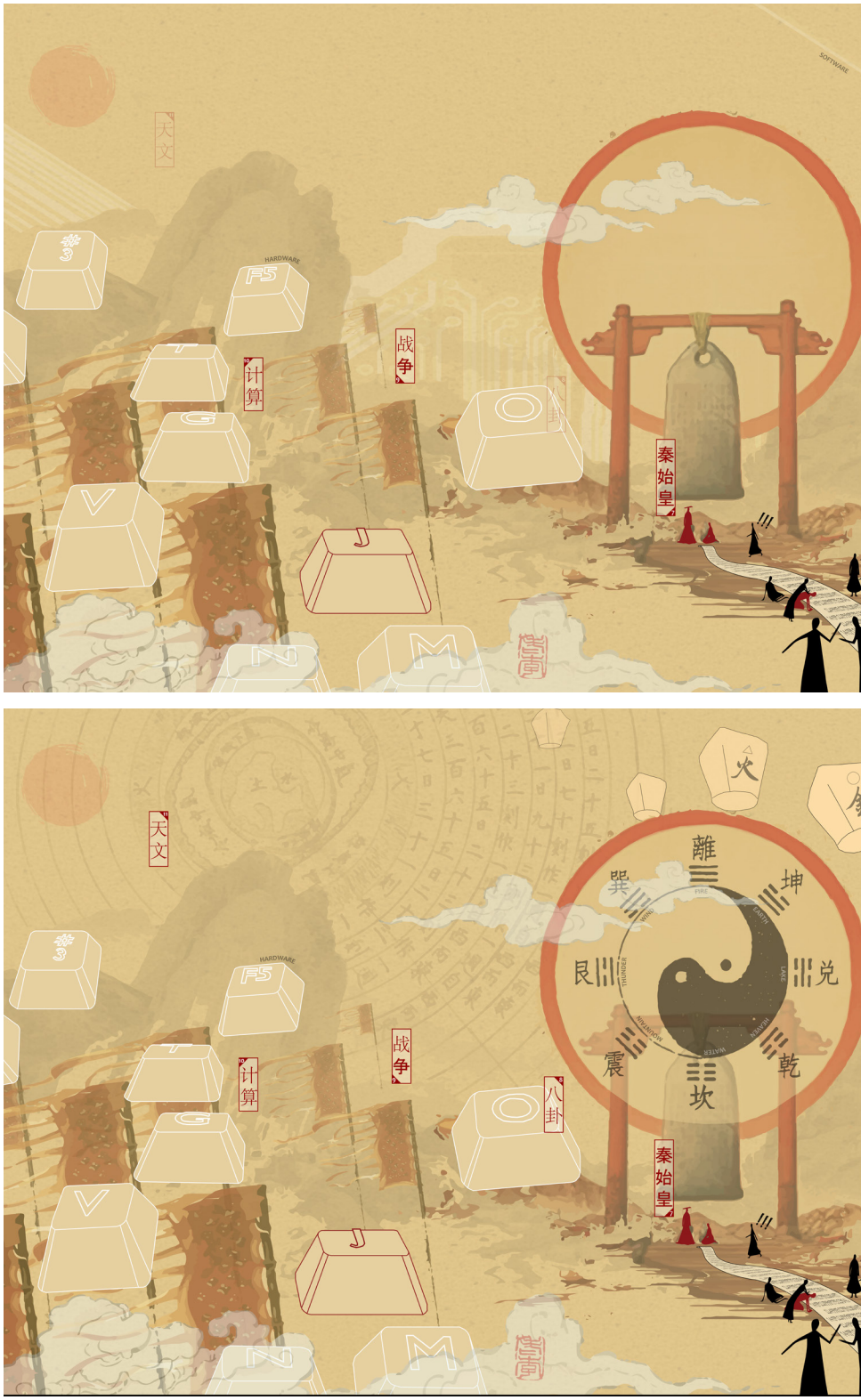


Fig. 4.56 Map of the Forbidden City showing the beautiful symmetry of the old city contrasting with the international style in design influenced through globalization and modernity (represented by the gingko leaf which is only mentioned in First Space).


天文
计算
战争
八卦
秦始皇
离
坤
兑
乾
坎
震
艮
巽

read from right to left



Fig. 4.57 The Circle scroll section (Surface).



Fig. 4.58 The Circle scroll section (Reveal).

4.4.2 *The Circle*

> *'Imagine a silk cloth as large as all-under-heaven. The string of numbers in the circle's ratio could be written in tiny script, each numeral no bigger than the head of a fly, all the way from here to the edge of the sky, and then coming back here start on a new line. Continued this way, the entire cloth could be filled, and there would still be no end to the numbers, and the sequence still wouldn't repeat. Your Majesty, this endless string of numbers contains the mysteries of the universe.'*[340]
>
> ~ Liu Cixin (translated by Ken Liu),
> *The Circle*

In an alternative version of the Qin Dynasty, King Zheng of Qin is a ruthless emperor obsessed with warfare and conquest. After defeating the King of Yan, a messenger by the name of Jing Ke, arrives at King Zheng's palace to deliver the surrender. The Crown prince Dan of Yan instructed Jing Ke to cease the opportunity and assassinate King Zheng, but due to great admiration for King Zheng, Jing Ke failed to do so. As a result of Jing Ke's honesty and intelligence, King Zheng spared his life in return for Jing Ke to join the Qin kingdom and contribute his skills and knowledge. After two years of servitude, Jing Ke gained many praises from the emperor for he invented a new bow that could shoot twice as far as the old ones; redesigned the war chariots to ride smoothly over tough terrain; and built bridges that required half as much material as before but are much stronger. However, Jing Ke wished to achieve more for his Majesty, and informed King Zheng that he will study the language of the Heavens to decipher the secrets of the universe.

In an attempt to uncover the mystery of eternal life and universal harmony, Jing Ke proposes that the answers lay in the mathematical properties of the Sun's and Moon's perfectly circular geometry, in the endless and never repeating numbers of the *pi* ratio. Thus, by obtaining the infinite string of numbers, the ways of universal balance and all living things and matter will be revealed to the king. However, to even begin the process, hundreds of thousands of numbers must be calculated to understand any simple message at all. The endeavor is far too great for Jing Ke alone, especially when King Zheng only granted him a few years to decipher God's

340 Ken Liu, trans., "The Circle," *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction* (London: Head of Zeus, 2017), page 237.

messages or face execution. As a result, Jing Ke requested for three million Qin soldiers to build the calculating formation. By training the men to use black and white flags to form an AND gate, OR gate, NAND gate, NOR gate, XOR-gate, XNOR-gate and a tristate gate, the calculating formation became a massive computing machine made of human beings.



