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Journey to the West:

An inquiry into Chinese cinema studies as a field of struggles over cultural capital

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This thesis is submitted to Cardiff University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2019

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To Masoud Yazdani (1955 – 2014)

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Acknowledgement

This thesis would have not been possible without my supervisor, Professor Stuart Allan. I am indebted to his mentorship, guidance and support. Professor Allan has inspired a junior scholar to learn various skills and make progress in personal development beyond academic inquiry. His sense of humour is particularly divine. In various ways, this PhD experience has benefited from his broad knowledge and profound philosophical thinking, certainly from his generosity in sharing his intelligence.

May I express my sincere respect and appreciation to Ms Penny Hunter, who has carefully copy-edited this thesis with patience and curiosity in comprehending each argument. I believe Ms Hunter is a fine writer herself, for being such a skilful literary editor and kind-hearted lady.

Appreciation must also be given to my beloved family: Diana X. Y. Wu Wu de Chan, Tai Lin Chan and Colbert Hiu Ngai Chan, for their kindness and understanding of what sometimes must have seemed like my stubbornness. I would also like to acknowledge my partner Sébastien de La Hamayde, who entered my life during the last stage of this PhD journey. His love and support enriched my final writing and editing days. Both Yo-Yo Ma and Glenn Gould deserve a special mention here for their magical music, which made the process of completing this research a transcendental experience. The recording of Boris Giltburg's performance of Maurice Ravel's *La Valse* at Queen Elizabeth Hall in 2013 on YouTube has rescued this delicate soul many times, truly.

This research would have not been possible without the Geoff Mungham Overseas Award scholarship offered by the School of Journalism, Media and Culture at Cardiff University as well as the generous sponsorship from Intellect, initiated by former Chairman Professor Masoud Yazdani and carried on by current Managing Director Mark Lewis.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to the late Masoud Yazdani (1955 – 2014), former Professor of Digital Media at UWE (Bristol, UK), founder of *Artificial Intelligence Review* and the publishing company Intellect. The faith he had in me – then a stranger – alongside his generous support, enabled a junior scholar's dream to come true. His outstanding creativity and innovation in academic publishing continue to resonate and inspire many.

You will always be missed, Masoud.

Abstract

It has been acknowledged by scholars that there has been a theoretical and hierarchical tension between Chinese cinema studies and film studies in English, but such a tension has not yet been addressed at length. While many would argue that the establishment of the field of Chinese cinema studies in English is a reaction to the so-called 'Euro-American paradigm' in film studies, there is a gap of knowledge in exploring the reasons, the processes and results regarding such a tension. This thesis wishes to address this gap of knowledge and thus asks: 'to what extent does Chinese cinema studies in English-language academia exemplify a field of discursive struggles over cultural capital?' It turns to Bourdieu's (1993) theory 'field' to establish a conceptual framework to explore possible answers. The investigation focuses on the 'relational' aspect between (and in) both the field of film studies and Chinese cinema studies, throughout their professionalisation. Furthermore, within this framework, it applies Bourdieu's notion of 'cultural capital' as a tool to investigate the organisation and distribution of discourses that have been shaping different research interests and agendas in both fields of studies. Enabled by a primary method of archival research, this thesis locates evidence that documents the processes of initial knowledge production as discourses making. It demonstrates, through a field analysis of materials such as scholarly publications, newspaper articles and meeting minutes, how different theoretical positions and linguistic strategies in a specific field context exerted influence on each other to obtain academic recognition.

This thesis discovers three main problematics which exemplify Chinese cinema studies in English as a field of struggles over cultural capital. The first refers to how Chinese cinema as a research topic was not included in the main debates contributing to the professionalisation of film studies between the 1950s to the 1970s; it conducts a field analysis of the 'discourse of film as a discipline', the 'discourse of film as art', the 'discourse of film as signification' and

questions how Chinese films were not considered as a relevant topic in support of these major debates by film scholars during this period. The second problematic refers to the continuously marginalised position of Chinese cinema as a research area in film studies between the 1960s and 1990s, where findings expose the lack of recognition of both scholarly and public attempts to further integrate the topic to academic discussions. The final problematic refers to how the rise of Chinese cinema studies as a new field in the 1990s was legitimised by the incorporation of a semi- 'cultural studies', where scholars also encountered struggles over different theoretical position-taking. Similar patterns as how film studies was professionalised also took place in the field of Chinese cinema studies. Three discourses have been identified in this thesis that shape the main interests of the field through theorising Chinese films as 'territories', 'ethnicities', 'languages' and 'independent'. This thesis further investigates the making of each of these discourses as well as evaluates the current state of the academic field of Chinese cinema studies.

Apart from presenting previously unavailable archival materials, the principal contribution of this thesis will be to theory-building. By rethinking the emergence of Chinese cinema studies in English-language academia critically, this thesis aims to establish basis for further enquiries. Proposed way forward is informed by Bourdieu's concept of 'field' to make sense of the struggles over cultural capital, battles over position-takings in academic disciplines such as the case of Chinese cinema studies. In looking forward, the conclusion identifies concrete strategies for future work regarding the current issues facing the field of Chinese cinema studies, including those of the disconnection between academic studies and the film industry as well as the disconnection between scholarship produced in mainland China and in English. The conclusion also provides suggestions for solution to how these ongoing issues could be resolved or at least further critically examined in future research.

Introduction

The principal research question which this thesis seeks to explore is: 'To what extent does Chinese cinema studies in English-language academia exemplify a field of discursive struggles over cultural capital.[1] More specifically, the struggles centred for investigation in this thesis are signalled by three problematics which, taken together, help to give shape to the overall narrative structure for the chapters to follow.

First of all, it is a problematic of the theoretical tension between 'Euro-American film theories' and the research topic of Chinese cinema, as signalled by previous scholars.[2] For example, Victor Fan (2015) argues that:

> Euro-American film theories have for many years been treated as a lingua franca in the field of cinema studies. Even countries like the People's Republic of China (PRC), where scholars have made deliberate efforts to recenter the discourse on film theory around the work of Chinese filmmakers, writers, and intellectuals, an alternative perspective can be hard to achieve. As many film theorists and historians who work in China and other parts of East Asia were trained in Europe and North America or are well acquainted with "Western" methodologies, key concepts in Euro-American theories still form the underlying assumptions in their discussions. (Fan, 2015: 1)

In his attempts to resolve this problematic, Fan (2015) proposes to locate 'Chinese film theory' through a comparative approach in order to build a methodological foundation to support the ongoing development of Chinese cinema studies in English-language academia.

[1] In the understanding of this thesis, 'Chinese cinema' refers to films that are made or co-made and distributed in Greater China, that is Mainland China, Hong Kong SAR and Macau SAR. The definition will not be theorised in depth in this Introduction as the thesis will demonstrate later that the ongoing definition and re-definition of the term is what constitutes the discourse in this field.

[2] Chow, 1995; Lu, 1997; Silbergeld, 1999; Zhang, 2002; Hu, 2003; Berry & Farquhar, 2006; Ng & Holden, 2006; Chow, 2007; Lu, 2007; Durovicová & Newman, 2009; Zhang, 2010; Chow, 2012; Vukovich, 2013; Yue & Koo, 2014; Fan, 2015.

While other similar arguments have been made regarding the problematic of western theories vs. Chinese films, so far, little scholarship pays attention to the context and processes of how such a tension occurred. The missing knowledge, in particular those details of activities such as initial theoretical discourses establishment and the reception of them, is what interests this thesis. How did such a tension occur, through what scholarly activities, and what was the result of this theoretical tension? This thesis hesitates to jump to a conclusion based on binary logic, namely, the East vs. West logic. It is necessary to mention here that the main title of this thesis, 'Journey to the West', does not wish to reflect or hint on this binary logic. Rather, the title here is used more as a poetic nuance to reflect on my academic studies abroad in the past years which led to final outcome of this thesis.

As the following chapters will explain, the hierarchical tension that highlighted by Fan between Chinese cinema studies and film studies is far more complicated than a simple binary logic can address. Furthermore, English-language scholarship on Chinese cinema nowadays is not only produced by western scholars, but also by scholars with Chinese heritage who work at universities outside of China and produce scholarship in English as a profession. Therefore, this contemporary scenario makes the East Vs. West binary questioning even less convincing in our current globalised research environment. We ought to search for a perspective that is independent from this binary presumption to support our investigation. The following paragraphs will introduce the identified theoretical framework to be applied throughout this thesis, but first we need to address the second problematic.

The second problematic refers to the marginalised position of intellectual discussions by both efforts in scholarship and in the public on Chinese films between the 1960s up until early 1990s in the US and the UK. This thesis has discovered materials from academic journals, newspaper articles, monographs and edited volumes with efforts by both academics and the public to introduce the topic of Chinese films to a wider audience during this period.

The problematic regarding the marginalisation of these early intellectual discussions have yet to be explored in detail previously and therefore provides a space for inquiry. What were these efforts, what did intellectuals want to achieve through their writing and what were the results? The findings in this thesis aim to explore answers to these questions, particularly to be examined in the context of film studies and the major debates which contributed to its professionalisation.

This thesis discovers that the first and the second problematics eventually motivated a group of scholars who were interested in Chinese films to establish a new field from 1990s onwards, to accommodate research on Chinse cinema in English-language academia. However, this thesis questions that, such establishment was neither neutral but connected to the previous battles over theoretical positions that scholars in film studies faced. In order to be accepted as a new field of studies in academia, scholars had to build a theoretical foundation to supports its academic discourses just as the previous generation of scholars did for the field of films studies. Findings in this thesis suggest a key theoretical turning point, the publication of Rey Chow's *Woman and Chinese Modernity* (1991), in particular a chapter titled 'Seeing Modern China: Toward a Theory of Ethnic Spectatorship'. In this chapter, Chow suggests a theory-backed model to study and problematise Chinese films based on a logic supported by her adaptation of 'cultural studies'. The 'cultural studies' that Chow has been practicing, I observe, is a combination of postcolonial studies, postmodernism, poststructuralism and continental philosophy. For instance, Chow writes:

> The primacy I accord "seeing" is an instance of the cultural predicament in which the ethnic subject finds herself. The institutionalized apparatuses of "seeing" on which I rely for my analyses – cinema, film theory, and the nexus of attitudes and fantasies that have developed around them – are part and parcel of a dominant "symbolic" whose potent accomplishments are inextricably bound up with its scopophilia. To this extent, the felicity with which my analyses *can*

> proceed owes itself to the reversal of history that informs the development of theory in the West (Chow, 1991: 3).

Here what Chow intends to build is a hierarchical tension between the object of China or China related visual materials and western theories. While the following chapter will further unpack Chow's contribution to what this thesis calls the 'semi-cultural studies' model for the studies of Chinese films, it was marked by this publication, that the methodological foundation was introduced to the field of Chinese cinema studies by Chow and her followers which enabled the new academic field to be initially recognised by other scholars. Findings in this thesis suggest that the primary theoretical model which enabled Chinese cinema studies to gain its academic status was supported by the 'semi-cultural studies' model that Chow encouraged, where its research practices focus on a close interpretation of different texts (Chinese films) as a way to 'liberate' the 'other' (Chinese ethnicity/Chinese cinema studies/area studies) in relation to the broader western discourse (western film/film theory/academia).

This thesis questions, that such a theoretical establishment eventually led to the third problematic, where scholars working in this new field also created their own distinctive research interests, agendas and linguistic strategies within the context of English-language academia. For instance, this third problematic is evident in the concerns raised by scholars from mainland China. From the early 2000s, the term 'Overseas Chinese' began to be used by scholars who work in mainland China to describe the field of Chinese cinema studies in English. They argue that the discourses in English scholarship on this topic are very different compared to the scholarship produced in China. Such theoretical difference has generated a series of ongoing debates questioning what appropriate research methodologies should be applied to this particular topic in the global context (Chen, 2009; Ouyang & Kang, 2012;

Chen, 2015; Xin, 2015; Shi, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c; Zhang, 2017; Zheng, 2017).[3] To summarise the third problematic, due to its theoretical foundation that is based on the 'semi-cultural studies' and influenced by a combination of theoretical vocabularies, scholarship on Chinese cinema produced in English is not fully translatable, and therefore comprehensible, for scholars who work in China. Scholars from mainland China such as such as those mentioned above even argues further, that Chinese cinema studies in English-language can no longer capture or represent the rapid changes in Chinese film and its contemporary industry due to the specific interests in how knowledge is produced. What are these specific interests and how did they emerge in the field of Chinese cinema studies produced in English? Similar to the first problematic in relation to film studies more generally, although these issues have already been pointed out by scholars, little scholarship has paid attention to the context and processes of how this problematic emerged. This thesis is therefore is set out to discover the details of how certain academic discourses were generated in the first place in order to assess their significance that has been shaping the field of Chinese studies since the 1990s. This thesis has identified three discourses that were shaped the major debates in the field of Chinese cinema studies, they are the 'the discourse of Chinese cinema as territories and ethnicities', the 'discourse of Chinese cinema as languages' and the 'discourse of Chinese cinema as independent'. How did the theoretical foundation that was based on Chow's version of 'semi-cultural studies' support the making of these discourses and their debates? What scholars intend to achieve through these discourses and what were the results? The following thesis will address these questions more closely.

In addition to investigations *on* these three main problematics, this thesis strives to expose the connective relations *among* and across these problematics: how does one relate to

[3] These articles were originally written in Chinese. The bibliography will include my English translation of these articles titles (in quotes) if not available in its publication, as well as the original Chinese titles as additional referencing information.

another and what influence does each of them have on others? This thesis has turned to Pierre Bourdieu and his theory of 'field' in order to elaborate a conceptual framework to pursue answers. It positions the case of Chinese cinema studies in English under Bourdieu's concept of 'field', with the aims of mapping out different positions among scholars and understanding how these positions are established through the making of different academic discourses. In Richard Jenkins' (1992) summary, 'a field, in Bourdieu's sense, is a social arena within which struggles or manoeuvres take place over specific resources or stakes and the access to them' (Jenkins, 1992: 60). Each field, Jenkins continues, 'has a different logic and taken-for-granted structure of necessity and relevance which is both the product and producer of the habitus which is specific and appropriate to the field' (60). In other words, following such a definition of 'field', this thesis investigates how the research subject of Chinese cinema in English exemplifies what Jenkins calls 'a structured system of social positions' whose producers (academic scholars) have created different strategies for their knowledge dispositions. Furthermore, how do these different positions then reveal a field of struggles for academic appropriation and recognition? This thesis pushes the questioning further based on this theoretical framework. In Randal Jonson's (1993) understanding of Bourdieu's conceptual framework, any field is 'structured by the distribution of available positions' and by the 'objective characteristics of the agents occupying them' (Jonson, 1993: 14). Therefore, a 'field' as used in this thesis in formed by Bourdieu, is based on 'the struggles between these positions, a struggle often expressed in the conflict between the orthodoxy of established traditions and the heretical challenge of new modes of cultural practice' (Jonson, 1993: 14). In other words, while the field of Chinese cinemas studies can be considered as a challenge to the more orthodox field of films studies, their internal conflicts and positions are also to some extent connected to one and another. It is those

relations that this thesis seeks to reveal, as well as the different positionings within each of the fields.

The issue of struggles over cultural capital and position takings is a common phenomenon in academia across different disciplines. Any new emerging field within academia will inevitably go through similar patterns. This is particularly the case if we consider academia as a broader field of struggles in the lens of Bourdieu. For instance, in 1982, the journal *Critical Inquiry* dedicated a special issue to discussions of this very issue. As editor W.J.T. Mitchell (1982) states:

> [many academics are] forced to leave the security of the disciplines we have spent a lifetime mastering and to confront the "real world" of social and institutional power which has sustained those disciplines. At times, no doubt, it will seem that this confrontation never quite takes place and that the realms of academic, professional, and institutional politics remain as distant as ever from the arenas of state power and real social change. (Mitchell, 1982: iv)

What Mitchell argues here is that even though academic scholars sometimes assume certain critiques are about the social and institutional power in the real world, the politics never leaves the walls of the academy. Instead of solving the problems in the real world, the making of discourses to establish different theoretical positions often become a form of internally politics, or *habitus,* in Bourdieu's words, to sustain academics' tenure. Nöel Carroll (1996) would echo in his critique of 'Theory' in film studies:

> I have little or no expectation about changing the heart and mind of advocates of the Theory. There are sound sociological reasons for believing that scholars who are already deeply invested in a paradigm are unlikely to surrender it. Careers, tenures, promotions, publications, and reputations have been and continue to be built by espousing the Theory. (Carroll, 1996: 68)

Although the issue addressed by Carroll here is about the academic field of film studies more generally, but the mechanism or in Bourdieu's terms, the *habitus* that signalled by both scholars is also practiced by scholars in the launch of a new field, Chinese cinema studies.

Based on Bourdieu's theory of field, therefore, this thesis understands Chinese cinema studies as an academic field where knowledge production takes place as a form of struggles for positions-taking and cultural capital. Some of these key terms will be further unpacked in relation to this thesis in the next chapter. It is my aim to use Bourdieu's theory in order to open up and elaborate a perspective that enables this research to investigate Chinese cinema studies by positioning this academic field within a broader network of social interactions, in particular its hierarchical relation and tension with the more traditional film studies. For Bourdieu, an important aspect of field theory is that it thinks of a field 'relationally': the different positions and their relations to other positions are the key conditions of any field to be studied. In other words, for this thesis to investigate Chinese cinema studies as what Bourdieu calls a 'field', then the investigation needs to involve not only this particular field's position to other academic fields, but also the positions that scholars in this field take for knowledge production and the result of those practices.

In making the case for the relevance of Bourdieu's field theory for this thesis's agenda, I will be drawing upon several of his previous studies. Of particular importance are those where he used the concept of field to investigate different academic disciplines, such as art and literature (Bourdieu, 1993), law (Bourdieu, [1984] 1988), science (Bourdieu, 1991), philosophy (Bourdieu & Passeron [1964] 1979) and sociology (Bourdieu, [1984] 1988, 1992). In more recent years, there have been numerous attempts in applying Bourdieu's theory to study other academic disciplines as new case studies. Examples include Pier Carlo Bontempelli (2004) on German studies, John Speller (2011) on literary studies, Bechtel et al. (ed., 2012) on life sciences and Gildea et al. (eds., 2015) on English studies.

These works, through the lens of Bourdieu, demonstrate that the concept and theoretical framework of field are still relevant for making sense of a discipline as a social space, where battles for resources and methodological recognition take place. As an extension to these existing efforts, this thesis is the first experiment in making a critical inquiry into the field of Chinese cinema studies as well as film studies more generally through the lens of Bourdieu. Therefore, the originality of this research contributes to the ongoing theory building of Bourdieu's concept of 'field' as an analytical model, but with a fresh focus on a brand new case study alongside new findings.

As part of the Introduction, therefore, it is important to position the research question, 'to what extent does Chinese cinema studies in English-language academia exemplify a field of discursive struggles over cultural capital?', in parallel with two dimensions: 1) existing critiques of film studies' development previously conducted by David Bordwell, Noël Carroll and D.N. Rodowick; 2) the current state of Chinese cinema studies in English and its rise as a response to those critiques, developed from summaries by Yinjin Zhang. This Introduction will further elaborate Bourdieu's concept of 'field' and why it is relevance to this thesis. It will explain how such a framework can help us to make sense of different positionings within each of the field, how do these different positions relate among each other as well as the hieratical relation between the field of film studies and the field of Chinese cinema studies. Toward the end, an outline of this thesis's line of enquiry will summarise the nature of how the particular theoretical framework will help to the analyses are conducted over subsequent chapters.

Existing Critiques of Film Studies and Its Development

The existing critiques of film studies and its development, are important as part of the research context. Because this thesis discovers that the rise of Chinese cinema studies in

English was in fact a response to the discipline of film studies and its academic discourses. Therefore, understanding these existing critiques but by bearing the case study of this thesis in mind will enable us to formulate new critical perspectives on a more specific topic. Such a process of contestation echoes Bourdieu's view of the 'relational' characteristic in a professional field. Therefore, with the research question in mind, this section will first acknowledge these critiques and their concerns as background knowledge.

Although still rather young compared to other more established subjects in academia, such as literature, history or philosophy, film studies is now widely recognised and accepted by the university curriculum as an academic discipline in countries such as the UK. This is not only evident through the presence of undergraduate programmes, but also through PhD research programmes. To provide a perspective, using the UK as an example, there are currently 1,107 UK university undergraduate, postgraduate and research degree courses related to 'film studies' offered by 161 providers.[4] There are 17 universities in the UK offering 19 PhD degrees in film studies for the academic year of 2019/2020.[5] This result does not include other countries that also teach and provide research programmes in English. Although, around the globe, different film studies programmes have been established, and each country also has its own characteristic in terms of teaching and research, scholarship written in English is still being the most recognised internationally and it continues to have an impact on the global research culture.[6]

According to Bourdieu (1993), in addition to curriculums, publication is also a way to justify a discipline's status as a professional field, through a form of 'capital of consecration'. For instance, many have argued the publication of *Screen* the journal in 1969

[4] Results of a search with the keyword 'film studies' on the UCAS website on 26 January 2019.
[5] Results of a search with the keyword 'film studies' on the UCAS website on 26 January 2019.
[6] Due to the scope of focus, this thesis cannot provide a list of all the film studies programmes and scholarship around the globe but it is aware of their existence.

was a significant landmark for the professionalisation of films studies. However, this thesis will later on counter this general understanding and to trace the history of the professionalisation of film studies to the foundation of the Society of Cinematologists in 1959 and its associate journal application. Furthermore, one of the most prestigious academic publishers, Oxford University Press, released a volume *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings* as early as 1974, and a volume of *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies* in 1998. Recently, it has also published the eighth edition of *Film Theory and Criticism* (2016). The continuous publications of monograph, edited volume and text book for film studies by many publishers nowadays as well as a widespread course adoption of these materials directly indicate that there is a demand for scholarship on this topic. There are also numbers of international conferences dedicated to the subject being held each year around the world, such as the annual Society for Cinema & Media Studies (SCMS) conference, which hosts an attendance of over a thousand delegates each year. The Society currently has a membership of over five thousand and also has its own associated journal. In summary, film studies is recognised as an academic discipline that has established its professional platform for both education and research.

As demonstrated by Bourdieu ([1984] 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1996) on many occasions, the emergence of a particular academic discipline and through understanding these scholarly spaces as a 'field' reveal the structure of our society as well as the activities that contribute to that structure: there are constant battles for positions, interests and resources. The discipline of film studies is no different from other disciplines such as philosophy, literary studies, sociology and law which have been studied by Bourdieu. Critical reflections on the development of film studies in English-language academia are nothing new.[7] Many scholars identify that the discipline's core institutionalisation, which

[7] 'film studies' mentioned later on in this thesis is within the same context of English-language academia, unless specified.

took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s, began with where the psychoanalytic/semiotic model of film analysis was recognised as the 'proper' film theory, actively promoted by publication platforms such as *Screen* (Bordwell 1998; Andrew 2000, 2009). The introduction of Freudian and Lacanian influenced psychoanalysis to film studies during this period was a major theoretical shift in the discipline. Rey Chow (2007) calls this theoretical turning point the 'disciplining moment' of film studies, where a set of analytical theories were adopted and reproduced for scholarly investigations into various film texts, with a further political ambition to criticise the structure of society and, later, identity politics. The 'disciplining moment' therefore, refers to when the commentary on films became standardised through this process of professionalisation. Scholars have already argued that the introduction of 'proper' academic film studies in the late 1960s and early 1970s within universities has meant that the potential for alternative conversations about the cinema has been severely hindered (Rodowick, 1988; Cavell, 1979; Bordwell & Carroll, 1996; Carroll, 1996; Wood, 2006; Rodowick, 2007; Andrew, 2009; Britton, 2009; Rodowick, 2014; Rodowick, 2015; Geal, 2015). Therefore, a problematic of knowledge hierarchy within film studies has been identified by scholars, which refers to certain ways of producing knowledge being more accepted and popular than others. If we look at this from Bourdieu's perspective of understanding film studies as a field, then this problematic can be explained as Randal Johnson summarises:

> To enter a field (the philosophical field, the scientific field, etc.), to play the game, one must possess the habitus which predisposes one to enter that field, that game, and not another. One must also possess at least the minimum amount of knowledge, or skill, or 'talent' to be accepted as a legitimate player. (Johnson, 1993: 10)

In other words, the professionalisation of film studies as an academic field, has been a process where scholars (players) establish a set of rules of the game and linguistic strategies

to create different discourses as knowledge production. In every field, certain 'interests' and 'investments' are at stake to protect the mutual interest of the players, which is to sustain certain social status and the cultural capital of the field. Bourdieu understands this as a 'general science of the economy of practices', and that each field of cultural production can be analysed according to this logic.

Although not in the language of Bourdieu, scholars had already expressed their concern over the state of film studies as early as the start of the discipline (See Victor Perkins, 1972). However, it was in the 1990s that the criticism of the development of film studies as an academic discipline was taken up more seriously. For example, David Bordwell and Noël Carroll (1996) use the phrase 'Grand Theory' to critique the theoretical monopoly resulting from the professionalisation of film studies. In Bordwell and Carroll's understanding, 'Grand Theory' come from two main schools of practice. Firstly, theories that originated in the late 1960s and early 1970s, influenced by both Louis Althusser's (1970) critique of ideology, Ferdinand de Saussure's semiology and the psychoanalytical theory of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. Known as the school of 'Screen theory', studies that follow these philosophical traditions are designed to explain how mainstream cinema operates as an ideological apparatus. The film theories developed from these philosophical traditions set out to explain how the individual subject is provided an illusionary, false identification, with the materiality that a film text generates through signs and codes. Secondly, there are studies that have been influenced by cultural theories, which began with postcolonial studies and critique in literature studies. Since the 1980s to the present, studies of films that follow such theoretical influences have been concerned with identity politics, the hierarchy of representations and the liberation (democratic modes of interpretation) of a text, supported by thoughts from postcolonial studies, postmodernism and poststructuralism.

Although the film theories established during the 1970s and 1980s discussed above are influenced by different philosophical traditions, in Carroll's (1996) view, the *theory* that has been practised is in fact in a singular model. In his words, it was 'a film theory [that] was generally conceived to be a rather comprehensive instrument that was supposed to answer virtually *every* legitimate question you might have about film' (Carroll, 1996: 38). Echoing this critique, Bordwell (1996) elaborates further regarding how these film theories tend to frame their (putative) explorations of the cinema 'within schemes which seek to describe or explain very broad features of society, history, language, and psyche' (Bordwell, 1996: 3). The phrase 'Grand Theory' has been picked by other scholars, since its inception, to express their concerns. For examples, Richard Rushton and Gary Bettinson (2010) argue how '"Grand Theory" ha[s] monopolized the reigning theoretical paradigm' within film studies. They state that 'Grand Theory' 'homogenizes films by producing "top-down" interpretations' (Rushton & Bettinson, 2010: 132). Jonathan Frome (2008) also argues that '"Grand Theory" [is] used dogmatically to exclude broad areas of inquiry from film studies' (Frome, 2008: 334). Despite these efforts and new trends being introduced, similar theoretical models, particularly the studies of representation in a film text, are still popular research practices in the studies of films. Several attempts have already been made to question 'Grand Theory', from problematizing specific interventions (Rodowick, 1988; Buckland, 2012) to problematizing the roots of those interventions (Wood, 1976; Carroll 1996) and even to problematizing the philosophical foundation which this 'Grand Theory' rests on (Britton, 2009; Buckland, 2012). However, these efforts are considered as marginal voices within the discipline which have not provoked a broader disciplinary reflection.

Existing critiques on film studies' legitimacy by Bordwell, Carroll and Rodowick will continue to be discussed in the light of Bourdieu as part of the literature review in the next chapter. The context of the current state of film studies is used here as a crucial

referencing point, as its operation and dynamics have a direct impact on the rise of Chinese cinema studies in English and its discourses. The following paragraphs will elaborate this second context of studies further.

The State of Chinese Cinema Studies and Its Responses to Film Studies

As the second context for this thesis's enquiry, this section will summarise the current state of Chinese cinema studies in English by examining its reception in university curriculum as well as the landscape of academic publications. It will then discuss how the rise of Chinese cinema studies may be understood as a response to the problematic of 'Grand Theory' in films studies as an attempt to open up a new professional space that will enable scholars interested in the studies of Chinese films.

What Bordwell and Carroll call the 'Grand Theory' in film studies has excluded not only alternative research interests and perspectives such as studies of the film industry, audience reception, cultural history of cinema but also films from other cultures. Therefore, introducing a new field of Chinese cinema studies in English opens up new space and scope to accommodate scholarly discussions on Chinese films. Bourdieu would see this as 'the fundamental law of the field', where a field of cultural production, in this case film studies, is always 'reasserted by "newcomers"' (Bourdieu, 1993: 82). However, at the same time, the 'newcomers' who establish a new field of cultural production inevitably reproduce similar acts, rules and patterns in their social and economic activities to maintain the 'cultural capital' that this new field has obtained (Bourdieu, 1993). Bourdieu's observation pertains to the case of Chinese cinema studies quite correctly; if we see the case study as what Bourdieu calls an academic 'field', this theoretical framework enables us to position Chinese cinema studies in relation to the field of film studies to unpack the discourse interactions between both fields. The following paragraphs will explain this point further.

Many understand that Chinese cinema began to generate increasing interests from the 1980s onwards owing to several crucial events. In 1978, led by former President Deng Xiaoping, China went through an economic reform when the country first opened to the world after a long period of isolation during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). As a result, more attentions were paid by the world to Chinese culture, including films. In the late 1980s early 1990s, several Chinese films appeared at European film festivals, receiving major awards. For instance, Zhang Yimou's *Red Sorghum* (1987) was awarded the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival in 1988, which was the first Chinese film to receive such a title in the major European film circuit. Apart from this award, since the 1980s, the Berlin Film Festival also began to promote Chinese cinema energetically through their programming from the 1990s onward. Zhang Yimou won the Golden Lion award at the Venice Film Festival in 1992 with his film *The Story of Qiu Jin* while Chen Kaige won the 1993 Palme d'or for *Farewell My Concubine.* In addition, all three films also received Best Foreign Language Film nominations from the Academy Awards. As a result for such a series of international exposure, scholars often consider this era (1980s-1990s) as the beginning of when Chinese cinema came to be widely recognised among western critics. However, some of the findings in this thesis will later counter this general perception, and argue that the public in the UK, for instance, began to show curiosity and interests in Chinese films as early as the 1950s. Regardless, Sheldon Lu (1997) summarises this significant juncture between the 1980s and the 1990s as: 'in receiving the Golden Bear Award at the Berlin Film Festival in 1988, *Red Sorghum* marked the beginning of the integration of Chinese national cinema in global film culture' (Lu, 1997: 125). In Lu's and most scholars' view, it is through its frequent festival appearances during the 1980s and the 1990s that Chinese film began to be appreciated, discussed and written about first by western film critics then film studies

scholars. UK based critic Tony Rayne also recognised this historical turning point where he coined as the 'new Chinse cinema'.

To provide a perspective on the current state of Chinese cinema studies in English as a professional field, there are currently 266,000 results for a keyword search on 'Chinese cinema' via Google Scholars. There are at least two professional academic journals in English that are dedicated to this subject, *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* (Taylor & Francis) and *Asian Cinema* (Intellect). Oxford University Press first published *The Oxford handbook of Chinese Cinemas* in 2013, edited by Carlos Rojas and Eileen Chow (and will be published in paperback format in 2019). The recognition by one of the most prestigious academic publishers of Chinese cinema as a proper research subject directly indicates its status as an academic field. Furthermore, the number of journal articles, edited volumes and monographs on this topic written in English continues to increase each year. For Bourdieu (1993), and similarly to the discussion earlier about film studies, these types of publication are considered as 'capital of consecration' which implies a certain 'power to consecrate objects' as a channel to disseminate a particular field's interests. In Bourdieu's view, publication is a form of accumulation of 'cultural capital' which means that while specific materials or discourses being published, they automatically gained some sort of credit and are understood by the wider society as legitimized. These specific vocabularies will be further unpacked in the next chapter.

Several other academic platforms also prepared the way for the topic to emerge in academic circles. An association devoted to Asian cinema, the Asian Cinema Studies Society, was established in 1984 in the United States and launched its own journal, *Asian Cinema*, which is now owned by the UK publisher Intellect; there was the establishment of the *East-West Film Journal* in 1986; and several serious research projects have been funded globally focusing on the topic of Chinese cinema studies. There are currently three examples

in the UK: 'Chinese Film Forum UK' (January 2012 – January 2014, £28,382)[8], 'Chinese Film Festival Studies' (May 2013 – Jun 2014, £36,206)[9] and 'Independent Cinema in China, 1990 – 2017: State, Market and Film Culture' (January 2019 – December 2022, £804,058)[10]. All these projects are recognised and funded by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council. It is through all the evidence discussed above, from book publications, to journals and substantial research projects, that the following argument can be made: the subject of Chinese cinema studies in English has gradually taken shape and is now considered as a legitimate scholarly space. If we follow Bourdieu's terms, Chinese cinema studies in English has indeed become a field, but the question we next need to ask is *how*? As one of the key founding players in the field, Chris Berry (2012) welcomes the rise of this scholarly space:

> A final way in which Chinese film studies in English is beginning to carve out its own distinct character concerns what could be called the "transnational turn." In mainstream film studies, globalization has been felt in the interest in diasporic cinema (Naficay 2001) as well as global ambition of Hollywood (Miller et al. 2001) But in Chinese film studies in English, the impact has, if anything, been even greater, and it has gone beyond the type of topic studied. (Berry, 2012: 497)

To Berry, and many others in the field, the emerging research topic of Chinese cinema studies is in fact practised as an alternative challenge to the more established field of film studies, particularly in the context of the existing critiques discussed earlier. Chinese cinema studies as a new interest of academic inquiry emerged around the same time as film studies encountered its maturity during the 1980s. However, at the same time, it shares a complex relation with the field of film studies.

[8] This project's Principal Investigator is Felicia Chan (Manchester University) and the Co-investigator is Andy Willis (University of Salford).
[9] This project's Principal Investigator is Chris Berry (King's College London) and the Co-investigator is Luke Robinson (University of Sussex).
[10] This project's Principal Investigator is Sabrina Qiong Yu (Newcastle University) and the Co-investigators are Luke Robinson (University of Sussex) and Chris Berry (King's College, London).

On one hand, as this thesis will demonstrate later, historically and theoretically, existing discourses in film studies have not entirely been applicable to studying films from China. This concern can partly be explained by Bordwell and Carroll's critique of 'Grand Theory' in film studies, regarding how certain types of film theories have been defining its major discourses, and how these discourses have to some extent become norms in knowledge production. However, on the other hand, as this thesis will also demonstrate, the 'cultural turn', which took place in film studies during the 1980s influenced by postcolonial studies, enabled a possibility for discussions around non-western films, including films from China. Therefore, the rise of Chinese cinema studies in English can be read as a positive result from Bordwell and Carroll's critique of 'Grand Theory' in film studies, but based on a postcolonial sentiment of dissatisfaction towards the western theoretical environment. Influenced by the rise of postcolonial studies in the 1980s, some scholars even call such theoretical problematics as 'Eurocentric biases' in film studies, where the 'Grand Theory' in film studies are argued as not being designed to include discussions of films from other cultures (Stam, 1991; Willemen, 1995; Zhang, 2002; Zhang, 2006; Wang, 2010; Zhang, 2010; Higbee & Lim, 2010; Ba & Higbee, 2012). However, as clarified earlier, this thesis hesitates to settle with simplistic answers such as 'Eurocentric biases' or the logic of 'East vs. West' as the final explanation of this problematic.

