

## Original Paper

# The Path of Breaking Out of the Circle for Prose Works in Film and Television as Seen from *To the Wonder*

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### Abstract

*The TV series To the Wonder, adapted from a prose work, has garnered phenomenal attention with its high-quality content and poetic and healing style. The drama has achieved success in script adaptation by creating quality text content, and it has provided audiences with fresh aesthetic experiences by using visual language and poetic and scattered cultural narrative. At the same time, the content's dissemination and marketing are based on a multi-media matrix, with multi-channel dissemination, and it has explored a new path for diverse expression of prose works through the creation of IP-based derivative products in the film and television industry.*

### Keywords

*To the Wonder, Prose Works, Film and Television*

### 1. Introduction

On May 7, 2024, the first film and TV series of the same name, adapted from a collection of essays, was broadcast on CCTV 1 prime time, and simultaneously broadcast in iQiyi Microdust Theater. The play follows the creative theme of “healing the mind” and “searching for roots and returning home”. It narrates the story of Li Wenxiu, a Han girl who grew up in Altay, who pursued her dream in a big city and returned to her hometown Altay. After the end of the show, the reputation and popularity of the drama continued to rise, and boosted the tourism economy of Altay region. In the *To the Wonder* location—Jilin New Village, Qibal Town, Habahe County, nearly 5,000 tourists come to punch in every day. They either walk into the “Zhang Fengxia store”, or take pictures under the Batai tree, or experience Li Wenxiu washing clothes by the river.... The “out of the circle” of *To the Wonder* provides new ideas for how to break through the original boundary in the process of mass communication in the three aspects of text building, audience acceptance and communication and marketing.

## 2. Text Creation: The Successful Adaptation of Prose Works

Richard Walter, a famous American screenwriter, believes that “among the characters, dialogues, scenes and many other elements, the story itself is above all else”. The most important element in screenwriting is the story, or it can be called a story. In the process of film and television of literary works, the appropriate adjustment of the plot can achieve twice the result with half the effort. (Richard, 2010)

### 2.1 Add a Storylines to Expand the Story

It is difficult to adapt a collection of essays that record life fragments into a film and television work with full content. Skolik also points out that adapting prose into film also faces certain challenges in the visual medium. (Skolik, 2019) Compared with novels with strong dramatic conflict, the recording of life stories and the description of characters are relatively simple. In the process of film and television adaptation, the story line to expand the plot is conducive to enriching the artistic connotation and depth of the drama.

In the original, the author Li Juan with gentle brush recorded the land in Xinjiang, things, scene, in the desolate place diligently run the restaurant couple, in order to clarify the innocent night line a few kilometers of the boy, uprooted to Xinjiang grandma and uncle, and everywhere of Xinjiang, the outline of the complex ecological people, between man and nature. Since the author Li Juan has always observed everything happening in this land from the perspective of outsiders, the work mainly contains the survival dilemma of contemporary women and the conflict between nomadic civilization and modern civilization.

Laura Fryer proposes that in self-adapted screenplays, it is necessary to seamlessly integrate screenwriting skills, adaptation techniques, and artistic rebirth in order to transform literary works into cinematic masterpieces. (Laura, 2018) In drama, for clear narrator Li outsider identity and self growth experience, increased the mother and daughter emotional line, at the same time set a three generations as a control, through different ethnic, gender, age of different choices, enhance the original implied conflict for civilization, intergenerational conflict, intrinsic anxiety of gender rights. In addition, the biggest change from the original film is the adaptation of the secret love story in the book for an unforgettable love affair. Wen-xiu Li and too love is beautiful like a fairy tale, but didn't have the end of the fairy tale, some viewers think the ending slightly abrupt, but in fact, it with *To the Wonder* serious background is integrated, “death of snow” for the weight of the reality and ideal collision, also avoid the series of love line into utopia. To this, some readers think that cut Li Juan prose plain nature and realistic care. But there is no denying that the expansion of the storyline has increased the appeal of the whole show. *To the Wonder* is originally a niche film and TV drama. If we blindly pursue slow pace, fragmented narrative and lack of story line support, we will repeat the mistakes of some art films that are applauded but not sold.