Fig. 4.59 Jing Ke reporting to King Zheng about his progress in obtaining the circular ratio (pi). If not to the King's satisfaction, Jing Ke will be crushed under his inscripted stone monument.

A Story of Universal Oneness

The narrative utilizes technological innovation to emphasize the importance of unity and oness in the Chinese culture. Although the concept of a computing machine is familiar in that the calculating formation represents an early predecessor of modern-day computers, unfamiliarity is established through the invention's peculiar human composition. The obsession of deciphering the secrets of a circle, which ultimately cost King Zheng his entire army and kingdom as well as his own life, reinforces that the concept of *universal harmony* (inscribed into the circle) is core to traditional Chinese belief, and will continue to dominate the minds of Chinese

nation even in an alternative world or the future. The idea that a circle symbolizes universal oneness is cognitive, but the setting of the narrative is of another realm, furthering reiterating the longevity of the Chinese belief system. In Jing Ke's elaborative demonstration of the functioning of the calculating formation to King Zheng, the story stresses the significance of *practical purposefulness*, which is often inherent in Chinese science fiction through the detailed explanation of cognitive novelty, such as technological innovations. Even though the logistics behind the calculating formation is the basics of computing machines, a certain level of engineering knowledge is still required to clearly define its operations, which starts simple, but when combined becomes exceedingly complex. As the story focuses on creating technological innovation to obtain the circular ratio that holds the secrets of the universe, the central motif of the circle indicates the cultural values of balance, unity, and oneness in Chinese society, which influences architectural and urban manifestations.

> *"It was another beautiful day with the sun and the moon both out. King Zheng and Jing Ke stood together on a high stone dais, with the king's numerous ministers in rows behind them. Below them, a magnificent phalanx of three million Qin soldiers stood arrayed on the ground, the entire formation a square three miles on each side. Lit by the freshly risen sun, the phalanx remained still like a giant carpet made of three million terra-cotta warriors. But when a flock of birds wandered above the phalanx, the birds immediately felt the potential for death from below and scattered anxiously."*[341]
>
> ~ Liu Cixin (translated by Ken Liu),
> *The Circle*

The Calculating Formation

In the span of ten years, Jing Ke computed a hundred digits of the circular ratio by himself. However, due to the sheer desire and obsession to uncover the mysteries of the universe, it was not nearly enough for King Zheng who demanded ten thousand digits in two years and reaching a hundred thousand digits after another five years. Even when Jing Ke gathered together all the

341 Ken Liu, trans., "The Circle," *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction* (London: Head of Zeus, 2017), page 241.



Fig. 4.60 Diagram of Bagua, with the Yin and Yang symbol in the center which is always in the shape of a perfect circle. In the background, a circular diagram of the universe fills the sky.



Fig. 4.61 A story about technological advancement and the violence of warfare, all key contributors to societal revolution.

capable mathematicians in the realm to assist with the calculations, which amounted to a total of nine people including Jing Ke, they will only be able to obtain three hundred digits in two years and three thousand digits by the end of their life spans. Nonetheless, the emperor promised to provide any resources that Jing Ke needs to make it happen. Therefore, Jing Ke asked the emperor for three million of his soldiers, almost the entirety of the king's army. Once again, the concept of abundance is key to the Chinese city, or in this particular case, the Chinese Empire. The abundance of collective people, collective minds, and collective labour are essential to achieving revolutionary feats. Thus, Jing Ke trained the three million men to assemble into the calculating formation that operated like a rudimentary computing machine. Before doing so, Jing Ke used three men to explain to King Zheng the logistics behind the operation of his human-made computer hardware. Assigning two soldiers to number input (they are named Input One and Input Two) and the third soldier to number output (named Output), Jing Ke instructs them to form a triangle with output as the apex and inputs as the base. Taking out six small flags

> "---three white, three black---and handed them out to the three soldiers so that each held a black flag and a white flag. 'White represents zero; black represents one…Output, you turn around and look at Input One and Input Two. If they both raise black flags, you raise the black flag as well. Under all other circumstances you raise the white flag.'…Input One and Input Two raised their flags three times. The first time they were black-black, the second time white-black, and the third time black-white. Output reacted correctly each time, raising the black flag once and the white one twice."[342]

Thus, the three soldiers formed a component of a calculating system called the AND gate. Then, Jing Ke proceeded to reformulate the operations between the three men to demonstrate the OR gate, NAND gate, NOR gate, XOR-gate, XNOR-gate and a tristate gate to King Zheng, which all together made up an entire calculating system. The extensive explanation of a computing machine's calculating hardware demonstrates the necessity of practical purposefulness, which is communicated through the straightforward approach of utilizing two numerals, one and zero. Although the end product is

342 Ken Liu, trans., "The Circle," *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction* (London: Head of Zeus, 2017), page 240.

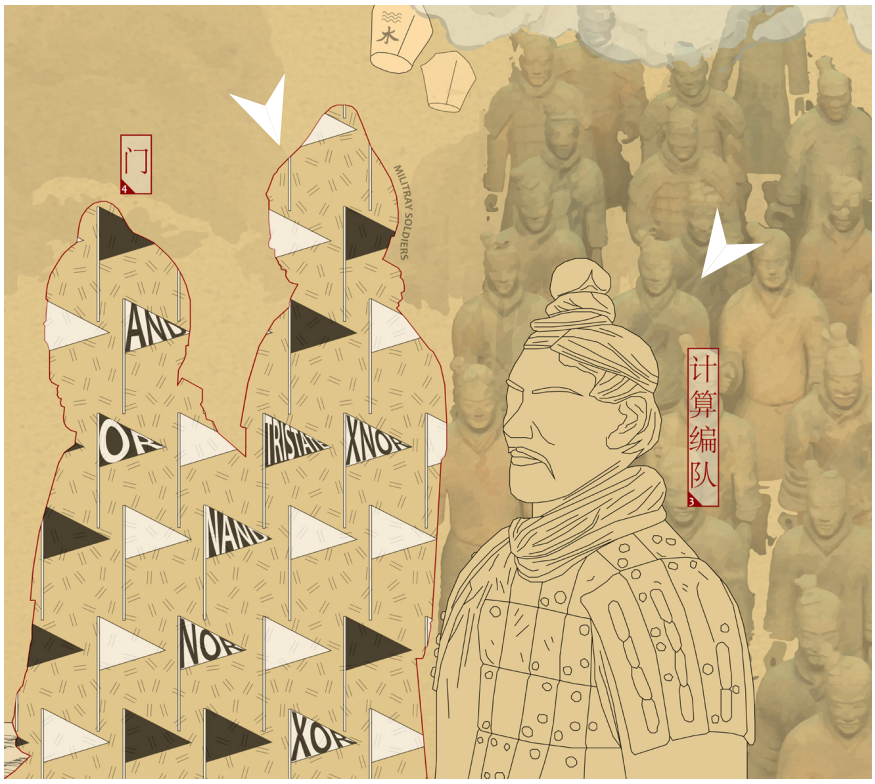


Fig. 4.62 Using white and black flags, the three million Qin soldiers formed the Calculating Formation.



