

How to Tell Chinese Red Stories Well from the Perspective of Narrative Rationality-Take The Battle at Lake Changjin as an example

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Abstract

At the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, put forward the communication strategy requirement of "promoting the construction of international communication capacity and telling Chinese stories well". How to tell Chinese stories well and spread Chinese voices well is related to the spread of Chinese traditional culture and red revolutionary culture. From the 35th China Film Golden Rooster Awards, it can be seen that Chinese filmmakers have never chosen to lie down, and are making unremitting efforts on the road of how to tell Chinese stories well. Movies with different forms and themes emerge in endlessly, and their reputation is mixed. The Battle at Lake Changjin, as a red memory theme film jointly directed by Chen Kaige, Tsui Hark and Lin Chaoxian, provides a feasible sample for how Chinese film production can fit the narrative rationality, tell Chinese stories well, spread Chinese culture and build the communication path of Chinese red revolutionary spirit.



Full Text Article



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Narrative Rationality In Main Melody Movies

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, has repeatedly emphasized the construction of international communication capacity and the construction of foreign discourse system; The report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China put forward: "To promote the construction of international communication capacity, tell Chinese stories well, show a real, three-dimensional and comprehensive China, and improve the national cultural soft power."^[1] The strategic requirement is to tell Chinese red

stories well through movies and focus on revolutionary traditional culture, we must be accurate and perfect in the selection of red story themes, and grasp the logic and positioning of film audience communication. Only by constantly excavating the conceptual expression and discourse system with Chinese local characteristics, and selecting narrative strategies that are consistent with differentiated communication fields and information adoption habits of overseas audiences in various countries, can we continuously improve the communication effect and living space of China's main melody films.^[2] This paper will analyze *The Battle at Lake Changjin* from the perspective of narrative rationality, and explore the consistency of structure, materials and characters in the film.

People are storytellers, which is an important hypothesis put forward by Fisher when studying narrative paradigm. In the film and television industry, directors become the narrators of movie stories. In Fisher's narrative rationality, the principle of consistency followed has become the method to judge the value of stories. Narrative consistency includes the consistency of narrative structure, that is, whether the structure of film narration is complete or not; The consistency of the narrative material, whether the things told in the story as a whole are consistent with the facts; The consistency of narrative roles, that is, whether the characters in the story are authentic or not.

Using narrative rationality to analyze the main melody film can provide more reliable theoretical support of communication and help film creators find the follow-up creative direction. Except for the relationship between content and form, there is not much substantial difference between the artistic characteristics of film and other forms in communication. The film made by the director should be in line with the popular communication Broadcasting, professional film talents in the audience are even rarer, and more of them are ordinary mass users. Without receiving professional film and television education, it is difficult to evaluate the film in a deeper level besides appreciating the aesthetic style and narrative paradigm of the film. Therefore, it is feasible to analyze the acceptance of films with the "narrative rationality" that fits the public, so as to explore how to "tell Chinese stories well".

Consistency of narrative structure

Hillis Miller, a representative of Yale critics of American structuralism, once put forward: "Narrative is to walk forward along a line, and any narration is to re-express and re-tell something with different 'lines'". This narrative line contains storyline components such as the beginning, middle and end.^[3] In view of the consistency of narrative structure, the film *The Battle at Lake Changjin* has a clear narrative structure, which mainly includes three narrative structures: macro, micro and confrontation.

(1) Macro narrative structure

The macro narrative structure mainly tells the historical review of the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea by the senior leaders of the US military and our country. In this narrative, the film adopts a document display method, and fully restores a true historical story through the deployment and decision-making of the entire war and the final combat process.

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The decision-making process and key lines to resist U.S. aggression and aid Korea all have their sources, and the deployment and implementation of Changjin Lake operations also strictly refer to military history documents.^[4] The macro narrative structure in the film is logical and clear, aiming to reproduce history through video materials and make up for the audience The constructed red memory and the gap in the changing times. At the beginning of the film, our high-level resolution shows the firm principle that we have to fight in order to safeguard national peace, depicts the tough attitude of our leaders in the face of national disasters, and shows the heroic temperament of Mao Peng who are unwilling to give in and struggle hard. Later, the main plot in the works is constantly interspersed between the micro-narrative structures by montage, and is presented in the whole film in a contrasting way. The macro-narrative structure is clear and easy to understand, which fully shapes the lofty image of the leaders in China's revolutionary era.