The director and screenwriter used several different story lines to show the audience the various kinds of people on the grassland. They could not only experience the poetic life in the distance, but also think

about the plight of women's survival and the conflict between nomadic civilization and real civilization in the process of watching the drama, thus conveying rich ideological connotation.

## 2.2 Create a three-dimensional Character Image

For screenwriters, adapting a script serves as a bridge between the original work and its dramatic interpretation. (Sherry, 2016) The plot and characters are each other, it is difficult to completely leave separate analysis. The plot cannot be separated from the promotion of the characters, and the characters also need the bearing of the plot. Therefore, an excellent film and television adaptation works should not only consider the plot, but also carefully carve the characters. Robert Mackey argues that all the other characters in the script were available first because of their relationship with the protagonist, and second because of the role these characters play in helping portray the complex character of the protagonist. That is, according to the need of depicting the multiple characters of the protagonist and the need of aggravating the conflicts, the film and television adaptation works need to adjust the characters in the novel. (Robert, 1997)

In addition to retaining the original "I" (in the play Li Wenxiu), mother and grandma (grandma in the play) three generations of women, but also added Ba Tai, Token, Sulitan, Gao Xiaoliang, Ayi Buick and other vivid characters. In his father Sulitan, for example, he is a name in the original *arm on eagle old hunter*, the author met with him, leaving only a feeling: "as one of the old things are disappearing, the circle of air around him and we can enter the air is separated, and refraction phenomenon." [6] In the drama, the old hunter undertakes the content expression of the conflict between nomadic civilization and modern civilization. As an old hunter, he does not want to hand in the gun, does not agree with his daughter-in-law with his children to remarry, does not agree with the youngest son to give up the nomadic life, but the series does not depict an "old stubborn". Ba Tai's father is a difficult and confused person abandoned by The Times, and also an old man trying to adapt to the new era. Finally, he gave his son freedom, but still insisted on his nomadic life, which became the connection anchor between the past and the present.

The success of *To the Wonder* stems from the success of characterization, and is also inseparable from its core height. Healing is the most significant label of this series, but there is also a proper deep dialogue in the healing journey of the story, how people live in the change of The Times, how the nation develops under the evolution of culture, and how women get out of difficulties are all questions raised and answered by *To the Wonder*. Li Wenxiu's mother, Zhang Fengxia, is an outsider for Altay. They always maintain a "semi-integrated" relationship with this land, because their "roots" are not here, and the grandmother in the drama always remembers the hometown that she can never go back to. However, Li Wenxiu, Zhang Fengxia and the nomads have the same root. They all "love, live, and get hurt" in this land, with the tenacity and vigorous vitality of the national spirit.

The root that the series looks for is not only the cultural root, but also the root of the female spirit. For series will be adapted for grandma, some audience complaints, the director TengCongCong in weibo is explained, it and the outside interpretation of the existence of the "outstanding father" or responsibility,

in the director, to Xinjiang migrant mainlanders from the world, they met in a barren boundless land, love each other, interpersonal understanding and mutual support does not have to rely on blood. Zhang has deep feelings for her deceased husband, but the series never mentions her care and care for her mother-in-law out of responsibility or obligation, and they are the same as their mother and daughter, which is enough to express the creators position. In the play, Li Wenxiu home is not based on the mobile land, nor based on the blood relationship, but based on womens real mutual support and interdependence.

### 3. Audience Acceptance: To Provide Fresh and Unique Aesthetic Experience

#### 3.1 Poetic Scattered Cultural Narrative

With traditional drama structure strong plot, strong conflict, fast pace, more reversal of intensity, cultural narrative pay more attention to the fragmentation of the plot, in the scene blend poetic flavor and artistic conception, create a pure and fresh and beautiful atmosphere and alcohol yu meaningful warmth, form daily life flow aesthetic style, has a unique artistic characteristics, become the TV drama creation necessary aesthetic supplement. Script development is extremely complex, as it requires consideration not only of the original work but also of the audience's reception. (Stayci & Craig, 2016) *To the Wonder* is adapted from prose works, which emphasizes the expression of the narrators subject consciousness, the content and structure are more loose, and the texture of the text is mostly reflected in the narrative rhythm, the atmosphere creation, the choice of images, and the rendering of emotions. In order to retain the charm of the original work, the screenwriter divided the main plot of the whole series into three parts: "to love, to live, to hurt". Through the perspective of Li Wenxiu, he described the natural scenery and humanistic beauty of Altay pastoral area are described in the way of "spiritual history". Follow the prose of "form" god does not come loose, through *To the Wonder* essays and plays of inner "verve" highly consistent, is the creator of nature and life sincere love, and sincere emotion between people, the play rely on such "mood", "emotion" rather than conflict "plot" structure, thus the maximum extent retained the original prose.