What interests this research, and forms its central question, is the unpacking of the processes of 1) how the academic field of film studies and its discourses exclude the discussion of Chinese films and leads to the emergence of a new academic field; and 2) how the field of Chinese cinema studies repeats similar patterns of discourse to those made in film studies for its own professionalisation. The term 'professionalisation' appears in different sections throughout this thesis and will therefore be further unpacked in the next chapter with regard to its specific meaning as informed by Bourdieu's theory. In the light of

Bourdieu, the processes of exclusion are, in fact, strategies for a specific field to take shape and function. This is what Bourdieu would call an act of 'symbolic violence', 'as the underlying power relations which serve, in part, to guarantee the continued reproduction of the legitimacy of those who produce or defend the canon' (Johnson, 1993: 16). As the findings in this thesis reveal in the following chapters, the emergence of the field of Chinese cinema studies in English, is in many aspects, particularly in its linguistic strategies, closely connected to the field of film studies. This thesis discovers, that although the establishment of a new subject area of Chinese cinema studies in English eventually enables more discussions of Chinese films that film studies fail to accommodate, its own very professionalisation also creates a set of theoretical languages that, to some extent, have become the core discourses which define the new research subject as yet another field of cultural production. For instance, the scholarship on Chinese films written in English follows major paradigms that support debates such as 'territories', 'ethnicities' and 'languages' as the specific interests in this field. The discussion of each of these discourses will be elaborated on further in the finding chapters.

If we continue to use Bordwell and Carroll's 'Grand Theory' critique as a reference point, the emerging subject of Chinese cinema studies on one hand is a response to their critique as a resistance and intervention, but at the same time also part of what Bordwell and Carroll criticise. The discourses which have helped to professionalise the discipline of film studies (the 'discourse of film as a discipline', 'film as art', 'film as signification' and 'film as cultures') continue to influence how knowledges are produced within the emerging subject of Chinese cinema studies in English. This issue has been pointed out by scholars who conduct research in Chinese films but who currently work in mainland China, such as Li Daoxin (2014), who argues that the research on Chinese cinema in English also contains certain biases just as film studies in general do. In other words, there is a set of criteria

established in English-language academia for the emerging research of Chinese cinema that is different to that used by research conducted in mainland China. This thesis insists, however, such a difference is imbedded in the relations among the three central problematics pointed out earlier in this Introduction, unpacking the processes of how these problematic emerged and to locate their material evidence will help further explain Li's criticism and disagreement on the development of Chinese cinema studies in English-language academia.

Now that both contexts of studies have been briefly discussed, how can this thesis make sense of the emergence of Chinese cinema studies in English reflexively from a position that is outside of both the subject as well as the discipline of film studies? This research has adopted a set of theoretical vocabularies outside of the discipline to position the questioning in a context which will enable the investigation to look at the problematic from the outside, while maintaining the language of critique connected to the theoretical discourses within. The following section will explain why a theoretical framework informed by Bourdieu is adopted for this thesis

A Theoretical Framework Informed by Pierre Bourdieu

For Bourdieu, a 'field' refers to 'the field of cultural production', a concept which helps us to understand social structure where the agent is 'free from the voluntarism and idealism of subjectivist's accounts' while the social space is 'free from the deterministic and mechanistic causality inherent in many objectivist approaches' (Johnson, 1993: 8). Through such a perspective of seeing any professional social space as a field, we are provided with a perspective for making sense of how capital is acquired as a response to the larger field of struggles. As Randal Johnson explains: 'In any given field, agents occupying the diverse available positions (or in some cases creating new positions) engage in competition for control of interests or recourses which are specific to the field in question' (Johnson, 1993:

9). This conceptualisation is particularly useful for understanding an academic discipline and its emergence, regardless of its being old or new, as Bourdieu has experimented on different occasions. These cases can be exemplified by his continuous efforts where he questions the profession of an academic as well as the field of academia itself ([1984] 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1996). This thesis extends Bourdieu's broader investigation to the 'field of academia' but with a more specific case study which has not been examined before. By considering the research subject of Chinese cinema studies in English as what Bourdieu calls the 'field', the findings of this thesis reveal repeated patterns of cultural production as processes that establish a distinctive interest or taste in its knowledge dispositions.

What Bourdieu calls a 'field' refers to 'the analytical space defined by the interdependence of the entities that compose a structure of positions among which there are power relations' (Hilgerz & Mangez, 2015: 5). According to Bourdieu (1993), the field is a social space which has relations to other fields and the structure of society. As Wacquant explains:

> A field consists of a set of objective, historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power (or capital), while habitus consists of a set of historical relations 'deposited' within individual bodies in the form of mental and corporeal schemata of perception, appreciation, and action. (Wacquant, 1992: 16)

This explains precisely why further sense can be made, through Bourdieu's concept of field, of the relation between the emerging subject of Chinese cinema studies in English and already established film studies. A 'field' is a space in which 'the structured set of the manifestations of the social agents are involved', through their 'political acts or pronouncements, manifestos or polemics', which are inseparable from how this space is 'defined by possession of a determinate quality of specific capital (recognition) and, at the same time, by occupation of a determinate position in the structure of the distribution of this

specific capital' (Bourdieu, 1993: 30). In other words, although initially its establishment was a reaction toward 'Grand Theory' in film studies, inevitably, Chinese cinema studies as a new field has also now appropriated a set of theoretical paradigms for this professional space to be recognised within academia.

For his investigation into different academic disciplines, Bourdieu ([1984] 1988) documented the battles between academics with social power and scientific power; between the administrators and the researchers; between older and younger academics; between professors and lecturers; between the older and more established disciplines (philosophy and history), and the younger disciplines (sociology and psychology). He investigates the position of sociology during the post-1968 period alongside all the surrounding transitions, supported by primary empirical sources which he gathered and surveyed for over twenty years. These empirical evidences include demographics of lecturers and professors, indicators of academic resource distributions, morphological evolutions of different faculties' labour circulation, statistics of university faculty administration, biographies of academics, correspondences among faculty members and administration, records of everyday activities, statistics of publication outputs and many more. Not only does Bourdieu present the data that he gathered, he also theorises and conceptualises them accordingly to reveal the inter-relations between each element and the processes through which certain 'cultural capital' is formed. The 'battlers for dominance' are nothing new in the discipline of film studies, as already discussed briefly earlier, and this has already been critiqued by Bordwell, Carroll and others. In Wacquant (1990)'s words, 'intellectuals are moved by forces, motivated by stakes, and wield forms of power that are specific to the academic field' (1990: 680).

The next chapter will continue to discuss how this thesis has understood Bourdieu's theoretical framework of 'field' as well as to explain how it will be applied to its research.

The research question ‘To what extent does Chinese cinema studies in English-language academia exemplify a field of discursive struggles over cultural capital?’ will be answered by the contents in the following order.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter One questions a gap of knowledge regarding the theoretical tension between Chinese cinema studies and film studies, through reviewing the works by Yingjin Zhang. It argues that although scholars who work on Chinese cinema often express their concern over the marginalisation of the topic in film studies, the processes of how such marginalisation took place have not been explored in great details. It suggests that an investigation will need to be revisited in this thesis to unpack the details. The chapter will then go on to look at two models of existing critique of film studies by Bordwell & Carroll and Rodowick, to put them in conversation with both the case of Chinese cinema studies and Bourdieu’s theory of field. The comparison explains how these existing critiques of film studies have influenced the forming of this research as well as their limitation to be applied to the case of Chinese cinema studies, in order to identify a common ground among all these critiques (Zhang, Bordwell, Carroll and Rodowick). Chapter One proposes to turn to Bourdieu and his theory of ‘field’ for a framework to supports its investigation. This chapter will further unpack notions such as ‘field’, ‘struggles’, ‘discourse’, ‘habitus’, ‘professionalisation’ and ‘cultural capital’ in Bourdieu’s terms as well as acknowledging the framework’s limitations. At the end of this chapter, it will introduce a set of methodologies that have been used for the finding and analysis chapters in this thesis.

Chapter Two identifies three main discourses which contributed to the professionalisation of film studies as an academic field. They include the ‘discourse of film as a discipline, the ‘discourse of film as art’ and the ‘discourse of film as signification’. By

using methods comprised archival research and field analysis that are informed by Bourdieu's theoretical framework, the findings in this chapter demonstrate how these three main discourses all focused on specific interests and agendas that were related to the broader field of struggles in academia. As a result, topics such as Chinese cinema did not fit into these debates. For instance, regarding the 'discourse of film as a discipline', it will analyse both public and scholarly publications that documented the launch of the Society of Cinematologists in the US. The analysis made sense of the agendas that the society aimed to achieve and the results that came after those activities in relation to the discipline of film studies. For the 'discourse of film as art', it will analyse debates that appeared in early film criticism between Bazin and Arnheim, as well as the notion of 'auteur', which was first popularised by French critics then adopted by American critics. Finally, for the 'discourse of film as signification', it will examine into a series of writing from *Screen* where it first introduced methods such as semiotics and psychoanalysis to the studies of cinema and to make sense of the theoretical positions that scholar wished to establish. These three discourses are important to be discussed at length, as they summarise the key stages of film studies' development as an academic discipline. Furthermore, by putting the topic of Chinese cinema in parallel to the analyses of these three discourses, this chapter fills in the gap of knowledge and provides a fuller context to the tension between the so called 'Euro-American paradigms in film theory and criticism' and Chinese cinema which has been pointed out by Zhang previously.

Chapter Three further demonstrates the struggles that Chinese cinema as a research topic faced in the field of film studies, by presenting and analysing three sets of findings. The first set of findings is three publications between the 1960s and the 1970s in English devoted to the topic of Chinese films. They include scholarship by Gerald Noxon (1963), Jay Leyda (1972) and Rosalind Delma and Mark Nash (1976). Each of this publication, this

chapter argues, attempted in their own way to introduce the topic of Chinese cinema to the field of film studies at that time but failed to gain further acknowledgement. The second set of findings to be used to demonstrate the marginalisation of the research topic in academia is a list of archival materials gathered from *The British Newspaper Archive.* Between the 1950s and the 1970s, a good amount of materials have been discovered as evidence of intellectual discussions of Chinese films in the public. This chapter will list all these findings in a chronological sequence in order to evaluate selected examples and further question that the topic of Chinese cinema was in fact paid more attention to in the public than in academia during this time. The final set of findings is a series of articles and editorial volumes by scholars based in China, US and the UK between the 1980s and the 1990s, where they all made efforts to further introduce the topic of Chinese cinema to a wider audience, including those by Shao Mujun, Chen Xihe, Lam Nin Tung, Geroge S. Semsel and Chris Berry. This chapter will address that, these efforts were unfortunately not acknowledged by their peers in film studies even though some of these contents show potentials to contributing new insights to existing debates at that time.

In response to the principal research question, Chapter Four demonstrates that from the 1990s onwards, owing to postcolonial studies and poststructuralist influenced scholars such as Rey Chow and her efforts in building a theoretical foundation for the studies of Chinese cinema, a new scholarly space for Chinese cinema studies was finally being recognised in academia. However, because of the specific interest and agenda that the theoretical model of Chow's 'semi-cultural studies' and her followers put forward, in particular to promote the practice of a close interpretation of cultural texts, several discourses were used by scholars to support a further theoretical development of the field. Based on this 'semi-cultural studies' model as exemplified by Chow, the studies of Chinese films as a new field focused mainly on debates over theorising Chinese cinema as 'as territories and

ethnicities', 'as languages' and the 'as independent'. This chapter identified three major discourses that have been shaping the main interests and agendas as the field of Chinese cinema studies developed, namely the 'discourse of Chinese cinema as territories and ethnicities', the 'discourse of Chinese cinema as languages' and the 'discourse of Chinese cinema as independent'. The analysis in this chapter reveals the theoretical background of key debates and their logics, to identify their theoretical connection with postcolonial studies and poststructuralism, as well as to expose similar patterns the making of these discourses share with the field of film studies. This chapter will also make a comparison between the three discourses to current different studies on the same topic conducted in mainland China, and to highlight the differences regarding how films are examined in both contexts. Together with the previous chapters, this chapter further demonstrates how Chinese cinema studies in English exemplifies a field of continuous struggles over different theoretical and capital positions.

Chapter One: Initial Framing of the Research Agenda

As discussed previously, if we follow Bourdieu's focus on the 'relational' aspect in any field analysis, then the investigation into the academic field of Chinese cinema studies in English cannot be isolated from its relation to other fields such as the broader field of film studies. To build on efforts in the Introduction, therefore, this chapter will continue to discuss existing scholarship on first the overall development of Chinese cinema studies based on Yingjin Zhang's works, followed by discussions on critiques of film studies' disciplinary status by David Bordwell, Noël Carroll and D.N, Rodowick. In the light of Bourdieu, this chapter will put these existing scholarship (Zhang, Bordwell, Carroll & Rodowick) and their critical concerns in dialogue with Bourdieu's writings in relation to 'field', as an initial framing of the thesis's research agenda for purposes of theory-building. While all these scholars have not been discussed in the same context previously, what additional perspectives can we gain through the orchestration of such a dialogue? This chapter as a literature review aims to explore a new space of inquiry.

1.1 A Critical Overview of Chinese Cinema Studies in English

To date, there have been numbers of book length scholarly works devoted to the topic of Chinese cinema in English (see most recently, for examples, Fan, 2015; Chan & Willis 2016; Bettinson & Udden, 2017; Rojas & Chow, 2019). However, an investigation on the studies themselves requires a relatively new perspective. To clarify, this thesis is not another study of Chinese films; it will not contain a single analysis of film, as it is an investigation into the academic field of such studies. Furthermore, this thesis will not be able to discuss every

single piece of scholarship ever published on the topic of Chinese cinema in English, but sets out to map several of the most formative *positions* within the fields of film studies and Chinese cinemas studies and to explore how they relate to the more established field of film studies. To follow Bourdieu's view on field analysis, the relation among different positions within a field is crucial for making sense of how the field operates and how discourses are distributed for the building of a form of cultural capital.

US-based scholar Yingjin Zhang (2002, 2004, 2010, 2012) has shown a consistent approach in summarising the overall development of Chinese cinema studies in English in both his monographs and edited volumes. Zhang is also one of the few scholars who has attempted to suggest different methodological possibilities for the academic field's future development. Zhang's works are known to be very helpful in providing an overall image of the relatively new discipline, its latest debates and ongoing issues, hence this chapter will explore some of his previous endeavours. It will put Zhang's works and Bourdieu's theoretical framework in dialogue as a way to highlight the similarities in their critical logics.

In Zhang's view, the rise of Chinese cinema studies since the 1980s in English-language academia has proved to be a positive landscape, as more scholars than ever conduct research on Chinese films nowadays, as part of the wider expansion of area studies. This thesis holds a different view. Findings to be presented in the following chapters will demonstrate that between the 1970s and early 1990s, the subject area of Chinese cinema in fact faced a degree of difficulties to integrate to the more established field of film studies, which Zhang has also addressed. Regardless, Zhang observes that there is an 'exciting development of Chinese cinema through its "box-office boom and academic investment"' (2012: 20). However, in the academic context, there are also unresolved questions and issues regarding how the field should develop and its methodological directions. For instance, Zhang (2006) points out the

tension between Chinese cinema studies and the more traditional film studies in one of his essays, by engaging Paul Willemen's criticism (Willemen's other writings will appear in the following chapters in a different context representing different positions):

> To contest Eurocentrism in film studies, Willemen exposes two problematic modes of scholarship: first, 'projective appropriation' is concerned with 'conquering markets, eliminating competition, and securing monopolies'; second, 'ventriloquism' functions as 'the monopolist-imperialist's guilty consciences' but 'allows him to remain an authoritarian monopolist while masquerading in the clothes of "the oppressed" (Willemen 1995: 28-29). To achieve a genuine comparative vision, Willemen draws on Bakhtin's concept of alterity and advocates 'creative understanding' as a process of double engagement: 'It is not simply a matter of engaging a "dialogue" with some other culture's products but of using one's understanding of another cultural practice to reperceive and rethink one's own cultural constellation at the same time' (Willemen 1995: 30). Comparative film studies, therefore, aims not just to project or export one's theoretical paradigm but also to revisit and rethink the foundation of one's theory. (Zhang, 2006: 28)

Facing the situation of Chinese cinema being 'eliminated' by traditional film studies, to align himself with Willemen, Zhang proposes a method of 'comparative film studies' as well as to adopt Sheldon Lu's (1997) suggestion of a 'transnational film studies'. In Zhang's view, Chinese cinema studies in English, by nature, is already comparative from the beginning, as it engages a non-Eurocentric topic in English, where its scholarship is ultimately a process of translation. Certainly, Zhang's view is embedded in his own academic background, that of a scholar trained in comparative literature in the US who is also interested in the research of Chinese films. Therefore, how Zhang approaches the issues around Chinese cinema studies in English comes from this very specific perspective. He proposes further:

> I would suggest that Chinese film studies came into being in the West precisely through its tactful negotiation with dominant Euro-American paradigms in film

> theory and criticism. Chinese film studies, therefore, is comparative in nature. It stands to benefit from comparative scholarship with regard to Hollywood and other national cinemas. Indeed, one reason why 'comparative film studies' does not exist is an unstated assumption by most scholars that studies of any national cinema, even United States cinema, is by necessity comparative in scope.
> (Zhang, 2012: 29)

Zhang's proposal of a comparative model for approaching Chinese cinema studies in English-language academia signals two main points. First is the situation of the research area of Chinese cinema not fitting into the more traditional, in his words, 'Euro-American paradigms in film theory and criticism'. The second is that in order to transform this disciplinary issue or tension, comparative film studies should be used as a tactic. Like many other scholars who work on Chinese films and who have likewise addressed the 'Eurocentric' problem in film studies, in my opinion, they jump to such a conclusion too quickly. For instance, the so called 'Euro-American paradigms' vs. Chinese cinema situation has been used on many occasions as a justification to support the rise of Chinese cinema studies in English. What has been missing is the detail of such a process; how the problematic occurred in the first place. Partly engaging with the same questioning as Zhang, this thesis would like to first take a step back to look at the broader picture regarding this particular critique by Zhang and others: how and why has the topic of Chinese cinema studies been 'eliminated' in films studies? Without this background knowledge, any theoretical suggestion to this emerging new field can only be an empty manifesto, as the fundamental questions are yet to be addressed.

It is important, however, for Zhang and other scholars to point out this tension between Chinese cinema studies and film studies, because this is where common ground can be developed for this thesis and its investigation. If we return to Willemen's language in his criticism as quoted in Zhang's essay, we discover some parallels between Willemen's logic and Bourdieu's critique on the academic fields more generally. Willemen writes:

> This [film studies] expansion in academia's disciplinary field creates job and departmental expansion opportunities. The result is that scholars formed within the paradigm of Euro-American film theory are rushing to plant their flags on the terrain of, for instance, Chinese, Japanese, or Indian film studies. In that respect, those scholars and departments are actively delaying the advent of genuine comparative film studies by trying to impose the paradigms of Euro-American film and aesthetic theories upon non-European cultural practices. (Willemen, 1995: 26-27)

To expand on this quote, Willemen's observation is no different to Bourdieu's observation of how an academic field operates: that is a space of constant battles and struggles for the players (academics) to establish their terrain. However, what is important to be noticed here, is that such a problematic, as signalled by Willemen, had already taken place in the field of films studies before Chinese cinema studies. In Willemen's understanding, too, that these battles are in fact carried over from an older field to a more recent field of academic practice. In the context of Chinese cinema studies, these issues are not often unpacked as a way of understanding how the topic of Chinese cinema studies is being positioned or even influenced.

This thesis explores the details of the tension that Zhang and Willemen raised between Chinese cinema studies and film studies, to reveal the processes of how such a tension came about and the influences that it had on both fields' development. By bearing in mind with the issues that Chinese cinema studies faced as alerted by Zhang and Wilemen, the following sections will revisit two existing critiques of film studies. By revisiting previous critical scholarship on film studies' disciplinary development, the following sections will identify a gap where it connects with this thesis' questioning regarding Chinese cinema studies as an academic field.

Despite Zhang's efforts in suggesting different theoretical models for Chinese cinema studies in English's future direction, his works often make reference back to the more

general development of films studies as a discipline. Therefore, it is necessary to revisit some existing debates regarding film studies' disciplinary status conducted by scholars.

There are currently several models of critique of film studies but two in particular which have been researched at length of direct pertinence to this thesis's focus. They include what Bourdieu would call the macro scale of internal analysis, represented by David Bordwell and Nöel Carroll (1996) and the 'broad scale of internal analysis', represented by D.N. Rodowick (1988, 2014). If we look at both models of critique from Bourdieu's perspective, they are considered as reductive, as they do not capture the relational aspect in a field of cultural production. For instance, how do Bordwell and Carroll's critique of Grand Theory and Rodowick's critiques of the 'discourse of political modernism' and the 'elegy of theory' relate to the field of Chinese cinema studies? The relational aspect is missing in both these models of critique.

For instance, while on one hand Bordwell, Carroll and Rodowick have all been critical about the development of film studies as a discipline, their criticisms were not made in conjunction with other emerging new academic fields, such as Chinese cinema studies in English. How would this specific case make a contribution to their critiques? On the other hand, Zhang's works often position the development of Chinese cinema studies in English within a broader context of the discipline of film studies. There seems to be a disconnection among their critical reflections. That is, while Zhang attempts to make dialogues and his works with scholars who also critique about film studies' development (but from other perspectives and positions, such as Bordwell, Carroll and Rodowick), there is no responses from latter scholars to scholars who research on Chinese cinema but also share the same concern. This is an important issue to be aware of, as such a disconnection can be understood as one of the central forces that drives the investigation in this thesis. Furthermore, also because of such a disconnection among these critiques, one of the tasks for this thesis is to

search for a framework where all these perspectives can be connected and put in dialogue. This chapter will therefore find a way to compare and connect their works, to initiate a conversation among them while also developing a new framework for its own investigation, inspired by Bourdieu. Fow now, let us first review existing critiques of the development of film studies, beginning with Bordwell and Carroll's works.

1.2 Bordwell & Carroll's Critique of Grand Theory in Film Studies

It is important to review Bordwell and Carroll's (1996) original critique of Grand Theory in film studies in some detail, because their protest against the professionalisation of film studies was the first major intervention in the discipline, countering major discourses that had already been accepted by the field as appropriate research paradigms. However, while Bordwell and Carroll presented a pioneering model for conducting a critical reflection on film studies, it is also limited in that it does not capture a broader picture of the relation between the field of film studies and other new emerging fields, such as Chinese cinema studies.

As outlined in the previous chapter, both Bordwell and Carroll expressed their concern over the development of film studies as a discipline as early as 1996. Using the phrase of Grand Theory, Bordwell and Carroll reflect on how major theories used in the studies of film have been a top-down model for knowledge production. Bordwell observes that Grand Theory tends to frame their (putative) explorations of the cinema 'within schemes which seek to describe or explain very broad features of society, history, language, and psyche' (Bordwell, 1996: 3). The critique of Grand Theory, established by both Bordwell and Carroll, can be understood as a meta-theoretical analysis referring to a critical exploration of existing theoretical frameworks which have provided analytical perspectives to researchers, as well as to theory that has been introduced to a particular field of academic

study. Therefore, the primary materials for their analysis are film theories or methods of researching film, which do not necessarily include evidence beyond the linguistic terrain of the discipline and its discourses.

However, Bordwell did attempt to conceptualise the issue of Grand Theory into some sort of social pattern. For instance, in the late 1980s, he criticised the research practice in film studies by highlighting the act of interpretation, popularised in film studies since its inception as the core problematic. Bordwell calls the discipline of film studies 'Interpretation, Inc.', that is, 'an institution which produces the interpretation of film as some kind of academic knowledge' (Bordwell, 1989c: 26). Although different theoretical and philosophical frameworks have been introduced to the discipline to support its knowledge production, including those of psychoanalysis, semiology, textural analysis, postcolonial studies, cultural theories, structuralism, poststructuralism, postmodernism and many more; for Bordwell, the interpretation of films remains singular. Bordwell states, that if the approach in film studies is 'to make all films mean the same things by applying the same critical procedures [it] is to ignore the rich variety of film history' (Bordwell, 1989c: 267). My extended understanding of this statement is that, it does not matter which theoretical or philosophical foundation a scholar is working from, it is how the theory is applied that makes a crucial difference – it cannot be a standardised model for the studies of all films. To further extend Bordwell's concern, the factors that the interpretation approach for studying films ignores are not only the history of cinema, but also the latest development in the industry, which includes processes of the production, distribution, exhibition and consumption. In other words, regardless of which theoretical framework a study adopts, the act of interpretation itself inevitably dismisses what is actually happening in the practising world about how a film is put together and the cultural interactions around it.

As with other forms of art, everyone is capable of interpreting films. Does one need to hold on to a set of theories to interpret a film? Different theories can be used as different lenses for us to make sense of a film from various perspectives, but the act of interpretation takes place with or without theories. Is what enables the interpretation of a film supported by certain theories, ultimately, the knowledge of cinema? The privilege which enables a certain interpretation to become 'proper', or deemed legitimate knowledge, is when it is associated with different theoretical complexities, institutionally produced and officially recognised as an academic practice. What is being signalled here is not only the act of interpretation itself as a process of knowledge production, but ultimately, the revelation of a problematic of knowledge hierarchy – that the interpretations of films within film studies are different from those outside the discipline. Bordwell continues his debate in 'Film Interpretation Revisited' (1993), which chimes with my observation above. He asks:

> After people see a film, they often talk about it. Sometimes they write or give lectures about it. At least some of the things people say or write count as interpretation in anybody's sense of that term. But what enables people to produce those linguistic constructs we call film interpretations? What are, we might say, the psychological, social, and historical conditions which make this possible? (Bordwell, 1993: 93)

What makes this possible, in Bordwell's view is the 'social institution of academic film studies'. Bordwell observes that the 'institution has played a crucial role in establishing and monitoring interpretive activities' (Bordwell, 1993: 93). In other words, the approach towards interpretation of films, regardless of which theoretical or philosophical framework a scholar adopts, has been appropriated by the discipline in order to recognise such interpretation as a method of knowledge production that can be applied to most films.

The problem of interpretation that Bordwell identifies in film studies is also what Bourdieu (1993) sees in the field of art criticism. The practice of interpretation that is

associated or supported by different theories is a strategy for the producers (in this case scholars) in the field to produce knowledge for themselves that is particularly within the interest of the field. Bourdieu writes:

> It is significant that the progress of the field of restricted production towards autonomy is marked by an increasingly distinct tendency of criticism to devote itself to the task, not of producing the instruments of appropriation – the more imperatively demanded by a work the further it separates itself from the public – but of providing a 'creative' interpretation for the benefit of the 'creators'. (Bourdieu, 1993: 63)

The result of such knowledge being produced within the field of film studies, from Bourdieu's perspective, is to exclude the 'public of non-producers from the entire business'. The 'intelligibility of works' – in this case the academic research of films – remains 'unintelligible to those not sufficiently integrated into the producers' field' (Bourdieu, 1993: 63).

In 1996, both Bordwell and Carroll declared the search for a new direction for the discipline of film studies in their co-written volume, *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies* (1996). What they attempted to do was reconstruct the discipline by not only delivering a critique of the Grand Theory, but also proposing an urgent need to explore alternative theoretical frameworks. In Bordwell and Carroll's understanding, Grand Theory in film studies is an 'aggregate of doctrines derived from Lacanian psychoanalysis, structuralist semiotics, poststructuralist literary theory, and variants of Althusserian Marxism' (Bordwell and Carroll, 1996: xiii). For them, the purpose of the volume as a critical reflection on Grand Theory and the age of 'Post-theory' in film studies is not designed to mark the end of film theory but to provoke a question regarding which theories 'can and should come after' their intervention. In their view, there should be multiple

theories for the discipline to take forward rather than a single bulk of theory that defines the whole discipline's academic logic. As they explain:

> What is coming after Theory is not another Theory but theor*ies* and the activity of *theorizing*. *A* theory of film defines a problem within the domain of cinema (defined non-dogmatically) and sets out to solve it through logical reflection, empirical research, or a combination of both. *Theorizing* is a commitment to using the best canons of inference and evidence available to answer the question posed. The standards ought to be those of the most stringent philosophical reasoning, historical argument, and sociological, economic, and critical analysis we can find, in film studies or elsewhere (even in science). (Bordwell & Carroll, 1996: xiv)

To propose a certain pluralism is indeed what Bordwell and Carroll wanted to achieve. However, the core problematic of knowledge hierarchy does not lie in the theories themselves, necessarily, as new theories always come and go. In Carroll's view, there are still 'obstacles' as film studies continues to develop, regardless of the new theories being introduced as different research trends emerge in different periods. He warns us that, 'as long as these obstacles continue to grip the imaginations of scholars,' it is 'unlikely' that the discipline will move away from the 'legacies' of Grand Theory (Carroll, 1996: 38). Carroll's prediction was quite right, as the following chapters will demonstrate: it is not only that within film studies the 'legacies' remain and captivate scholarly imagination; but also that the problematic of knowledge hierarchy continues to exist within the discipline. This thesis discovers that, even as the field of Chinese cinema studies emerged as a resistance against Grand Theory in film studies, its discourses as knowledge disposition continue to be influenced by the 'legacies' of the Grand Theory tradition, particularly in the approach of interpretation which Bordwell critiqued.

While it is true that Bordwell and Carrol's critique of Grand Theory has created an alternative perspective for challenging the status quo and theoretical norms in film studies,

their critical framework is also limited. For instance, if we continue to use the same logic of Grand Theory to question the emerging field of Chinese cinema studies, the investigation does not lead us to answer the '*how'* in the research question: *to what extent Chinese Cinema Studies in English exemplifies a field of discursive struggles over cultural capital*? Bordwell and Carroll's scholarship can be used as a contextual support here as it shares a similar concern in the professionalisation and knowledge production within film studies. But for the agenda that is set out in the research question, Bordwell and Carroll's meta-theoretical analysis cannot be used as a single analytical framework to be reproduced in this thesis.

Bourdieu sees a model of critique such as is exemplified by Bordwell and Carroll as an 'internal analysis' of cultural production. As Johnson explains, Bourdieu objects to this kind of 'internal analysis' because such a mode:

> 'looks for the final explanation of texts either within the texts themselves (the object of analysis, in other words, is its own explanation) or within some sort of ahistorical "essence" rather than in a complex network of social relations that make the very existence of the texts possible.' (Johnson, 1993: 11)

This means that Bordwell and Carroll's critique of Grand Theory in film studies is detached from any historical conditions and it has ignored the constant movements within a field as well as between different fields. Their critique is frozen within a specific historical period which cannot be applied as a scientific model to inquire into other new case studies, such as the case of Chinese film studies. This is one of the reasons why Bourdieu develops the notion of 'field' because it 'provides a means of going beyond internal analysis,' to look at the social inter-relations of the field from the outside.

Furthermore, even though as Bordwell and Carroll state, 'it is our conviction that after Theory the most fruitful work will represent theories and theorizing; problem-driven research and middle-level scholarship; responsible, imaginative, and lively inquiry. Pursuing this agenda can reconstruct film studies' (Bordwell and Carroll, 1996: xvii); their proposed

solution to the problematic of Grand Theory is to propose another set of theories to be taken more seriously. In contrast to the Grand Theory, Bordwell and Carroll have a very different theoretical background to those who follow the logic of the structuralist- and poststructuralist-influenced film theories when it comes to making sense of cinema and cinema spectatorship. Both Bordwell and Carroll are followers and practitioners of the cognitivist school and have been consistently trying to establish such a method as part of film theory since the start of their careers (Bordwell 1987, 1989a, 1989b, 1989c, 1992, 2008; Carroll 1988, 1992, 1996, 2008). This particular school of practice has been largely marginal throughout the discipline's professionalisation. Therefore, what makes Bordwell and Carroll strongly opposed to Grand Theory is their belief in the cognitivist approach (an approach which focuses particularly on audience responses to film, which in turn relies on research in cognitive psychology). The theoretical difference/position for Bordwell and Carroll has been their fundamental disagreement on the assumption of a passive unconscious supported by their research interest in active cognition.

If Bordwell and Carroll's project were to be successful in replacing Grand Theory with their cognitive methods, could they guarantee that their proposed method would not itself become the future Grand Theory in the discipline? This hypothesis has not been addressed by them. This is the limitation of a meta-theoretical analysis, because its analytical model fails to reveal the critics' own positions within the field and their relations to other players; the 'relational' aspect is crucial in the critical thinking of a field. Any professional field is composed of a set of networks containing different positions and relationships. If the language of a critical investigation does not go beyond the field of study itself, any critique of knowledge within the field is bound to be associated with an ambition to establish a new rule for the field, a new set of positions. While this dilemma has not been addressed by Bordwell and Carroll, we can understand it from a perspective as informed by Bourdieu. A

field, such as the field of film studies, always encounters internal 'struggle for the monopolistic power to impose the legitimate categories of perception and appreciation' (Bourdieu, 1993: 58). Such a struggle is 'the continuous creation of the battle between those who have made their names [*fait date*] and are struggling to stay in view and those who cannot make their own names without relating to the past the established figures, whose interest lies in freezing the movement of time, fixing the present state of the field for ever' (58). In other words, both Bordwell and Carroll fail to see that they are also part of the struggles within the field of film studies, and are fighting for their position to be recognised by their peers and fellow players of the field.

Both Bordwell and Carroll's critiques are part of what Bourdieu would call the 'battles for dominance' in the field of film studies. Their position on the critique of Grand Theory is an attempt to establish a new space for the cognitive school of film theories to be legitimised. Although their arguments on Grand Theory are adequate, their meta-theoretical analysis is still within the field of struggle with an agenda to fight for a more established theoretical position within the discipline. This is a useful reminder for this thesis, that it does not wish to propose a new discourse or new set of theories to the studies of Chinese cinema in English, but rather, it is more interested in understanding how the field of such study emerges, formulates and functions. Throughout Bordwell and Carroll's critiques, they do not acknowledge the emergence of Chinese cinema studies in English in the 1980s, even though its rise has several layers relating to the Grand Theory that they critique. Therefore, adopting a theoretical framework informed by Bourdieu, this missing discussion will be included in the next chapter as one part of the answer to this thesis' research question – the relation between major discourses in film studies and the subordinated topic of Chinese cinema.

Theoretically speaking, the meta-theoretical analysis by Bordwell and Carroll's critique of Grand Theory in film studies does not enable the investigation to reveal a broader

picture of the complex relation within the field of film studies and with other emerging fields such as Chinese cinema studies. If we follow Bourdieu's understanding of a field, and the analysis of it, it 'must work to relate to each other two sets of relations, the shape of works or discourses taken as differential stances, and the space of the positions held by those who produce them'.

This is how this thesis sets out to make sense of the field of Chinese cinema studies; the critical approach set out by Bordwell and Carroll is not adequate to achieve these tasks.

1.3 D.N. Rodowick's Foucauldian Critique of Film Studies

Learning from Bordwell and Carroll's meta-theoretical analysis above, in order to conduct a more objective investigation into any academic discipline, its theoretical framework needs to go beyond the language of its internal knowledge. In other words, a more independent theoretical framework is needed for such a critique that is not part of disciplinary studies.