(2) Micro-narrative structure

The micro-narrative structure mainly focuses on the perspective of the soldiers of the Seventh Company in the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea, and revolves around Wu Wanli, a fledgling soldier who had illusions about the war and tried to be recognized by his brother by killing the enemy in battle. As the youngest brother in Wu Wanli's family, he has been protected by his brother Wu Qianli and his relatives. In the film, Wu Qianli once said, "We have finished the battle we should fight, so you don't have to fight." This perspective of a little person makes it easier for the audience to substitute for the plot, and examining oneself is the fledgling recruit in the film who doesn't know the cruelty of war. With the advancement of micro-narrative structure, after showing the tragic war from Wu Wanli's perspective, the audience better understands that the current peace is hard-won. Wu Wanli's growth and transformation go hand in hand with the cruelty of the war. It is this narrative structure that allows the audience to better understand the hard and difficult life of the volunteer soldiers in those days.

The micro-narrative structure is attached to the emotions of life and death of the soldiers of the Seventh Company, which is very common in the main theme movies in recent years. Telling big stories from the perspective of small people has become the main theme movies of red theme in China at present One of the creative trends, so is Sniper directed by Zhang Yimou. This not only forms a strong contrast with the macro narrative line in structure, but also explains the cruel significance of war for individuals to the audience through a subtle perspective. At the same time, the emotions of the little people in this micro narrative line can also be more recognized by the audience. In a sense, to tell the Chinese red story well, we have to discover the characters from a more acceptable perspective for the whole society.

(3) Confrontation narrative structure

The confrontation narrative structure depicts the image of the U.S. military in the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea, including Commander MacArthur and the "Polar Bear" Corps. Before the war started, MacArthur made malicious words to make the war end before Christmas and let all soldiers go home for Christmas. This declaration was also accepted by American soldiers. American soldiers believed that the Korean War was nothing

more than a small scene in many aggressive wars, and the purpose was to add chips to General MacArthur's presidential campaign. In the narrative of the passage before the head-on confrontation at the Battle of Changjin Lake, the film uses multiple details to create the arrogant, cruel and bloody characters of US military commanders and soldiers, and lays the foundation for the war. The ending of "Great Reversal" sets a distinct metaphorical effect and narrative foreshadowing.

The confrontation narrative line and the macro narrative line have the same function, both of which are to better give way to the micro narrative line and substitute the audience's movie-watching mood. Therefore, in the overall framework of the film, most of the narrative plots are still concentrated in the micro-perspective, and the auxiliary role played by the confrontation narrative line and the macro narrative line has brought great resonance psychology and appeal to the audience. The three narrative structures in *The Battle at Lake Changjin* have distinct primary and secondary, and are clearly organized, which are relatively more in line with the principle of structural consistency in narrative rationality.

Consistency of narrative materials

(1) Authenticity of material consistency

Movies based on the history of the Red Revolution often have a gap with the audience because of the theme. For *The Battle at Lake Changjin*, audiences of different ages, regions and education levels may also have mixed word-of-mouth situations because of historical reasons and their own environmental problems. However, for the audience who is familiar with Chinese history, the war materials shown in the film are basically consistent with their cognition and conception. In historical memory, the battle of "Changjin Lake" to resist U.S. aggression and aid Korea and the national problems reflected can be found in the film. Such groups have a high expectation and sense of identity for the story told in this battle. As a tribute film for the centenary of the founding of China, *The Battle at Lake Changjin's* box office exceeded 5.695 billion yuan, surpassing *Wolf Warriors II* to become the new box office champion in Chinese film history, setting a new record in Chinese film history and leading the annual global movie box office.[5] At the same time, it also caused waves in overseas markets, which undoubtedly shows that this film is very successful. Syrian accident The authenticity and integrity of the materials in the event ensure the possibility for everyone to know about history through the film, which is highly praised by both overseas and domestic markets.