The whole play creates a poetic style of "poetry and distance". In the emotional atmosphere of returning to the natural context, it presents the nomadic life of the city and the state of freedom on the basis of slow plot and tranquil style. Life flow narrative is an indispensable element of pastoral healing drama. In the drama, it is usually written in the daily life of ordinary people, which creates the scene of poetry and distant blossom in parallel, so as to meet the pressure of the audience away from the pressure in real life and seek the aesthetic needs of the spiritual habitat.

#### 3.2 Exquisite and Rich Image Texture

In film and television creation, roles such as the screenwriter, director, cinematographer, and post-production editor should be seen as an integrated whole, and with this holistic perspective on film and television creation, the final presentation will be even more exquisite. (Henry, 2006)

Due to the differences in production and broadcasting process and artistic value, it seems that films and TV dramas do not pay much attention to the use of audio-visual language compared with films. *To the Wonder* is the first miniseries of iQiyi to complete the production process of “native HDR”, and each frame presents a delicate and rich image texture. With unique image language, *To the Wonder* weaves the magnificent natural landscape of Xinjiang Altay and the original ecological lifestyle of Kazakh people into a song of great beauty. The beautiful pictures of blue sky, white clouds, snow-capped mountains and grassland, and the simple and leisurely daily life of herdsmen, each picture is a poetic scene with the hearts of modern urbanites.

*To the Wonder*, as a work that shows the profound and rich living landscape of nomadic people. To present this “daily” and light texture with lens language, the key is to remove the perspective of readers and tourists. During the landscape exploration and shooting, the crew tried to show the most natural and simple life style of northern Xinjiang from the perspective of the local people. The crew spent two years to Altay area to research, in-depth visits. In order to restore the natural scenery of Xinjiang to the greatest extent, the production team used 4K ultra HD camera shooting. The series lasted 8 episodes and lasted 56 days. For a mini-series, the pace of each episode every seven days shows how hard the team is. The high standard of shooting and production makes each frame look like a beautiful painting, vividly presenting the natural beauty of Altay and the details of Kazakh life to the audience.

In the original work, the authors description of the “environment in Xinjiang” can be seen everywhere in the text, and the relationship between people and the environment has become an important part of this life. The people in Li Juans works usually look very small in front of nature. In order to maximize the characteristics of the original work, in terms of composition, the camera often puts the characters at the bottom of the picture, leaving a large amount of space for the natural scenery. The movement of the lens is soft and slow, creating a light, poetic and abstract atmosphere. This kind of composition method perfectly fits the artistic conception of the distant earth and the small people under Li Juans works, and also makes the audience experience the deep emotion of the harmonious coexistence between man and nature. Such composition technique is used repeatedly, showing a group of contrast relations between the city and the grassland, when Li Wenxiu was working in Urumqi, people walk under the huge overpass, like trapped in the world of the concrete; when she arrived in the grassland, the huge background became green, high and broad, peoples mood also changes.

At the same time, the show also uses surreal techniques of expression. When Li Wenxiu finally found her writing direction in the grassland life, the camera gave her a perspective close-up when she was sitting up and writing. At the moment, she dropped the ink in the bottle, creating a black ripple, “ just like a huge wave.” This shot means that Li Wenxiu, as a writer, actually has two worlds, one is the real world, the other is the world in writing. She may feel herself small in the face of reality; but in her subjective world, she can become infinitely larger. Such a non-realistic lens, magnifies the inner world of the characters.

#### 4. Communication Marketing: Multi-channel Communication and the Derivative Development of IP

##### 4.1 Multi-channel Communication

The diverse forms of communication of new media provide multiple channels for the dissemination of television dramas. (Erik, 2016) In order to improve the coverage and influence, the TV series *To the Wonder* has expanded the content map with the help of the financial media matrix of itself and iQiyi video. On the one hand, through the broadcast mode and mobile communication mode, we realize the interaction of large and small screens and the all-channel coverage of long and short videos; on the other hand, the drama is marketed on the new media platform through the WeChat official account, the official Weibo account and the leading Weibo account. At the same time, the articles and comments of Peoples Daily, Guangming Daily, Xinhua News Agency and other mainstream media and the publicity and promotion of we-media with millions of fans have released the content tension and boosted the topic degree and heat of the drama.