Fig. 4.63 The nine mathmaticians (including Jing Ke) dedicating their lives to figuring out the circular ratio (pi) for King Zheng. Literally their lives depend on it.

highly sophisticated,

> "'the complexity in everything in the universe is built up from the simplest components…an immense number of simple components, when structured together appropriately, can generate extremely complex capabilities…this new method can use zero and one to represent any number, and this allows the calculating formation to use a large number of simple components to collectively carry out high-speed calculations.'"[343]

Universal Harmony of the Circle

King Zheng's obsession of the circular ratio is due to the cultural belief that the circle represents infinity and the ultimate harmony of the universe. Jing Ke's discovery that the perfect circle holds the secrets of world unity and immortality occurred when he realized that the only existing perfect circles in life are the sun and the full moon. But God has put them in the sky, or in other words, in the Heavens, out of men's reach. Although the circle is the simplest form consisting of only a single line, it "disguises a profound mystery".[344] Jing Ke referred to the perfect circle as "'…the most mysterious shape the Heavens gifted us'"[345], because

> "'…the ratio between the circumference and the diameter of a circle is an endless string of numbers beginning with 3.1415926. But it keeps on going after that, never repeating itself…by treating the numbers as coordinates, it's possible to turn the numbers into new shapes and pictures…maybe it will be an illustration of an enigma of the universe. Or maybe it will be an essay, or perhaps even a whole book.'"[346]

As the narrative mainly focuses on the cultural concept of a perfect circle, which is the main apparatus in pushing forward the plot, the circular ratio dominates the entire kingdom and the people. The

343 Ken Liu, trans., "The Circle," *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction* (London: Head of Zeus, 2017), page 241.
344 Ibid., page 236.
345 Ken Liu, trans., "The Circle," *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction* (London: Head of Zeus, 2017), page 237.
346 Ibid.

emperor's undivided attention towards deciphering the endless string of numbers emphasize the meanings of the circle, that transcends and influences Chinese society, culture, and built forms.

Since ancient times, Chinese building has been deeply rooted in the traditional concept of the *Feng Shui* practice (风水学), which is also sometimes referred to as Chinese geomancy. Feng shui directly translates to "wind-water", and originates from the Taoism's understanding of nature, in which the world is filled with the flow of universal energy called *qi* (气).[347] Since the flow of qi resembles the pattern of wind and water through the landscape, individuals that understand the movement of wind-water can manipulate the "cosmic current" to bring forth happiness, prosperity, good health, long life, and unification of family.[348] Thus, feng shui involves astronomical, astrological, architectural, cosmological, geographical, and topological dimensions.[349]

Although feng shui is identified as pseudoscientific, many contemporary architects in China seek feng shui consultants, and pay a large sum for their analysis and diagnosis of qi in a design space. The principles of feng shui provides a system of philosophical laws that governs the arrangement and orientation of spatial designs in relation to the flow of qi. Dedicated to establishing harmony between people, buildings, and nature, the principles of feng shui advocate for the unifying existence of all matters of life. The five elements of feng shui are wood, earth, fire, metal, and water. Each element is also symbolized by their own assigned shape: rectangle represents wood; triangle represents fire; square represents earth; circle represents metal; and curvilinear shapes, which often involves wavy lines, represent water. In addition to the circle being an element of feng shui, one of the most important energy maps of the feng shui system is called the *Bagua* (八卦), and at the center of the bagua is the perfectly circular symbol of yin yang.

The center of a bagua is the embodiment of qi, the energy current that inhibits everything in the universe. Represented by a perfect circle, qi orchestrates the ultimate harmony between the

347 "Feng Shui," *National Geographic* (National Geographic Society, May 20, 2022), education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/feng-shui.

348 Ole Bruun, *Fengshui in China: Geomantic Divination between State Orthodoxy and Popular Religion* (NIAS Press, 2003), page 3.

349 Roisin Everard, "Feng Shui and Chinese Geomancy: A Guide to a Better Life?," Historic Mysteries, September 19, 2022, www.historicmysteries.com/feng-shui/.

opposing forces of yin and yang. Henceforth, as the perfect circle is fundamental to the Chinese cultural belief of universal balance, the story's emphasis on deciphering the secrets of the circular ratio indicates the significance of unity between humankind, built forms, and nature that transcends the Chinese society and their architecture. The seeking of universal harmony dictates the design decisions of location, orientation, and physical form of a building, but also the smaller details such as the placement of windows, doors, and interior furniture. Thus, the significance of the circle in the story urges for the revival and renewal of ancient Chinese architecture. For instance, circular or semicircular elements are often present in traditional Chinese architecture, because the curvatures bring momentum and increase the flow of qi within a space. As the mission of obtaining the circular ratio began with Jing Ke gazing up to the sun and the full moon, the Chinese Moon Festival is held annually under a perfectly circular moon, which represents unity amongst the family and the harmony of the universe.

> *'What is the language of the Heavens, then?'*
>
> *'Mathematics. Numbers and shapes are the means by which the Heavens write to the world.'*[350]
>
> ~ Liu Cixin (translated by Ken Liu),
> *The Circle*

350 Ken Liu, trans., "The Circle," *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction* (London: Head of Zeus, 2017), page 235.



Fig. 4.64 The five elements of Feng Shui: wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. They dictated ancient Chinese architectural and urban design. Even till today, some architects and homeowners hire professionals that specialize in feng shui study.