In the film, when the U.S. military crossed the Yalu River and brought the war to China, our country's leaders quickly organized a counterattack. From the meeting to decide whether to participate in the war, to the specific war implementation arrangements, these events were in the original history. It can be found in history, providing the audience with official confirmation information when choosing whether to believe the storyline of the film. Of course, the reason for the audience's recognition is not only this, but also because of the historical knowledge learned by our movie audiences in the same cultural environment and their lofty admiration for the martyrs in the revolutionary era. The audience will naturally be infected by that indomitable spirit.

Of course, some viewers will be skeptical about the materials shown in the *The Battle at Lake Changjin*, such as the image of the US military shown in the film by the western media and audiences. The reason for their questioning is still that they are hostile to China itself. They cannot accept that their own country's soldiers lost to China and hold different positions and viewpoints. From the perspective of western media, they think that the stories told in *The Battle at Lake Changjin's* films are untrue, and this material is inconsistent with their history books, indirectly denying their hegemonism and aggressive ambition. From this point of view, narrative rationality believes that people should be influenced by culture. Audiences who believe in the consistency of materials have reasons to believe, and it is reasonable to choose not to believe, while real historical events cannot be changed after all.

To tell the Chinese red story well, we must first look positively at historical materials, discover themes from the red memory revolutionary culture, create films on this basis, and build national self-confidence and cultural self-confidence. We must first establish an objective image of China in the hearts of Chinese audiences before we can further move towards overseas markets. *The Battle at Lake Changjin* has undoubtedly done this. While watching the movie, the audience has broken away from the scene described in the movie, not only watching it, but also putting themselves in the environment shown in the movie to understand the suffering of the war years. Thanks to the consistency of the narrative materials of the film, the film has reached a certain aesthetic height, and it is also a great work that shows the heroic image and popularizes the revolutionary spirit in China's war years.

(2) Accuracy of material consistency

The narrative materials in the film not only strictly examine all kinds of authoritative historical materials, but also combine the relevant historical documents to develop, which makes the narrative materials achieve a high degree of consistency. However, there are some problems in the details of the film. For example, the description of the extreme weather conditions in Changjin Lake is far from detailed enough. The famous American writer John Tolan's war history book "*The Long Battle: The Korean War in the Eyes of Americans*" describes: "Chinese soldiers are covered with ice and are still charging tenaciously. Chinese soldiers use lard and cattle and sheep suet to paste their feet to prevent frostbite. But they showed the most incredible courage and willpower in the history of human war. Hundreds of thousands of officers and soldiers trekked through snowfields and glaciers on foot, crossing bullets and flames." [6] In later interviews, many American veterans who participated in the Battle of Changjin Lake to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea described cruel scenes that were more difficult than those shown in the film. The film was undoubtedly successful in terms of the authenticity of the narrative material, but it was slightly lacking in the accuracy of the material.

Secondly, *The Battle at Lake Changjin's* performance in describing the scale of the war and the difference between the enemy and ourselves is insufficient. It is similar to the movies of *The Battle at Lake Changjin's* cinema fires in previous years, that is, it describes the grand war through a subtle perspective, and most of the themes are selected from small-scale battles in a certain battle. This way of expression is chosen to be implemented in specific historical figures, but the disadvantage is that it cannot reflect large-scale scenes and the complete

framework of the war at that time. Although The Battle at Lake Changjin's ending extends to the subsequent larger scene of battle, because of the film and television It is not reflected in the material, which makes it impossible for the audience to connect the two together, resulting in different degrees of separation when watching movies.

Finally, no matter in terms of the difference in numbers between the enemy and ourselves or the difference in firepower, this sense of disparity in the war has not been well reflected. It is only through Wu Qianli's dictation in the film that "the enemy's strength is several times that of ours in every battle", but it is difficult to describe the accuracy of the number of people in the war only in words.

Narrative role consistency

To tell the Chinese red story well, why should we focus on the heroic image of the revolutionary tradition? Freud believes that the worship of heroes is an important source to promote the spiritual connotation and ideological power among social people. When people are in a real predicament, they need spiritual sustenance and the spiritual inheritance of great and lofty heroes, so that they can establish a perfect personality and confidence in facing difficulties. In recent years, Chinese main melody movies have been pursuing the diversity of characters in stories. As far as the motif of telling Chinese red stories well is concerned, the martyrs in the revolutionary era are the best range of materials. Every hero in The Battle at Lake Changjin has his own unique personality and characteristics, and the narrative role conforms to the image of heroes and martyrs in the revolutionary era. Although not everyone is lofty and great, they all have the typical characteristics of "defending the country".