The integration between the circle of film and television dramas and the public is not only the touch of the information level, but also the integration of values and emotions. It takes place in the process of the audience decoding the meaning of the text, which can be summarized into three stages: relationship link, emotional resonance and value integration. Relationship link is the process of taking the content of the TV series to attract the audience to interact and participate, and constantly “expand the circle” outward, so as to enhance the influence of the TV series. The film and TV drama *To the Wonder* is anti-inner volume, anti-landscape, anti-chicken soup, anti-self-exploitation posture, to open up a comfortable spiritual space for the audience. In fact, *To the Wonder* show is a unique values, shows the “slow”, shows the beauty of nature, shows the scarcity still exist in poetic, shows beyond the utilitarian generosity and temperament, and these are the fast pace of modern society, drama is with the values caused the public attention. In the process of watching the play, the audience will express their views and feelings by means of barrage, comments, forwarding and likes. At the same time, the drama creator team will also synthesize the current hot spots, targeted to respond.

##### 4.2 Derivative Development of the IP

As we all know, the high-quality TV drama IP has exuberant vitality and creativity. The TV series *To the Wonder* creates a series of “Altay” products by reconstructing the symbols of empathy, which constantly connects the daily life of the public and radiates new user groups, and responds to the emotional needs and experience of the public. *To the Wonder* attracts many literary young people with poetic image language, moves urban white-collar workers with sincere emotional expression, and attracts tourism lovers with the local customs and customs with Xinjiang characteristics.

Through *To the Wonder*, the most infectious media, commercial brands communicate with consumers deep in their souls, convey the ideal picture of a better life, and establish an emotional bond. For example, in *To the Wonder*, Xinjiang local brand Wusu Beer has a natural adaptability and close connection with the TV series, and Wusu Beer has keenly captured this opportunity. Therefore, I chose

the prime position of 5-8 episodes when placing the advertisement. Not only in the opening advertisement, but also integrated into the daily life of the TV characters, forming a strong visual impression, which makes the audience have a deep understanding of this brand. There is always no beer in Zhang Fengxias shop, and Zhang Fengxia is accompanied by Wusu Beer at every lonely moment. When the audience is immersed in the world of My Altay, Wusu Beer has become a part of the world, which greatly enhances the brand recognition and goodwill.

Although the broadcast cycle of film and television content is limited, the brand effect can continue to ferment for a long time. Relying on the popular film and TV drama IP, the local government takes the trend and adopts cross-industry resource integration to broaden the cultural boundary, and continues to promote the new integrated development model of “cultural tourism +, + cultural tourism”. *To the Wonder* drives the cycle of industrial economy such as tourism, IP peripheral, music and offline performance. Today, the Altay region has become a new tourist destination. In addition to advertising revenue, iQiyi has developed “TAI” cultural and creative products, Haba River cultural tourism, and customized travel routes around the series IP, successfully transforming traffic into consumption productivity. In fact, *To the Wonder* not only brought a lot of tourists to the local area, but also triggered the derivative consumption of rich cultural deposits such as characteristic home ays, cultural and creative parks and theme performances. The artistic temperature and ideological height left by the drama will be transformed into the endogenous power of the cultural tourism industry.

## 5. Conclusions

When a prose-adapted online drama wins huge traffic, when a slow lifestyle wins the youth, or so to speak, it is a literary victory. The TV drama *To the Wonder* is like a fresh wind, let the audience find a trace of tranquility and depth in the impetuous real world, and then drive a cultural tourism boom across the screen, making the local economy and national culture revitalized. At the same time, with its exquisite and exquisite content, sincere emotion and healing style, *To the Wonder* proves that the healing power of literary film and television works is infinite. In terms of emotional needs, it soothe the individuals anxiety about realistic stress and in reality, the promotion of multiple values provides different channels for the realization of personal value and promotes social communication and understanding. The success of this play also explores a new path for the diversified expression of prose works. (Li, 2024)

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