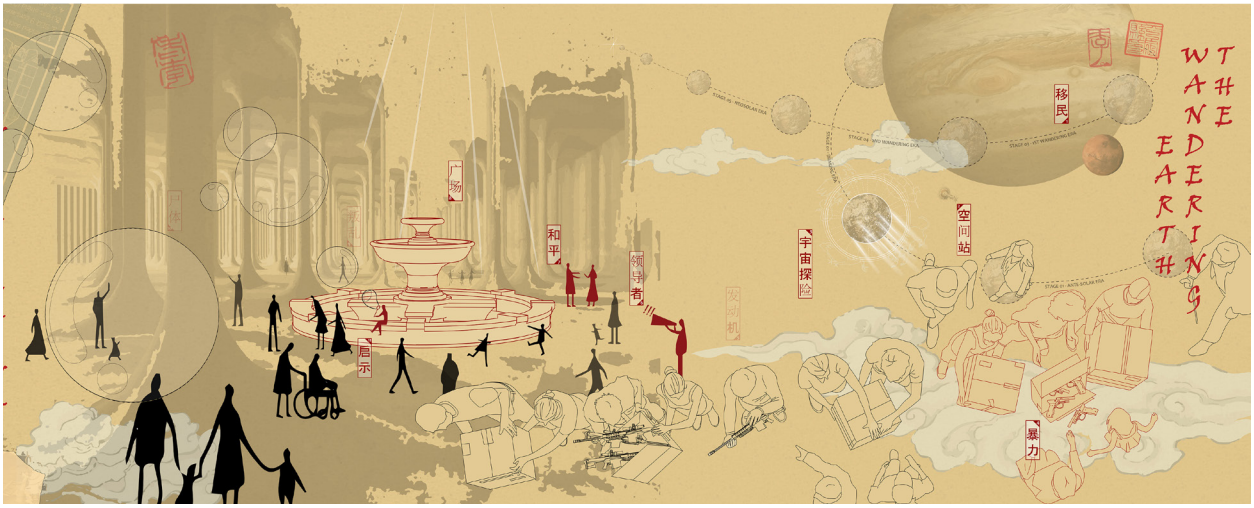


Fig. 4.65 The Wandering Earth

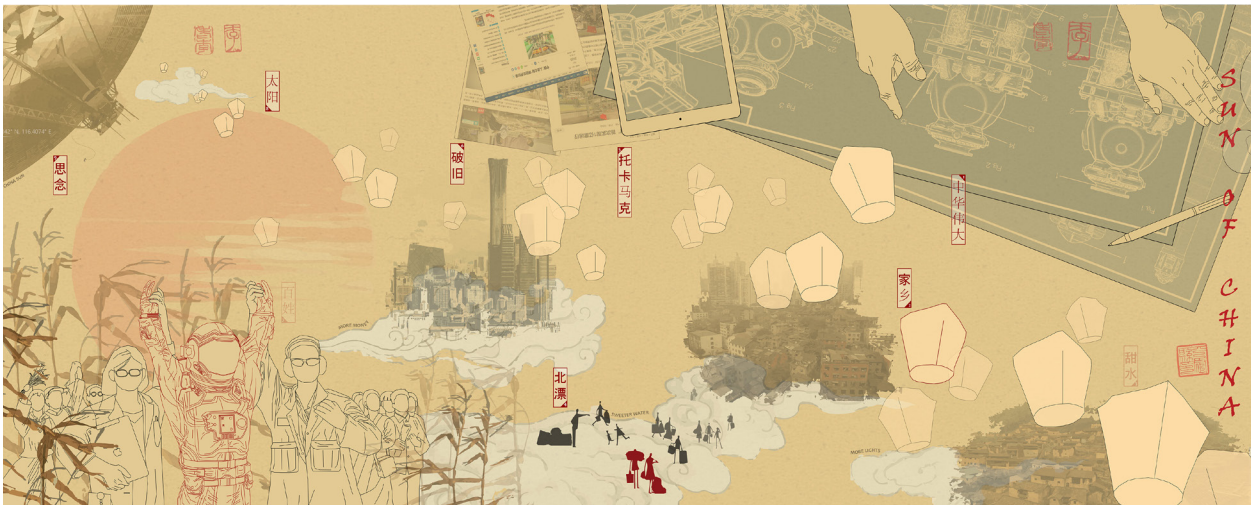


Fig. 4.66 Sun of China

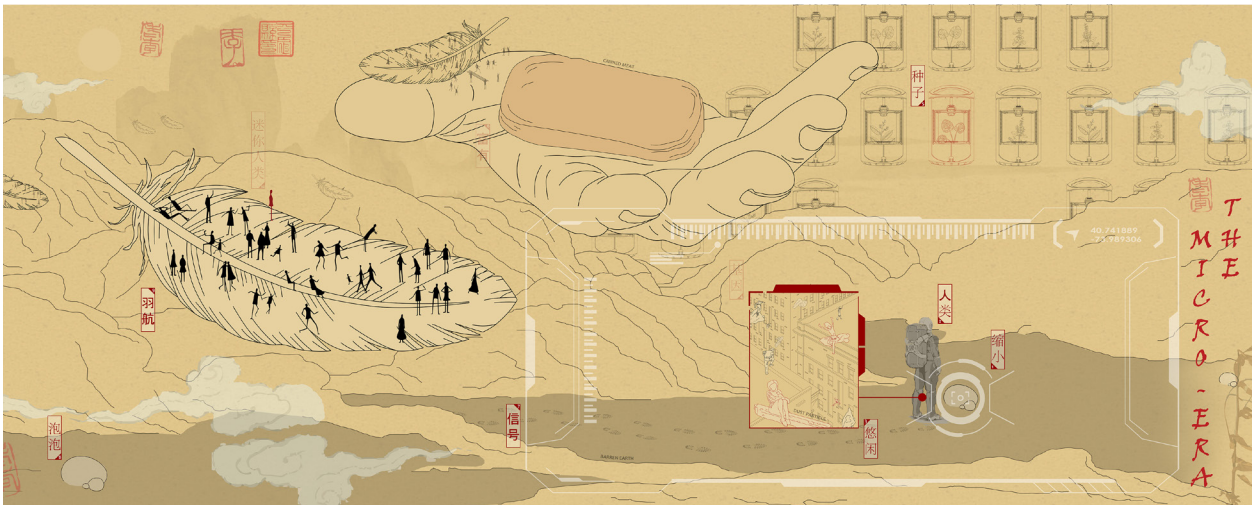


Fig. 4.67 The Micro-Era



Fig. 4.68 Moonlight



Fig. 4.69 The First Emperor's Games



Fig. 4.70 Folding Beijing

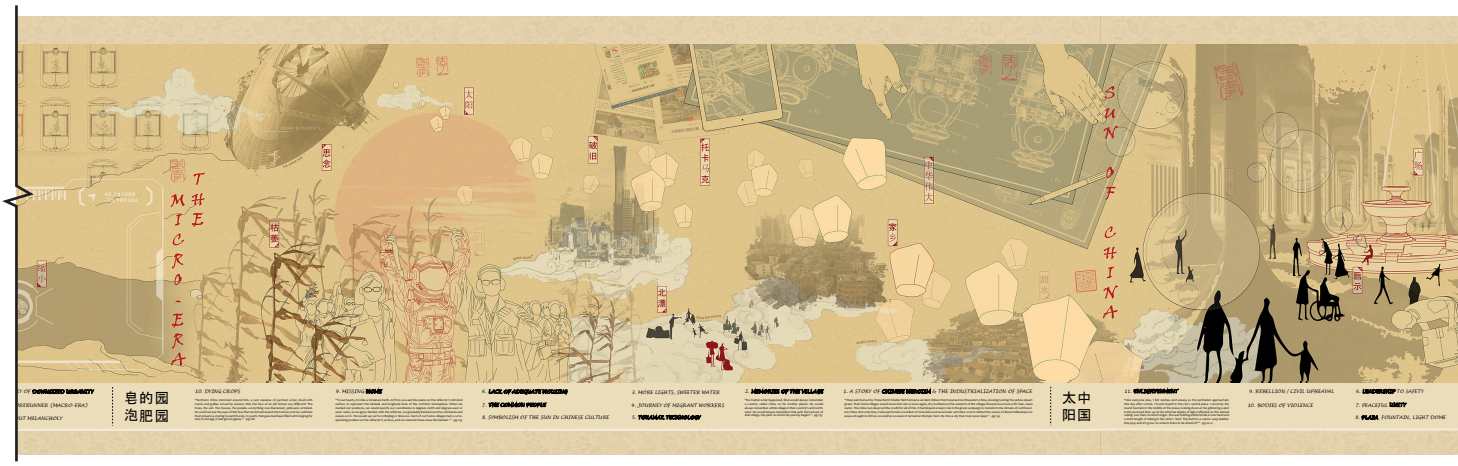


Fig. 4.71 The Circle

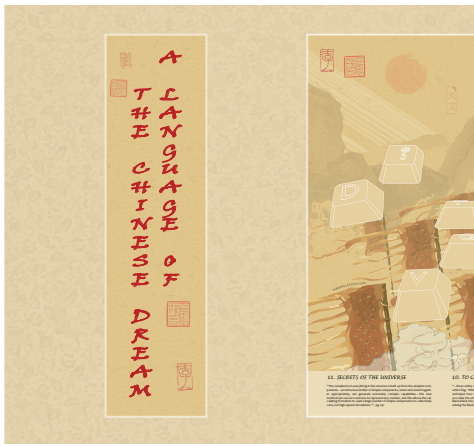