For example, Wu Wanli in The Battle at Lake Changjin, as a young teenager who doesn't know the sinister, has a role relationship with Wu Qianli's younger brother, and the role story told is also the mental journey of a recruit's growth. The metaphor of the character is suitable for people in peacetime and non-war years. The audience in peacetime, like Wu Wanli, has unrealistic illusions about war, but when they really come into contact with the cruel truth, they have a certain fear. The role of Wu Wanli in the film conforms to the role consistency in narrative rationality, and can form empathy with the audience. In the second half of the film, Wu Wanli gradually integrates into the group portraits of soldiers, which not only means that Wu Wanli, as a recruit, finally experienced the significance of war, but also transformed into a real soldier. At the same time, he also returned his individual heroism to the collective, showing the change from small to big in his narrative role.

Wu Qianli's image as a "company commander" runs through the whole film, and only in the clip of going home, he shows the role attribute of "elder brother". As a typical character, he plays a leading role in the whole film in the continuous advancement of the narrative. In the narrative role, the image of "Lei Gong", like Wu Wanli, shows the tolerance of the collective of "Qilian" for the individual "Wu Wanli" in the superficial narrative, and in the internal narrative, it is a metaphor for the expectation and affirmation of the martyrs in the revolutionary era for the younger generation.

Finally, the consistency of characters also includes whether the image of the actor is consistent with the image in the story he is performing. Obviously, Jason Wu, Hu Jun and others are actors who have appeared in Chinese main melody movies many times, and their heroic roles are more easily accepted by the audience. Jason Wu, in particular, has accumulated a lot of audience popularity in the early Wolf Warriors series of movies, and his positive role has added a lot of persuasiveness and role effect to *The Battle at Lake Changjin*. Jackson Yee, who plays Wu Wanli in the film, belongs to the new generation of actors, but he also fully deduces the psychological changes of a newcomer to a veteran with his own acting skills and role understanding, which provides a guarantee for the consistency of roles in the story narrative.

Conclusion

The Battle of Changjin Lake and even the whole war to resist U.S. aggression and aid Korea have different significances for different countries. It is a civil war that the Korean nation can't bear to look back on. It is the war that "no one wants to remember and understand again" in the United States^[7], but for China, it is "the manifesto of the Chinese people standing up and standing in the east of the world, and it is the manifesto of the Chinese people. An important milestone for the great rejuvenation of the nation"^[8]. The main melody film shows history with the feelings of Chinese sons and daughters' home and country, rising from the individual to the collective, and from a small perspective to a big man. From the perspective of aesthetic value, it is highly in line with the communication effect of narrative rationality. *The Battle at Lake Changjin* can also be regarded as a model for the film industry to closely follow General Secretary Xi's teaching of "telling Chinese stories well" in the new era. It has established a tenacious, unyielding and hard-working heroic image for the story of China's red revolution, and translated the difficulties of the Battle of Changjin Lake. It is vividly reflected and portrays historical heroes into reasonable and well-founded figures.

As a tribute film for the centenary of the founding of the Party, *The Battle at Lake Changjin* broke the shackles of traditional war films and provided an excellent template for subsequent film creators. Correspondingly, the red theme during the revolutionary struggle still has a broad space for development, but it is necessary to construct works that are more in line with our national image and narrative rational paradigm based on the standpoint of "telling Chinese stories well". We should have the courage to face history directly to complete the narration of history, take the excellent red revolutionary culture as our confidence, stick to the historical position, and explore more artistic and narrative film works. Drawing lessons from the narrative framework of a series of excellent main melody films such as *The Battle at Lake Changjin*, we will constantly excavate and construct the narrative ideas of Chinese revolutionary martyrs, spread the spirit of patriotism and nationalism to win wide cultural recognition and recognition, establish an international image belonging to China, and constantly improve the communication power of Chinese stories.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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