With a similar concern over the professionalisation of film studies as Bordwell and Carroll, D.N. Rodowick is the first scholar to have transformed the disciplinary problematic into a more philosophical reasoning by borrowing the works from Michel Foucault. His endeavours, particularly his critiques on 'political modernism' and his argument of 'elegy for theory' in relation to the discipline of film studies, are worth discussion at some length here. While this thesis also intends to borrow a theoretical framework outside film studies to make sense of the field of Chinese cinema studies, it is useful for us to learn about how Rodowick has conducted his previous investigations as well as their limitations. As the term 'discourse' will continue to appear in many parts throughout this thesis, it is necessary to elaborate further on how this thesis understands the term from Bourdieu's perspective, which is different from Foucault's. Rodowick's Foucauldian critiques of film studies, particularly the theoretical framework established in both *The Crisis of Political Modernism* (1988) and

Elegy for Theory (2014) will be used as examples here, to highlight the difference in Bourdieu's take on 'discourse' and 'field' in comparison to Foucault.

In his first attempt, Rodowick (1988) reconceptualises what Bordwell and Carroll call the Grand Theory in film studies as the 'discourse of political modernism', by adopting the vocabularies of Foucault. He writes:

> …a theme dominating the recent history of Anglo-American film theory, political modernism is the expression of a desire to combine semiotic and ideological analysis with the development of an avant-garde aesthetic practice dedicated to the production of radical social effects. Although this term has been mobilized to describe the work of a variety of independent filmmakers in Europe and America, […] my discussion of political modernism refers neither to a film style, movement, nor even a "theory" properly speaking, but rather a logic or order of discourse common to both film theorists and filmmakers since 1968. (Rodowick, 1988: 1-2)

To follow Foucault's perspective, Rodowick sees what Bordwell and Carroll call the Grand Theory as a problematic of the 'logic or order of discourse'. In Rodowick's opinion, from the late 1960s onwards, the 'dominating logic' of the 'discourse of political modernism' as 'the formulation of contemporary film theory' was in fact 'conditioned by the theoretical agendas, theoretical strategies, and conceptual schemata already established in this particular discursive space' (Rodowick, 1988: 10). In other words, if we follow Rodowick's critique, Grand Theory in film studies emerged as series of 'methodological conveniences' that function according to the 'laws of rare faction' which 'designate relational structures subtending the formation of statements' about the cinema (Rodowick, 1988: 11). Rodowick's critique of the 'discourse of political modernism' in film studies as 'the possibility of a radical, political text [is] conditioned by the necessity of an avant-garde representational strategy' is aligned with Foucault's early conceptualisation of discourse. In Foucault's view, as explained in *Archaeology of Knowledge* ([1969] 2002), any discourse

and its production is immediately and ultimately self-governed by a set of pre-established 'regularities' and 'hidden rules', within the 'law of rare-faction' as a specific 'discursive practice'. Although Foucault's theorisation of the term discourse is much more complicated than the summary above, it will not be possible to discuss this matter in depth within the scope of this thesis, but it is aware of other works that pay more attention to this task.[11] For the purpose of comparison, the discussion of Foucault's 'discourse' in this section will mainly be Rodowick's (1988, 2014) understanding of it and his application of it to the critiques of film studies.

In Rodowick's understanding of an early Foucauldian perspective, every discourse (an utterance, a statement, or any form of knowledge production) is immediately linked to a network of power which influences the outcome of such discourse. Within his critical analysis of a series of film theories that emerged after WWII, such as semiotics, structuralism, psychoanalysis, Marxism and feminism, Rodowick exposes their theoretical relationship to the literary paradigms established in France, particularly through the literary magazine *Tel Quel.* Rodowick calls the 'discourse of political modernism' in film studies a specific 'discursive practice' that was conditioned by its relational schema during the post-1968 period within a disciplinary and political network, through 'sets of relations of selection, exclusion, limitation and appropriation' (Rodowick, 1988: 11). This is how Rodowick understands the 'discourse of political modernism' within film studies from a Foucauldian perspective. He explains:

> …the discourse of political modernism includes artists' statements, statements of editorial position, exhibition catalogues, and scholarly essays as well as films.

[11] See Berger, 1979; Morris & Patton, 1979; Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982; Major-Poetzl, 1983; Rabinow, 1984; Megill, 1985; Merquior, 1985; Rajchman, 1985; Hoy, 1986; Baudrillard, 1987; Deleuze, 1988; Gutting, 1989; Shumway 1989; Taylor, 2011; Prado, 2011; Brunon-Ernst, 2012; Oksala, 2012; Boyne, 2013; Brunon-Ernst, 2013; Falzon, O'Leary & Sawicki, 2013; O'Brien, 2013; Gane, 2013; Gane & Johnson, 2013; McNay, 2013; Smart, 2013; Szakolczai, 2013; Fendler, 2014; Lawlor & Nale, 2014; Faubion, 2014; Nola, 2014; Dyrberg, 2014; Fendler, 2014; Kelly, 2014; May, 2014; Boyne, 2015; Jo, 2015; Lynch, 2016; Oram, 2016; Sembou, 2016; Veyne, 2016; Scott, 2017.

> What might seem perplexing about *The Crisis of Political Modernism,* however, is that I refuse to treat either films or film theory as autonomous or self-sufficient acts. Rather, I consider them as part of what Michel Foucault calls a discursive practice. None of these kinds of statements has priority over the others. Together they form a complex space where the idea of political modernism is defined, debated, and worked through in contradictory ways (Rodowick, [1988] 1994: xi).

By following Foucault, Rodowick conceptualises the 'discourse of political modernism' as a 'discursive practice' or a discursive space. Therefore, differing from Bordwell and Carroll, who have identified a problematic of knowledge hierarchy within film studies, Rodowick sees film studies as a discursive space and denies the hypothesis of any centralised power or positions within the discipline. However, this theoretical perspective has also created a contradiction. Foucault's conceptualisation of 'discursivity' guided Rodowick to gesture his criticism toward the unspoken rules underlying the discipline of film studies but, at the same time, to maintain a belief in the possibilities for knowledge (*episteme*) or what Foucault calls the 'field of strategic possibilities'. To follow this logic, despite also being critical about the discipline, for Rodowick, film studies has been and still is a 'transactional space' that 'is not the system of a theory'. Rather, the discipline 'practices "regularity" in the organization of concepts, assumptions, and propositions that is ordered by a definable series of oppositions' (Rodowick, [1988] 1994: 11).

Although Rodowick delivers specific arguments on the logic of several film theories from representative scholars within the 'discourse of political modernism' (including those of Laura Mulvey, Peter Wollen, Stephen Heath, Colin MacCabe and other figures from the journal *Screen's* establishment), Rodowick sees the emergence of the 'discourse of political modernism' as an inevitable historical condition. In Rodowick's view, the choice of language or 'rhetorical strategies' within the 'discourse of political modernism' relates to what happened across academia at that time as a specific historical response to a series of

political events that took place circa 1968 across the world. As a result, for the 'discourse of political modernism' to become apparent, 'sets of relations of selection, exclusion, limitation, and appropriation' took place as part of the 'discursive practice' which contributed to the legitimisation of film studies as an academic discipline (Rodowick, 1988: 11).

This is where the dilemma arises. The above argument is only partly able to convince due to several contradictions and uncertainties. For example, the question about *how* certain 'hidden regularities' in the 'discursive space' of film studies for the selection and exclusion of knowledge are conducted is not clear in Rodowick's critique. Secondly, although Rodowick focuses his critique of the 'discourse of political modernism' round the post-war period in English-language academia, the questions regarding where this 'discursive space' begins and ends, and how broad such a space is, are not answered. Is such 'discursive space' as broad as to include the field of Chinese cinema studies? Ironically, the discussion of Chinese cinema studies in English was not included in Rodowick's critique of film studies. Therefore, this limitation puts the notion of 'discursivity' of a social space into question, as it evidently cannot include every single practice within it. The contradiction is that while Rodowick's investigation is, to some extent, a critical reflection on the 'dominating discourse' [in his own language] in film studies, at the same time it denies the existence of any centralised power theoretically. Rodowick's Foucauldian theoretical framework is different from Bourdieu's concept of field. In Rodowick's approach, in line with Foucault, film studies is a discursive space, although with certain unspoken rules (discourses), and has open borders; on the other hand, for Bourdieu, any academic discipline as a field establishes its own rules as a way for the field players to protect the internal resources and common interests that concern only the players within that field. Bourdieu has also written about such a dilemma:

> It is probably in Michel Foucault that one finds the most rigorous formulation of the foundations of the structural analysis of cultural works. Conscious that no cultural work exists by itself, that is outside the relations of interdependence that unite it to other works, he gives the name 'field of strategic possibilities' to the 'regulated system of differences and dispersions' within which each individual work defines itself …[but] … He explicitly refuses to search outside the 'field of discourse' for the principle which would elucidate each of the discourses within it. (Bourdieu, [1992] 1995: 108)

As Bourdieu points out, while he acknowledges Foucault's approach in cultural analysis as a respect to the Saussurean structuralist tradition, Foucault's theoretical framework on the other hand can be argued as poststructuralist, where the borders of any cultural field are explicitly denied. As a result, according to Bourdieu, Foucault 'rejects any relating of works to the social conditions of their production' (108). Although Foucault's critical discourse analysis on knowledge and power inspired Rodowick to apply such a model to a more specific case such as film studies, where it comes to 'taking into account agents and their interests, and especially violence in its symbolic dimension', in Bourdieu's view, their critiques remain 'abstract and idealist' (109).

It is true that both Foucault and Bourdieu are concerned with knowledge and power, but Bourdieu's concept of field 'allows us to bypass the opposition between internal reading and external analysis without losing any of the benefits and exigencies of these two approaches' (Bourdieu, [1992] 1995: 112). For Bourdieu, the space of works, in this case an academic discipline, is always 'a field of position-takings which can only be understood in terms of relationships, as a system of differential variations' (112). As discussed previously, the 'relational' aspect is crucial to this thesis, for its investigation into the field of Chinese cinema studies in English, particularly its relation to the theoretical traditions in film studies. Although Rodowick and Foucault to some extent do pay attention to the network and relationship within the 'discursive space', due to the hypothesis of the absence of centralised

power and linguistic borders, it proves to be difficult for a Foucauldian model to pin down the beginning and the end of a space of works to be analysed. In Bourdieu's terms, on the other hand, the relations in his cultural analysis are always identified within a specific field where evidence is located to reveal the interactions and transactions among players within such field. The theoretical problematic of a Foucauldian model can be further demonstrated by Rodowick's second attempt in applying Foucault's works to his critique of films studies.

By continuing to follow Foucault's early views on discourse and discursivity, Rodowick stretches the inquiry timeline even further in *Elegy for Theory* (2014) in order to question the emergence of theory in the humanities. In this study, the 'discursive space' in which film studies is situated is now a much broader context than the period of post-WWII. Rodowick expanded his scope of inquiry to the history of theory. His book traced the original birth of the concept of theory back to ancient Greece. As a result, in *Elegy for Theory,* Rodowick takes the 'fate of theory in cinema studies as an exemplary of the more general contestation of theory in the humanities' (Rodowick, 2014: xi). To continue to transcend the problematic of Grand Theory in film studies to a broader philosophical issue, Rodowick redirects the focus of his critique from the discourse of political modernism as a specific discursive practice to the concept of 'theory' itself. *Elegy for Theory* views the notion of theory as a problematic to the extent that, as a word and concept, it is considered to have *a* sense or to indicate a given practice of thought, or it is assumed to have a single continuous history. He asks:

> In analogy with film's virtual life, theory is a way of thinking that when considered critically and genealogically retreats from us as rapidly as we approach it, like a fata morgana. We moderns in the humanities have lived with theory for what seems like a long time. It has a certain presence to us or for us, which some embrace and others resist. But if theory is considered as something more like a language game, in how many ways could it be played? How variable

> or consistent would the rules remain across these games, and how many varieties of similarity and difference might become apparent? (Rodowick, 2014: xii)

In this attempt, Rodowick begins his inquiry into the problematic of theory from as early as ancient Greek philosophy. He traces the origin of theory as a concept, highlights its development within the humanities, and places the emergence of film studies alongside this genealogy. He uses film studies as an example to reflect on the broader issue of the concept and history of theory, investigates what theory meant in different periods of the discipline's development, and highlights those moments where certain theories became dominant discourse within the humanities. In Rodowick's opinion, the split of theoretical practices within humanities has its influence over the way cinema has been theorised: one 'sunk very deeply in the ancient ground of philosophy' and the other 'recently matured and flourishing out of the history of positivism and the empirical science' (Rodowick, 2014: 265). Although expressing his preference towards the philosophical branch of theory, Rodowick (2015) does not reject the scientific branch completely.

This unsettlement therefore reminds us, that the problematic of film studies critiqued by Bordwell and Carroll is not necessarily about the concept of *theory* as such. *Theory* is not what prevents alternative discussions about the cinema to emerge within film studies. By extension, neither is *theory* itself the central problematic that has professionalised the field of Chinese cinema studies. Any theory can be selected and appropriated as a discourse within a discipline, regardless of whether it is the more philosophical branch, or the more positivist, scientific one. For instance, while psychoanalysis was recognised and practised as the major film theory during the 1970s, it is partly true that this branch of theory belongs to what Rodowick would consider the 'scientific invasion into the humanities'.

During the 2000s, there was a popularisation of philosopher Gilles Deleuze's writings on cinema, after the translations of his *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* ([1983]

2013) and *Cinema 2: The Time Image* ([1985] 2013) into English. As Rodowick summarises, 'Deleuze and Guattari have set out to critique and demolish the Saussurean and Lacanian foundations on which, coincidentally, most contemporary cultural and film theory has been based'. This new theoretical intervention has also become a new popular discourse in the discipline. For example, Anna Powell (2007) calls it the 'Deleuzian orthodoxy', referring to a landscape where film scholars use the theory coined by Deleuze to apply to every film text in every study.

Even though Rodowick takes a step back to look into 'theory' itself as the central problematic of Grand Theory within film studies, there is also a slightly indulgent poetic side to his elegy. Although he has consistently been critical about the development of theory within film studies, and the general concept of theory within humanities since the 20th century, he continues to have a paradoxical relationship with the concept and practice of theory. This is evident in his reservation of his own academic identity as a 'film theorist' in a 2001 article:

> Despite my interest in new technologies and new media, I have never given up – and indeed still insist on – my identity as a film theorist, much to the confusion of my family and the amusement of taxi drivers the world over. (Rodowick, 2001: 1397)

Rodowick is not entirely against theory but he attempts to pull back the concept of theory from the scientific intervention into the humanities in the 20th century. Such an issue relating to the use of theory within scientific knowledge has also been famously criticised by Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (1962). Rodowick is still in some way attached to a certain *preferred* theoretical approach for the studies of cinema which is the philosophical branch. In this regard, such dilemma is in fact similar to Bordwell and Carrol's meta-theoretical analysis, only the theoretical preference they have for film studies

is the cognitivist school. Rodowick's theoretical preference is further discussed and demonstrated in his *Philosophy's Artful Conversation* (2015).

Although taking a step forward to position his investigation outside film studies by borrowing the concepts from Foucault, Rodowick's critiques on film studies appear once again as an attempt to convince his readers about which kind of theory *should* be embraced for the discipline, similar to Bordwell and Carroll's 'reconstruction'. The only difference here is that while Bordwell and Carroll aim to put forward an approach to study film through cognition, Rodowick proposes to study film from a philosophical perspective. What we must therefore question here, is are we simply facing a battle between philosophical and scientific theory within the humanities after all?

The problematic of how certain discourses are being taken for granted within an academic discipline and reproduced as an appropriation is not a matter regarding a specific school of theory (for example psychoanalysis or Deleuzian). If there are certain discourses to be taken as knowledge, or a way to reproduce knowledge within film studies, where did they come from? The answer within all of Rodowick's Foucauldian endeavours only goes as far as the 'variable discursive contexts', the 'discursive space' or the 'disciplinary map'. But these answers are not enough to satisfy the investigation of this thesis. The core problematic in an academic discipline is not the concept, history or practice of *theory* itself; in the light of Bourdieu, it lies in the nature of field as a social space where struggles and 'battles for dominance' are inevitable. An investigator's job therefore, is to capture and reveal as much evidence of these processes of struggle as possible.

To summarise this section, Rodowick has indeed demonstrated an alternative model of critique for investigating the problematic of Grand Theory film studies by adopting a theoretical framework based on Foucault's works. By transforming the phrase Grand Theory into the concept of 'discourse', Rodowick has opened up a new theoretical possibility for

scholars to conduct new critical debates and dialogues. At the same time, Rodowick's Foucauldian intervention also poses several questions; his studies do not answer the question of how theoretical regularity takes place within film studies. While Rodowick's uses the term 'rhetorical strategies' several times to indicate how the discourse of political modernism became a dominating discourse during the post-war development of film studies in English-language academia, on the other hand, it contradicts his notion of film studies as a discursive space where none of the academic discourse 'has priority over the others'. It is for these reasons Rodowick's model of critique will not be reproduced for this thesis and its case study.

1.3 Bourdieu's Field Theory and Methodologies for This Thesis

After reviewing two existing critiques of film studies and their theoretical limitations, adopting Bourdieu's concept of field will enable this thesis to produce a more balanced investigation into the field of Chinese cinema studies. Such a framework takes additional considerations into account that the previous two models do not accommodate. These additional considerations include the 'active agent' as well as the 'relational' aspect in the field of cultural production. This section will explain further how Bourdieu's theoretical framework is applied in this thesis, by unpacking the key terms of 'field', 'habitus', 'discourse' and 'cultural capital' in the context of this thesis.

James Albright and Deborah Hartman (2018) see Bourdieu's concept of field as both a 'conceptual and empirical object of analysis' and explain how it is relevant to the analysis of a particular academic discipline:

> Through self-reflexivity and genealogy, researchers construct the properties of fields, understand how they emerged, and name how they affect agents' relational positions, actions and interests. Yet, in order to practice this kind of

> methodology, researchers walk a fine line between the logic of discovery and the logic of validation (Albright & Hartman, 2018: 3).

Albright and Hartman's summary is what this thesis has been searching for since the beginning. This research is ambitious in its aim to establish an investigation which not only makes sense of the process of how certain knowledge is produced, how a certain field is established, and how such field has an impact on scholars' 'relational positions, actions and interests'. This is because, for Bourdieu, a 'field' is a social space, a:

> …network or configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations, they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (situs) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc) (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 97).

What Bourdieu acknowledges in his field theory is that, any professional field is ultimately within the broader field of struggles, a 'space of relations of force between agents or between institutions having in common the possession of the capital necessary to occupy the dominant positions in different fields' (Bourdieu, [1993] 1995: 117). Two elements are important here in the field of cultural production: the 'agents' and the 'positions'/'relations' that they have within a particular field.

For this reason, any investigation into an academic field needs to begin with the 'immediately visible relations between agents engaged in intellectual life' (100). The agents in this thesis are therefore film critics and scholars who, in Bourdieu's terms, are considered as the 'field players' consciously making discourses as reactions to the fields in which they belong. Bourdieu would call such social phenomenon *habitus,* which emphasises the 'active' aspect of the field players, as a way to 'demonstrate the active, inventive and "creative" capacities of the agent' (99). In another definition, *habitus* is explained as 'a sense of the

world and an aspiration to taste and heightened legitimacy carried in the body through accretions of acquired social memory' (quoted in Gildea et al., 2015: 17). As this thesis demonstrates, by capturing the processes of how certain discourses are made, film critics and scholars react to the legitimate ways of producing knowledge about film for the building of a particular field, namely the field of film studies and later the field of Chinese cinema studies.

As the following chapters demonstrate, each discourse-making about film in general or about Chinese cinema is what Bourdieu calls the 'symbolic violence', which creates a class of taste or status to be distinguished as knowledge. This is produced not according to the common interest in a particular field, but in order to sustain its prestige social status. The concept of 'discourse' is used in this thesis as a more practical term rather than in the abstract notional way in which Rodowick uses it for his Foucauldian critique. The use of the term 'discourse' throughout this thesis is in line with Bourdieu's field theory. As Marty Hipsky (2000) points out, Bourdieu's understanding of discourse is far more complex than a Foucauldian sense. A Bourdieuian take on 'discourse' is determined to 'analyze both the social and the individual determinants of agency and subjectivity in cultural production, that does not take language (in whatever sense, with whatever emphases) as its final horizon' (Hipsky, 2000: 186). Differing from Foucault's discourse as 'discursive practice', John B. Thompson (1991) summarises Bourdieu's take on discourse as follows:

> Mechanisms of censorship operate not only in the production of everyday oral discourse, but also in the production of the scholarly discourses found in written texts. Here as elsewhere, when Bourdieu speaks of 'censorship' he is not referring to the explicit activity of political or religious organizations seeking to suppress or restrict the diffusion of symbolic forms. Rather, he is referring to a general feature of markets or fields which requires that, if one wishes to produce discourse successfully within a particular field, one must observe the forms and formalities of that field. This is just as true of the scholarly fields of literature, philosophy and sciences as it is of the mundane markets of everyday social interaction. (Thompson, 1991: 16)

In this logic, any identified discourses constitute the 'forms and formalities of that field'. This thesis sees the making of a discourse as a process of establishing a certain linguistic formula for the field of film studies and the field of Chinese cinema studies. Any discourse analysed in this thesis is seen as the empirical evidence of the struggles within the fields of film studies and Chinese cinema studies, as well as between these two fields. Any discourse analysed in this thesis is used as a practical cannon to highlight and reveal the power relations between different film scholars within the field as well as between the two fields. This thesis argues that all these processes of discourse-making are responses to a broader field of struggles for film scholars to gain a certain cultural capital. The cultural capital in this thesis refers to the 'proper' or legitimate ways of writing about film as a condition in the field of film studies as well as the field of Chinese cinema studies in English-language academia. The process of the making of a discourse is at the same time the process of legitimisation. For Bourdieu (1993), the concept of cultural capital is used to explain the social relation within a system of cultural exchange that confers social status. Within any professional field, the 'symbolic power' (not necessarily economic power) 'acquired in the observance of the rules of the functioning of the field is opposed to all forms of heteronomous power' where a certain group of people are holders of cultural capital, such as academics and scholars. A discourse in this thesis, as informed by Bourdieu, is therefore a judgement and production of the value of the art work (film) to 'advance a particular class of interests' of film academics to acquire a certain cultural capital.

Furthermore, the relational aspect in Bourdieu's field theory is not only useful in capturing the exchanges and interactions amongst agents within a particular field, it is also useful for inviting us to take into the account the relations between different fields. This thesis discovers that, despite the internal struggles within film studies as a field where different discourses fight for their more legitimate position, the rise of Chinese cinema

studies in English is in fact a reaction against the field of film studies and its rules, for the purpose of establishing its own discourses. However, as this thesis later demonstrates, similar patterns of acquiring 'cultural capital' are repeated in the field of Chinese cinema studies through processes of new discourses being made as the new *habitus* of this field. Bourdieu explains the relational aspect between a more established field and a new emerging field as:

> The newcomers, often take the form of *parody* (intentional, this time), which presupposes and confirms *emancipation.* In this case, the newcomers 'get beyond' the dominant mode of thought and expression not by explicitly denouncing it but by repeating and reproducing it in a sociologically non-congruent context, which has the effect of rendering it incongruous or even absurd, simply by making it perceptible as the arbitrary convention it is. (Bourdieu, 1993: 21)

In other words, if we follow Bourdieu's observation regarding the power relation between different fields, the evidence gathered in this thesis reveals that this particular struggle also applies to the established field of film studies and the 'newcomer' field of Chinese cinema studies. The evidence gathered will be used to demonstrate how patterns of discourse-making are repeated and reproduced in the latter field.

If we translate Bourdieu's theoretical framework of field, and its key terms, to the case study in this thesis, both the field of film studies and the field of Chinese cinema studies in English are part of the broader field of struggles over cultural capital in academia. Different discourses have been established in the field of film studies by film scholars to legitimise certain ways of talking about the cinema. These are the discourse of 'film as a discipline', the discourse of 'film as art', the discourse of 'film as signification' and the discourse of 'film as cultures'. On the one hand, the discourses are used as boundaries to distinguish knowledge that does not fall into these paradigms or outside the field.

Furthermore, each of these discourses is also related to the research of Chinese cinema, particularly its theoretical and material limitation for including such a topic.

It is these internal struggles within the field of film studies which ultimately lead to the rise of the field of Chinese cinema studies as a process of struggle for the establishment of a new field. However, the forming of the new field of Chinese cinema studies inevitably shares certain interests and resources with the more established field of film studies. As a result, similar patterns of discourse-making take place and new discourses are made as *habitus* for a new generation of scholars to establish their positions in the field and acquire 'cultural capital'. These discourses as identified by this thesis, include the 'discourse of Chinese cinema as territories and ethnicities', the 'discourse of Chinese cinema as languages' and the 'discourse of Chinese cinema as independent'. Each of these specific discourses, this thesis questions, is a process for distinguishing knowledge that does not fall within its boundaries.

Another term that will also appear throughout this thesis is 'professionalisation', what does it mean in the context of this thesis, within Bourdieu's theoretical framework? Although Bourdieu himself has not written about 'professionalisation' specifically, his writings on the field of cultural production however, has mentioned several relevant points.

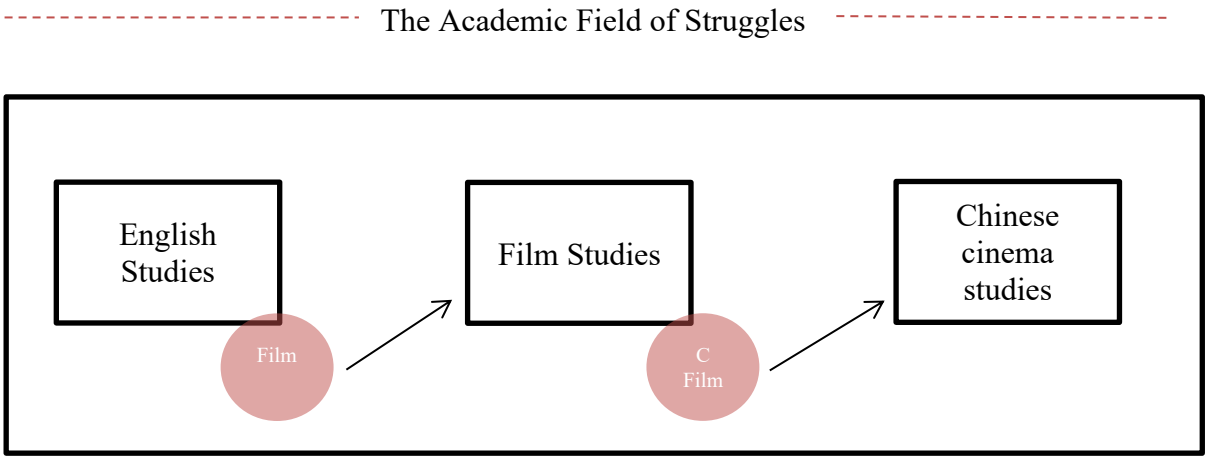
In the light of Bourdieu, both fields constitute a space of relations of forces between scholars who have it in common to create a form of cultural capital necessary for occupying the dominant positions in these fields. One of the results of this social phenomenon is Bordwell and Carroll's critique of Grand Theory in film studies. In the light of Bourdieu, both the field of film studies and the field of Chinese cinema studies are 'sites of struggles between holders of different power (or kinds of capital)' (Bourdieu, [1992] 1995: 120). In order to demonstrate that both film studies and Chinese cinema studies are what Bourdieu

calls the 'field', the evidence of discourses and the processes of their production are gathered so as to expose the struggles within the fields as well as between them:

> The struggles over definition (or classification) have *boundaries* at stake (between genres and disciplines, or between modes of production inside the same genre) and, therefore, hierarchies. (Bourdieu, [1992] 1995: 122)

These struggles will be analysed through different discourses in each of the fields. In short, under this theoretical framework, film studies is seen as a field, as is Chinese cinema studies in English (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. A visualisation of the relations between the fields of English studies, film studies and Chinese cinema studies in Bourdieu's theoretical framework.



This thesis is also aware of the criticism of Bourdieu's field theory and will therefore summarise the key arguments. For example, Anthony King argues:

> Bourdieu believes that the habitus is compatible with his practical theory and overcomes the impasses of objectivitism and subjectivitism in social theory, neither claim is the case; the habitus is incompatible with his practical theory, and it retreats quickly to objectivism. (King, 2000: 417)

King's critique is relevant here, however, I would defend Bourdieu's framework of 'field' and its concept of habitus for this thesis, but strengthen it with additional methodologies that are specifically tailored to this thesis' investigation.

What methodologies have been applied under this framework in this thesis for its investigation on the case of Chinese cinema studies? In *Homo Academicus* ([1984] 1988), Bourdieu shows us how an academic field can be studied. Bourdieu documented the internal battles among different powers in different academic disciplines. He uses a significant amount of evidence to map out these battles, their network and how such social structure is reflected on the production of knowledge. These evidences include official documents, curriculums, funding distributions, letter exchanges between researchers, administrators and many other people who were involved in French academia. However, the methodologies that Bourdieu uses for his investigation into academic disciplines are never fixed. In terms of methodologies, they can be flexible as long as they capture the important aspects of a field: the 'relational' aspect as well as that of *habitus* where an individual's engagement as an agent within each field is taken into account. As Johnson explains, Bourdieu's model for studying any field involves different levels of analysis. They include 'different aspects of cultural practice, ranging from the relationship between the cultural field and the broader field of power to the strategies, trajectories and works of individual agents' (Johnson, 1993: 15). Therefore, the following methods have been applied for this thesis' investigation influenced by Bourdieu's works.

Locating the evidence of discourses – One of the most important sets of data and evidence this thesis has gathered are the different discourses, as well as the conditions in which these discourses are made. The identification of discourses to be analysed is not random. Some of the discourses have already been critiqued by previous scholars, such as Bordwell, Carroll and Rodowick. What this thesis has done therefore, is to reanalyse those

discourses within the new theoretical framework provided by Bourdieu and to extend the existing critiques within a new theoretical dimension.

Each discourse is identified through the significance that it has in the field. For example, one additional discourse in the field of film studies, which has not been discussed in depth previously, is that of 'film as a discipline', actively constructed by the Society of Climatologists. This particular discourse is worth attention, as it not only marks the beginning of the cultural capital struggle for the field of films studies, but the processes of the discourse-making are also evidence of the struggle that film enthusiasts had with the field of literary studies.

Following Bourdieu's empirical tradition, therefore, by using discourse as a canon, evidence of each discourse – the processes of its formation as well as the conditions in which they are situated – have been gathered to visualise the complex network of relations between different scholars. The empirical evidence of discourses and the making of them include newspaper articles (for examples from *The New York Times*), official meeting minutes (for examples the meeting minutes from the Society of Cinematologists and the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham University), academic journal articles, journal editorials, critical responses and interviews, as well as Google Scholar citation data.

Historical perspective - Apart from following Bourdieu's empirical tradition, this thesis also follows his preferred historical perspective, by setting out its investigations in a chronological order into both the field of film studies as well as the field of Chinese cinema studies. This is not to say that this thesis aims to provide a historiography of both academic fields and to capture every single event or discourse that has taken place. This task is impossible for any research to achieve. 'Historical' is a perspective supporting the methodologies applied with a time reference. Unlike Rodowick who stretches his genealogical timeline as far as the Ancient Greeks, the earliest discourse to be analysed in

this thesis dates back to the 1940s (the 'discourse of film as a discipline'), while evidence that this thesis has gathered can be dated as early as the 1900s. In short, the narrative of this thesis progresses in a chronological order, and the same is true for the discourses to be analysed as well as the empirical evidence.

Archival research - Several archives (both digital and physical) have been used for evidence and data gathering, in addition to further literature reviews. For examples, the *Internet Archive*[12] has been used for evidence and data collection. The purpose of accessing this archive is to locate writings (books and periodicals) on the topic of film prior to the discourse of 'film as a discipline' introduced by the Society of Cinematologists during the 1950s. Therefore, the research focuses on text-based evidence dated between 1900s and 1940s. Some of these items are used as evidence supporting the analysis of the discourse of 'film as discipline'. A list of numbers of items will also be presented as a statistical reference.

Another important archive used in this research is the *China National Knowledge Infrastructure* (CNKI)[13], which is the main national information platform hosting all academic scholarship produced within mainland China. The purpose of accessing this digital archive is to gather evidence and data of scholarship on the critiques of the field of Chinese cinema studies in English as well as scholarship on Chinese cinema that are different from those produced within the field. The online archive research is conducted through two keyword searches: 'overseas Chinese cinema studies'(119 items found) and 'overseas Chinese-language film studies' (45 items found). All this evidence is used to support the argument regarding how Chinese cinema studies in English-language academia has become

[12] The Internet Archive is a San Francisco-based, non-profit library with the stated mission of 'universal access to knowledge'. https://archive.org

[13] China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) is a key national information construction project led by Tsinghua University, and supported by the Chinese government. https://cnki.net

a field that has established a series of discourses which are only within the interest of this field and its field players. Another resource that has been used to support evidence gathering is *The British Newspaper Archive.*

Field analysis – According to Bourdieu (1993), 'field analysis' is applied in his studies to reveal different relations among positions within a field or between fields. Bourdieu defines fields as 'structured spaces of positions' and 'the network of objective relations between positions'. Therefore, field analysis, as applied in this thesis throughout all chapters, offers a unique way to make sense of between theoretical links among the field players, scholars during the process of discourse making. This method is used to analyse different discourse, the position that it represents, to reveal the composition of capital as well as its interests, strategies and agendas. In other words, field analysis enables this thesis to make sense of how one discourse is related to another, what theoretical position a certain discourse stands for, what does it fight against, for what purposes and through what linguistic strategies.

Translation – A specific tailored method that has been used in this thesis is translation. Because the investigation involves materials that are in original Chinese mandarin language, in order to evaluate them as evidence, this thesis has translated necessary content such as names of scholars, titles of article, as well as extract of original texts from books, journal articles and newspaper articles. This method is crucial to this thesis all of the materials are used the first time in English to support arguments building. This method is also unique to this thesis to accommodate its specific case study.

Semi-structured interview - For Bourdieu, each scholar's position taken in the building of any field is important. Therefore, apart from the methods above, other qualitative research methods such as semi-structured interviews have also been used with the explicit aim of revealing each scholar's position and the resultant relations with other field players.

This method has been used to conduct semi-structured interviews with two pioneering scholars for the studies of Chinese films in English-language academia. The interviewees are Chris Berry and George S. Semsel.

1.4 Chapter Summary

In its mapping of the pertinent contours of the broader literature on this topic, this chapter has put Yingjin Zhang's observation of the tension between Chinese cinema studies and film studies as well as David Bordwell, Nöel Carroll and D.N. Rodowick's critiques of film studies into dialogue. It used Bourdieu's theory of 'field' to highlight the hidden common ground of these existing critiques as well as their methodological weaknesses. This chapter argued that the tension between the field of Chinese cinemas studies and the field of film studies is an underexplored area; that scholars often make such criticism but that there is a gap of knowledge regarding how such tension occurred. Neither are its processes explored. This chapter therefore turned to Bourdieu's theory of 'field' for a new perspective, in particular to focus on the 'relational' aspect for a theoretical framework to be built for this thesis's investigation. It unpacked terms introduced by Bourdieu such as 'field', 'struggles', 'habitus', 'professionalisation', 'cultural capital' in connection with the case of Chinese cinema studies to further position the research question in this context. These concepts are used as tool to support this thesis's focus on the 'relational' aspect between the field of Chinese cinema studies and film studies more generally, particularly in understanding how both fields operate and how discourses in films studies influence on the professionalisation of Chinee cinemas studies in English-language academia. Methodologies such as 'archival research', 'locating evidence of discourses', 'field analysis', 'translation' and 'semi-structured interview' to be used in this thesis's have also been introduced in this chapter and are subjected to a preliminary evaluative assessment as part of the theory-building.