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Fig. 5.1 First version of full scroll, hand drawing.


THE MICRO-ERA
SUN OF CHINA
阜的园
泡肥园
太中
阳国


FOLDING BEIJING
IMPROVE OUR CITY!!!
MICROMANAGEMENT
MICROMANAGEMENT
ENTERTAINMENT AMENITIES!!!
SOCIAL AMENITIES!
PUBLIC SPACES!
PLEBIANS HAPPINESS!!!
THE EMPEROR'S GAMES
折北
叠京
游帝始
戏的皇


A LANGUAGE OF THE CHINESE DREAM



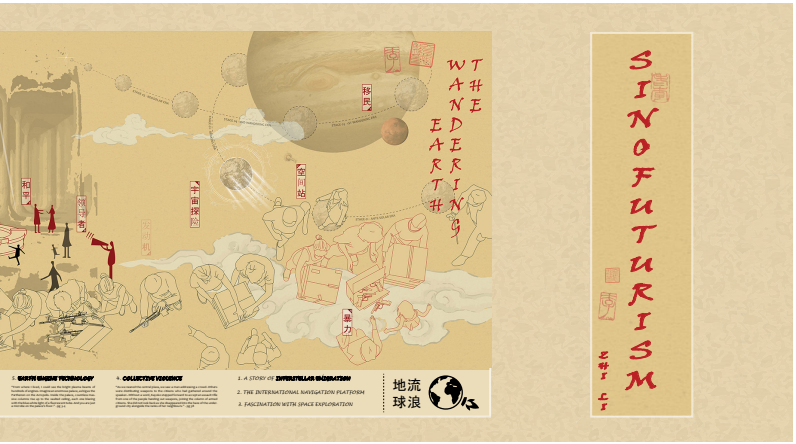


Fig. 5.2 Full Scroll synthsizing seven narratives (Surface). Read from right to left.

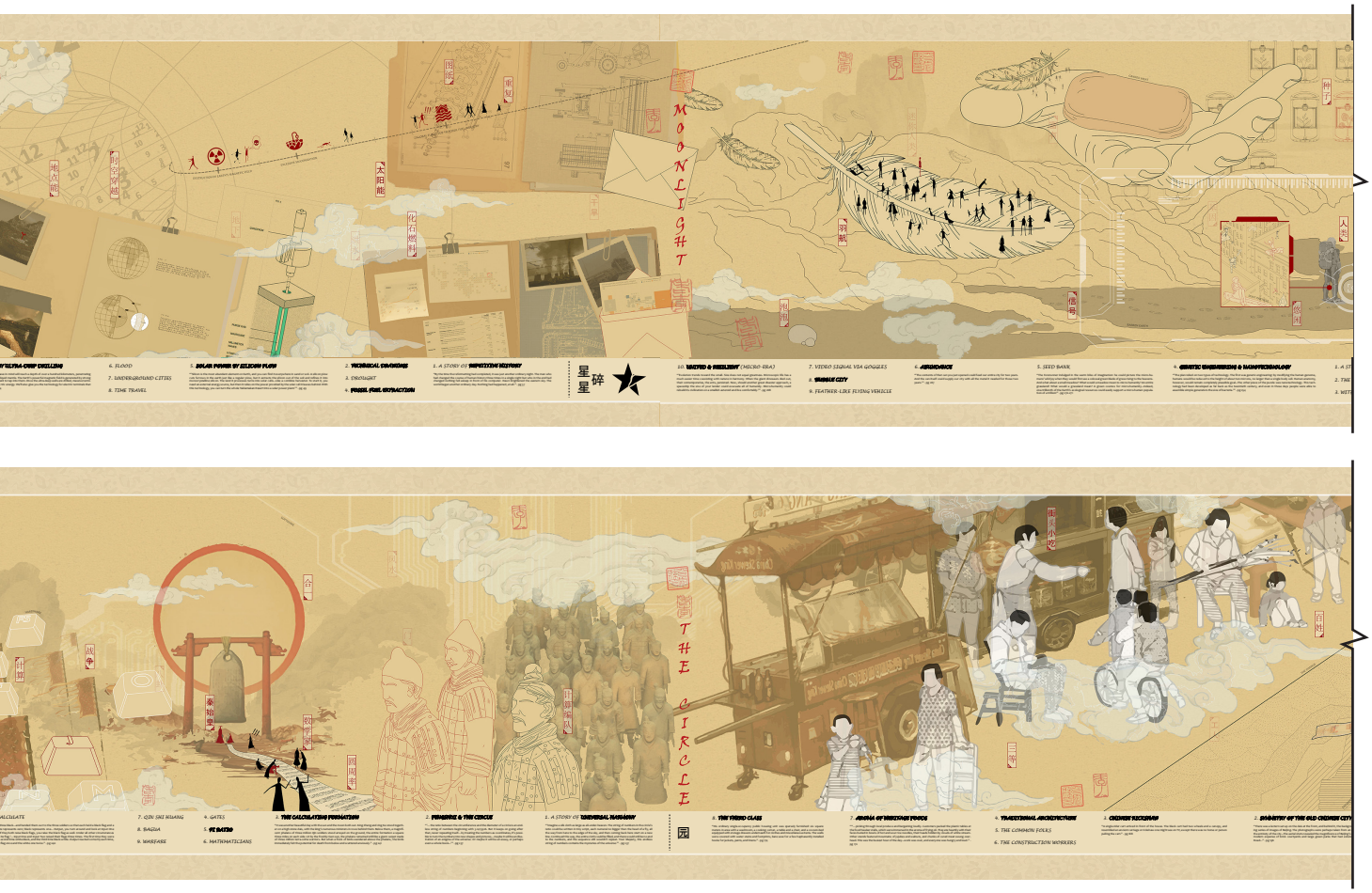
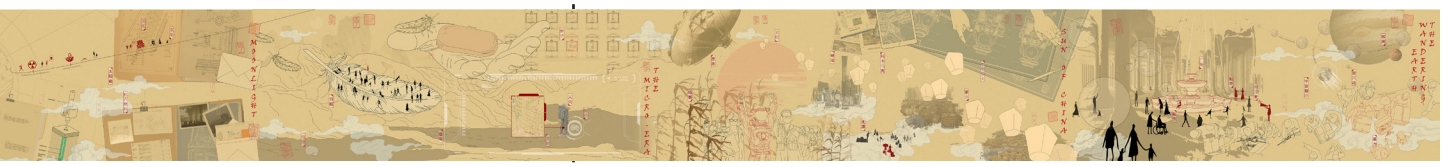
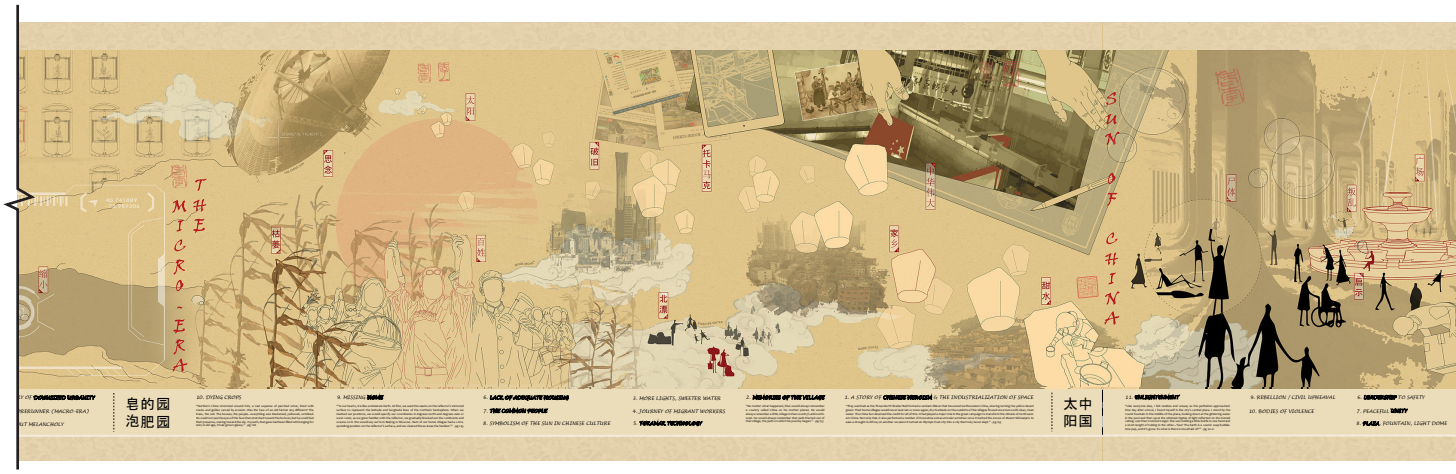
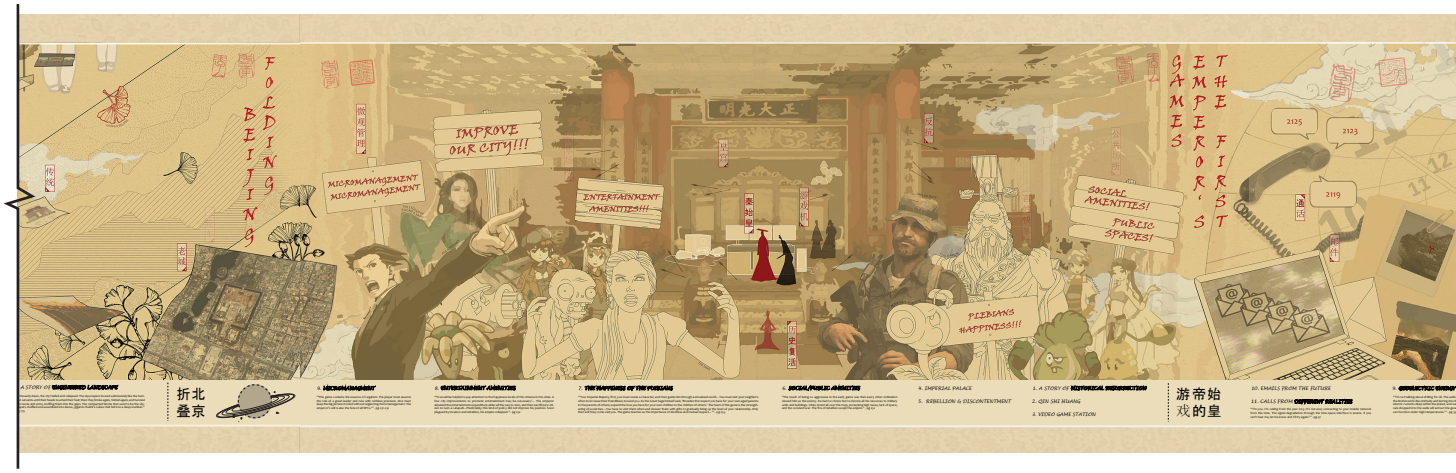
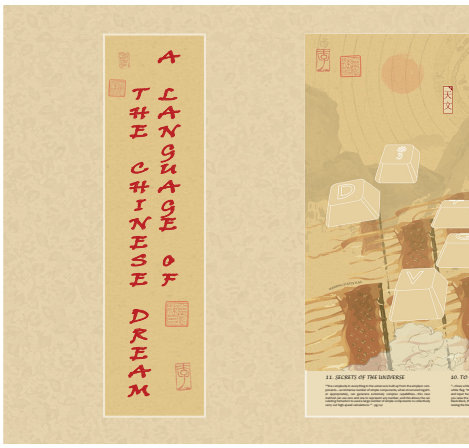