Chapter Two: Discourses in the Field of Film Studies and Chinese Cinema

According to Bourdieu (1993), the field is a space of constant struggle over interests, positions, resources and cultural capital. As the findings of this chapter demonstrate, these struggles over academic recognition are evident in several of the discourse-making processes. Owing to the struggles faced by the field of film studies in obtaining its academic status between the 1950s and 1970s, the intellectual inquiry of Chinese cinema was historically and theoretically excluded throughout the professionalisation of film studies. But why was this the case?

Three main discourses composed by a series of debates where scholars attempted to theorise film as something worthy to be studied, contributed the initial professionalisation of the field of film studies as an academic discipline. They are namely the 'discourse of film as a discipline', the 'discourse of film as art' and the 'discourse of film as signification'. This chapter will present findings gathered from various archival resources to unpack the interests and linguistic strategies that scholars paid attention to in the production of each of these discourses.

For instance, what did scholars from the Society of Cinematologists want to achieve by creating the 'discourse of film as a discipline'? What debates contributed to the 'discourse of film as art' and what function did this discourse play in enabling the field of film studies to operate? How did the debates by UK based scholars appeared in journal *Screen* form the 'discourse of film as signification', what did such a discourse want to achieve? Furthermore, alongside a field analysis of each of this discourses in order to expose different theoretical

positions, this chapter will also question how the research of Chinese cinema was not included into these scholarly discussions and why. This problematic, the exclusion of Chinese cinema in the three main discourses that shaped the main interests of film studies is a crucial point, as this tension later encouraged scholars who were interested in Chinese films to establish a new field of studies. Therefore, understanding this problematic in detail will help us to better understand the current state of Chinese cinema studies in English-language academia. Because the process of how such a tension occurred can inform us regarding how current discourses in the field of Chinese cinema studies and their positions are influenced by the discourses in field of film studies was, which will be discussed in the following pages.

2.1 The Discourse of Film as a Discipline

In discussing the ‘discourse of film as a discipline’, three questions can be raised in relation to the principal research question. How did the ‘discourse of film as a discipline’ emerge? When did scholars start to talk about film as a ‘discipline’? What is this particular discourse’s historical and theoretical relation to the field of Chinese cinema studies?

The ‘discourse of film as a discipline’ here refers to a series of activities and linguistic strategies designed to distinguish film as a new professional field to be studied within academia. The questions we must ask here are: what counts as knowledge toward the studies of film or cinema and who decides what counts? The diaries of film pioneers, cameramen, engineers, projectionists, directors and screenwriters are all valuable materials. Early journalistic reviews can also be seen as a kind of knowledge about the cinema, because they contain not only the summary of film narrative, but also descriptions of the audience’s reaction, as well as the historical and cultural context of the production. As we will realise in

the following paragraphs, the 'discourse of film as a discipline' and its specific linguistic strategies excluded these elements and created their own language for the studies of film.

Before film became an academic field, cinema as a research topic had generated interests across different disciplines as early as the 1910s, in parallel with cinema becoming a new type of entertainment. For example, sociologists certainly saw the potential in examining the relationship between this new form of entertainment and society. To list a few examples, George Esdras Bevans' doctoral thesis *How Workingmen Spend Their Time* was submitted to the Department of Sociology, Columbia University in 1913 and includes a section on studying working men's habits in cinema-going; another thesis, which focuses on moral concerns, *Motion Pictures as a Phase of Commercialized Amusement in Toledo, Ohio,* was submitted by John J. Phelan in 1919; Donald Yound's *Motion Pictures: A Study in Social Legislation* was published in 1922; Herbert Blumer's *Movie and Conduct,* published in 1933, presents twelve studies of how motion pictures exert influence upon the young public; and J.P. Mayer's *Sociology of Film: Studies and Documents* (1946) investigates the social influence that cinema had in British society. The new medium also raised interests among psychologists. For instance, Hugo Münsterberg's *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* (1916) was one of the earliest literatures that not only investigated the psychological activities in cinema (focusing mainly on the audience), but also paid close attention to how film and its unique composition triggers certain psychological activities in the audience. In short, from the 1910s onwards, although different disciplines began to include cinema as a new research interest, there was yet to be a proper discipline for the studies of film.

In 1941, New York University established its first motion-picture department, with Robert Gessner appointed as department chair.[14] Prior to his involvement with the

[14] The date of the establishment of the motion-picture department at NYU has several different interpretations. For instance, in the autobiographical article of another pioneer of academic film education, 'Ruminations of an Ex-Cinematologist' (1985), Jack C. Ellis writes the date of establishment as 1945. However, during my research, I have discovered such records

department, Gessner was a member of the English faculty, where he had already begun to introduce courses on cinema to the curriculum. These included a series of lectures on 'History and Appreciation of the Cinema', which later became the credited course The Cinema as Literary Art (Polan, 2007: 342-343). According to a series of news reports published in the *New York Times* between 1941 and 1959, the department was actively involved in training undergraduate students in film productions. When the Society of Cinematologists formed in 1959 with Gessner as one of the founding members, more serious discussions on how to take the scholarly studies of film forward took place. In a 1959 *New York Times* article titled 'Learned Film Society Formed – Other Items', the society's manifesto is captured:

> No other area of instruction suffers more from the absence of academic criteria. To fulfil the individual responsibility of instructors and to enhance the cultural values of our field. It is essential to establish an organization which will be our professional channel of communication to eliminate quackery from the historical and critical evaluation of films. (Nason, 1959: 7)

The language of this manifesto is the perfect evidence for demonstrating what Bourdieu calls the 'field of struggles', the struggle in this context being the 'absence of academic criteria' for the 'critical evaluation of films' within the broader field of academia. Because of this absence, a new scholarly space – a new field – needs to be created to accommodate this interest, as suggested by the Society. Theoretically speaking, for Bourdieu, 'the dynamic of the field is based on the struggles between these positions, a struggle often expressed in the

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to be reported as early as 1941 in two New York Times coverages, 'N.Y.U. Delves into New Fields' and 'N.Y.U. Designs Movie Course'. The latter coverage reports in its introductory sentence, 'New York University will establish a motion-picture department in its College of Arts and Science at Washington Square, Dr. Harry Woodburn Chase, chancellor, announced yesterday.' In a later report on Robert Gessner's death in *The New York Times* in 1968, however, the short biography of the professor states briefly that the department was established during the 1930s, saying, 'In the nineteen-thirties, he founded the motion-picture department at New York University. He was named assistant professor of motion pictures in 1941 and professor in 1943.' Considering the last report was published more than two decades after the event, it might have been a mistake by the reporter, so I have decided to use the date 1941, according to the two coverages of the actual event mentioned above.

conflict between the orthodoxy of established traditions and the heretical challenge of new modes of cultural practice, manifested as *prese de* positions or position-takings' (Johnson, 1993, 14). The 'orthodoxy of established traditions' here refers to the older academic fields such as literary studies. In this context, therefore, the study of film is considered as the new mode of cultural practice up against the 'orthodoxy of established traditions'.

Lee Grieveson's (2009) discussion on this particular event further confirms Bourdieu's theory as a relevant explanation. Lee considers that the formation of the Society of Cinematologists was a gesture to legitimise a place for teaching film within academia; establishing such a society enabled 'acquiring academic standards', so that the 'isolated' teacher could 'end his second-class citizenship in university faculties'. These quoted expressions are Gessner's exact words, as evidenced in the 'Minutes of the Second Conference on Motion Picture Education' published in 1958 (cited in MacCann & Ellis, 1982: ix). This very conference was where delegates decided to form the Society of Cinematologists and to take film as a subject to be studied seriously.

What justifies an academic discipline of film, as distinct from the trainings and activities that were already available outside of the university? Before 1959, film reviews were always present in newspapers and magazines. Examples can be seen in Alistair Cooke's *Garbo and the Night Watchman: A Selection from the Writings of British and American Film Critics* (1937) among many others. In terms of archival service and research, The Museum of Modern Art in New York had an established Film Library as early as 1935. In the UK, the British Film Institute was established in 1933, to support film as a means of education as well as film preservation. Practical training for film production was also offered by different film studios and production companies as well as by private enterprises such as Ford Motor Company and by governmental bodies. Detailed historical studies of Ford's investment in film training can be seen in Lee Grieveson's 'Visualising Industrial

Citizenship; or, Henry Ford makes Movies' (2008), 'The Work of Film in the Age of Fordist Mechanization' (2012) and 'What is the Value of a Technological History of Cinema' (2013). With all these contexts in mind, becoming an academic discipline solely by teaching students how to appreciate film is certainly not convincing enough as a scholarly ambition; one does not need to be a scholar to be a cinephile who can have exceptional knowledge about a certain director, actor or studio as a personal indulgence. Besides, as discussed earlier, other disciplines already showed their interest in including film as a research topic within their existing methodologies. Therefore, the only strategy available for the subject of film to acquire academic status was to create its own linguistic tradition and research methodologies in academia – what Bourdieu calls the 'field of struggles'.

As the director of the Society of Cinematologists, Gessner helped to formalise the academic language of this new emerging field in various ways. The gesture of attempting to create an academic language for the discipline of film is evident in several of his key essays in the *Journal of the Society of Cinematologists* between 1961 and 1963. In '"The Parts of Cinema": A Definition' (1961), Gessner declares a manifesto for the new discipline. He writes:

> In the absence of a discipline in cinema, the embarrassing question is: how does a typical teacher (which omits us!) go about analysing or discussing a film? Apparently, he does so, if an attempt is made, in terms of either contentual disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology, and literature, or in terms of formalistic patterns applied out of the sister arts, such as drama and fine arts. The Cinematologist, searching for what is unique, is the exception on any campus. Without this search for the exclusive language of cinema, teaching then resembles a course in French literature conducted entirely in English translations, or a study of operas in terms of synopsized librettos. (Gessner, 1961: 29)

In his own linguistic strategy here, Gessner distinguishes film as a separate discipline from other academic fields 'such as anthropology, sociology, and literature', and intends to search for the 'exclusive language of cinema'. This immediate isolation of the subject of film from other existing discussions is the very forming of the 'discourse of film as a discipline'. In Bourdieu's terms, this is the process of occupying new positions in the creation of a new field by the field agents. As Randal Johnson explains, according to Bourdieu, 'in any given field, agents occupying the diverse available positions (or in some cases creating new positions) engage in competition for control of the interests or resources which are specific to the field in question' (Johnson, 1993: 9). In this case, the 'discourse of film as a discipline' is a process of creating new positions.

Gessner's continuous efforts gradually isolated, or at least attempted to isolate, a 'proper' way to research film, despite the fact that various writings and discussions on the topic already existed. One of Gessner's motivations in articulating the 'discourse of film as a discipline' was to convince his academic counterparts to recognise the subject's academic value. In his later essay 'Cinema and Scholarship' (1963), he continued to express his desperation:

> "Movies" and "scholarship" are words which sound strange when heard in juxtaposition. The two were not considered marriageable in the traditional halls of academe, and hence not even accorded the respectable status of a sad but legal mésalliance. (Gessner, 1963: 73)

The 'absence' that Gessner expressed was not the absence of serious discussion or scholarship about films, but of his preferred approaches for research on cinema, or film studies as a field, according to his own interests. For example, during the 1960s when Gessner's 'Cinema and Scholarship' essay was published, many more writings in English about the cinema were available across different disciplines as well as by writers and practitioners outside of academia (see Figure 2). However, these publications were ignored

by Gessner. From Bourdieu's point of view, this was because these publications were outside the field's (film studies') interests and struggles within academia.

Figure 2. A List of Book Publications on Film/Cinema between the 1920s and 1960s in English (excluding Periodicals, Magazines and Newspaper Articles)[15]

Book Title & Year	Authors
Cinema Craftsmanship: A Book for Photoplaywrights (1921)	Frances Taylor Patterson
Scenario and Screen (1928)	Frances Taylor Patterson
Modern Theatres and Cinemas (1930)	Philip Morton
The Toronto Amateur Cinema Club, Central Y.M.C.A., Toronto: Pictures with a Purpose (1930)	Leonard Hacker
Cinematic Design (1931)	Leonard Hacker
Behind the Cinema Screen (1935)	Stuart Chesmore
Film Music: A Summary of the Characteristic Features of Its History, Aesthetics; Technique; and Possible Developments (1936)	Kurt London
Children in the Cinema (1939)	Richard Ford
The Penguin Film Review (1946 – 1949)	Edited by Roger Manvell
Film (1947)	Roger Manvell
The World is My Cinema (1947)	Emanuel W. Robson & Mary Major Robson
The Theatre, the Cinema and Ourselves (1947)	Cyril Bruyn Andrew
Cinema Parade: Fifty Years of Film Shows (1947)	John H. Bird

[15] The evidence in this list is gathered from archive research on the Google Books archive as well as the *Internet Archive.*

The Cinema and the Public: An Inquiry Into Cinema Going Habits and Expenditure Made in 1946 (1948)	Kathleen Lois Box, commissioned by the Central Office of Information, Social Survey Division
The Art of the Film: An Introduction to Film Appreciation (1948)	Ernest Lindgren
A Grammar of the Film (1950)	Raymond Spottiswoode
The Cinema (1951)	Edited by Roger Manvell and R.K. Neilson Baxter
The Cinema (1952)	Edited by Roger Manvell and R.K. Neilson Baxter
Approaches to Film as an Art Form: A Handbook for College Teachers (1955)	Douglas Arthur Spencer & Hubert D. Waley
The Cinema To-day (1956)	Douglas Arthur Spencer & Hubert D. Waley
The Cinema as a Graphic Art: on a Theory of Representation in the Cinema (1959)	Vladimir Nilsen
A Picture History of the Cinema (1960)	Ernest Lindgren

Among these findings, some of the materials were written by film professionals for the purpose of sharing technical and practical knowledge in different areas of filmmaking. These examples include two books by Frances Taylor Patterson, a screenwriter and lecturer in screenwriting, who also taught a course on 'Photoplay Composition' at Columbia University in New York from 1917 onwards for several years; Raymond Spottiswoode, a film director and editor and Vladimir Nilsen, a cinematographer.

Gessner's linguistic strategy, which was evidence of the 'field of struggles', was not to create *studies on film* (as they already existed, as shown above), but to create *film studies*;

not scholarship about cinema but, in his own words, 'cinema scholarship'. As Gessner (1963) explained in his manifesto:

> Once a methodological tool has been established, the need for an aesthetical measurement becomes obvious. Perhaps no art suffers confusion over its identity more than cinema, primarily through a lack of critical standards. Although art may be measured best by an invisible yardstick, there must be at least a commonly understood nomenclature and a relatively complete acknowledgement of parts, not unlike an atomic chart. (Gessner, 1963: 78)

As is evident, what Gessner proposed continually was a *discipline* of cinema, a *theory* of cinema, a *theory* specifically for the thinking about cinema with 'critical standards'. Such *theory* was considered to be different from Vladimir Nilsen's *The Cinema as a Graphic Art: on a Theory of Representation in the Cinema* (1959). This focused more on the practical aspect of filmmaking, and was specifically designed for camera-men. In it, he introduced a list of professional terms, as well as illustrations with detailed instructions to exemplify how a camera should be positioned in order to get certain shots. According to the new rules created by Gessner for the field of film studies, textbooks written by professionals like Nilsen's were not up to the 'critical standards' that Gessner aimed for. He insisted in '"The Parts of Cinema": A Definition' (1961):

> There has been regrettably only one notable attempt to chart order out of chaos, the all-inclusive diagram of Raymond Spottiswoode, when audaciously youthful, in A Grammar of the Film, but alas, the confusion of terms and definitions, compounded by the lack of any artistic delimitation or aesthetic ambitions, has given rise to a colleague's quip: You can't see Spottiswoode for the trees. (…) Even a well-intended methodologist like Spottiswoode fails in his presentation of no less than 77 items in his chart simply because he does not distinguish between objective elements, coordinative factors, and subjective qualities. (Gesner, 1961: 29)

The attempt at creating a specific academic language by the cinematologists was so absorbed in its struggles to acquire academic status, in an attempt to depart from the field of literary studies, that the discourse could not possibly accommodate any discussion of such a topic as Chinese cinema, because it did not fit into the field interests in any relevant way. This argument will be further explained in the following section.

Bourdieu encourages the studies of any field to pay attention to the 'relative' aspect; to unpack the network further. The 'discourse of film as a discipline' was also associated with the movement of new criticism away from the traditional philological and historical school in literary studies. Its methodology focused on close reading of a text in order to identify its 'literariness', so that the text could become a definable object of study. Such 'borrowing' was evident across Gessner's writings published in the *Journal of Cinematologist*, where he regularly proposed the idea of the 'exclusive language of cinema', and later the 'grammar of cinema' (Gessner, 1961, 1964). In his 1964 essay, 'An Approach to the Basics in Cinema: the ABC's of Teaching and Studying Film and Television', Gessner referenced the theoretical concepts from I.A. Richards, the founder of new criticism as a theoretical model. Such 'borrowing' is also evident in his later book-length scholarship *The Moving Image: A Guide to Cinematic Literacy* (1968), where he demonstrated different examples of analysing a film with close readings and several new 'theoretical' terms. For the field of film studies to push into academe and be recognised as a discipline, in Grieveson's words, Gessner's efforts 'would in turn inform the idea that film could constitute the grounds of an autonomous discipline that would be properly housed in a university department and supported by a professional association' (Grieveson, 2009: 49).

As demonstrated, in Bourdieu's terms the 'field of struggles' faced by film studies during its inception was related to the field of English literary studies as well as to the broader field of academia. The 'discourse of film as a discipline' was mainly promoted by

the Society of Cinematologists to obtain academic status for film by creating a new language and set of interests. Because of its initial theoretical connection with English literary studies, the 'discourse of film as a discipline' was, from the beginning of its creation, already immediately disconnected, along with other none-English topics such as Chinese cinema. This argument will be revised and further explained in the following sections.

2.2 The Discourse of Film as Art

According to Bourdieu, the very definition and the judgement of art is a process of position- and disposition-making, for the construction of a professional field. As Bourdieu ([1992] 1995) describes:

> It is only when one has characterized different positions that one can come back to particular agents and to different personal properties that more or less predispose them to occupy these positions and to realize the potentialities inscribed there. It is remarkable that the whole assembly of campions of 'art for art's sake', who are objectively very close in the political and aesthetic positions they take up, and who, without forming a group properly speaking, are linked together by relations of mutual esteem. (Bourdieu, [1992] 1995: 52)

What Bourdieu describes is also evidenced in the professionalisation of film studies and in the 'discourse of film as art' through a series of debates and practices. This section argues that the 'discourse of film as art', in addition to the 'discourse of film as a discipline', continued to contribute to the forming of film studies as an academic field. The 'discourse of film as art', as this section will demonstrate, is an agenda for acquiring the art status of film by theorising over the essence of film and its materialistic, artistic and creative characteristics.

Once again, just as the 'discourse of film as a discipline' discussed in the previous section, because of the agenda being so specific, topics such as Chinese cinema did not fit

into the debates around film as art, even though it could certainly contribute alternative perspectives. For instance, in his film *Personal Tailor* (Feng, 2013), Chinese director and scriptwriter Feng Xiaogang explained his views about cinema by using a self-reflexive perspective of his role as a film director. He states that 'film has always been made for the public and hence conventional, it loses its meaning if we insist on its artistic status' (transcribed and translated from a film dialogue line). This realisation by director Feng is in contrast to the western criticism culture and its development. The idea of film as an art is a widely accepted notion now, but this battle had to be fought, just as the battle to push film to be accepted as an academic discipline fought by the Cinematologists. Within the theoretical framework of this thesis, in Bourdieu's terms, battles within any professional field are inevitable and studies in any field have therefore to demonstrate and visualise these struggles.

As early as the 1970s, Victor Perkins signalled his concerns over the battles in film criticism as an aim to acquire the medium's artistic status. Perkins (1972) articulates his critique through a phrase which he calls 'the sins of the pioneers'. He observes that early writings on film had ambition to battle for the artistic status of film through their arguments. These film criticisms followed an approach which justified the writing of film itself, as well as the activity of going to films, as being equally intellectual as other more serious forms of traditional art. For Perkins, the central thesis of the 'pioneers' in early film theory/criticism (such as those by Vachel Lindsay, Rudolf Arnheim, Paul Rotha) was to justify 'the established dogmas of Art' (quoted in Perkins 1972: 11). While major film writings in the 1920s and 1930s were established under this very agenda, they ignored other factors about film itself. In Perkins' words, such ambitious 'concern with prestige severely limited the freedom to investigate and speculate on the nature of the movies' (Perkins, 1972: 11). To summarise Perkins' observation of early development of film criticism, these writings

engaged with the art status and political matter rather than film itself as a subject of inquiry. This thesis understands it as the 'discourse of film as art', which refers to a group of linguistic strategies developed to talk specifically about film and its artistic status as the main interest. In his 1972 book, Perkins finally proposes a mission to restore our intellectual engagement with films by seeing 'film as film'. However, Perkins leaves the book with an open ending: while a problematic is identified, solutions are not suggested.

While the 'discourse of film as a discipline' was initially driven by an ambition for demanding the academic status of film, the 'discourse of film as art', in Perkin's opinion, was motivated by film theorists' and critics' own 'obsession with status'. There are different ways to discuss how a certain film is made artistically, or to discuss how we can acknowledge film as an art form, but these discussions had not been visible since the birth of the cinema. For example, Ralph Block was an active Hollywood film producer during the 1920s and attempted to inquire into film's very artistic essence. This was evident in an article titled 'Not Theatre, Not Literature, Not Painting' (1927) that was published in *The Dial*, a modernist literature magazine. As a practitioner in filmmaking (a film producer, screenwriter and journalist), Block's intellectual exploration toward the question of film and art was more open and less deterministic on its status in comparison to the other approaches. He explained that:

> [movies] exist – massively, ubiquitous. It will be time enough to judge them as an art when they become a historical method of presenting selected truth, mellowed and tested by time, and captured by an audience saturated with tradition – acclimated by use to an understanding of laws, intentions, and refinements of the medium. (Block, 1927: 1)

Instead of insisting on film's art status, Block's language was much more explorative when it came to the debate. From a practical point of view, Block's thinking about the relationship between film and art always inquired into the possibilities of cinema becoming more artistic

and questioned how cinema could embrace a humanistic value. His writings on cinema were not driven to define what cinema should be – how is it an art? – but rather to question what it could become. According to Block, we should not compare cinema to other traditional art forms owing to its complexity. In short, Block opposed the 'discourse of film as art' and welcomed a more flexible and open discussion around the topic.

While art historians and critics can easily pin down the essence of traditional painting, we cannot do the same with cinema, in Block (1927)'s opinion. He states that there is a 'pragmatic sanction hovering over them which offends academicians' (Block, 1972: 5). The appearance and operation of cinema simply does not fall into the traditional theoretical model for defining an art. Despite this issue still remaining, writings from Block are not widely acknowledged.[16] Although he touched on several important points that deserved further discussion among film critics and academics, it is rare to see his writings quoted in scholarly publications. Block's words were not aligned with the agenda of the 'discourse of film as art' at that time; they were opposed to interests of the field of film studies in fighting for the artistic status of film. The formation of the 'discourse of film as art' has been an attempt to create a language set that justifies the art *status* of cinema, and that eventually excludes alternative discussions about the topic of cinema. In Bourdieu's framework, this is a typical symptom of a professional field.

How was the 'discourse of film as art' articulated and distributed as part of the professionalisation of film studies as a field? The following paragraphs will present further evidence. The 'discourse of film as art' is evident in two main types of debate. One has been referred to as the 'classical film theory', which consists of theories produced since the 1910s

[16] Block's writings are important for the research into early intellectual writings about the cinema yet have been excluded from the common discussions on early film theory. For details please see Ralph Block Papers Press Release by the Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 2009. Available at http://memory.loc.gov/service/mss/eadxmlmss/eadpdfmss/2009/ms009299.pdf

and up to the late 1960s. A driving concern of the classical film theory was to identify cinema's most distinguished characteristic as an art form. The second type of debate is oftentimes known as the 'auteur theory', partially influenced by the French film magazine *Cahiers du cinéma* and later popularised by a group of American film critics and intellectuals during the 1960s. This thesis argues that both 'classical film theory' and the 'auteur theory' contributed to the formation of 'film as art' as a discourse (a specific way to talk about the cinema).

Understandably, there was a reason for those who were fascinated by cinema to fight for its artistic status. Historically, advocates of this view perceived that film was not widely acknowledged for its artistic significance by those who had the power to comment on traditional arts. Early film critics therefore invested their efforts in arguing for the artistic value of film through active criticism writing. This can be seen in Vachel Lindsay's words in *The Art of the Moving Picture* ([1915] 1970):

> The motion picture art is a great high art. The people I hope to convince of this are (1) the great art museums of America; (2) the departments of English, of the history of the drama, of the practice of the drama and the history and practice of art… (3) the critical and literary world generally. (Lindsay, [1915] 1970: 45)

As a poet, Lindsay tried to justify his passion for cinema amongst his literary fellows in English literature, as well as those who worked on the criticism and theory of high art at that time. The 'isolation' that Lindsay felt was to some extent subject to his own experience and environment, because the definition of art among the intellectual circuit was already prestigious at that time. Lindsay's frustration is understandable, when comments like this, illustrating a common sentiment amongst those working in literature and theatre, appeared in *The English Review* at around the same time as his book was published:

> This new form of illusion cannot be called an art. Without the music of the human voice, without the reality of the human form, lacking in colour, sound and poetry, the film is a purely ocular illusion, an effect of light. As its worst it is a kind of eye-frenzy; at its best it is apt to cause a headache. (S.O., 1922: 1)

Although film's art status was not yet accepted by the elite group of critics or intellectuals, it did not stop those who were involved in its making to continue to experiment with the medium's artistic possibilities.

For instance, 1915 was not only the year when Lindsay's book was published, but also when D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915) was released, a film that has been regarded as one of the pioneering masterpieces in many artistic attempts, especially for its story-telling technique. The fact that cinema contained its own artistic elements was different from its being accepted as prestigious amongst a specific group of people, who had already established a certain usage of language about art. As discussed earlier, Robert Gessner had to convince his colleagues within the English department to take cinema more seriously as an academic subject. Lindsay too had to convince his peers of the artistic status of art using linguistic strategies. Such formation of discourse led to a counterproductive result. As Perkins argues:

> The theorist's concern with prestige severely limited his freedom to investigate and speculate on the nature of the movies. His definitions had to be such that they would appeal to the conventionally cultured mind. Thus Lindsay 'endeavoured to keep to the established dogmas of Art' in the hope that 'the main lines of argument will appeal to the people who have classified and related the beautiful works of man that have preceded the moving pictures.' (Perkins, 1972: 11)

By focusing on one element of cinema (its motion), Lindsay's attempt served as a template for film theorists later to look for the unique characteristic of film as a way of justifying its artistic status. In order to establish the prestige of art in cinema, early film theorists invested

their efforts in separating cinema from other forms of art. Despite sharing the same agenda of acquiring status, the theorists had differing opinions and disagreements. All these debates were therefore locked within the 'discourse of film as art', as the process of the making of a professional field. In Perkins' opinion, such 'obsession with status persists in nearly all the standard works of film theory', and they later became what Perkins calls the 'orthodox theory of film' (Perkins, 1972: 10-11). Perkins continued to question the emergence of film theory (or, in my terms informed by Bourdieu, the 'discourse of film as art'):

> [Early film theory] emerged radically deformed and incapable of useful growth. It could develop only as a sterile orthodoxy, a body of rules and prescriptions whose common features include internal contradiction and irrelevance to critical discussion of actual movies. The cinema which the great majority of film theorists present for our admiration is a fossil when it is not a myth. An aesthetic system established in the early years of the status struggle, and relevant to some aspects of the primitive form of cinema from which it was derived, has hardened into a dogma. (Perkins, 1972: 11, additional words added)

Was Perkins being overcritical about these early attempts? His critique of the 'status struggle' of film does accord with Bourdieu's film theory and the theoretical framework that this thesis is positioned in.

Rudolf Arnheim joined in the debate as an early film theorist with his book *Film as Art* ([1932] 1957) and according to his perspective this should be understood as a unique art form. The English translation and publication of this book in the 1950s allows the 'discourse of film as art' to materialise further. Arnheim compared the differences between what we see in reality and what is in photography or film. He pointed out elements such as depth, distance, lighting, colour and the absence of the space-time continuum relies on the artist's decisions. These elements are often 'selected deliberately for the sake of achieving specific effects' (Amheim, 1932: 11). To illustrate how film art works, Arnheim ([1932] 1957) proposed that 'the spectator's attention should be guided to such *qualities* of form'

(emphasis added), 'that he should abandon himself to a mental attitude which is to some extent unnatural' (Arnheim, [1932] 1957: 43). According to Arnhem's logic, in order that the spectator recognises the 'qualities' of film, instead of merely seeing something on the screen, he should be reminded of how something appears. Arnheim also explained how different angles or montage techniques help to create different meanings and psychological reactions by giving systematic analysis of different examples. In his words:

> The art of the moving image is as old as the other arts, it is as old as humanity itself, and the motion picture is but its most recent manifestation. What is more, I would venture to predict that the film will be able to reach the heights of the other arts only when it frees itself from the bonds of photographic reproduction and becomes a pure work of man, namely, as animated cartoon or painting. (Amheim, [1932] 1957: 213)

Some of these early film theorists were also filmmakers (such as Sergei Eisenstein, Lev Kuleshov, Dziga Vertov, Béla Balázs). Arnheim shared their common belief in seeing the artistic value in film as being different from reality: that it is not just a direct recording of reality but also contains space to allow for manipulation. To illustrate this, he focused on the specific film technique of montage, a French term referring to the editing technique of cutting and pasting a filmstrip together. To follow Arnheim's logic, the ideal film for justifying cinema as a unique form of art is one which contains techniques that deliberately make the audience pay attention to its composition and the process of its making. In Arnheim's opinion, such characteristics qualify film as art. The technique of cutting and pasting together was one of the major experiments in filmmaking explored by many pioneers. This group of early film theorists recognised the technique as being different from painting because it had a different form which justified cinema as art. Arnheim explained that the cinema not only established a set of rules for the practice of filmmakers, but it also encouraged them to focus on revealing this specific technique in works as an essence, and

ultimately established a set of rules for how the audience should comprehend films. If an audience was lost in the illusion of cinematic realism, and was not able to pay attention to its difference from reality, did it mean that cinema had lost its artistic value? Certainly, insisting on one of the many characteristics as the definition of film art was somehow over essentialist. Perkins criticised Arnheim's attempt as the 'isolating impulse' that ventured to 'predict that the film will be able to reach the heights of the other arts only when it frees itself from the bounds of photographic reproduction and becomes a pure work of man' (1972: 15). Perkins (1972) stated the following:

> This gulf between theoretical criteria and proclaimed enthusiasms shows how little the orthodox view of the cinema owes and contributes to a consideration of actual movies. It treats artistry in terms of methods rather than of works, as if a 'correct' use of the medium would itself provide a guarantee and a standard of excellence. (Perkins, 1972, 26)

Every filmmaker, even the early pioneers, has their own preferred techniques in making films. This was not the problem at all. According to Arnheim there was the creation of a language which insisted on only one particular form as a gesture to discourse about cinema as a definition. Indeed, what Arnhem proposed in *Film as Art* served more as a set of criteria with which to judge a film as art. While Arnheim denied film as a direct reproduction of reality according to his particular judgement on film art, there must have been others who thought about this differently.

André Bazin ([1958-1965] 1967), once a favourite theorist that was, and still is, widely used in film studies in English, had a different approach to define such an art. Bazin explained that it is in fact the realism that film is capable of producing that makes it an art *of* nature, and it is this characteristic which defines the essence of cinema. Bazin was weary of 'manipulations' lauded by Arnheim, and referred to such criteria as the 'plastics' of cinema about which he was often sceptical, if not outright hostile. In Bazin's understanding, in this

type of practice, the meaning lies 'in the shadow of the image projected by montage onto the field of consciousness of the spectator', rather than in the images themselves ([1958-1965] 1967: 126). He criticises the filmmakers who were heavy-handed with their editing (mostly the Soviet Russian and German Expressionist directors from the 1920s), stating that such a style 'did not give us the event'; rather, it 'alluded to it' (126). What interested Bazin in terms of film as art was its capability of capturing content as it is, and for as long as one can. In contrast to Arnheim, Bazin preferred to use long takes and 'invisible editing': 'Our intention is certainly not to preach the glory of form over content. Art for art's sake is just as heretical in cinema as elsewhere, probably more so' (Bazin, [1958-1965] 1967: 130). While Arnheim attempted to pull film art away from its relation with photographic image, Bazin insisted on it. Instead of paying attention to how film could 'manipulate' reality like Arnheim and the early Soviet filmmakers, Bazin believed in the reality of the photographic image:

> Only a photographic lens can give us the kind of image of the object that is capable of satisfying the deep need man has to substitute for it something more than a mere approximation, a kind of decal or transfer. The photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it. No matter how fuzzy, distorted, or discoloured, no matter how lacking in documentary value the image may be, it shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction; it *is* the model. (Bazin, ([1958-1965] 1967: 14)

If there was a continuum, Bazin was at one extreme with his view that what made film a distinguished art was cinema's 'objectivity in time'. In a similar deterministic passion to Arnheim, Bazin had another ideal about his 'pure cinema'. Apart from criticising the heavy montage style experimented with by early Soviet filmmakers, throughout his writings Bazin continued to praise those filmmakers who used very little visible editing and demonstrated how their films succeed in achieving realism.

The emergence of early film theory meant that Perkins disagreed with Bazin's writings, which were later considered as film theory by his film scholars, though it was not his intention to write them as such. According to Perkins, it was the 'purist' conception of cinema that enabled emerging theorists to further construct a theoretical model. Such an exclusive conception very much begins with its selection of rhetoric, which immediately delivers a kind of final conclusion rather than offer a space for further theoretical exploration. Perkins argued:

> Bazin mistook his own critical vocation to the defence of realism for the 'true vocation of the cinema'. His theoretical statements threaten a purism of the *object* as narrow as that of the image. Despite Bazin's careful qualifications and disclaimers, realist theory becomes coherent only if we identify the cinema's 'essence' with a single aspect of the film – photographic reproduction. In defining the film by reference to one of its features it resembles the orthodoxy, as it does in making a criterion out of a preference for particular aspects of film technique. (Perkins, 1972: 39)

In Perkins's view, the language put forward by both Arnheim and Bazin discriminated in favour of certain kinds of cinematic effect, according to the theorist's or critic's personal preference, which to some extent was situated above the filmmaker's or artist's choices. Furthermore, to develop Perkins' argument in line with the theoretical framework of this thesis, the languages presented by both Arnheim and Bazin are evidence of the struggles over the status of film as art, and hence the field of film studies. Although the theorists represented different preferences towards the style of such an art, both Arnheim and Bazin's languages would not allow the discussion about the cinema to go beyond this very discourse, that of 'film as art'. Its extension and further reproduction as a model of film studies would only strengthen such a discourse and its position and disposition.

Such knowledge disposition in the field of film studies through the construction of the 'discourse of film as art' has also been questioned by Noël Carroll in his *Philosophical*

Problems of Classical Film Theory (1998). Carroll refers to the works of Arnheim and Bazin as 'essentialism'. While both Arnheim and Bazin aimed to produce a general model for thinking about cinema, however, they also had limitations in their logic. In Carroll's view, both Arnheim and Bazin produced ideas that are only applicable to a set of specific films, but not all film productions.