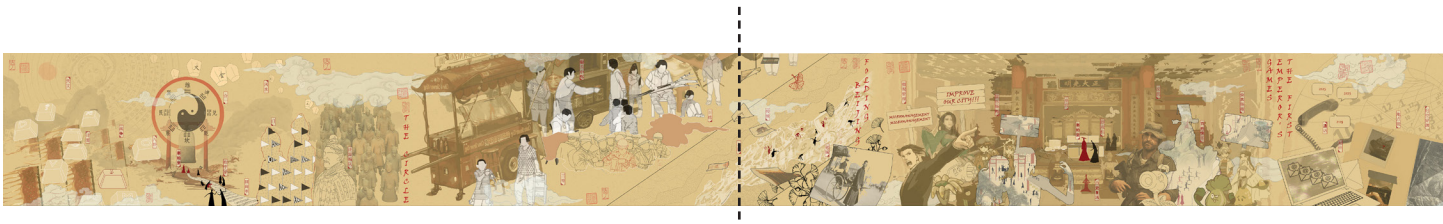
Fig. 5.3 Overview




THE MICRO-ERA
SUN OF CHINA
皂的园
泡肥园
太中
阳国


BEIJING FOLDING
IMPROVE OUR CITY!!!
MICROMANAGEMENT MICROMANAGEMENT
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游帝始
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A LANGUAGE OF THE CHINESE DREAM



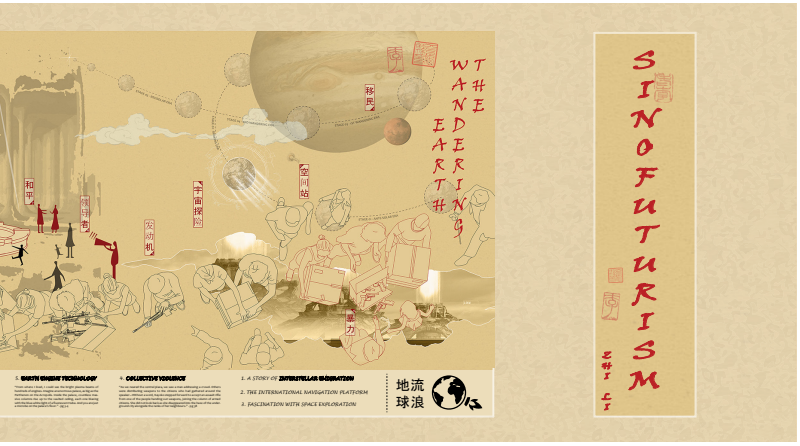


Fig. 5.4 Full Scroll synthsizing seven narratives (Reveal). Read from right to left.