For instance, the question of whether this theoretical model is applicable to Chinese cinema was not mentioned until recently by scholars such as Victor Fan (2015). Instead of theories, Carroll preferred to call them 'criticism', because they were written according the critic's own personal artistic preference, and not necessarily universal. The ideal theory to Carroll would be what he calls an 'institutional theory of film', that is a model which involves an open logic. This kind of theory can 'either incorporate into its definitions or, at least acknowledge the creativity and search for innovation that is said to be part of the concept of art in general or film art in particular' (Carroll, 1998: 204). Secondly, the institutional theory, as Carroll suggests, should not determine the universality of an effect or function of a technique, which is a signal that readers can constantly get from the works by Arnheim and Bazin; instead, each criticism and analysis needs to show that certain techniques in a certain work create meaning and effects specific to the work's context. Thirdly, the 'institutional theory' should aim at each work's historical context and investigate what the historical situations were when these films are made.

The methodological error in the 'essentialism' of the 'classical film theories' is that, 'each of these classical theorists, in different ways, is committed to the belief that certain features specific to the medium of film can be characterized theoretically so that the discussion of these medium-specific features can be parlayed into guidelines or principles of aesthetic decision making' (Carroll, 1998: 260). As Carroll writes elsewhere, instead of defending the 'medium-specificity' of various arts, the theorist of an art should proceed by

arguments, 'finding reasons – artistic, moral, and intellectual – that count for or against those styles, genres, artworks, and their subtending purposes which confront us in the thick of the life of the culture' (Carroll, 1996: 35). In Carroll's logic, instead of theorising about the art of film in totality, a more effective way to reveal the medium's artistic value is to focus on each work's own specificity, which often lies in the artist's hands.

Another group of writings that aimed to emphasise the art of film was auteur criticism, otherwise known as 'auteur theory'. Alongside 'classical film theory', these writings were part of the formation of the 'discourse of film as art' within the field of film studies, as part of the field struggles. As Jim Hillier (1985) summarises, 'film criticism and theory as we know it today – and even film-making too – owe[s] almost everything to French film criticism in the period since 1945, and particularly to the achievements of the journal *Cahiers du cinéma*, founded in 1951' (Hillier, 1985: 1). The statement is over-exaggerated, but French criticisms (and some of the Soviet Russian criticisms, mainly as translated by the Cahiers) were the most fashionable debates about cinema before the 1970s. Most of the contributors of *Cahiers du cinéma* were filmmakers themselves: André Bazin, Jacques Doniol-Valcroze and Joseph-Marie Lo Duca (the founders of the journal) were among them, as were François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Eric Rohmer, Charles Bitsch, Claude Chabrol, Jacques Rivette and many more. These filmmakers and critics were best known associated with the *nouvelle vague* (The French New Wave) movement in the 1960s, which artistically, philosophically and politically has continued to influence independent filmmakers across the globe since its birth. These theories and criticisms were mainly directed towards the practice of filmmaking, but the journal also accommodated some intellectual and philosophical thinking about the essence of film. One of *nouvelle vague*'s main purposes was to challenge the standardised and commercial film practice that was

made dominant by Hollywood and domestic French productions at that time, in order to seek alternative expressions.

One major concept that came out from the Cahiers was ‘la politique des auteurs’, proposed by François Truffaut in his 1954 essay ‘Une certaine tendance du cinéma français’ (‘A Certain Tendency in French Cinema’), where Truffaut argued that a filmmaker’s individual artistic signature should be imprinted within a work in order to challenge the commercial status of movie-making. ‘La politique des auteurs’ then recognises the ability of the filmmaker as an individual artist and to maximise signatures in the different techniques that he adopts. This concept was first translated into English by Andrew Sarris in his essay ‘Notes on Auteur Theory’, published in *Film Culture* (Sarris, 1962). In Sarris’s summary, ‘the first premise of the *auteur* theory is the technical competence of a director as a criterion of value’, and ‘the second premise of the *auteur* theory is the distinguishable personality of the director as a criterion of value’; and finally, ‘the third and ultimate premise of the *auteur* theory is concerned with interior meaning, the ultimate glory of the cinema as an art’ (Sarris,1962: 122). Since the publication of Sarris’s translation, many others have joined in the debate on this concept and its theoretical applicability.

Pauline Kael contributed to the conversation on authorship in her article ‘Circles and Squares’ (1963). Kael not only critically engaged with Sarris’s understanding of auteur theory, but also presented some counter-arguments. Kael’s criticisms were directed towards Sarris’s translation of Truffaut’s ‘politique des auteurs’. Originally, Sarris’s attempt was only to translate and summarise the latest debates at that time in France, rather than to propose the concept to be a theory. However, the name of his article fails to defend him from such suspicion, and it was indeed after the coining of the term by Sarris, that the concept became popularised not only among critics, but also academics. Kael wrote:

> Those, like Sarris, who ask for objective standards seem to want a theory of criticism which makes the critic unnecessary. And he is expendable if categories replace experience; a critic with a single theory is like a gardener who uses a lawn mower on everything that grows. Their desire for a theory that will solve all the riddles of creativity is in itself perhaps an indication of their narrowness and confusion; they're like those puzzled, lost people who inevitably approach one after a lecture and ask, "But what is your basis for judging a movie?" when one answers that new films are judged in terms of how they extend our experience and give us pleasure, and that our ways of judging how they do this are drawn not only from older films but from other works of art, and theories of arts, that new films are generally related to what is going in other arts, that as wide a background as possible in literature, painting, music, philosophy, political thought, etc., helps, that it is the wealth and variety of what he has to bring to new works that makes the critic's reaction to them valuable, the questioners are always unsatisfied. They wanted a simple answer, a formula; if they approached a chef they would probably ask for the one magic recipe that could be followed in all cooking. (Kael, 1963: 21)

Donald E. Staples responded to this debate in 'The Auteur Theory Reexamined' (Staples, 1966), where he closely examined the concept by tracing some of the original writings in *Cahiers du cinéma,* in order to critically think over this new theory and its applicability for the study of film. For instance, he revisited some of André Bazin's writings which appeared to be sceptical about the theory. As Staples pointed out, Bazin's 1957 essay 'De la politique des auteurs' discussed the weaknesses of the 'politique des auteurs':

> The politique des auteurs appears to me to harbour and protect an essential critical truth which the cinema needs more than all the other arts, exactly to the extent that the act of true artistic creation is more uncertain and menaced in it than elsewhere. But its exclusive practice would lead to another peril: the negation of the work to the benefit of the exaltation of its auteur…
>
> Useful and fruitful, it seems to me thus, independently of its polemic value, that [the politique des auteurs] should be completed by other approaches to the

> cinematographic fact which would restore to the film its value as a work.
> (Translation cited in Staples 1966 - 67: 5)

Staples criticised the auteur theory in a similar way to Bazin. By pointing out Bazin's worry over the 'cult of personality', Staples finished his essay by warning us that, film appreciation, inevitably, is subjective; and auteur theory can be somehow rather carelessly applied according to each critic's individual favours. 'It's always convenient to choose a theory of film that embraces our favourites as examples', and he suggests 'let's not change the criteria to accommodate our temporary tastes.' 'There will never be a 'perfect' theory of film', he continues, 'but let's have more theories and let's make the theories we have basic and available in their theoretical form' (Staples, 1966 – 67: 6).

The debate on 'auteur theory' as highlighted above invites us to rethink Carroll's proposal of an 'institutional film theory' which pays attention to the artistic characteristics of specific films. If the danger of a 'personality cult' is signalled through the mass reproduction of auteur theory, then similar problems might too occur to Carroll's theoretical model, but as the 'taste cult'. Instead of speaking of the directors that one favours, the theorists or critics can equally speak of certain movies according to their own taste. All the 'classical film theory', auteur criticism (auteur theory) or Carroll's 'institutional theory' are motivated by a shared agenda to define film as art. It does not matter how the arguments are formulated, there is already a destination. It is this destination which guides the field interests and the struggles within the studies of film. In fact, the destination comes before the inquiry, and the languages serve the purpose. Eventually, as we have seen in the above examples, the 'discourse of film as art' would always be influenced by personal tastes and preferences, or in Bourdieu's terms by *habitus* – the field players' reaction toward the professional environment in which they are situated. The criteria of judging which filmmaker is an auteur, and which is not, is in fact a process of selection and is, ultimately, discrimination. Why is a

certain filmmaker regarded as an artist, but not another? Can this judgment be based purely on personal preferences?

The battle of 'discourse of film as art' has now been won. In Perkins' view, 'the cultural establishments have been converted, though less by the evangelism of the theorists than by the good works of the film-makers' (Perkins, 1972: 10). Its own artistic status has been justified by those who have been contributing to the making of films which 'offered carrion to the culture-vulture as rich and ripe as any provided by painting, music or literature' (Perkins, 1972: 10). Perkins continued to argue:

> As a result, the theory is most emphatic where it should be most cautious, in imposing obligations on the artist; it is least helpful where it should be most relevant, in developing the disciplines of criticism. As useful theory will have to redirect attention to the movie as it is *seen*, by shifting the emphasis back from creation to perception. In order to arrive at a more accurate and inclusive definition of film as it exists for the spectator, it will need to concentrate not on the viewfinder and the cutting bench but on the screen. (Perkins, 1972: 27)

The artistic experiments of cinema continued, the battle had been won and the 'discourse of film as art' soon faded toward the end of the 1960s. To conclude this section, on one hand, the discourse eventually excluded other ways of talking about the cinema as 'not the proper' as they did not fit into this specific agenda and set of interests (including topics such as Chinese cinema). On the other hand, as the next section will argue, such limitation provided a gap for new positions to intervene within the field of film studies.

Theoretically speaking, this section continued to present evidence that demonstrates how the field of film studies falls in to what Bourdieu theorises about as a professional field, regarding its struggles and battles for positions, resources and eventually capital.

2.3 The Discourse of Film as Signification

Following similar approaches to the previous two sections in this chapter, this section will continue to explore another major discourse in the field of film studies throughout its professionalisation – the 'discourse of film as signification. It will present evidence of debates which signal the specific interest of this discourse. It argues how this discourse helps to maintain film studies as a professional field and its autonomy on one hand, but inevitably – once again – exclude other topics such as Chinese cinema that are not relevant to 'the discourse of signification'.

The formation of 'the discourse film as signification' from the late 1960s onward has been considered as the most important theoretical transitional moment in film studies. This period has been commonly known as the '*Screen* theory' era. Philip Rosen (2008) once summarised the significance of this theoretical development, stating that '*Screen* was the most powerful and widely discussed English-language platform for 1970s film theory' (Rosen, 2008: 265). Most scholars in the field of film studies would also agree with Rosen's observation regarding *Screen*'s contribution toward the further professionalisation of film studies. Many scholars have written historical investigations about this period (Nash, 2008; Rosen, 2008; Bolas, 2009; Chapman, 2013; MacDonald, 2016) and this section will continue to examine this discourse from a Bourdieuian perspective in terms of a field and the struggles over positions and resources within a field, as well as the 'relative' aspect not only within a field but also between different fields.

The historical context for the 'discourse of film as signification' emerging in film studies should be taken into account. 1968 was a significant year; a series of events took place in parallel which encouraged a new group of intellectuals and academics to rise. These were The Paris May events, the Prague Spring revolution against the Soviet Union, student protests across North and Latin America and the ongoing series of protest against the

Vietnam War. A sentiment and spirit of revolt emerged across the world under the manifesto of fighting for more equality in society. Universities became the major grounds for intellectuals and students to express their voices and radical ideas as resistance toward power. Since the 1968 events across different universities (and also several other movements prior that year in the late 1950s and early 1960s), there has been a change within academia. A new group of academics came forward – the new intellectuals, or in Alvin W. Gouldner (1975-76)'s words, the 'revolutionary intellectuals' – aiming to distinguish themselves from the traditional academics who had already established their elite positions in academia.[17] The agenda of this new generation of academics was to take a more democratic approach in order to implement a wide range of reforms on several particular social issues, such as gender and racial equality, through university education. Apart from protesting against a series of social issues, they also criticised the previous generation of intellectuals, those who had become the elites within universities, where their intellect and knowledge production were disconnected with broader society and the ordinaries. In addition, some of these young intellectuals wished to propose a revision of Marxism that was beyond the traditional theoretical model of class struggle. (To some degree, this was similar to what Lenin and his fellows tried to achieve too, but this is another topic that deserves separate attention). For instance, the *New Left Review* journal in Britain popularised several critical theories from the Frankfurt School, writings from Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser, alongside other reinterpretations of writings by Marx. The popularisation of these critical theories was determined to educate the public to become more aware of social inequality and to gain a political consciousness about

[17] Although the majority associates the new intellectuals with the movements in 1968, significant prior events also included the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, and the 'nouvelle gauche' that was associated with *France Observateur* in the 1950s, the publication of E.P. Thompson and John Saville's *New Reasoner* in 1957, and the publication of the *New Left Review* in 1960 in Britain.

everyday social issues. Film, among other things, was included in the politics. No longer talking about film's artistic status, from the 1960s onwards, new struggles emerged which became the field of film studies' new priority, interest and resource distribution.

This political and cultural context shifted the previous cinephilia culture of cinema to one that examined film as part of a wider politics and power structure. This shift was once again influenced by the French intellectual circuit. The French journal *Communications* was founded in 1961 by Georges Friedmann, Roland Barthes and Edgar Morin. In its first editorial, the founders proposed a sociological analysis of all mass communications (press, radio, television, film, advertising and so on). The initial aim of setting up le Centre d'Études des Communications de Masse (and the journal) was to investigate the following questions:

> What are the psycho-social effects of mass media on the public? What nature and how important? What are the role of reciprocal, producer groups and the public in the development of content? What happens to mass communications according to the classes, schemes and societies which they are offered? Are they a means of integrating men in Modern society or do they contribute instead to dodging the problems of integration? Are they destined to be a new human language and frankly a new culture? In short: what is the significance of the phenomenon? (Friedmann, Barthes & Morin, 1961: 1-2, translated from the original text)

The gesture of including film as part of mass communication also prepared the theoretical ground for the studies of media & communication within English-academia thereafter. More importantly, the publications within *Communications* introduced a new set of theories, languages and approaches to the studies of film and other media. Meanwhile in Britain, the *New Left Review* journal was founded in 1960, with Stuart Hall as the first editor-in-chief. Apart from its new Marxist political manifesto, the journal also showed the same interest in popular culture and its societal effects as the French theorists had. For example, in a 1961 article, 'Television Supplement', Kit Coppard, Paddy Whannel, Raymond Williams and

Tony Higgins wrote about the journal's attitude and concern toward mass media by asking a central question, '[in] what manner should television (and other media) communicate with its audience' (Coppard et al., 1961: 33-34)? The writers then proposed four attitudes towards communication: authoritarian, where media is seen as an important part of the whole machinery that governs a particular society; paternalistic, one needs to feel responsibility and reverence towards his own work; commercial, a media needs to make profit for its sustainability, taking into account the first two attitudes; and democratic, society has the right to choose what to read, listen or watch, at the same time contributing to what is communicated (Coppard et al., 1961: 33-34).

Concerning the responsibility for making sure these four attitudes were practised, the writers proposed that it was not only the responsibility of media organisations such as the BBC or ITV, but that education also played an effective role. In their view, educational bodies should train their students 'to be concerned with ways in which television and other mass media could be used positively to enlarge and enrich our experience', children and adults thus needed to be taught 'to evaluate critically the kinds of experiences and ethics in which these media deal', in the writers' words (Coppard et al., 1961: 45).

There was a close connection between the British Film Institution's (BFI hereafter) institutional transformation and the *New Left Review*. Paddy Whannel, who was acting as the BFI Education Officer between 1957 and 1971, was also closely involved with the journal *New Left Review.* Apart from contributing to it regularly, he co-authored *The Popular Arts* (1964) with Stuart Hall, where he called for the critics' attention to treat Hollywood cinema as a serious subject to analyse its influence on the public's consciousness. Prior to his proposal, the BFI's very own film magazine *Sight and Sound* mainly paid attention to European or avant-garde art films, in a cinephilia manner, for critics to praise the less commercial and more artistic films that they personally adored. Certainly, under the

influence of the *New Left Review*, Whannel was more concerned with film as part of mass communication and its obligation to educational responsibility.

Thinking about how to bring film not only into high education, but also to the general education topic was the aim of Whannel and those involved with the *New Left Review* at that time. His position as officer of the BFI Education Department, provided an opportunity for Whannel to be actively involved in the institutionalisation of film studies within the UK. He published a book titled *Studies in the Teaching of Film within Formal Education: Four Courses Described* in 1964, and at the same time invited young film teachers such as Alan Lovell, Jim Kitses, Peter Wollen and Victor Perkins to work within the film education department at BFI, in order to establish a theoretical foundation for this emerging discipline. In a conversation between Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen, Wollen reveals that *The Popular Arts* 'was the first book to use what you might call a theoretical approach to a subject that had no academic standing, and people like Paddy [Whannel] saw an opportunity to give film studies an academic standing through promoting writing that was theoretical' (cited in Grieveson & Wasson, 2008: 218). As Wollen recalled in the interview, the British Journal *Screen* was published by the BFI Education Department at that time, in the context outlined above.

Although positioning his vision differently from *Sight & Sound'*s pure film appreciation, with clear ideas about emphasising the public educational function of film, Wannel's initial ideas of a discipline of film studies was nothing like 'the discourse of film as signification' that was later promoted through the journal *Screen*. Phillip Rosen summarises:

> In rereading *Screen* and its allies now, one is struck by the extent to which the search for new thinking was in the air at the time. Desires for radical political novelty at the end of the 1960s corresponded with a quest for radical transformation among some intellectual sectors. Notions of fundamental change,

> epistemological breaks, and, occasionally, revolution were the order of the day. This coalesced with the growing and controversial prestige of theory as a mode by which to renovate Anglo-American critical studies in the academy. All of these fed into ambitions to overhaul film theory along with film culture. (Rosen, 2008: 265)

Screen and its allies established a very specific way of talking about cinema as 'political novelty' and 'radical transformation', which I conceptualise as 'the discourse of film as signification'. Although Whannel and his colleagues resigned from the Education Department in 1971, the journal's followers took his initiatives to a higher ambition. Acting as an academic comrade alongside the *New Left Review* from the 1970s onwards, the journal *Screen* published writings and translations that prioritised the same political interest as the *New Left Review*. The methodological and theoretical rigour that these writings put forward quickly made *Screen* the most important academic platform to engage with the studies of cinema in English language in a more serious manner, in comparison with its opponents in British film review culture at that time, such as *Sight & Sound* (also a BFI publication) and *Movie*. All of these publications shared a mutual passion about cinema but what made *Screen* stand out was that, apart from writing about films from a pure appreciation perspective, it had at least two additional ambitions. One was to transform the field of film studies into a more seriously taken academic discipline in higher education. The second was to utilise the education of film to articulate a *New Left* influenced political message to young students and intellectuals.

While the formation of the 'discourse of film as art' was motivated by the issues of the art status of film not being widely recognised, the 'discourse of film as signification' was motivated by the political interests of the young critics and intellectuals at that time. This is once again in line with Bourdieu's conceptualisation of field: that different interests emerge to fight for new positions, to replace older positions and to redistribute resources.

What Bourdieu calls the *habitus* is also evident in the field of film studies during this period: those who actively participated in the formation of 'the discourse of film as signification' (and those who later followed and reproduced it) were concerned about the issues of power in society, ideological apparatus and different forms of regime and their impacts on an individual's consciousness and everyday life. Following the series of events after 1968, several main regimes were the targets for criticism by these theorists: the ideology of capitalism, the ideology of patriarchy and the conventional aesthetic and narrative model of Hollywood filmmaking (which is also considered as being accountable for embedding the former two ideologies). In the view of this generation of critics, all the above ideological apparatuses must be, and can be, revealed through a semiotic analysis of a certain film, as a critical evaluation resisting the interpellation of a false consciousness onto an individual. In short, the study of cinema has become a way to study any embedded structure in our society that 'controls' and 'influences' our identity, consciousness and even behaviours. In other words, the 'discourse of film as signification' has carried several political rationales from the very beginning of its introduction.

As with the previous discourses discussed, the 'discourse of film as signification' created several theoretical problems as its struggles took place within the field of film studies. Film scholar Peter Wollen's series of efforts in introducing a new language to film studies marked a significant discontinuity from the previous discourse, the 'discourse of film as art'. Wollen was also one of the colleagues who worked alongside Whannel during his time at the BFI's Education Department. Wollen's 'Cinema – Code and Image' ([published under the pseudonym 'Lee Russell'], 1968) in the *New Left Review* was also included in his later book *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (1969-1972). This essay was the earliest attempt to lay out a theoretical foundation for the formation of the 'discourse of film as

signification'. The journal *Screen,* which had already acquired certain capital in academia, was responsible in widely popularising this particular discourse.

By turning a specific film, or film in general, into signs or codes for various analysis and criticism, the 'discourse of film as signification' is based on a selected and combined logic influenced mainly by thinkers including Jacques Lacan, Louis Althusser, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Ferdinand de Saussure. Such a theoretical logic can be summarised by the following main arguments: our hidden unconscious is structured like a language which can therefore be studied through the structure of language (Lacan); the interpellation of ideology and ideological state apparatus is a process which is embedded in all social institutions, constituting individuals as subjects by hailing them as different types of social interactions and cultural productions (Althusser); a structuralist approach to the studies of myths enables us to understand and underline any structure in our society (Lévi-Strauss); and finally, semiology as a science of language enables us to uncover the arbitrary nature of sign as well as the group of systems grounded on such a nature, where the individual's will is being eluded by language through the system of signs (Saussure).

Based on the above logic, the 'discourse of film as signification' has ambitions to achieve several aims through the studies of cinema, one of which includes turning the language of film into the system of sign as a 'science' for uncovering the repressed unconscious. This unconscious can be understood as the interpellation of an ideological state apparatus which influences an individual's behaviours, social interactions and cultural productions as a further criticism towards any form of ideological regime. Therefore, within this proposed system of sign, all elements (such as a line of dialogue, a gesture of performance, a specific chosen colour, a camera angle) in a film can be considered as carrying a certain signification, and such a signification can be examined by the theorist or the semiologist as a cue that leads to a deeper ideological structure embedded in our

everyday life. Instead of paying attention to the justification of cinema as an art form, or to how artistic certain filmmakers are as auteurs as in the previous discourse, film theorists became more interested in making sense of social issues and the structure of our society through 'the discourse of film as signification'.

Wollen attempted to combine the logic as described above and refigured the notion of cinematic language in more theoretical terms. In his arguments, cinema is a vehicle which demonstrates the characteristics of the system of sign, and therefore, semiology is the 'correct' way for us not only to comprehend the true potential of cinema, but at the same time the embedded meanings that it signifies. By assuming that most film viewers are passive receivers who do not hold any of their own critical capabilities, Wollen believes that the science of semiology is able to 'educate' people to 'decode' cinematic language within the system of sign in a less subjective, more scientific manner. Within this combined logic that Wollen adopted for his film semiology project, there is a possible contradiction. If Wollen followed Saussure's thesis by agreeing on the 'arbitrary nature of the sign', then what would make 'the science of semiology' the ultimate method to the 'systems grounded on the arbitrariness?' If any sign within a film text is arbitrary, then anyone can make sense of, or interpret, this sign according to their own preferences. A semiological approach is just like other interpretations; why should it be considered as the correct way to make sense of the cinematic language? Such a logical contradiction was also revealed by Wollen's own words, that there is a danger of over-interpreting a certain sign by exploring a theorist's own intentional reading of it. The semiology of cinema, Wollen argued:

> …would situate the consciousness of the reader or spectator no longer outside the work as receiver, consumer and judge, but force him to put his consciousness at risk within the text itself, so that he is forced to interrogate his own codes, his own method of interpretation, in the course of reading, and thus to produce fissures and gaps in the space of his own consciousness (fissures and gaps which

> exist in reality but which are repressed by an ideology, characteristic of bourgeois society, which insists on the 'wholeness' and integrity of each individual consciousness). (Wollen, 1969-1972: 162)

It is possible to illustrate this contradiction. If Saussure proposed that any sign's appearance is 'unmotivated' and therefore is arbitrary or open to interpretation, then how would this logic construct our understanding of a scene in a film if we follow Wollen's theoretical adoptation into the studies of cinema?

Any element in a film can be transformed into a sign to be further studied. The sign identified for such purpose is immediately isolated from the film as a whole, from the context of the film that is made, and of course from the makers' intentions on this particular appearance of the scene. Although this sign is arbitrary, only the science of semiology is able to reveal its potential meaning. Such practice, therefore, immediately puts itself above any other interpretations of it as the 'correct' consciousness. If we look at it from Bourdieu's (1993) perspective, this is further evidence for position-making within a professional field: to distinguish one particular interest from others, to distinguish one particular group of people from others. In other words, although not expressed explicitly in Wollen's essay, the theoretical proposal that he attempted to put forward immediately assumed two hypotheses: 1) the team of filmmakers who produce and make a film has no control over the signs that they produce and are unaware of the unpredictable outcomes of meaning; 2) the audience who watches a film has no idea what message he/she is receiving. Under these hypotheses, a conclusion is rather clear: only the semiotician is capable of decoding and revealing the true meanings behind any sign that appears in a film. There is no direct and transparent communication between a film (or those who made it) and the audience; the only bridge to 'complete' this communication is through the 'science of semiology'.

Leland A. Poague (1975) criticised Wollen's intended marriage between the cinema and semiology as a 'failure, in turn, [which] can be partially attributed to his desire for

comprehensiveness: he tries to enlist all sorts of authorities under a single rhetorical banner' (Poague, 1975: 309). A new discourse that was used to understand and interpret the cinema was created through selecting specific language to produce knowledge for the cinema, and ultimately, by positioning these chosen languages above all other alternative discussions. Poague continues to question Wollen's theoretical approach: 'in [Wollen's] search for respectable precedents he tends to lose sight of his subject – the cinema' (Poague, 1975: 310). It is with such unresolved logical contradiction that the 'discourse of film as signification', alongside its revolutionary Marxist sentiment, ambitiously took up a political rationale to critique various forms of ideology by resting criticism on the above logical foundation. There were criticisms and disagreements with Wollen's theoretical intervention that became visible soon after his book's publication (Eckert, 1969; McTaggart, 1969; Henderson, 1973; Poague, 1975). This initial model of semiology was quickly adopted and popularised through the journal *Screen*. In other words, this discourse was distributed widely and effectively because it already had the support of a professional publishing platform.

A similar political sentiment's influence on the culture of film criticism also took place in the French magazine *Cahiers du cinéma:*

> The upheaval of May 1968 in France challenged not only established institutions, but established modes of thought. Film criticism under the impact of the May events, of ideas developed by Althusser in his work on Marx, and by a new school of structuralist thought in linguistics and anthropology, became increasingly political, Marxist and intellectually rigorous in its approach to film. (Comolli & Narboni, 1971: 27)

This editorial of *Cahiers du cinéma* was translated and cited in Jean-Luc Comolli and Paul Narboni's 1971 article 'Cinema/Ideology/Criticism/' published in *Screen,* where the authors proposed a new role of film studies following the political shift in France and elsewhere. At this point, film was no longer considered as art, but was taken to the other extreme as being

'a result of being a material product of the system, it is also an ideological product of the system, which in France means capitalism' (Comolli & Narboni, 1971: 29). Dominique Noguez agreed with this and stated that 'cinema study will thus be able to contribute to the great work of interpreting the totality of social phenomena so urgently called for' (Noguez,1971: 135). It is against this background and the highly specialised political agenda (following Wollen's initial intervention) that *Screen* continued to introduce semiology as a theoretical approach to film studies. It aimed to educate students about how to read films critically, and especially to examine the underlying ideological structures that might affect their comprehension of reality.

In 1973, within a few years of its establishment, *Screen* published a special issue in order to introduce the approach of semiotics to the study of film developed from Wollen's pioneering efforts. In his 'Introduction: Questions of Emphasis' (1973), Stephen Heath encourages scholars to change the then fashion (treating film as an art) within film studies of following the new political language, 'the discourse of film as signification'. However, in contrast, Stephen Prince (1993) expressed his scepticism toward this theoretical model:

> To what extent are linguistic models appropriate for an understanding of how images communicate? Film theory since the 1970s has tended to place great emphasis upon what is regarded as the arbitrary nature of the signifier-signified relationship, that is, upon the purely conventional and symbolic aspect of signs. What this focus has tended to displace is an appreciation of the iconic and mimetic aspect of certain categories of signs, namely pictorial signs, those most relevant to an understanding of the cinema. This stress upon the arbitrary nature of semiotic coding has had enormous consequences for the way film studies as a discipline has tended to frame questions about visual meaning and communication. (Prince, 1993: 16)

This is the logical foundation of 'the discourse of film as signification' (a way to talk about the cinema as a practice of knowledge production): film is within a language system (both in

a linguistic and Lacanian sense), it is a signifying practice which can be seen as a myth, that is also under the 'interpellation' of 'ideological apparatus', which at the same time acts as the mirror. By unconsciously (mis-)recognising themselves, the viewer receives a false identification, and thus becomes the subject that the 'ideological apparatus' 'hails' them to be. The approach of semiology aims to rearrange the arbitrary signs within a myth (a film), in order to reveal the 'ideology' that the cinema (as an apparatus) produces. How can we then apply all these theories to the examination of cinema? Thierry Kuntzel explains in his essay 'The Treatment of Ideology in the Textual analysis of Film' (1973) published in *Screen*:

> Semiotic analysis deals with the filmic fact; it 'should restrict itself to the study of film considered as a language.' (…) Though the before and the after of film do not interest semiotics, one must not think that semiotics removes film from its socio-economic context, for this would render it a non-ideological object: thus we study neither the various pressures of production and distribution nor the ideological impact of film (these external studies being best left to sociologists, economists and psychologists) but the ideological interplay within filmic fact itself. (Kuntzel, 1973: 44)

This paragraph illustrates the practice of how to examine a film through this particular theoretical model precisely. The methodology deals with the 'filmic fact'; in another sense, the textual fact, which is disconnected, with the socio-economic context as an isolated object. The 'ideology' then, without further empirical research, is 'revealed' after the practice of semiotics through gathering codes and their significations. It does involve a process of 'data collecting', but it is within the realm of filmic reality among the visual-audio elements that are present within the surface of a film text. The 'ideological interplay within the filmic fact itself' is what the theorists ought to examine and unpack. Articles with similar approaches were published in *Screen* one after another, with the same module unpacking

film after film. This was the main priority and interest that continued to sustain academic status for the field of film studies.

From the early 1970s onward, the 'discourse of film as signification' was the major focus within the field of film studies. Although there were arguments against this particular way of studying cinema, these debates were still a part of the same language within the field, a part of the same struggle that the field of film studies was going through at the time. For instance, both Robin Wood (1976) and Andrew Britton (2008) expressed their disagreement over the emergence of 'the discourse of film as signification', not only thinking that the theories on which this discourse rests do not help to bring us wider knowledge about cinema, but also pointing out the logical and philosophical errors to which we need to be alerted. Wood writes:

> Screen sees theory not as a system for providing values, but as a system for providing knowledge, i.e., a body of concepts whose importance lies in producing a form of understanding that does not entail a necessary dependence on institutionalized authority, be it that of the critic or teacher, but rather provides, through its system of conceptual elaboration and definition and its procedures of application and testing, a potential alternative to that authority. (Wood, 1976: 120)

Britton critiques further:

> The concept of a reading as a "finished product" is inadmissible. The act of reading is never finished; it is open to perpetual transformation, precisely to the extent that the reader's social/intellectual context is never fixed, the text has his/hers entering constantly into new relations. Similarly, to describe a concept as a piece of property that can be acquired, so that by owning a set of concepts – things one can busily set about constructing a reading – things of one's own, completely goes against what I take to be meant by "the means of intellectual production." (Britton, 2008: 390)

Both Wood and Britton indicate that the logic of *Screen*'s theory for a textual analysis of film is an act of close reading. Indeed, the 'discourse of film as signification' and its unique theoretical model responds to the initial aim of Paddy Whannel and the *New Left Review* to institutionalise the studies of popular arts, in order to launch the mission of educating the public's critical attitude toward mass communication.

However, film scholars who endorsed the 'discourse of film as signification' privileged themselves with a powerful position for their rhetorical articulations. In James S. Hans's (1995) observation:

> …those who are in the business of criticizing culture today have had to accept the fact that there is a slight hook in their own program: it begs the question of how they themselves, the ones who lay bare the omnipotent powers of culture, can escape from these shaping forces. If we are so thoroughly constructed by the socioeconomic apparatus around us, how can those who point this out be doing anything different? Aren't they too necessarily complicitous with the regimes they attack? These violations of the law of noncontradiction trouble people most when they are looking for vulnerable points in their opponents, and there is unquestionably a meditation that needs to be taken up in relation to those who think they can escape the force of their own arguments. (Hans, 1995: 5)

The attitude described above was not agreed by everyone who was equally (if not more) passionate about the cinema. Hans's criticism was taken further into action as is evident in the words of Edward Buscombe, Christine Gledhill, Alan Lovell (who was also a colleague of Whannel at BFI) and Christopher Williams who resigned from *Screen*'s editorial board in 1976. They made three main points in their resignation statement, expressing their frustrations over the language battles within the field of film studies:

1) *Screen* is unnecessarily obscure and inaccessible
2) The politico-cultural analysis that has increasingly come to underpin *Screen*'s whole theoretical effort is intellectually unsound and unproductive

3) *Screen* has no serious interest in educational matters

(Buscombe, et al., 1976: 106-107)

Another piece of evidence found by this thesis was a reply to this statement after its publication by other members of the editorial board, including Ben Brewster, Elizabeth Cowie, Joh Halliday, Kari Hanet, Stephen Heath, Colin MacCabe, Paul Willemen and Peter Wollen. The purpose in this reply was predictable: to defend their theoretical and political positions within the field of film studies, mainly because the journal *Screen* was then 'a major point of reference in film theory debate in Britain and North America (it should be noted that many of *Screen*'s subscribers and readers live abroad, especially in the USA)', and 'this effectiveness is reflected in a continuous rise in subscriptions and sales' (Brewster, et al., 1976: 111-112).

2.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has identified three main discourses which contributed to the professionalisation of film studies between the 1950s and the 1970s, through methods of archival research and field analysis. They are the 'discourse of film as a discipline', the 'discourse of film as art' and the 'discourse of film as signification' where film was theorised by scholar according to each of the discourse agenda.

This chapter has evaluated the process of how these discourses were created through a series of debates, as part of the field struggles over cultural capital among different theoretical positions. The process of these struggles was what film studies as a new scholarly field faced in acquiring its academic and intellectual status. It is evident that, not being aligned with any of these very specific interests and agendas, the topic of Chinese cinema could not fit into these debates, which were to theorise film as a 'discipline' to be studied, as 'art' and as 'signification'. It is important to understand these debates, as the following

chapters will explain that, the field of film studies and the field of Chinese cinema studies are in fact connected with each other where they also share similar perceived regularities in discourses making.

The next chapter will continue to make sense of the marginalisation of the research area of Chinese cinema in film studies with additional examples and primary materials gathered from *The British Newspaper Archive*. While this chapter has evaluated how the topic of Chinese films did not fit into the three main discourses in film studies, the next chapter will evaluate the reception of several examples where scholars intended to integrate into the debates in films studies with the discussions around Chinese films. How were these efforts received by peers in film studies?

Chapter Three: The Marginalisation of Chinese Cinema in Film Studies

The previous chapter investigated how the research subject of Chinese cinema was not included in the three main discourses that shaped the discursive field of films studies between the 1950s and 1970s. It unpacked each of the discourses through a field analysis to make sense of the theoretical positions that scholars intended to establish within the field of film studies and questioned the purposes and results of these discourses.

This chapter will continue to question the marginalisation of Chinese cinema in film studies between the 1960s and the 1990s, but by focusing on a set of different findings more specifically. The findings in this chapter are divided into three sections. The first part looks at three cases that appeared between 1960s and 1970s, where a small group of scholars attempted to integrate the topic of Chinese cinema to the main discourses in film studies. Specifically, I have selected the following examples for purposes of close evaluation. They include Gerald Noxon's 1963 article on pictorial origins, published in *The Journal of the Society of Cinematologists*, Jay Leyda's 1972 book *Dianying: An Account of Films and the Film Audience in China* and the 1976 article 'Breaking with Old Ideas: Recent Chinese Films' written by Rosalind Delma and Mark Nash, published in the journal *Screen.* Each of these examples, can be seen as a response to two of the discourses that were discussed in the previous chapter. How did these attempts or did not make a theoretical breakthrough into the field of film studies? How do these selected examples further highlight the marginalisation of Chinese cinema as a research area in film studies? The following pages in this chapter will seek answers to these questions.

The second section of this chapter presents primary findings gathered from *The British Newspaper Archive.* The findings composed a list of news articles which reported different public activities of screening and learning Chinese films in the UK as well as their initial reception. How was Chinese cinema talked about differently in the UK public between the 1950s and the 1970s, in comparison to academic inquiries at that time? All findings are read as evidence which demonstrates the regular public discussions of Chinese films throughout the 1950s to the 1970s. How can these additional archival findings be made in contrast to the argument presented in the first section, and how can it be used to further highlight the marginalised position of Chinese cinema as a research area in film studies?

The third section of this chapter presents and evaluates findings of a series of writing and editorial projects by scholars in China, the US and the UK to further connect the research topic of Chinese cinema with the field of film studies. Selected examples to be discussed include articles written by mainland based scholars Shao Mujun, Chen Xihe and Lam Nin Tung during the 1980s; George S. Semsel and his students' translation projects and edited volumes on Chinese film theory between the late 1980s and early 1990s; as well as Chris Berry's translation and editing efforts in introducing Chinese cinema and Chinese writings on cinema to film studies during the 1990s. How were these efforts received and whether the model that these scholars set out was used in supporting the establishment of the field of Chinese cinema studies afterward? The final section of this chapter will seeks answers to these questions.

For now, let us look at three scholarly attempts on researching Chinese cinema between the 1960s and the 1970s and question, how do they further demonstrate a marginalised position in contrast to the discourses in the field of films studies during this period?

3.1 Three Scholarly Attempts on Chinese Cinema between the 1960s and 1970s

According to Michel Peillon's (1998) summary of Bourdieu's field theory that:

> Bourdieu conceptualises most aspects of social life in terms of *fields,* which constitute sites of struggles over a central *stake.* The resources which are used in these struggles, and whose appropriation is at stake, are defined as types of *capital*: economic, cultural, social and symbolic. Each field involves a set of players, of agents who are engaged in practices and strategies on the basis of an *habitus.* (Peillon, 1998: 213)

Within this theoretical framework, therefore, while the main discourses and their strategies in terms of knowledge production were the central stake within the field of film studies (see Chapter Two), topics that did not fit into their agendas, such as Chinese cinema, were inevitably marginalised. The 'discourse of film as a discipline' was a struggle and position battle within the more established discipline of (English) literature studies, the 'discourse of film as an art' was a struggle to acquire the art status of film among all other traditional western art forms, and the 'discourse of film as signification' was related to the wider politics in society and the political transformation throughout the 1960s and the 1970s in Europe, the UK and US. The topic of Chinese cinema, or the discussion of a Chinese film, did not provide relevant material to support these debates so, in short, Chinese cinema did not gain much attention from scholars whose efforts were invested in the above interests as priorities.

However, this does not mean that the topic of Chinese cinema was completely absent from academic scholarship between the 1950s to the 1970s. This thesis has discovered three examples of its inclusion. However, even though they all intended to open up new research potentials in film studies, through the case study of Chinese cinema, they received very little attention in comparison to the lively debates around the three main discourses in film studies at the time.

The first example, although it received very little attention from other scholars, is Gerald Noxon's article 'Pictorial Origins of Cinema Narrative: An Anticipation of Some Pictorial Narrative Techniques of Cinema in the Chinese Scroll Paintings of the Northern Sung Empire (A.D. 960 to 1126), with Particular Reference to the Scroll "The Ch'ing Ming Festival of the River" by Chang Tse-Twan"' (1963), published in *The Journal of the Society of Cinematologists*. Although the article received very little attention from other scholars, it can be considered as an alternative intervention into the debates around the 'discourse of film as art'. The following paragraphs will explain this further.

As one of the founding members of the Society of Cinematologists, Noxon's interest in cinema appeared to be broader than that of his peer, Robert Gessner. As discussed in the previous chapter, while Gessner was active in publishing articles with a specific interest in creating a language for the studies of film (hence the 'discourse of film as a discipline') as a departure from literary studies, Noxon's writings on cinema were more explorative and not necessarily in a definitive language. The piece that Noxon wrote on Chinese art and film is a great example for comparison with Gessner's writings. Not only does Noxon's article differ from those of his peers from the Society of Cinematologists, his approach in terms of engaging with the question of film as art, also differed from that of other early film theorists who tended to theorise the characteristics of film (see the discussions of Arheim, Bazin, Perkin, Carroll and debates around auteur theory in Chapter Two).

Noxon was the first scholar who attempted to compare the traditional Chinese aesthetic in scroll paintings to the modern medium of film. While other scholars in his generation were more interested in defining film as modern art, Noxon argued that the origin of moving images is in fact ancient. He suggested that his 'cinematologist' peers look further when searching for a method of studying cinema, writing:

> It is with these scrolls that we, as cinematologists may properly be concerned. Why? Because we can learn from them, not only that we are working in a very ancient and fruitful tradition, but, of immediate importance to us, that certain aspects of pictorial narrative and methods of presentation in the scrolls not only help to explain some very recent tendencies in modern cinema, but may well continue to point the way to the discovery and exploration of entirely new techniques of pictorial narrative in cinema, charged with potential for enrichment of the medium. (Noxon, 1963: 31)

Noxon continues to demonstrate his argument by using one single scroll painting example from ancient China, entitled *The Ch'ing ming Festival of the River* (1085-1145) by Chang Tse-twan (Zhang Zeduan).[18] He argues that although this important painting had been studied by art historians, it had never been examined 'in the light of its extraordinary originality and significance as an example of pictorial narrative, let alone its demonstration of what might be described as the "documentary" principle in the context of cinema theory' (32). Noxon is correct in this regard. As discussed in the previous chapter, the *Journal of the Society of Cinematologists* was a main battle ground for Gessner and his followers to establish a language to study cinema properly, that is differently from those in the field of literary studies. Not surprisingly, although Noxon's article offered a new perspective on the debates which could have been further explored, it was not acknowledged or addressed by any of his peers in the Society. Disappointingly, neither has Noxon's article been cited by any other scholars since its publication, regardless of whether they worked in the field of film studies, Chinese studies or the new field of Chinese cinema studies to be formed in the following decades.[19] In Noxon's view, the studies of cinema as art continued to be 'devoted

[18] Zhang Zeduan, 張擇端 (1085-1145)

[19] This argument is confirmed through research conducted on Google Scholar regarding the citations of Noxon's article. This article was only cited once for a PhD thesis submitted to University of York in 2014, titled 'Experiment: A Manifesto of Young England, 1928-1931' by K.L. Donaldson. See: https://scholar.google.co.uk/scholar?cites=7692390433346982456&as_sdt=2005&sciodt=0,5&hl=en

simply to widening the horizontal field of the camera while preserving, or sometimes simply chopping off the vertical dimension, and preserving once more the fixed aspect ratio of the picture' (42). In Noxon's view, this is a traditional western way of studying pictorial narrative which is fixed within the 'Renaissance frame' and he encourages scholars to look for new inspiration from ancient Chinese art and philosophy when it comes to the study of film (42).

Certainly, Noxon's argument at that time was too far ahead of all the theoretical politics involved in fighting for the academic status of film studies. In contrast to the debates in the discourses of 'film as a discipline' and 'film as art', his article took on a more explorative approach, a contribution to the discussion of Chinese art and cinematic movement which could have opened up many new doors of questioning, in particular in the thinking around the ontology of art.

The second example that explored the topic Chinese cinema from an alternative perspective during this period was Jay Leyda's monograph, *Dianying: An Account of Films and the Film Audience in China*, published in 1972 (currently out of print). This book published by MIT Press, was the first full-length scholarship in English dedicated to the topic of Chinese cinema. Once again, like Noxon, Leyda provided new perspectives to the debates around film as art, or the artistic essence of film art more generally, through the case of Chinese cinema. However, although Leyda's book generated some attention across different disciplines, his efforts, like Noxon's, were not taken further by scholars as part of the major debates throughout the professionalisation of film studies as a field.

By embracing a wide range of interests across cinema, Leyda – like Noxon – was a scholar who did not want to follow the orthodox frameworks in studying film, certainly not

as any of the three major discourses discussed in the previous chapter. In *Dianyin,*[20]Among other things, Leyda introduced the existence of Chinese films that were not widely known in the western society at that time. Through his experience in working with the Chinese film industry between 1959 and 1964, Leyda was exposed not only to Chinese films but also to Chinese writings in theory and criticism that were hardly available in English. Leyda's book covers a wide range of aspects, in terms of Chinese cinema. The content includes: the development, rise and fall of important Chinese film studios; the artistic influences that Chinese filmmakers learnt from foreign filmmakers; an introduction to important and representative films, directors, actors and actresses in China; and also a more philosophical inquiry into the concept of *dianying* (electric shadows) and its relation to the essence of film ontology. Leyda's book is an overall introduction to Chinese cinema which immediately stood out from other approaches in film studies at that time, all of which were narrowed down to a specific discourse as a process of theoretical position taking (see Chapter Two).

Leyda's book contributed a solid foundation justifying why Chinese cinema needed to be taken more seriously in English-language academia and what audiences could expect from it. He writes:

> Seeing a steady quantity of Chinese films, I found myself imagining, too easily, that if there had been films in the Middle Ages, this is what they would have looked like. Here are the conformity, the self-satisfied and defensive insularity, the almost scientific reduction of personal interpretation to its minimum, the rigid stratification of social groups…, the fixed place for each individual, and the molding of people to types that we find in medieval arts, with rare exceptions. There are the same rare exceptions in Chinese cinema, I'm glad to see, for its only from such brave exceptions, recognizing the values of humanity and art, that we can expect any progress to grow – or a socialist cinema to tear itself away from feudalism. These exceptions make me hopeful for China's future and

[20] *Dianying* refers to 'electric shadows' in Chinese, which is the phrase in Chinese used to represent the English word 'film'. As such, a cinema is literally called an 'electric shadows house' in Chinese.

> film future; without this hope there would be little point in this book. (Leyda, 1972: 301)

The immediate reactions of academics to Leyda's book have been recorded in several pieces. Ernest Callenbach wrote, in a review in *Film Quarterly* in 1974, that Leyda's book 'provides a historical foundation upon which studies of contemporary Chinese film work can rest' (Callenbach, 1974: 51). A year later, Humphrey W. Leynse wrote, in a review published in *Cinema Journal* (the former *Journal of the Society of Cinematologists* which was renamed in 1966):

> Dianying is a pioneering work. It is the first study in the English language on a subject that is virtually unknown outside of China. Yet Leyda does not pretend for a moment that it is a definitive work. "A wealth of evidence awaits examination, and this book will have achieved one of its purposes, if the existence of this wealth is recognized." (Leynse, 1975: 75)

As well as these two responses, Leyda's book attracted at least three other reviews in different journals. Some scholars criticised the inconsistency in his research and the lack of analysis (Mackerras, 1973-1974; Whyte, 1975), but the fact that both important journals on film studies at that time – *Film Quarterly* and *Cinema Journal* – published reviews on the first English scholarly book on Chinese cinema, indicated that there was an opportunity for the integration of Chinese cinema into film studies. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, the state of film studies during the 1970s, when this book was published, was actively involved in the 'discourse of film as signification'. While such discourse was closely connected with a larger political and social movement, the topic of Chinese cinema once again was not considered as a relevant case for supporting the discourse and its specific interests. The final example to be discussed in the following paragraph further justifies this argument.

The third example of engagement with the topic of Chinese cinema is Rosalind Delma and Mark Nash's 'Breaking with Old Ideas: Recent Chinese Films', an article published in *Screen* in 1976. Following a controversial quotation of Mao Zedong at the beginning of their article, Delma and Nash go on to provide brief accounts about the film industry, and how films were made, in China during the Cultural Revolution. This can be seen as a continuation of the research in Leyda's 1972 book. While Leyda's book was criticised as being too descriptive and lacking analysis, Delma and Nash presented their analysis of how the ideological struggle during the Cultural Revolution in China was a constant theme that appeared in a limited number of films. They write:

> During the Cultural Revolution the economic and the subjective were inter-linked in the priority given to the work of transforming the superstructure: 'To transform the cultural and educational positions according to the image of the proletariat is more difficult and complicated than to seize political power and change the system of ownership' is a typical statement of this outlook. (Delma & Nash, 1976: 72)

As a result of this theme identified by Delma and Nash, 'the demonstration and exemplification of two-line struggle, [which] in its turn allocates a particular relationship of the audience to the film material' (72). In other words, in Delma and Nash opinion, by constantly engaging with the film, the audience is quite likely to experience two types of subjectivities. These two subjectivities are in constant struggle, namely the bourgeois individualism vs. class consciousness. Delmar and Nash continue to argue that all seven of the films that were available during the Cultural Revolution period share the same aesthetics. Although both Delmar and Nash share similar Marxist influences to other active film scholars who published in *Screen* to promote the 'discourse of film as signification', their approach is somewhat different.

Through their analysis of a Chinese revolutionary film *Breaking with Old Ideas* (Li, 1975), Delmar and Nash's argument about China's seven model films emphasises the importance of an active audience. In their observation, all seven films were deliberately designed to engage with the audience in an interactive way as a form of communication synchronising the political struggle portrayed in the film with the political struggle that the Chinese people experienced during the revolution period. As such, if we follow Delma and Nash's analysis, film is no longer pure signification in the way that the 'discourse of film as signification' promotes. In using socialist films from China, Delmar and Nash's statement made via this article could well be: film as a medium needs to be studied as an interactive form of communication rather than as a simply linguistic container. This subtle statement can be considered as a counter-argument to the main debates and theorisations in *Screen.* They finally conclude:

> In this article we have tried to indicate the importance of studying the interconnection of politics and aesthetics in the cinema of socialist countries. Only by an understanding of the specificity of the politico-cultural conjuncture within which the films are produced can their meanings be investigated. (Delmar & Nash, 1976: 83)

The dilemma signalled by Delma and Nash's article is that although socialist model films from China during the Cultural Revolution share the broader philosophical foundation as 'Screen theory' (Marxism), these films are contradictory examples that can easily challenge the 'discourse of film as signification' as promoted by 'Screen theory' at that time This is the very reason that Chinese films were not used as case studies to support the professionalisation of film studies. The struggle faced and practised in the field of film studies in the name of Marxism – the 'discourse of film as signification' that was mainly supported by French linguistic theories – had a very different agenda in terms of political struggle to the political struggles which took place in China during the same period.

In order to make better sense of this dilemma, the question we need to ask is, what films did scholars use for their critiques on the ideology of patriarchy and capitalism in *Screen* during the 1970s, and how are they different from the revolutionary Chinese films introduced by Delmar and Nash? Matthew Croombs (2011) states in his essay, 'in the 1970s, film's realism was the key to its powers of seduction and interpellation'(Croombs, 2011: 4). Jackie Byards also observes, that 'the politically oriented *Screen* theorists and critics found films interesting and valuable only if they could be read as ruptured and, thus, as subversive or if they could be shown to be instruments of capitalism' (Byards, 2003: 11). Combining both Croombs' and Byards' comments, therefore, in order to legitimise 'Screen theory' as the 'discourse of film as signification', the films that theorists chose to support their arguments were those that had the potential to be interpreted as forms of 'realism' and 'powers of seduction.'

For example, Laura Mulvey's famous essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1975) selected a series of films to be examined to support her arguments. The films *Only Angels Have Wings* (1939) and *To Have and Have Not* (1949) by Howard Hawks were examined by Mulvey through a certain psychoanalytic prism. She states that the female characters in these films are positioned as the visual pleasure of the 'combined gaze of spectator and all the male protagonists'. As the objects to be looked at, they are 'isolated, glamorous, on display, sexualised' (Mulvey, 1975: 11). Mulvey also examined Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958)*, Marnie* (1964) and *Rear Window* (1954) to support her argument on 'male gaze' above:

> Hitchcock's skilful use of identification processes and liberal use of subjective camera from the point of view of the male protagonist draw the spectators deeply into his position, making them share his uneasy gaze. The audience is absorbed into a voyeuristic situation within the screen scene and diegesis which parodies his own in the cinema. (Mulvey, 1975: 13)

Theoretical disagreements and challenges to Mulvey's essay have been made by different scholars (Bergstrom, 1979; Rich, 1990; Clover, 1992; Hooks, 2003; Modleski, 1984, 1988; Buckland, 2012) and will not be repeated here. Most of the critiques about ideology in cinema turned their attention to Hollywood cinema. If, as asserted in Mulvey's essay, 'fetishism', 'voyeurism', 'male gaze' and 'glamour' provide the key evidences needed to support the 'discourse of film as signification' and its critiques of capitalism and patriarchy, then Hollywood cinema offered an obvious choice as case study. However, Chinese films from the same period of time send out completely different aesthetic and ideological messages. As Lingzhen Wang summarises:

> Whether in content or artistic form, nationalism was an important component of socialist feminist cinematic practice. Representing proletarian women as social agents and national models for the first time in Chinese history, socialist feminist cultural production was integrally tied to advanced proletarianization, which was mass oriented and designed to serve the urban working classes and large rural populations. These central features of Chinese socialist feminist culture directly challenge prevailing assumptions that feminist cinema is a marginalized practice that necessarily resists, disrupts, and/or subverts mainstream ideology. (Wang, 2015: 603-604)

Therefore, Mulvey's argument of how women being positioned as object through a 'male gaze' would not apply to revolutionary Chinese films, where all women are deliberately desexualised and represented as equal members of the social fabric to their male comrades.

Yingjin Zhang (2004) described cinema in China between 1949 and 1978 as the 'socialist cinema of the People's Republic of China (PRC)', where it carries specific production, distribution and aesthetic characteristics, subject to the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) political regime. Since 1949, when the CCP founded the PRC after defeating the Nationalist Party, 'cinema was under complete control of the Party, which acted autocratically in the name of the *nation-state,* and the fate of filmmakers and, to a lesser

degree, film administrators was subject to the unpredictable whims of the CCP leadership' (Zhang, 2004: 189). Some pre-1970s 'model-play' film aesthetics continued to influence the forms of films produced in the 1970s. The 'model play' concept was introduced by Jiang Qing, wife of then the CCP leader Mao Zedong, in 1968 to use film production and distribution as a propaganda instrument for the purposes of political education.[21] As Zhang summarises, the model plays must follow 'three prominences': to 'give prominence to positive characters among all the characters, to heroes among the positive characters, to the principal hero among the heroes' (Zhang, 2004: 219). Apart from these specific directions, the narrative design of the 'socialist cinema of the PRC' also centred on the revolutionary spirit, subject to the phasing of communism and socialism. As a result, films from the 'soloist cinema of the PRC' would have not been the ideal 'data' for the analysts to examine, because these examples contradict the theoretical foundation on which the 'discourse of film as signification' rests.

The following passages, published in *Screen*, defending *Screen's* theoretical position in relation to Chinese cinema, can be seen as a response to Delmar and Nash's alternative intervention:

> This does not mean that these films should be protected from all criticism as if a new transformation were not both necessary and desirable, but a critique with a view to transforming Chinese cinematic practice can only be made from the standpoint of the ideological struggle which has produced those film as they exist today, and not from the abstract and autonomous standpoint of the historian of (bourgeois) avant gardisms. While the bourgeois avant gardes are in fact engaged in a struggle against the dominant bourgeois cinema, it is certainly not being waged from the historical position of Marxist-Leninist films – also established in contradiction with the dominant bourgeois cinema. (Unnamed author, 1973: 202)

[21] Mao Zedong, 毛澤東(1893 – 1976); Jiang Qing, 江青(1914 – 1991)

Chinese film from this period belonged to a different political struggle, one that was outside the internal interests of the field of film studies.

To summarise, this section has introduced three examples that engaged with the topic of Chinese cinema during the 1960s and the 1970s, evidently with efforts to intervene into the main discourses that defined the field of film studies at that time with an alternative view. However, as the evaluation shows, none of these alternative researches on Chinese films were recognised by other film scholars, even though their content evidently opened new perspectives for debate regarding film as a discipline, art or signification more generally. The next sections will present and evaluate findings gathered from *The British Newspaper Archive* from the 1950s to the 1970s, to demonstrate how the topic of Chinese cinema was much more commonly discussed by the public than within film studies in academia.

3.2 Public Discussions of Chinese Cinema in the UK Newspapers between the 1950s and 1970s

The previous section of this chapter continued to explain why Chinese cinema was not included in the major debates that took place in film studies, by closely looking at three cases offering an alternative perspective. In contrast to the marginalisation of Chinese cinema as a research topic in the field of film studies during the 1950s to the 1970s, the findings in this section demonstrate that discussions of Chinese films were in fact commonly present in the public forum. All the findings in this section have been gathered from *The British Newspaper Archive.*

In the period from the 1950s to the 1970s, searching on *The British Newspaper Archive* using the keywords ‘Chinese cinema’ and ‘Chinese film’, a total number of 711 items appear in the result. The list in the Figure 3 below has been filtered and organised

chronologically, with detailed information of each of article's title, the name of the newspaper and the date of publication. Repeated content has been included under its earliest appearance in the original newspaper source, while repetitions in other newspaper sources are not included.

Figure 3: A List of Articles on Chinese Cinema Gathered from Newspapers in the UK, 1950s – 1970s[22]

Article Title	Author	Name of Newspaper	Date of Publication
'Miss Chan has a word for "Oomph" its 皇后'	Donald Zec	Daily Mirror (p.1)	01 March 1951
'Chinese Film Daughters of China'	Unknown	Fife Free Press, & Kirkcaldy Guardian (p.2)	01 March 1952
'Britain-China Friendship Association Announces Programme of Chinese Films'[23]	Unknown	Liverpool Echo (p.1)	21 May 1952
'Chinese Films for Children'	Unknown	Coventry Evening Telegraph (p.2)	15 September, 1952
'China's Two Faces'	Freda Bruce Lockhart	The Tatler (p.32)	10 December 1952

[22] This list of information will not appear again in the final bibliography to avoid repetition

[23] Similar listings appear in Liverpool Echo throughout the 1950s to promote the association's film screening activity.

‘China Led U.S. Films Import’	Unknown	Nottingham Journal (p.3)	12 February 1953
‘Posters, films are employed for propaganda’	Unknown	Belfast Telegraph (p.9)	27 February 1953
‘Britain-China Friendship ASSOC. Education Committee presents “White Haired Girl”’	Unknown	Liverpool Echo (p.1)	18 May 1953
‘The First Chinese Film to be Shown to the Public’	Unknown	Liverpool Echo (p.4)	27 July 1953
‘Britain China Friendship Assn (Education Committee) Presents Two Chinese Films’	Unknown	Liverpool Echo (p.1)	26 February 1954
‘Caught in Tornado’	Unknown	Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail (p.8)	20 December 1954
‘Hon Plickwick’	Unknown	Liverpool Echo (p.16)	13 June 1955
‘Mr Pickwick in China’	Unknown	Belfast Telegraph (p.7)	13 June 1955

‘Bob’s proving to be expensive’	Unknown	Lancashire Evening post (p.8)	29 July 1955
‘Chinese Make English-Dialogue Film’	Unknown	Aberdeen Evening Express (p.4)	12 May 1956
‘Chinese Film with English Dialogue’	Unknown	Coventry Evening Telegraph (p.18)	16 May 1956
‘“House Full,” says Film Society’	Unknown	Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail (p.12)	04 November 1958
‘The Chinese Borrow Old Hobby for New Films’	Unknown	Birmingham Daily Post (p.7)	14 September 1959
‘Film Star has Textile Mill’	Unknown	Coventry Evening Telegraph (p.23)	31 October 1959
‘“3-D” Films Come to China’	Unknown	Birmingham Daily Post (p.6)	30 January 1961
‘Chinese Crowd Club Rooms to Watch TV	Unknown	Birmingham Daily Post (p.9)	05 July 1961
‘Hong Kong Film Exports Up’	Unknown	Coventry Evening Telegraph (p.12)	21 July 1961
‘Formasa Ban on Japanese Films’	Unknown	Coventry Evening Telegraph (p.12)	20 September 1961

‘Conquest of Everest Film (China’s Version) is “censured”’	Unknown	Newcastle Journal (p.5)	Thursday 30 August 1962
‘China’s Film Back in B.A. Programme’	Unknown	Coventry Evening Telegraph (p.6)	05 September 1962
‘Everest Film a Chinese Puzzle’	Unknown	Newcastle Journal (p.6)	06 September 1962
‘Chinese Everest Claim Unresolved - Film Print Reversed’	A Science Correspondence	Birmingham Daily Post (p.5)	06 September 1962
‘New Ulster Rose’	Unknown	Belfast Telegraph (p.1)	20 May 1963
‘She Will Arrange Dickson’s Roses’	Unknown	Belfast Telegraph (p.3)	20 May 1963
‘Chinese only’	Unknown	The People (p.8)	13 September 1964
‘Thank you comrade’	Unknown	Newcastle Journal (p.1)	04 February 1967
‘The silent men find new target for the thoughts of Mao’	Eric Chou	Coventry Evening Telegraph (p.8)	07 May 1968
‘Hamlet Banned’	Unknown	Liverpool Echo (p.22)	13 November 1968
‘It’s all Chinese to me’	Donald Walker	Daily Mirror (p.18)	04 January 1971

'Now a season of Chinese films'[24]	Unknown	Kensington Post (p.24)	24 September 1971
'Chairman Mao makes Classics see red'	Unknown	Kensington Post (p.20)	01 October 1971
'Festival of Chinese Films'	Unknown	Birmingham Daily Post (p.22)	02 October 1971
launch of Chinese film club in Newcastle	Unknown	Newcastle Evening Chronicle (p.8)	11 July 1972
'Film star on £8 a month'	James Pringle	Liverpool Echo (p.6)	26 October 1972
'Chinese Will See Julie'	Unknown	Thanet Times (p.6)	25 April 1973
'Chinese Film Society'[25]	Unknown	Coventry Evening Telegraph (p.2)	04 May 1973
'Stars of the East'	Unknown	Daily Mirror (p.15)	09 May 1973
'Queen of Kung Fu'	Unknown	Daily Mirror (p.17)	16 January 1975
'The Chinese Connection'	Unknown	Daily Mirror (p.11)	06 August 1976
'Saturday Night and Sunday Morning'	Unknown	Liverpool Echo (p.5)	18 September 1976

[24] Similar listings to advertise this season or the Festival of Chinese Films continue to appear in the same newspapers throughout 1972 as well as in other regional newspapers.

[25] Similar listings to advertise screening for the Chinese Film Society, which took place every Sunday at Theatre One in Coventry, continue to appear in *Coventry Evening Telegraph* throughout the rest of the 1970s.

'Aberdeen screens Chinese films to community'	John Dunbar	Aberdeen Press and Journal (p.27)	13 January 1977
'Eastern Western…'	Bill Lothian	Newcastle Evening Chronicle (p.17)	26 January 1979
'Hong Kong Festival'	Unknown	The Stage (p.10)	22 February 1979
'China Since Mao'	Unknown	Illustrated London News (p.64)	01 September 1979
'All night Kung Fu Films'	Unknown	Liverpool Echo (p.2)	14 September 1979
'Euro-Chinese Cinema Club'[26]	Unknown	Liverpool Echo (p.2)	17 October 1979

This archival research has been conducted out of an interest in finding out whether the topic of Chinse cinema was discussed by the public outside of the field of films studies and, more generally, if so, how was the topic discussed? Such a curiosity was encouraged by the arguments made in both Chapter Two and the first section of this chapter, regarding how the topic of Chinese cinema was largely marginalised in the field of film studies during the 1950s to the 1970s. The rich findings presented in the previous section, therefore, demonstrate a sharp contrast between the knowledge and debates generated in the public space and those within the field of film studies.

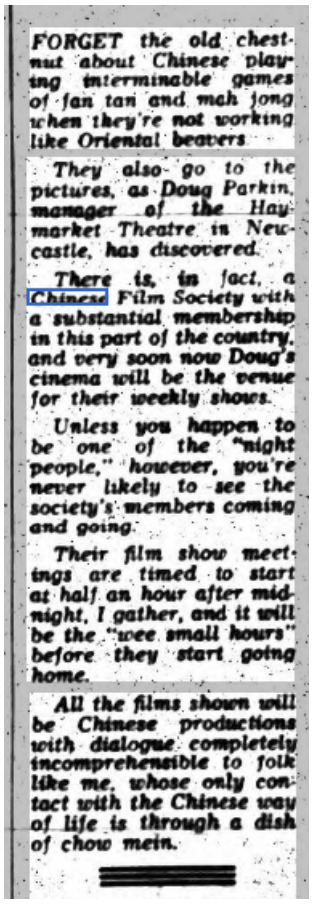
Several observations can be made as a result of the findings gathered from *The British Newspaper Archive*. Evidence suggests that there had been regular public screenings

[26] Similar listings about this weekly cinema club repeatedly appear in *Liverpool Echo* every week for the rest of 1970s.

of Chinese films organised throughout the 1950s to the 1970s in the UK. These screenings were put on by different organisations, including the Britain China Friendship Association as well as local film clubs in London, Birmingham, Coventry, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Belfast and possibility more cities. These screenings were not only organised for a local UK audience, but sometimes for Chinese immigrants living in the UK at that time. This report written by Eric Cho in the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* reflects on these public screening activities in the UK:

> …But what attracted him were the Chinese films shown by the mobile film projection unit which called at Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham fairly regularly. These pictures, Leung recalled, were either made in Peking, Shanghai or Canton, portraying "the heroic deeds of the Chinese people in the course of building a socialist motherland." He told me that he "was so touched by these pictures that his tears fell like rain." Later he came to work in a town nearer London, where he now is. As soon as he moved, the legation informed him that he should now come to London to see such films. According to Leung, there are three Chinese "movie clubs" in Soho, and he gave me their addresses. Sometimes the admission is free and sometimes there is a charge of 2s. 6d. After every show the legation officials usually give a short report on the "progress in the People's motherland" and hand out pamphlets to illustrate and reinforce their point. (*Coventry Evening Telegraph,* 07 March 1968: [p.8])

Figure 4. Newspaper section from Newcastle Evening Chronicle – Tuesday 11 July, 1972 (p.8)



FORGET the old chestnut about Chinese playing interminable games of fan tan and mah jong when they're not working like Oriental beavers.

They also go to the pictures, as Doug Parkin, manager of the Haymarket Theatre in Newcastle, has discovered.

There is, in fact, a Chinese Film Society with a substantial membership in this part of the country, and very soon now Doug's cinema will be the venue for their weekly shows.

Unless you happen to be one of the "night people," however, you're never likely to see the society's members coming and going.

Their film show meetings are timed to start at half an hour after midnight, I gather, and it will be the "wee small hours" before they start going home.

All the films shown will be Chinese productions with dialogue completely incomprehensible to folk like me, whose only contact with the Chinese way of life is through a dish of chow mein.

All this evidence of local Chinese film clubs in the UK makes a strong counter-argument disapproving a statement that many Chinese film scholars were to make in the following decades. Many scholars who research Chinese cinema in English nowadays claim that the interest in researching Chinese cinema as an academic topic only began to rise during the 1990s, when several Chinese films won international awards at European film festivals. However, as the evidence above suggests, the intellectual interest in exploring the topic of Chinese cinema was started with enthusiasm by the public long before it became an academic field of research. Moreover, the information presented in these newspaper articles from the 1950s to the 1970s are no less educational than the 'knowledge' produced by Chinese cinema studies scholars and their discourses. The following paragraphs explain this argument.

As the evidence above suggests, the topics included in the public discussions of Chinese films are diverse. There were reports regarding the development of the latest Chinese film industry, even during the Cultural Revolution period. Other topics include general aesthetic evaluation, stories on film celebrities, the relationship between Chinese films and society (in China, the UK and elsewhere) and the process of filmmaking, as well as the relationship between Chinese films and China's latest political development. The following example from the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* in 1952 supports this observation:

Figure 5. Chinese Films for Children – Coventry Evening Telegraph - Monday 15 September 1952 (p.2)

Chinese Films for Children

State cinemas in China have begun showing special programmes for children. Shows start with the children singing a revolutionary song.

A Communist newspaper, describing a recent show, said films included a Russian coloured cartoon portraying the struggle of a young peasant against a cruel landlord.

"Through this film," it commented, "the children learn to love the labouring class and to hate the landlords."

A more analytical example that explores the techniques of Chinese filmmaking can be seen in an article titled 'The Chinese Borrow Old Hobby for New Films', republished in the *Birmingham Daily Post* in 1959:

> Chinese film makers are borrowing centuries-old traditional arts and skills to help produce a new kind of animated film, Reuter reports. The result is a colour film similar to a cartoon but with figures cut out of paper by scissors taking the place of drawings. The first "scissor-cut" film ever made in China has already been screened and a second is in production, They are the outcome of several years' search by Shanghai film makers for a simpler way of making animated

> films than the cartoon method. The new process combines the Chinese art of cutting out delicate paper design figures and used for decorating windows and lanterns and methods used in shadow plays in which puppets are silhouette are projected on to a screen. (*Birmingham Daily Post,* Monday 14 September 1959*,* [p.7])

Although not written as a piece of scholarship, this article by an unknown author can easily be compared to the article written by Gerald Noxon on Chinese art and cinematic movement in 1963, as discussed in section one of this chapter, as well as Jay Leyda's book on Chinese cinema published a decade later in 1972. In short, imagine a reader who has no knowledge whatsoever about Chinese cinema reading this article which is informative enough for them to obtain basic knowledge about how a Chinese animation film is made.

Furthermore, throughout all these news articles, the term 'Chinese film' or 'Chinese cinema' was used to describe films not only from mainland China, but also from the then British colony of Hong Kong and from the region of Taiwan, as well as films made by Chinese diaspora outside China, such as in Singapore. This is, once again, in contrast to the scholarship produced for Chinese cinema studies in the following decades, in which most discourses are developed with the purpose of separating these regions as a form of theorisation (see Chapter Four later).

Another interesting characteristic of this body of evidence is that the newspapers did not create a separate section just for the coverages of Chinese films but placed the articles alongside other articles on films or on culture more generally. This is in direct contrast to the way in which the topic of Chinese cinema was marginalised in film studies, in academia; the differentiation did not seem to mean as much as to the public as it did to film scholars.