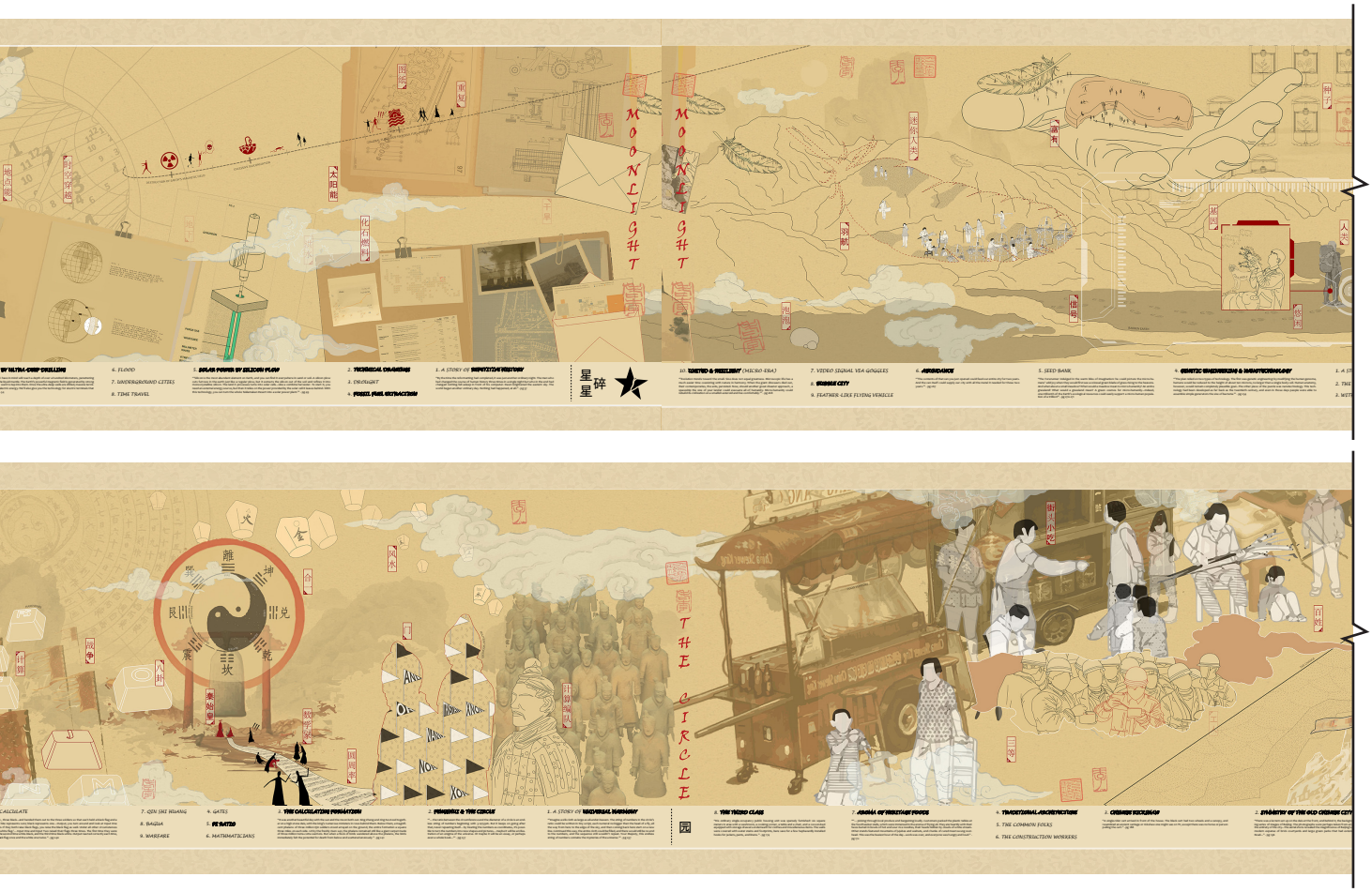


Fig. 5.5 Overview





Fig. 5.6 First version of full scroll, hand drawing.



Fig. 6.1 My interest in oriental futurism initially began with the video game 2077 Cyberpunk.

Conclusion

> *"Sinophone science fiction could be the next goldmine to be discovered, explored, and brought to attention for a world audience."*[351]
>
> ~ Mingwei Song (translated by Ken Liu),
> *A New Continent for China Scholars:*
> *Chinese Science Fiction Studies*

As I begin to wrap up my thesis after over a year's worth of research, I feel as though I have only dug up the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the sophistications and future entails of Chinese science fiction. By exploring Chinese SF works through the Chinese cultural lens, the complex origin(s), turbulent and fragmented developments, and rich visions justify Chinese SF as completely its own unique entity. Infused by the Chinese Dream ideology, prominent ingredients of Chinese SF in terms of collectivism, repetitive history, national rejuvenation, universal balance, technological utopia, and practical purposefulness play a crucial role in the establishment of the futurist Chinese city.

The case studies demonstrate that although each of them do not include all the pillars of the Chinese Dream, the ones that are addressed embody architectural and urbanistic connotations, whether those being specific to a particular architectural motif or a broad speculation on building and urban design. These insights present alternative design perspectives rooted in the values of the Chinese city. Through an investigation of the trends of Chinese SF, which all originate from the core of the national dream mission, the key concepts of abundance, prudence, and figuration that are crucial to the foundation of the Chinese city all correlate with one another.

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351 Ken Liu, trans., "A New Continent for China Scholars: Chinese Science Fiction Studies," *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation* (New York, NY: Tor Books, 2019), page 341.

The future of the Chinese city is designed for the *collective*, indicating spaces for the manifestation of maximum quantities in terms of population, things, and power. To design for the common people, which ultimately reinforces a unifying, prosperous society. The belief of *repeating history* suggests a future that values the revival and renewal of culture. As modernity inevitably accelerates the expansion of globalization, China longs to reawaken the greatness of its ancient civilization. Through the concept of figuration, the future of the Chinese city aims for the resurrection of its traditional built forms and aesthetics. The goal of *national rejuvenation* is intrinsically linked to the idea of collective effort. A dedication towards obtaining great pride and empowerment from self-sufficiency, the Chinese city is influenced by ideas of independence and identity preservation, originating from the value of prudence. *Universal harmony* has always been fundamental to the ancient Chinese belief system. Relating to the concept of figuration, the future design of the Chinese city aims to restore the balanced co-existence between Heaven, Nature, State (architecture), and Men. Furthermore, Chinese SF is devoted to the optimism of *technological utopia* as narratives often present in-depth explanation of scientific developments. However, since figuration in the sense of cultural preservation wishes to protect the philosophies of the ancient Chinese city, the future Chinese city envisions a simple life augmented by futurist technology. Lastly, since China has always been influenced by the attitude of realism, *practical purposefulness* is crucial to prospective societal developments as it supports the country's belief in technological progression. It also indicates that the future Chinese city is interested in practical design initiatives, such as searching for clean energy resources, new building typologies for the overflowing population, improvements to domestic and urbanistic livelihood, and alleviating and coping with shifts of climate change conditions.

Contemporary China is gradually reawakening from its ancient slumber, and the architectural connotations dissected from Chinese SF may possibly dominate the future discourses of city design around the world. Entranced by nostalgia of the past and the dreams of the future, the strange newness of these zero worlds illustrates future landscapes that sometimes overlap with Western visions, but manifested from divergent ways of thinking, *the Chinese way*.

In the end, I find myself circling back to the poem that marked the very beginning of Chinese science fiction, *Flowing Spring*. Analogues to the Chinese nation losing its dream many

times throughout history, and wishing to break free from this vicious cycle that suppresses its true potentials, I feel the same sentiment. After the many moments in my life where I felt I had to conceal and forget my Chinese background, because it made me feel inferior in a foreign country, this thesis illuminated the self-realization that I am proud of my Chinese heritage. Through the exploration of Chinese SF, I have discovered a renewed respect for my homeland. Reviving the memories of my authentic zero world, now I can confidently say that I am proud to be Chinese, and I anticipate the future becoming of a great and powerful Chinese nation.



Fig. 6.2 Star Wars character (Darth Vader) reimagined as mythical Chinese warrior. A dualism between West and East, past and future, tradition and modernity. It is a strange newness.

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