Alongside celebrity gossip, these news articles also captured the international movements of Chinese film, filmmakers and film stars. Sometimes, coverage capturing the

process of the making of a Chinese film was also found, as exemplified in an article titled 'Caught in Tornado' (1954):

> A Chinese film writer, who wanted to gain first-hand experience about the lives of fishermen along the China Coast for a film script, paid dearly for his eagerness, reports Reuter from Hong Kong. The writer, Hen Pei-Ping, and 15 members of the crew of a fishing boat spent 36 perilous hours when they were caught in a 70 m.p.h. hurricane in the Pearl River delta, and nine days drifting helplessly in the South China Sea, according to the New China News Agency. They were picked up by Communist troops when they abandoned the sinking vessel off Kanan Island and rowed to the shore on rafts – Reuters (*Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, Monday 20 December 1954: [p.8]).

Through an examination of the findings from *The British Newspaper Archive,* it is evident that the topic of Chinese cinema was present in public discussions during the period from the 1950s to the 1970s. This thesis would claim that these discussions were frequent, given the fact that in almost every year throughout the period, reports on Chinese films could be found in local UK newspapers. Therefore, when compared to the marginalisation of the topic within film studies, the materials available to the public were more informative in terms of introducing a broad picture of the development of Chinese films to the UK audience.

3.3 Attempts by Scholars in China in the US and the UK between the 1980s and 1990s

Despite the existing public discussions about Chinese cinema found in UK newspapers from the 1950s to the 1970s, facing the situation as a marginalised topic in film studies from the 1980s onwards, scholars from China, the US and the UK invested effort in the hope of transforming the state of the field. This section will present findings that capture these activities, detail what scholars tried to achieve and examine the reception of these attempts.

We can certainly understand these scholarly activities within the broader theoretical framework, as informed by Bourdieu, as attempting to be part of the struggles within the field of film studies for position-taking and gaining scholarly recognition. In other words, during the 1980s and 1990s, evidence demonstrates that scholars were actively fighting for the marginalised research topic of Chinese cinema to be taken more seriously by the more established film studies scholars, by creating new debates that could connect with the three main discourses shaping the field of film studies at the time. In the context of China, 'film studies' was in fact born during this period.

The 1980s was a very special decade in China, for both its politics and its economy. The end of the 10-year Cultural Revolution political crisis led to an immediate political transformation. The most significant change was President Deng Xiaoping's 'opening up policy' initiated in 1978. As William A. Callahan summarises, 'while Deng's goal was economic the "opening up policy" has gone far beyond liberalizing markets to create a variety of cultural opportunities' (Callahan, 2016: 290). The opening up also meant that, for the first time, after long decades of internal political crisis, Chinese intellectuals had access to western scholarship, books and ideas. Chinese intellectuals in the 1980s were desperate to participate in intellectual discussions and debates about all topics concerning the humanities, and film was amongst them.

For instance, before the 1980s, debates regarding what 'film studies' could mean to Chinese intellectuals did not exist. Most topics regarding film were based on realist practices answering questions such as how a film that further supports the government's ideological communication could be made. Owing to the changes in China's political and economic environment during the 1980s, numbers of intellectuals began to ask whether China could also have their own 'film studies' or 'film theories' like the West. These debates are captured in the following evidence.

A Chinese film journal titled *Film Art Translation Series*[27] was founded in 1952, however, during the Cultural Revolution it stopped all publication and did not begin to publish again until 1978 when the revolution ended. The 1980s witnessed some important changes in this journal. While during the 1950s, this journal was active in translating film theories from the Soviet filmmakers, to support revolutionary filmmaking and criticism in China, during the 1980s, the journal included translation of film theories from western countries including France, the US and the UK. The journal even included the latest updates from film industries in other countries and became one of the most important platforms for Chinese intellectuals to learn about film studies outside of China. The journal, and the translation work it did, inspired a new generation of Chinese film scholars to absorb, learn and think about what film studies could mean to Chinese intellectuals.

In 1981, the journal was renamed *World Cinema* and continued to support new voices from Chinese intellectuals and their thoughts on film studies in the Chinese context. It can be argued that the debates regarding film studies in China started in around 1981, as represented by an article titled 'Regarding Questions of Film Theory'[28] written by Shao Mujun.[29] Shao (1982) points out that compared to other forms of art, the history of film is still rather short. Film theory, as a summary of film practice, has an even shorter history. He questions what film theory can even exist as yet, as there are still so many questions to be asked and scholars should not jump too quickly to conclusions and definitions (Shao, 1982). If we look back into the development of film studies, Shao's question is similar to those raised by Bordwell, Carroll and Rodowick, in their critiques of film studies. Therefore, as a scholar based in China, Shao's interest in his scholarly inquiry was far more than just the

[27] 《電影藝術譯叢》(1952 –)

28《電影藝術譯叢》– Article titles in Chinese will be translated by the author on some occasions (with quotation marks) in this thesis, for readers to have a general understanding. The original titles in Chinese will be included in the final bibliography.

29 Shao Mujun, 邵牧君 (1928 -)

topic of Chinese cinema; he was genuinely interested in the broader thinking about what the studies of cinema should be. Similar examples can be found in various other publications. In general, during the 1980s, when Chinese scholars began to talk about what 'film studies' was and what it meant to Chinese intellectuals, their concerns and writings were not far removed from the debates that took place in English-language film studies.

The founding of two journals *Contemporary Cinema*[30] and the *Journal of Beijing Film Academy*[31] in 1984 accommodated more theoretical and philosophical exploration regarding topics such as film studies and film theory in the Chinese context. These two journals also constituted important platforms for Chinese intellectuals to respond to the latest theoretical development in English-language film studies. Although, as demonstrated in the previous chapters, the main discourses which shaped how knowledge was produced in film studies did not include the topic of Chinese cinema studies as part of their debates, the findings in this chapter reveal that Chinese intellectuals were in fact more informed about their western counterparts and were oftentimes enthusiastic to join in the debates with their thoughts and opinions.

For example, in *Contemporary Cinema,* scholars such as Chen Xihe (1984) and Hu Bin (1984) provided their own understandings of André Bazin's film theory on realism, in an attempt to join in the dialogues with western film theory, or what this thesis calls the 'discourse of film as art'. Both scholars expressed that there was larger space to think about what Bazin could offer, in particular for the thinking of Chinese films. There were also efforts by scholars such as Lam Nin Tung (1984), who explored the theoretical possibility between traditional Chinese art and aesthetic in Chinese cinema, represented by his article titled 'An Exploration of Chinese Classic Aesthetics in Chinese Film Theory'. Lam argues,

[30] 《當代電影》(1984 -)
[31] 《北京電影學院學報》(1984 -)

that there are two traditions in Chinese cinema: one is the Soviet-influenced montage tradition and the other is the tradition inherited from Chinese classical art. Lam's argument might sound familiar to us here, as this is what Gerald Noxon attempted to do back in 1963 with his article on Chinese scroll paintings and the ontology of moving images. Lam's article can therefore be seen as a perfect dialogue with Noxon's earlier effort, and be taken further for theoretical discussion. However, as argued earlier in this chapter, Noxon's article did not get much of a reception within film studies, and certainly not among his cinematologist peers, even though Noxon intended to bring in a profound theoretical exploration via the case of Chinese art and films. At that time, during the 1960s, scholars in film studies were too busy fighting for the field's academic and artistic status with specific linguistic strategies. Another similar attempt to both Noxon and Lam is Zhong Dafeng's (1985) article titled 'On Shadowplay', published in the *Journal of Beijing Film Academy.* Zhong argues that what makes the ontology of Chinese cinema different is its profound transition from shadowplay as an ancient folk art to the modern version of electric shadow (which refers to 'film' in Chinese). Zhong therefore encourages scholars to pay more attention to this conceptualisation and suggests that perhaps this can be the main philosophical foundation for Chinese film theory to rest on.

In addition to the scholarship highlighted, active discussions around film studies in China or Chinese film theory emerged throughout the 1980s and 1990s, mainly accommodated by the two academic journals mentioned above. One important observation must be shared here. While this thesis has discovered that at the beginning of film studies being launched in the US through the *Society of Cinematologists,* the 'studies' as such were in fact disconnected from the practice all along, and excluded from writings that touched on the practice of filmmaking or on the industry not as part of the field. As explained in Chapter Two, this was because the beginning of film studies was a struggle with the more established

academic field of literary studies. In other words, many methodologies to study films 'properly' or 'academically' were borrowed from the field of literary studies.

In comparison, an examination of the archive of the two Chinese film journals shows that the beginning of film studies in the Chinese context did not exclude writings on the practice of filmmaking or on the industry. It is evident that both journals covered a wide range of topics regarding not only Chinese films, but also films from around the world. Furthermore, Chinese scholars who were more interested in the theoretical discussion of film were totally aware of the theoretical development in film studies in English and were engaging with the main discourses in film studies from their own perspectives. In short, the theoretical writings by Chinese film scholars could easily to be inserted into dialogue with scholars in France, the US and the UK. In spite of this, all these efforts were ignored throughout the period/phase of professionalisation of film studies in English-language academia.

All these active intellectuals eventually made a noise and gained some attention from scholars who worked outside China and who were interested in the topic of Chinese cinema. What did they do to introduce these thoughts to their peers and were these attempts successful? The next section will answer these questions.

Meanwhile, in English-language academia across the US and the UK, several events took place which also supported the increase of scholarly discussion on Chinese films. They included the launch of the Asian Cinema Studies Society in 1984 and its associated journal *Asian Cinema*, as well as the launch of *East-West Film Journal* in 1986. More specifically, two approaches were conducted as a second attempt to introduce the topic of Chinese cinema into English-language academia. The first was to acknowledge these debates in China and to facilitate the translation of these rising intellectual activities in China into English. The second was to ignore these debates in China, represented by scholars such as Rey Chow who

were trained in literary studies and comparative literature in the US and who aimed to introduce a new theoretical framework to Chinese cinema studies. The latter approach, which the next chapter will continue to argue, was what eventually professionalised the field of Chinese cinema studies. For now, let us look at the first approach, what did scholars do in an attempt to introduce Chinese scholarship on cinema to an audience outside China?

In order to help film scholars outside China to become aware of the lively intellectual activities happening in China during the 1980s, several film scholars from both the US and the UK acted as facilitators, in the hope of initiating a dialogue between the two sides. Two of the most active scholars conducting this task were George S. Semsel and Chris Berry. Their role is evident in their translations into English of important works by Chinese intellectuals on film, published as a series of edited volumes introducing Western readers not only to the state of Chinese cinema but also to the scholarship on cinema from China. These important pioneering volumes include: *Chinese Film: The State of the Art in the People's Republic* (1987), *Chinese Film Theory* (1990), *Perspectives on Chinese Cinema* (1991) and *Film in Contemporary China* (1993).

After Jay Leyda's (1972) full-length scholarship on Chinese cinema, *Chinese Film: The State of the Art in the People's Republic* (1987), edited by George S. Semsel, is the second book-length publication attempting to introduce the topic to English-language academia. The approach it took was unique: not only did it invite Chinese scholars to be included in the writing of capters, it also included transcripts of interviews with Chinese filmmakers. Like Leyda, Semsel had experience of working in China with filmmakers and critics, and he invites his readers to be interested in Chinese cinema via a rather personal note:

> In August 1984, with my family, I began a year in Beijing working under the Ministry of Culture as a foreign expert in the China Film Corporation, the

> government enterprise responsible for all film business in the country, from financing films to distribution and exhibition. The position placed me in the centre of the Chinese film industry and gave me access to many of the people making films. This book is a result of that experience. (Semsel, 1984: xv)

It is through this edited volume, which contains materials on the theory, practice and industry of Chinese cinema, that the editor wanted to introduce how 'the film industry in China thinks and operates'. For Semsel, it was important to include interviews with Chinese filmmakers 'not only to provide information about filmmaking in China, but to provide a glimpse into the personalities directly engaged in it' (xv). The model of Chinese cinema studies (if there was such a profession to be called that) that Semsel wanted to introduce, following in Leyda's footsteps, was immediately different from how film studies was established in English-language academia. The model that Semsel encouraged, through his volume, was to include not only the voices of Chinese filmmakers, but also Chinese film theories and insights into China's film industry and society. His strong opening paragraphs vividly describe the disconnection in terms of knowledge regarding Chinese cinema, or perhaps China more generally, in English-language academia:

> Many foreigners, disappointingly ignorant about China, are surprised to learn that the People's Republic makes almost 150 films a year (the United States made 167 features in 1984), and exhibits them to an audience officially numbered at 27 billion. They are equally surprised to learn that the Chinese have been making films since 1905, within a decade of the Lumière brothers' first films. The Chinese film industry is a well-organised and effective structure which has been increasing production annually since the end of the cultural revolution in 1976. (Semsel, 1984: 1)

If we once again see this type of language as the founding of Chinese cinema studies in English, its scope is very different from how 'film studies', whose language was mainly supported by literary studies and criticism, was founded. Semsel's approach, or the model that he intended to put forward, provided a broader picture of how a certain country's cinema

operates, its network within that industry, as well as the theories and criticism that are raised from it. Certainly, Semsel was interested in theories too. In particular, he supported the theoretical development in film studies in the Chinese context to be introduced to Western academics. This is evidenced in the next book-length scholarship that he edited with his students Xia Hong and Hou Jianping.

Chinese Film Theory (1990) collects a series of essays by Chinese film scholars that were translated from Chinese to English. This was the first scholarly book on Chinese cinema done in this way. The book not only introduces the major debates on the thinking about cinema and filmmaking happening in China at that time, Chen Xihe's essay 'Shadowplay: Chinese Film Aesthetics and Their Philosophical and Cultural Fundamentals' (1990) raises some interesting theoretical issues regarding the relationship between Chinese cinema and the discipline of films studies in the English language. Although his comparative method setting apart the aesthetic traditions in Chinese and Western films could be argued as being too generalised, and perhaps to some degree essentialist, he nevertheless raises an important question on the ontology of film, and how it was understood differently in the Chinese context.

According to Chen, the fundamental theoretical differences need to include, from the Chinese point of view, that 'play is the origin of film'[32], but in the understanding in Western film theory, photographic image and its structure is the key foundational concept (Chen, 1990: 196). Furthermore, there are different understandings in terms of the concept of theory. From the Chinese perspective, the manner of constructing film theory starts 'from its social and political functions, Chinese film aesthetics approaches the material and forms of film, and classifies them into sociological and political categories', whereas Western film

[32] This needs to be distinguished from the overwhelming citations of Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida's concept of 'play' (Barthes, 1979 & Derrida, [1967] 1978). The 'play' here refers to the script.

aesthetics 'first approaches the structure of film, which includes the material of film and the methods of treating it and its forms, and then goes on to the function of film' (Chen, 1990: 198). Chen's writing was developed from an early Chinese film theorist and critic Hou Yao's essay 'The Making of a Shadowplay Script' (1926).[33] To Chen, Hou Yao's theory, developed in the 1920s, was as early as the Soviet montage school and the French avant-garde film theories (the main contributions toward the understanding of film as art at that time), and therefore more attention needs to be paid to its contribution toward the theoretical and philosophical thinking of cinema . In fact, Jay Leyda came to the same conclusion through his research during the 1970s, about the focus on 'play' and 'script', and how Chinese film aesthetics focus more on the drama and story. Ralph C. Croizer, in reviewing Leyda's book, states that he explains how the Chinese director is much more closely bound to film script than in most countries. Again, he suggests that 'traditional respect for the written word' may be an inhibiting factor in developing a Chinese film art (1974: 3-4). This characteristic of Chinese cinema was also described later in Chen Xihe's essay although he strongly believed in the fundamental differences in understanding of the ontology of film between Chinese culture and the West. Chen's essay, and his reading on Hou Yao, show great efforts in trying to establish dialogue with Western academic debates and discussions and how it would change our thinking about the relation between cinema and reality, and what cinema is, if this alternative thinking was registered and articulated.[34]

In Stephanie Hoare's review (1991: 676) of Semsel *et al*.'s 1990 volume, she not only pointed out that the ideas this volume translates from Chinese scholars were 'nothing new to the West', but also questioned some problems of mis-translation and mis-editing. In

[33] Hou Yao, 侯曜 (1903 – 1942)

[34] A recent publication by Victor Fan, *Cinema Approaching Reality: Locating Chinese Film Theory* (2015) re-conducts a dialogue on film aesthetics and the ontology of cinema between Chinese film theorists and Western theorists once more.

an interview in 2013 ascertaining what he hoped to achieve through the three volumes, Semsel said:

> I thought my task was to produce sufficient literature in English on the subject of Chinese films that Chinese scholars would intensify their efforts and China would begin to produce a more significant literature of its own. I thought it somewhat pretentious of me to go into China and tell people there what their films were all about. This is, incidentally, one of the reasons I later moved away from the subject. It would have been easy for me to produce more books and articles. Once I felt I had succeeded in my task and Chinese scholars had engaged [with?] the subject, I should gracefully move away from it. (Semsel, 2013, see full transcript in Appendix)

Hoare's comment 'nothing new to the West' summarises well the failure of such an attempt for intellectual connection. When the volume was translated and published in English in 1990, the dominant ethos in film studies had moved away from the 'discourse of film as art', which was fashionable for debates on cinema from the silent era up to late 1960s. As Rodowick (1995) summarised, the shift in paradigm was achieved by 'introducing Marxist aesthetics to its field of inquiry, and second by welding a theory of ideology to semiotic and formal analyses as a way of understanding cinema's potential for either perpetuating or undermining the formulation and circulation of value systems under late capitalism' (67); or as Nöel Carroll (1996) summarised, for such a paradigm, 'the leading hypothesis among contemporary film theorists is that film is an instrument of ideology, and their research program is a matter of identifying the relevant levels of ideological manipulation that cinema affords' (275). While Chinese film theorists were still catching up with film theories and the debates in relation to the 'discourse of film as art', the popular discourse in film studies in English-language academia had already moved on to the 'discourse of film as signification' (see Chapter Two).

A few years after the publication of *Chinese Film Theory*, Ted Wang, Chris Berry and Chen Mei made a similar effort to Semsel. The three scholars translated an essay written by Chinese scholar Hu Ke into English (1995).[35] While Chen Xihe's essay aimed at conducting a dialogue with 'classical film theory' (which focuses on film aesthesis and the ontology of film), Hu Ke's essay aimed to provide the reception of Western contemporary film theory in China, presenting several issues and debates that could potentially have contributed to the then dominant theorisation.[36]

> The application of contemporary theory by Chinese scholars was characterized mainly by the reading of films and the understanding of society. They made Chinese cinema and society the objects of study, used contemporary film theory as the tool, integrated film theory and criticism, and combined film criticism with social criticism. […] Perhaps it is because Chinese scholars pay closer attention to social realities that China's system of contemporary film theory is centred on ideology instead of around linguistics, as it is in the West. (Hu, 1995: 3)

What Hu Ke expresses in this paragraph is, even though scholars in China find contemporary film theory useful, it must be modified according to local interests in order to be applicable. If Hu Ke's writing could integrate theoretical debates, 'Screen theory' might in fact have enhanced its theoretical development. In an interview, Chris Berry, one of the translators of Hu Ke's essay and also a scholar of Chinese cinema, expressed several interesting points on this matter:

> A lot of what we call "film theory" today was originally written as responses to the phenomenon of cinema by public intellectuals in Western countries. Public intellectuals in China in the teens, twenties, and thirties also wrote similar essays

[35] Hu Ke, 胡克

[36] Contemporary film theory is generally understood as paradigms which are influenced by 'Screen theory', post-structuralism, post-colonialism and cultural studies. In the context of this thesis, they are referred as the 'politics of interpretations' that are determined by 'film as ideology' and 'film as culture'.

> responding in various ways to film. It's just that we – and I include many Chinese scholars in that "we" – have not been accustomed to thinking of that as "film theory", too. If Western film theory is useful for understanding Asian films, why shouldn't Asian film theory be useful for understanding Western films? After all, a lot of it was written as least as much in response to Western films as to Asian films. In fact, isn't it time we stopped the East-West dichotomizing? (Berry, 2013, see Appendix)

What Hu Ke's essay could have contributed does not necessarily need to become what Berry proposes, to question whether Asian film theory is useful for understanding Western films. As Berry also points out, a halt could be called to 'East-West dichotomizing'. If a theory is useful, it does not matter where it is from, or who wrote it. The problems Hu Ke points out in his essay have also been addressed by other scholars working in English academia, in particular a group within film studies who prefer solving problems through rationale, namely the cognitivist branch. Therefore, this was not at all the logic of Chinese opposed to the West, or about whose theory is more accurate. Hu Ke's essay was mainly an effort to establish a theoretical conversation between Chinese scholars and scholars in the West. Chris Berry (2012) summarises such an important theoretical distinction again in 'Chinese Film Scholarship in English':

> … overall, film studies scholars in the PRC are more concerned with the well-being of the industry, its structural reforms, technological change, new genres, and so on, and less invested in ideological critique based on textual analysis. Prior to the 1980s moment of close contact between Chinese and Western film studies (Zhang 2002: 44), film studies in China was primarily seen as a research arm of the cinema enterprise. Therefore, the current tendency may be a continuation of that earlier pattern, albeit with an emphasis on the market more than the pedagogical mission of the cinema during the Mao era (1949-76). Furthermore, in a society that does not permit political opposition, ideological critique is too sensitive and risky to be widely attempted. (Berry, 2012: 497)

As Nick Browne and Paul G. Pickowicz (1996) point out, 'it is important for Western scholars to be aware of the ways in which Chinese scholars approach Chinese cinema' (297). They add further, 'few will be surprised to learn that Chinese approaches are often informed by intellectual agendas that differ markedly from those that preoccupy Western scholars' (Browne & Pickowicz, 1996: 297). Berry (2012) extends this argument:

> If there are ways in which Chinese film studies in English does not follow mainstream film studies, then there are also many divergences between Chinese films studies in English and Chinese film studies in Chinese. Or, at least there are many such divergences in the case of the PRC. Scholars working in Hong Kong and in Taiwan often operate with theories and methods that are very similar to those used in the West, and indeed many if not most of the leading scholars have had experience of either studying or working in the West. Further, in many cases their own bilingual capacities mean that they often publish in both English and Chinese. The nuanced differences between them would be worthy of further investigation. (Berry, 2012: 497)

The cross-cultural theoretical dialogue is an important effort towards reopening possible dialogues again, towards different discussions on the research of Chinese cinema, as well as a new transformation of the previous dominant discourses in film studies in English-language academia. This is what Victor Fan tries to do in his recent monograph *Cinema Approaching Reality: Locating Chinese Film Theory* (2015). It reintroduces early intellectual writings on cinema by Chinese scholars, and shows how, in fact, these early Chinese filmmakers and theorists constantly tried to make productive conversation with Western film theorists. In Fan's opinion, 'to use ideas and concepts previously ignored in the Euro-American debate is an effective comparative manner to reflect on the discipline and to 'work through some of its problematic and aporias' (Fan, 2015: 1).

Represented by Semsel and Berry, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, interest in Chinese cinema as a research topic increased both in the US and in the UK. This thesis

would coin that this period constitutes the rise of Chinese cinema studies in both China and in English-language academia. One approach towards these studies put forward by both Semsel and Berry was to acknowledge the voices in China of both filmmakers and scholars. However, it was not the model introduced by Semsel and Berry that professionalised the field of Chinese cinema studies, but other discourses.

3.4 Chapter Summary

To continue to elaborate the previous chapter's argument regarding how the topic of Chinese cinema has not been historically and theoretically included in the professionalisation of film studies (see Chapter Two), this chapter has provided further evidence demonstrating its marginalised position.

The first section of this chapter has discussed three cases of scholarship by US and UK based scholars during the 1960s and 1970s, in particular the writings by Noxon, Leyda and Delmar & Nash. I argued that these three examples can be considered as the first set of initiative for scholars to join in the main discourses in film studies during this period. In other words, what these scholars intended to achieve, in my reading, is to use the case of Chinese cinema to open up a new space of discussion in the 'discourse of film as art' as well as the 'discourse of film as signification'. However, as this chapter has also demonstrated that, none of these cases made it into the main discourses and neither provoked further attention to be paid to the topic of Chinese films.

The second section presented further empirical evidence gathered from *The British Newspaper Archive* related to the topic of Chinese films during the period between the 1950s and the 1970s. It provided an evaluation of these findings and argued that the topic of Chinese cinema was in fact discussed in a lively way among the public. It suggested that the information about Chinese cinema generated from these discussions was more educational

than the field of films studies had facilitated during this period. This chapter intended to use this new evidence as a contrast to further highlight the marginalisation of the topic of Chinese cinema within film studies in English-language academia.

The third section of this chapter presented evidence of several attempts by scholars in China, the US and the UK to further introduce Chinese cinema as an academic research topic. Selected examples that were discussed include articles written by mainland based scholars Shao Mujun, Chen Xihe and Lam Nin Tung during the 1980s; George S. Semsel and his students' translation projects and edited volumes on Chinese film theory between the late 1980s and early 1990s; as well as Chris Berry's translation and editing efforts in introducing Chinese cinema and Chinese writings on cinema to film studies during the 1990s. It argued that although these exemplified attempts made a significant initiative in introducing the research of Chinese cinema to English-language academia, these efforts likewise failed to gain a wider attention in academic. Furthermore, instead of following these initial efforts, a slightly different theoretical model was introduced by another group of scholars which eventually became the conceptual foundation for the field of Chinese cinema studies to rest on.

The next chapter will explore the processes of how the field of Chinese cinema was established through the making of several discourses from the 1990s onwards. It will question how its establishment was based on a 'semi- cultural studies' model, as a result in relation to all the struggles over academic recognition that the scholars faced in film studies as discussed in the previous chapters.

Chapter Four: Discourses in the Field of Chinese Cinema Studies

Just because a new professional field has been established, it does not mean the same battles over cultural capital or academic recognition will not occur again. According to Bourdieu, the activities of exclusion and the interests that form continue to exist as a condition for any academic field to maintain its social status and cultural capital. He explains:

> …the newcomers 'get beyond' the dominant mode of thought and expression not by explicitly denouncing it but by repeating and reproducing it in a sociologically non-congruent context, which has the effect of rendering it incongruous or even absurd, simply by making it perceptible as the arbitrary convention it is. This form of heretical break is particularly favoured by ex-believers, who use pastiche or parody as indispensable means of objectifying, and thereby appropriating, the form of thought and expression by which they were formerly possessed. (Bourdieu, 1993: 31)

The above observation is very much the case of Chinese cinema studies, similar patterns in terms of how discourses are produced are evident throughout the professionalisation of Chinese cinema studies.

Findings and evidence in both Chapters Two and Three have revealed in detail how the topic of Chinese cinema was marginalised in the field of film studies in both the US and the UK. Even though scholars tried different tactics to introduce the topic to their peers, including efforts in translating materials by Chinese scholars into English, the responses that they received were not significant enough to encourage a disciplinary transformation in film studies. In short, up until the 1990s, these was no such concept as the field of Chinese cinema studies and the topic continued to face struggles to gain a proper recognition in academia. While, personally, the author does not see the necessity for a battle to be fought in

order to gain proper recognition for Chinese cinema studies in academia, it was fought by other scholars as a way for them to establish new positions in the broader field of academia.

From the 1990s onwards, a different strategy was used to address the situation regarding the marginalisation of Chinese cinema in film studies, particularly by scholars with an academic background in comparative literature trained in the US. This chapter captures those highlighted moments of when new theoretical models were introduced. It presents findings which will expose the making of the new discourses that constitute the field of Chinese cinema studies, and its legitimisation. Before going on to discuss these discourses – 'Chinese cinema as territories and ethnicities', 'Chinese cinema as languages' and 'Chinese cinema as independent' – the first of section of this chapter looks at the establishment of a theoretical foundation which supported the topic of Chinese cinema in creating a scholarly voice within academia.

4.1 'Cultural Studies' as the Theoretical Foundation for Chinese Cinema Studies

The theoretical foundation that supported the building of Chinese cinema studies as a new academic field in English was based on a quasi-adaptation of 'cultural studies' (as a combination of both postcolonialism and poststructuralism), evident in a series of experiments by US based postcolonial and cultural theorist Rey Chow (notably 1991, 1993, 1995, 1998, 2002, 2007, 2012). As discussed in Chapter Three, although several scholars intended to introduce the topic of Chinese films to the field of film studies, through different efforts, most of them were not acknowledged by film scholars at that time. In comparison, Chow's theory-building attracted much more attention. It is fair to say that during the 1990s, Chow's influence transformed the field of Chinese cinema studies, providing the topic with a solid theoretical foundation which had not existed up until that point. Chow's follower, James A. Steintrager (2010) praises the importance of Chow that she has:

> …[an] ongoing passion for close reading and interpretation, albeit mingled with a scepticism about institutional interests, the prestige of literary studies, and the values of close reading. She loves theory in a way that can appear alarmingly irreverent to the disciple because she reads it less what it is – for what it reveals – than for what it does. (quoted in Bowman, 2010a: 232)

Steintager observes an important methodology in Chow's studies of not only Chinese films but also literature and other culture, that of 'close reading and interpretation' which is practiced as a form of theory-building in criticism. We are familiar with this type of method, particularly from the debates discussed in Chapter One, as one which has already been critiqued by Bordwell and Carroll. Chow's model of film analysis is, in fact, almost the same as the Grand Theory critiqued by Bordwell and Carroll in film studies; it uses a set of theoretical languages to justify the act of close interpretation of a particular film as a way of legitimising a certain theory or philosophy. However, the alerts that had already been raised in film studies were ignored and not taken into consideration. Instead, the field of Chinese cinema studies took off by following the theoretical model that Chow set out; a model which remains as the main logic for how Chinese films are studied in English-language academia.

Chow's theoretical model centres on three main logics: 1) to use 'cultural studies' of Chinese cinema to challenge the marginalisation of Chinese films/literature within traditional western academia (supported by the logic of postcolonial studies); 2) to position any visualisation of 'China' as a kind of fetishism that is ultimately wrapped up in the power/gaze relation between the East and West (influenced by Laura Mulvey's 'male gaze'); and 3) to propose a democratic reading of 'Chineseness' as well as identity politics as a method of studying Chinese films (supported by the logic of poststructuralism).

Chow's motivation can be understood, in my reading, if we take into consideration her own academic background and career development. The struggle that Chow faced in the field of literary studies (later theorised as the struggle of Chinese cinema studies) was the

marginalised position that the studies of East Asian (Chinese) literature/culture encountered in English literary studies. Trained in comparative literature in the US, Chow had to learn all the western theories to support her studies on Chinese literature and culture where she identified the cross-cultural theoretical issues. Chow points out these politics and observes the struggles as an:

> asymmetrical distribution of cultural capital and intellectual labor so that cultures of Europe […] tend to be studied with meticulousness while cultures on the margins of Europe […] may simply be considered examples of the same geographical areas. (Chow, 2006: 77)

She argues further that academia in the west and its:

> [a]pparently monolingual, monocultural, or mononational investigations […] should be understood as full-fledged comparative projects, their precarious and enigmatic enunciations bearing testimony to an interlingual, intercultural, and international historicity that exposes the positivistic limits of the (Western) human sciences. (Chow, 2006: 85)

It is through such a sentiment, encouraged by the rise of postcolonial studies, that Chow identified 'cultural studies' as a method of liberating the subject of area studies in academia which, in this case, included the field of Chinese cinema studies. Paul Bowman (2010b) evaluates Chow's efforts in such theory-building between cultural studies and Chinese cinema studies and justifies his understanding of the function of 'cultural studies' (via Chow):

> 'Cultural studies' is an umbrella term that covers a multitude of different possibilities: studies of popular culture, national culture, regional culture, cross-cultural or intercultural encounters; studies of subculture and marginal or 'subaltern' culture; studies focusing on questions and issues of class, gender, ethnicity and identify; others focusing on the significance and effects of different aspects and elements of technology, globalization, 'mediatization' and virtualization; still more on the historical, cultural and economic contexts of the

> production and consumption of literature, film, TV and news media; others elaborating on the cultural implications of government policy, law legislation, educational paradigms, and so on; as well as the multitudes focusing on any of myriad details of everyday life, approached in terms of anything from power to pleasure to politics, and beyond. (Bowman, 2010b: 239)

It is under this very broad umbrella of 'cultural studies', that Bowman celebrates Chow's theory-building. He further explains that Chow is influential in her introduction of a series of theoretical vocabularies to the studies of Chinese films, borrowed from thinkers such as Heidegger, Derrida, Foucault, Spivak. One of the reasons that Chow's intervention was better received than efforts by Semsel, for instance, is that Chow used the same theoretical language to approach Chinese cinema studies as area studies and joined in the debates that took place in academia supported by postcolonial studies and their critiques of western scholarship at the time.

However, what Bowman did not explain in his celebration of such an approach is that Chow's theory-building for Chinese cinema studies was in fact a mis-adaptation of the initial establishment of cultural studies by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS hereafter) in the UK. In the name of 'cultural studies', Chow's close analyses of Chinese films, or the examples that she sets out, continue to be text-based analyses (a method already critiqued by several film scholars. See Chapter One). Furthermore, Chow's theoretical positioning of how the 'visuality' of China is immediately entangled in the power/gaze relation between the East and West is also similar to the critique model that was put forward by *Screen,* the problems of which have also already been addressed in this thesis (see Chapter Two). The initial launch of cultural studies in the UK was, in fact, a reaction against the reductive interpretation method appropriated by *Screen* for the studies of films, but Chow practiced it as a *continuation* of *Screen*, only with a set of new vocabularies.

The original ethos of CCCS's cultural studies is evident in an article titled 'Debate: Marxism and Culture', published in *Screen* in 1977 by the CCCS members (Iain Chambers, Lidia Curti, John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Ian Connell and Tony Jefferson) as a criticism of *Screen* and its research practices, which were driving film studies at that time:

> A theory of the positions cannot just be inserted anywhere. A theory of the positioning of 'the subject' in-general, in ideology-in-general, through Language-in-general, with no further reference to mode of production or social formation or conjuncture, can be declared to be 'Marxist' only if theory production consists wholly of successive acts of faith. (Chambers, et al., 1977: 119)

In the article, the CCCS members expressed their frustration over how major players in *Screen* had utilised Marxism as a way of promoting their favoured theories and theorists for film studies. In the following decades, CCCS continued to position itself differently from the discourse that *Screen* and its followers created for the studies of cinema. In comparison to *Screen*'s singular-formula in its critique of ideology through the 'discourse of film as signification', CCCS was interested in a variety of different experiments rather than relying on one single methodological template. Instead of analysing everything through one paradigm, early CCCS members tended to explore different interdisciplinary possibilities, to pay more attention to the process of production and consumption of culture, and the actions of demanding social justices in response to questions regarding ideology and cultural hegemony. As already discussed, the weakness of the 'discourse of film as signification' was its textual analysis-based practice, which lacked attention to the audience and the *formations* of culture in society. Writings from early cultural studies, especially in their focus on the audience and their later research about cultural identities, offered a new direction for film studies to reconfigure its research methodologies.

For early cultural studies practitioners, culture is more than a mere text.[37] Such a logic is articulated in several evidences. For instance, in 'The Analysis of Culture' ([1961] 1994), Raymond Williams identifies three general categories in the definition of culture: the 'ideal', 'in which culture is a state or process of human perfection, certain absolute or universal values'; the 'documentary', 'in which culture is the body of intellectual and imaginative work' and 'human thought and experience are variously recorded' in details; and finally, the 'social definition', 'in which culture is a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and value'(Williams, [1961] 1994: 56-57). In Williams' understanding, the analysis of culture is not simply criticism; we also need to make sense of the formations of values and meanings in relation to society by paying attention to the contextual specificities in traditions and history. Williams' logic on culture is the opposite to the 'discourse of film as signification'. The latter sees the audience as passive bodies in which the ideological manipulations take place; early cultural studies practitioners believed that culture is active and that the audience's participation in such interactions is where the meanings and values of culture are. Perhaps nothing can state the Centre's scope of research as clearly as their first annual report. Richard Hoggart, the founding director of the Centre proposed studying:

> 1) The scope of historical and philosophical, which will be concerned with the terms in which debate about contemporary culture and social change is carried on.
>
> 2) The sociology of literature and the arts, and it will try and develop a critical language for dealing with those phenomena which have both artistic and social significance. The centre aims to bring together literary criticism, sociology, social psychology and social history. It will concern the nature of different audience for different kinds of art and literature, with the relationship between

[37] Later the further institutionalisation of cultural studies tends to return to the text for its major methodology.

> different ‘kinds’ and ‘levels’ of art, and with the influences of communication upon audiences.
>
> 3) The scope of critical-evaluative, studies in depth will be made of mass art, popular art, culture and mass media, and to focus on how the mass arts or the popular arts achieve their effects. This field includes popular fiction, the press, film and television, popular music and advertising. (Hoggart,1964: 2)

In both Williams’ and Hoggart’s writings, there is a common focus on the ‘interaction of culture’ and the *process* of media effects. Such thinking can be placed in parallel with the philosophical-theoretical shift from structuralism to poststructuralism, from modernism to postmodernism, which took place at around the same time, but the influence was not direct.

The theoretical and philosophical shift from structuralism to poststructuralism was never quite straightforward; some previously recognised structuralists were, in fact, staged into a relationship with the thinking of poststructuralism, which they themselves denied. The term ‘poststructuralism’ however, was coined by academics in America in order to create a narrative as a theoretical rejection towards the previous structuralist paradigm, as a way of searching for a more democratic space for interpretation. The criteria for being a poststructuralist are varied in different interpretations. Benoît Dillet, Iain MacKenzie and Robert Porter’s introduction delivers a more common understanding of the key elements of poststructuralism:

> Poststructuralism simply comes after structuralism; it is a form of relativism; it celebrates the death of the subject; it is a post-metaphysical form of inquiry that has utterly displaced the idea of truth; it is stylistically obtuse; it refuses all claims to normativity; and it transforms critical practice into textual play. (Dillet, et al., 2013: 2)

What concerns a poststructuralist critic is demonstrating how any meaning is not fixed and how the ‘textual play’ can serve as an act of ‘liberation’ of the text. The most notable and widely recognised poststructuralist concepts are considered to have been developed by

Jacques Derrida ([1967] 1978). His idea of 'différance', which refers to how meaning is not entirely present in its signifier, derives its meaning from somewhere else in a chain of signification, and therefore language creates an endless deferral of meaning. Another of his concepts was 'deconstruction' which, in summary, refers to a critique of the thinking through a binary structure (or, in his view, Western metaphysics more generally). To some extent, this logic does have a light connection with several cultural studies projects. For example, it echoes Stuart Hall's writings on cultural hegemony and the politics of identity in particular (especially in the representations of black identities in Britain) (1980, 1996). Hall's politics of difference proposes the recognition of the 'many' within the 'one' and a rejection of clear-cut, binary oppositions that divide diverse communities. Hall, in fact, did include Derrida's concept of 'différance' in order to support his arguments on the politics of identity, about how identity is not fixed. In Paul Bowman's (2013) opinion, cultural studies (from Hall onwards) was in fact indebted to Derridean poststructuralism. In Bowman's understanding (via Chow's writings), the nature of poststructuralism fit with Hall's ambition of treating cultural studies as 'both an academic endeavour and a political project: a politicised academic endeavour which sought to engage rigorously, comprehensively, unrelentingly with all aspects of culture, power, structures, processes, formations, deformations and transformations' (Bowman, 2013: 455). This shared nature meant that it was possible for Bowman to observe that 'Hall regarded theory – and poststructuralism in particular – to be of fundamental and foundational importance' (Bowman, 2013: 455).

There are several contradictions in such a misunderstanding by Bowman, and his celebration of Chow's theory-building. If Bowman (2013) understands that the project of 'cultural studies' promoted by Hall tended to pay attention to 'all aspects of culture, power, structures, processes, formations, deformations and transformations', how could poststructuralism, a philosophy that tackles the idea and belief of origin, be the foundational

philosophy supporting this ambitious project? If context is so important to a text, or to an act of interpretation – and this is how Derrida really proposed 'il n'y a pas de hors-text' rather than its mistranslation of 'there is nothing outside of the text' – then are the contexts what we really ought to pay attention to when it comes to making sense of the changes in culture? (as Williams also proposed).

What Hall saw in poststructuralist thought to support his project theoretically was its belief in non-fixed meaning, which matched his fights for the politics of identity, as he was always passionate about demonstrating how one should not understand cultural identity as a fixed category. However, what cultural theorists (represented by both Bowman and Chow) later picked up on as the theoretical foundation for supporting Chinese cinema studies were only fragments from both the political ambition from CSSS and part of the theoretical language of poststructuralism. Mainly supported by Derrida's concept of *différance* and his mistranslated statement of 'there is nothing outside the text', the theoretical foundation of Chinese cinema studies became a paradigm that maximised the space of textual interpretation of Chinese films, in the name of 'cultural studies', as the politics of what Chow calls the 'ethnic supplement and the logic of the wound'. Chow explains:

> Just as socialism, modernization, or nationalism at the level of realpolitik have been regularly supplemented by the word *Chinese*, so, in the much smaller sphere of the academic study of China, is the word *Chinese* frequently used to modify general, theoretical issues such as modernity, modernism, feminism, poetic tradition, novels, gay and lesbian issues, film theory, cultural studies, and so forth. One can almost be certain that, once a new type of discourse gains currency among academics at large, academics working on China-related topics will sooner or later produce a "Chinese" response to it that would both make use of the opportunity for attention made available by the generality of the theoretical issue at hand *and* deflect it by way of historical and cultural characteristics that are specific to China. (Chow, 1998: 3)

On one hand, Chow points out how identity politics is inevitably involved in the studies of China-related topics (in this case Chinese cinema); but on the other hand, based on her mis-adaptation of 'cultural studies' supported by both the logic of postcolonial studies and poststructuralism, Chow sees China (in this case Chinese cinema) as a method and 'Chineseness as a theoretical problem' for the field of Chinese cinema studies to rest on.

Not being taken into account by Chow's followers, Chow's 'cultural studies' model for Chinese cinema studies was in fact already critiqued by David Bordwell as part of the Grand Theory in film studies as around the same time (see Chapter Two). Bordwell (1996) argues:

> The culturalist trend has sought to distinguish itself from subject-position theory by emphasizing that the object of study is not *texts* (dominant, oppositional, or whatever) but instead the *uses* made of texts. Hence culturalists of all stripes promote reception studies, whereby audiences are often held to appropriate films for their cultural agendas. (Bordwell, 1996: 10)

Bordwell observes further, 'the culturalist trend has also been resolutely hermeneutic. Sometimes it is a matter of reading viewers rather than texts, as when Cultural Studies adherents undertake quasi-ethnographic interpretation of audiences' (Bordwell, 1996: 26). With its original sociological context removed, the 'culturalist view is no less text-centered than subject-position theory, generating readings that are substantially indistinguishable from the sort of commentary that became commonplace in the 1970s' (26). In other words, the Chow model of studying Chinese cinema in the name of 'cultural studies' is in fact no different to the 'discourse of film as signification' and its reductive mode of the interpretation of films critiqued by Bordwell as Grand Theory. However, Chow's theory-building, based on her version of 'cultural studies', was quickly adopted by scholars for engaging with the topic of Chinese cinema and became the theoretical foundation that the field of Chinese cinema studies rests on. Now the field not only had a set of agendas, but

also the language to deliver those agendas, through the making of discourses. How Chow's theoretical model became a success is evident in the following findings.

According to Bourdieu (1993), the materialisation of a certain field and its cultural capital can be achieved by publication, not only as a form recognition regarding the field's distinctiveness but also as a form of knowledge distribution. Therefore, the launch of an academic journal titled the *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* in 2006 was a symbolic landmark that indicated the research subject of Chinese cinema studies becoming a professional academic field.

The logic of how the journal was first introduced aligned perfectly with Chow's model of 'cultural studies' by treating the problematisation of 'Chineseness' as its central focus for debates. Editor Song Hwee Lim (2007) expresses, in the first editorial, that the launch of the journal is seen as a 'new beginning', by pointing out the 'possible directions' for this new field. There are two key focuses that Lim wishes to propose for Chinese cinema studies, which are 'plurality' and 'multidisciplinarity'. These two terms immediately remind us of the theoretical foundation sets out by Chow, regarding the democratic reading of 'Chineseness' in relation to Chinese cinema, its studies and the function that 'cultural studies' plays in these debates.

According to Lim, 'plurality' here refers to the cultural and identity diversity of 'Chineseness' that is 'manifested in Chinese-cultural-heritage-related cinematic practices'. This determination is evidently reflected in the journal's title with its use of the plural form – 'Chinese cinemas'. Lim (2007) uses the example of Taiwanese director Tsai Ming-liang to explain this specific research agenda:

> …the figure of Tsai, a Malaysian-born, Taiwan-based film-maker known for exploring marginal sexualities and liminal experiences in his films, problematizes any monolithic concept of a Chinese national cinema, and embodies a complexity and diversity that demands an equally sophisticated and

> plural approach to his films, and by extension, to the field of Chinese cinema studies. (Lim, 2007: 3)

In Lim's proposal, cultural 'plurality' is one possible space for the research of 'Chinese cinemas', with an aim of investigating the presentation and representation of its diverse cultural identities. Lim's focus on Taiwanese director Tsai Ming-liang, his hybrid cultural background, and how the concept of cultural 'plurality' is illustrated in his films, shows a returning interest in taking the author's agency into account.

Laikwan Pang furthers the debate in the same issue of the new journal regarding the 'plurality' in 'Chineseness' and its identity politics, where she observes and argues that the motivation to institutionalise Chinese cinema 'is achieved through the negation of the very name of "Chinese cinema" itself'. Pang summarizes the current three main approaches in the research as:

> 1) The assertion and the problematization of the specific model of 'Chinese National Cinema'; 2) Chinese cinema as a category composed of different regional cinemas' and 3) The global and international dimensions of Chinese cinema. (Pang, 2007: 56)

In Pang's opinion, these approaches 'reinforce the notion of Chinese cinema "academically", as they all constitute efforts to develop and legitimise a new field of studies' (2007: 58). Although the three approaches Pang summarises all have different concerns, the common strategy that drives the professionalisation of Chinese cinema studies as an academic field focuses on their cultural and geopolitical terms, domestically and globally. Ironically, as Pang points out, despite the hopes of scholars in this field for moving away from old-fashioned national thinking and demonstrating 'plurality' through their studies of Chinese films to achieve 'multidisciplinarity', the problematisation of 'Chineseness' [following Chow's model], Pang furthers, inevitably 'safeguards our critical position' (Pang, 2007: 59). Pang concludes that perhaps a shift of our attention from the cinema to the particular issue in

the field itself is needed. What concerned Pang was not necessarily the studies of Chinese films as a new research topic as such, but the theoretical foundation the topic has adopted as its forefront strategy.

As a result, the *official* launch of Chinese cinema studies as a field is legitimised by these debates regarding appropriate methodology and by a question as to whether the focus on 'plurality' or identity politics is relevant. Pang is not alone in her hesitation . Within the same issue, Jeroen de Kloet (2007) raises similar concerns regarding the theoretical research model around the concept of 'Chineseness' in Chinese cinema studies, introduced by Chow. He writes:

> In a time of intense globalization, when national, ethnic and religious cultures are simultaneously under siege as well as vigorously reinvented, it seems odd to launch a *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*. If, as Rey Chow (1998a: 9) reminds us, the task of contemporary cultural studies is of 'bringing the entire notion of "culture" into crisis', then how can we justify the use of epithet 'Chinese' in the journal's title? (de Kloet, 2007: 64)

De Kloet continues to argue 'for a cosmopolitan sensitivity in the emerging discipline of Chinese film studies, a quest for a deterritorializing mode of analysis that liberates rather than confines the Chineseness of "Chinese" cinemas' (64). In short, what de Kloet points out in his arguments is the danger of such a 'cultural studies' model, which claims to be a democratic reading of Chinese cinema, falling into an exclusive practice. He then encourages scholars to search for more 'cosmopolitan' and 'inclusive' approaches to the topic.

Yingjing Zhang (2010) joins in the discussion on the institutionalisation of Chinese cinema studies with his proposal of a 'comparative film studies'. In Zhang's view, a comparative model can provide a more transnational and interdisciplinary approach to engage with the 'cross-mediality' and 'transcultural visuality' in Chinese cinema:

> Comparative studies are more likely to capture the multidirectionality with which film studies simultaneously looks outwards (transnationalism, globalization), inwards (cultural traditions, aesthetic conventions), backwards (history, memory), and sideways (cross-media practices, interdisciplinary research). (Zhang, 2010: 31)

What Zhang wishes to establish is a methodology that has the capacity to accommodate both 'interdisciplinarity' and 'cross-mediality'; at the same time, such a comparative ethos also allows researchers to reflect on their own 'blind spots'. Such a concept is not new. For instance, Zhang's writing is based on, and developed from, a similar proposal that Paul Willemen (1995) suggested previously. However, both Willemen and Zhang's proposals of methodology remain unclarified. In Zhang's quote above, 'comparative film studies' seems to be a grand solution to all the methodological limitations that colleagues face within the field of Chinese film studies in general, without specifying that within such a model many different possible routes are available. There are many factors that are comparable: different aesthetics conventions; production, distribution and exhibition models; receptions and technological or historical developments, among others. Furthermore, what conclusion can we draw from these comparative practices? How can the similarities and differences be registered properly, so that they can contribute to the filmmaking industry, as well as to academic critical thinking?

The method of comparing aesthetic conventions does not capture the complex and constant flow of artistic and cultural exchange globally. The logic of comparing aesthetic conventions can be traced back to the tradition of comparative literature, where non-Western literature highlights the differences in literature written in other languages. Although its initial intention is to challenge nationalism or cultural imperialism, if we presume two separate and different aesthetic conventions, the result highlights the differences – eventual

cultural hierarchy – and less the potential exchange between the two conventions. Susan Lanser (1994) states:

> Comparative literature grew up in an era of imperialist nationalism which some comparatists hoped to combat by affirming a transnational spirit in the human sciences. This agenda must have seemed especially pressing in the years when comparative literature was developing in Europe and the United States, since these were years in which the very countries collaborating most fully in the comparative project, France and Germany, were bitter enemies. "Rising above" national boundaries and partisan identities was surely a crucial strategy of resistance, a way to preserve not simply personal and collegial relations, or even the project of comparative literary scholarship, but "culture" itself. It is sadly ironic that this resistance to nationalism ended up constructing an androcentric Continentalism that became its own exclusivity. (Lanser, 1994: 290)

Theoretical debates on comparative literature have been extensively examined, and are not revisited in depth here. Although the initial aim of a comparative practice is to reveal alternative aesthetics that do not necessarily counter, but diversify, aesthetics (or the understanding of it) in Western conventions, ironically, as Lanser argues, such a practice inevitably contributes to an 'androcentric Continentalism', a new form of categorisation.

Other comparative research activities perhaps offer further insight that could be applied to film studies. For example, the comparison of production, distribution and exhibition models. As both Chris Berry and Laikwan Pang (2010) suggest, perhaps there is a need to shift our attention from textual characteristics to production and distribution in the research of Chinese cinema. For example, when the former UK Prime Minister David Cameron visited China in 2014 and agreed on a £14 billion trade and investment deal, comparative research on the production, distribution and exhibition models of the two regions contributed to further collaborations between two regions. The research was not a study in business or marketing strategies with a focus in cinema, but scholars were able to benefit from ethical-cultural concerns and criticisms.

Despite these debates – in particular Pang and de Kloet's warning regarding Chow's 'cultural studies' approach to Chinese cinemas studies and the danger of such a theoretical model becoming another inclusive field of practice – rather than focusing on 'multidisciplinarity', with the support of Chow's theory-building via a 'cultural studies' that rests on both postcolonial studies and poststructuralism, discourses that paid attention to the 'plurality' of 'Chineseness' became the main agendas and priorities constituting knowledge dispositions in the field. This thesis has identified three main discourses that closely follow Chow's logic, which are the discourse of 'Chinese cinema as territories and ethnicities', 'Chinese cinema as languages' and 'Chinese cinema as independent'. The following sections will unpack each of these discourses in more detail.

4.2 The Discourse of Chinese Cinema as Territories and Ethnicities

Chow's 'cultural studies' approach to Chinese cinema studies and its 'democratic' reading of 'Chineseness' is evident in the 'discourse of Chinese cinema as territories and ethnicities'. Such as discourse refers to a series of debates and discussions which intended to theorise Chinese cinema as different territories and ethnicities and to problematise a singular definition of Chinese cinema. In summary, an analysis of a film within this discourse would be a practice of seeking for visual 'evidence' to support an argument regarding any definition of territories and ethnicities in relation to a 'democratic' mode of 'Chineseness'.

For instance, the *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* introduced the use of plural in its title which has generated different views. Some scholars agree with it and have been adopting the use of this plural in their writings (Browne *et al*., 1996; Lu, 1997; Rojas & Chow, 2013; Chan & Willis, 2016); others however, think that such a conceptualisation is not necessary. For instance, Chris Berry and Laikwan Pang (2010) express:

> We choose to retain the singular form of "cinema" in this study of Chinese cinematic practices. We do not dispute that this cinema is culturally multiple. Such multiplicity does not render a singular concept of Chinese cinema obsolete, however. Pluralizing does not necessarily challenge the underlying cultural-territorial model of the cinema – "Chinese cinemas" can simply designate the three national or quasi-national cinemas of the People's Republic, Taiwan and Hong Kong. In view of the development of the global cinema scenes in the past decade, we believe that such a cultural-territorial model is no longer the most sophisticated one for understanding the composition and workings of Chinese cinema today. (Berry & Pang, 2010: 93)

In terms of territories, perhaps the most obvious discussion is the ongoing debate over the inter-cultural-political entanglements between mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and diaspora Chinese communities across the globe. The use of the plurality 'cinemas' therefore aims to highlight the regional-cultural differences among these Chinese-culture-related territories. Both Hong Kong and Macau are Special Administrative Regions in China following handovers from their previous colonialists in the late 1990s, which now have separate systems for the economy, law, and the electoral system, but at the same time are influenced by the country's ruling party in terms of national security and foreign policy. Taiwan, however, although it shares the same cultural heritage, is recognised by the United Nation as an independent country that has had a completely different political and economic system from mainland China since 1949. Therefore, in 'Chinese cinemas', the plurality aims to bring into the foreground the different modes of representation, production, distribution and exhibition, according to the different territories and their specific cultures and political economies.

Just as Berry and Pang (2010) have argued, the use of an 's' in 'Chinese cinemas' 'does not necessarily challenge the underlying cultural-territorial model'. That is, the interpretation, analysis or debate over whether a plural form should be used to define Chinese cinema does not necessarily change the geopolitical fact or the political economy

that associated with it. All theorisation alongside its film interpretation only remains on a textual level. In this context, the region of Macau is a good example. Even though scholars have been actively emphasising the 'plurality' of different territories, Macau has rarely been included in these discussions. Understandably, on the larger global economic-political-cultural map, Macau's influence may seem insignificant in comparison to that of Hong Kong and Taiwan in terms of film culture. However, how do we justify the use of an 's', if the region of Macau has been excluded from consideration for its research potential? The lack of attention toward this region's film history, production, distribution and exhibition in its cinematic culture does not refer to the non-existence of these practices and their contribution to local and global cinema in general. To give some brief examples, an early encounter between Hollywood and Macau is evident in a 1952 film *Macao* (1952), directed by Josef von Sternberg and Nicholas Ray; and a recent example is a 16-minute promotional film directed by Martin Scorsese (2015) for a casino resort in the region. Furthermore, the Macau Film Brothers Productions Ltd has produced and co-produced some of the popular mainland Chinese blockbusters: for example, *Ocean Heaven* (2010), *Love is Disguise* (2010), *Cold War* (2012) and *Finding Mr. Right* (2013). In terms of exhibiting films, 2015 saw the ninth Macau International Film and Video Festival, and it continues to attract attendance by filmmakers from around the globe.

A subject that is certainly lacking in research attention is Macau's film history, industry and culture during the colonial period under Portugal's governorship. For such a unique region, its film history as part of its broader colonial cultural history must be worthy of investigation. However, the research has been heavily influenced by certain branches of post-colonialism within the academy, and shifted attention away from certain research possibilities. The example of Macau indicates how turning the word 'cinema' into the plural, to create a slogan-like territorial-cultural plurality, lacks credibility since Macau has gained

very little attention within the field. Different regions related to China work much more closely with each other in the actual film industry, therefore, as Berry and Pang suggest, ‘we are seeing more convergence and connection among them than ever, and their actual financing, production, distribution, and exhibition can no longer be contained within a cultural-territorial framework’ (Berry & Pang, 2010: 94). The efforts should emphasise exploring a research space rather than conceptualising the legitimacy of pluralising ‘cinema’. Whether or not to have an ‘s’ in the term Chinese cinema studies should not be the main focus for debate.

By contrast, different regional channels of BBC Radio have their own style of broadcast practice, and yet conceptualisation of ‘BBC Radios’ has never occurred. However, not using the plural form does not necessarily mean that scholars are not aware of the diverse styles and characteristics within each channel, and this fact is as obvious to the public as to academics. Such linguistic usage does not necessarily generate useful knowledge, but rather than a meta-academic self-enjoyment. Similarly, although these heritage-related territories have their own cultural differences, each of them cannot generate enough academic interest to establish their own research fields, apart from being included within the umbrella category of ‘Chinese cinemas’. Therefore, this seems to be an unsolvable theoretical paradox: a subject that aims to unite everyone, but simultaneously, to set everyone apart.

After all, although scholars who follow this logic claim to have concerns over the definition of territories in ‘Chinese cinemas’ and its ‘plurality’, de Kloet (2007) rightly observes that these definitions and redefinitions are purely based on textual interpretations which do not necessarily contribute any empirical studies to the actual Chinese films themselves. De Kloet concludes and warns that the textual favour is in fact a continuation from film studies:

> The field of cinema studies shows a bias toward the textual. Given its disciplinary past – most film studies department – are part of the humanities – this comes as no surprise. However valuable a lucid textual analysis may be, it tends to ignore both the production process of movies – like its underpinning political economy of, for example, production conglomerate and movies festivals – as well as the moment of reception. Moreover, film scholars tend to be dismissive if not ignorant about technological developments, when these in fact strongly impact upon the ways audiences use movies in their everyday lives. (de Kloet, 2007: 66)

Despite these disagreements, the definition of 'territories' became an important agenda for knowledge regarding Chinese films to be produced, as is particularly evident in Yinjing Zhang's (2004) efforts in encouraging taking the 'messiness' of Chinese cinema.

Besides territories, the notion of 'plurality' encouraged by Chow's 'cultural studies' model also aims to generate attention toward ethnic differences within mainland China, and how the differences manifest in films and film practices. Both Chris Berry and Yingjin Zhang have written on this topic regularly. First published in 1992, Chris Berry's article '"Race" (民族): Chinese Film and the Politics of Nationalism' was an early effort to engage with the topic of China's multi-ethnicity and such a unique culture's relationship to its national cinema.[38] In Berry's opinion, there has long been an issue of the construction of 'race' as a discourse 'in the name of national liberation and the promotion of nationality' in Chinese film criticism. Such usage of the term 'race', in his words, is 'a transhistorical, essentialist, and idealist concept that tends toward conservatism' (1992: 45). Although the concept of 'race' has been used as a figure of speech in everyday media, it has been used as a

[38] A necessary context background to be noted is that, according to the press release 'National Minorities Policy and Its Practice in China' published by the Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Other International Organisations in Switzerland (1999): 'The People's Republic of China is a united multi-ethnic state founded jointly by the people of its ethnic groups. So far, there are 56 ethnic groups identified and confirmed by the Central Government. […] As the majority of the population belongs to the Han ethnic group, China's 55 ethnic groups are customarily referred to as the national minorities.'

homogenous term to reinforce the dominant ethnicity (Han) over the other minorities intentionally. Berry (1992) criticises:

> It is interesting to note that although there are fifty-six races in the People's Republic, the politics of language usage there are such that it is not necessary to specify that the "race" referred to is the Han Chinese majority group, except in circumstances that require clarification to avoid confusion. This is part of a sinocentrism, or perhaps I should say a "race-centrism" that is a powerful tradition in China. (Berry, 1992: 47)

The issue of 'race-centrism' has been evident throughout what Berry calls the 'classical Chinese cinema' (1950s and 1960s), a period where the production of films was heavily influenced and operated by the State as an instrument for its construction of national identity, in particular through its constant emphasis of the dominant Han race. Other scholars have also studied the issue (Lu, 1997; Zhu, 2003; Zhang, 2004; Berry & Farquhar, 2006; Zhang, 2012). In Sheldon H. Lu's opinion (1997), in order to reinforce the construction of a national identity through the focus on its dominant Han race, internal ethnic and cultural differences were often reduced. Berry therefore, aims to demonstrate how the rise of the Fifth Generation[39] Chinese films to some extent, challenge this 'race' tradition that was previously practised. He argues (1992):

> Recent Chinese cinema has made use of the ambiguity of art and motivated signs to undercut the fundamental assumption of a coherent, positive "race" unity, and to question many of the cinematic traditions that grew up around that assumption. Sino-centrism, the praise for them, and even the very assumption of a fundamental duality separating the Han Chinese and the foreign, have all been thrown into question by these films. (Berry, 1992: 49)

[39] 'The Fifth Generation' is an umbrella term used in both film criticism and film studies to refer to a group of filmmakers who gained wider awareness during the 1980s through submitting their works to international film festivals. In Sheldon Lu's words (1997: 7), 'in the post-Mao era, a new wave of filmmaking emerged in the New Chinese Cinema, most noticeably "Fifth-Generation film" (film by the class that graduated from the Beijing Film Academy in 1982) in the 1980s. The makers of these films are active participants and definitive fashioners of a broad, nationwide intellectual movement self-styled as "cultural reflection" (wenhua fansi) and "historical reflection" (lishi fansi).' The representative directors of this generation include: Zhang Yimou, Tian Zhuangzhuang, Chen Kaige and Zhang Junzhao.

Berry provides several examples which contain 'a diversity that radically denies the presumption of unity that provides a foundation for the "race" discourse' (1992). He analyses two of the examples as such:

> *On the Hunting Ground,* set in Mongolia, and *Horse Thief,* set in Tibet, both radically re-interpellate the Han Chinese spectator, using distance and alienation to challenge the sinocentric assumption that the Han Chinese spectator can readily access these cultures. […] Far from being all-knowing subjects, as superior to the racial minorities as the Han characters in the diegesis of traditional racial minority films, viewers are placed as know-nothings. In *On the Hunting Ground,* this undermining and distancing effect is accentuated by the dialogue, which is all in Mongolian, with a monotone male translation laid over it on the soundtrack. (Berry, 1992: 54)

The writer continues to interpret several other examples similarly throughout. Indeed, Berry traces back the historical-social context and the discursive practices (from the State side) as an attempt to construct national identity, and how the concept of 'race', in this particular context, has been reduced to Han as the dominant ethnic-identity. However, the way Berry interprets these Fifth Generation films in a binary manner, is to put the dominant race as Han and the minorities in opposition. At least two weaknesses must be addressed here. First, Berry's assumption about how these films 'radically re-interpolate' the Han Chinese spectator'. Without carrying out an audience survey or further empirical research, this is a very broad assumption. By placing Han (or the construction of Han as the majority race as national identity) as the object to be critiqued, Berry ignores the possibility of diversity within the ethnicity of Han. Although there has been an effort to promote Han as *the 'r*ace' of the country, not every Han person feels superior over the other minorities, and thus, not necessarily 'challenged' or irritated when they experience a film that is centred on a minority narrative. Second, for Berry's 'national politics' argument to be demonstrated, he intentionally constructs these films as 'racial minority films', as a binary system. Berry fails

to define what 'minority films' means, apart from pointing out that there is evidence or deliberate use of non-Han language in them. Furthermore, the fact that both films that Berry uses as examples were directed by a Han ethnic filmmaker, Tian Zhuangzhuang, already makes the debate on ethnicities within China more complicated than a duality logic. Berry criticises the concept of 'Third Cinema' in film studies as 'essentialism', 'an attempt to construct Third Cinema as a new subject position', as a challenge toward the dominant Hollywood practices. The same criticism can be applied here to reflect on his approach to the films centred on minority ethnicities, an attempt to construct the concept of 'minority films' as 'a new subject position', to bring to the fore academic rhetoric driven by certain political ambition.

Yingjing Zhang's article 'From "Minority Film" to "Minority Discourse"' (1997) as a response to Berry also expresses several concerns toward his approach as 'a politically motivated and manipulated process of cultural production.' He adds:

> This cultural production brings out not just a unified discourse of solidarity among fifty-five "ethnic minorities" in China, but also – as we shall see in the later sections of film analysis – an *ambivalent* filmic discourse on which the dialectic of Self and Other is inevitably predicated. (Zhang, 1997: 74)

Zhang further problematises Berry's simplistic definition of 'race' describing his explanation through both social science and literary studies in detail. In addition, Zhang has a different interpretation of the film examples that Berry discussed. In Zhang's opinion (1997: 81), instead of seeing the Fifth Generation films as containing ethnic minority interests as a new challenge to Han ethnicity, he regards these films as still sharing 'internal colonialism' and 'internal orientalism', that are an effective discursive means to the establishment of the Han cultural hegemony. He adds that a 'still fundamentally Han-centered' position remains the central ethos of these films.

Comparing Berry and Zhang's articulations demonstrates the differences in their interpretation of the same films. The ways in which these films appeal to the public must be similarly diverse, for example their reception by a Han audience, or by an ethnic minority audience. Since these films, or films in general, are produced for a wide audience, instead of being specifically tailored for scholars to examine, analysis of their reception regarding their ethnic-political appeal demands more attention than a purely textual-based analysis by a scholar. Scholars should always take cultural history into account, to truly understand the experience films offer to an audience, regardless of ethnic-background. Dudley Andrew (1986) maintains that:

> […] neither the producer, the text, the apparatus, nor the viewer is stable enough to hold us within a universal theory of the film experience. Today we are fascinated by history and by the variety of films, spectators, texts, and uses of the cinema. Any theory we have of the place of the spectator will need to be mapped along the specific coordinates of cultural history. For the multiple sites in which spectators meet texts supposes multiple ambitions of producers, multiple cultural needs and traditions. The ritual of the movies cannot be understood simply by looking at the machinery that makes it possible or by studying the most glorious films that have been made. We must, I'm afraid, interrogate cultural history to see how cinema has inserted itself into social life in succeeding eras and different places. (Andrew, 1986: 9)

In his conclusion, Zhang points out another issue: that we have now entered a 'critical moment of redefining our geopolitical world.' Instead of defining such types of film as 'minority films', Zhang implies that Berry's divisions into the minority ethnicities against the Han majority (or to the nation state) is a response to (or a symptom of) the 'currently hard-to-define geopolitical world' in 'a hyphenated existence'. Zhang (1997) questions:

> Does this conspicuous lack in critical language reveal any penchant for essentialism in our conceptualization of nationhood (i.e., a nation is so "fundamental" that it can never be "post" itself), even though the "nation" (in

> both sense of "nation-people" and "nation-state") has been repeatedly broken down to multiple ethnicities and regions, and the "nation as narration" has been subject to interrogation by various instances of minority discourse? (Zhang, 1997: 80)

The problems and debates about China's internal multi-ethnicity remain. Whether a politically driven interpretation of certain films can challenge the reality of nation is another matter.[40] These different interpretations do not change the geographical reality, however; what they have achieved is a specific discourse, or a selected linguistic usage, when writing about the topic of Chinese cinema as a form of knowledge production. The research on minorities within China is not a new topic, and it has been widely written about in various study disciplines. The use of discourse which focuses on 'ethnicities' as a film interpretation strategy undeniably appears as radical within the studies of filmic reality, which enables scholars to bring to the fore the rhetoric of cultural 'plurality' as a pseudo-progressive intervention. However, because of its lack of attention to the wider society and specific cultural history, such simplistic interpretation is unlikely to contribute any new knowledge to the already existing scholarship on ethnic-minority politics, policy and culture.

Apart from remaining as a niche topic within a small self-serving circle, such 'minority discourse' interpretation inevitably fails to offer a wider epistemological resonance within the field. For instance, the scholars who have been using the 'minority discourse' paradigm for their research on Chinese films, have also been involved in promoting 'minority films' themselves. In the UK for example, the annual Chinese Visual Festival that is hosted by King's College, Cambridge and in elaboration with the BFI, has an established preference for 'minority films'. While it is difficult for scholars who work in the UK (and elsewhere) to access films, primary sources and historical documents, and to conduct audience surveys among ethnic minorities in China, to evaluate the wider social implications

[40] The reality of a nation state does not necessarily lead to the negative connotation of nationalism.

about these so-called ‘minority films’, a platform such as this festival becomes the source for scholars to validate their research.

This section has demonstrated that debate over the ‘discourse of Chinese cinema as territories and ethnicities’ became a way of producing academic knowledge about Chinese films, supported by the theoretical model which was first introduced by Rey Chow’s version of ‘cultural studies’. The ultimate aim of such an approach is to generate ‘plurality’ regarding different modes of interpretation of the ‘Chineseness’ of Chinese cinema. However, as signalled by the disagreement of several scholars, such an approach to the studies remains on a textual level which is disconnected with the reality of the actual production, distribution and consumption of Chinese films inside and outside of China (de Kloet, 2007).

4.3 The Discourse of Chinese Cinema as Languages

The Chow influenced ‘cultural studies’ approach of Chinese cinema studies, which insists on any cultural text’s ‘plurality’ through interpretation, continued to be practised, as is evident in the making of the ‘discourse of Chinese cinema as languages’. This particular discourse refers to a series of debates over the notion of ‘Chinese-language cinema’ as well as the increasingly popular debates about ‘Sinophone cinemas’.

The debate regarding the term ‘Chinese-language cinema’ was instigated by what Zhang (2010) calls the country’s ‘unstable geopolitical and ecocultural constitution’, and therefore the theoretical definition is both ‘fluctuating and unfinished due to the historical ruptures caused by regime changes and China’s intermittent mass movements of border crossing and self-fashioning’ (2010: 19). Thus, the term ‘Chinese-language cinema’ was proposed by Sheldon Lu and Emilie Yeh (2005) to replace the term ‘Chinese cinema’ in order to shift the interpretational focus to language from the focus on the nation state.

However, just like the interpretational focus on 'territories' and 'ethnicities' discussed in the previous section, the notion of 'Chinese-language cinema' is problematic. As Zhang (2010) argues:

> While "Chinese-language cinema" has the advantage of foregrounding differences of regional dialect as well as challenging – if not transcending – the singular nation-state model, its narrow linguistic emphasis may not be sufficient to capture the rich variety of geopolitics, regionalism, ethnicity, and polylocality in Chinese cinema. Moreover, "Chinese-language cinema" is wholly inadequate for referencing commercially successful films from mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong […] [where they] intentionally deploy extensive English dialogue in a mixture of "global melange" and employ a multinational cast in order to expand international viewership beyond an established base of Chinese-language audiences. (Zhang, 2010: 20)

Despite the debate on using or not using 'Chinese-language cinema' to define this emerging field, these discussions became the dominant discourse within Chinese cinema studies that spawned many academic articles. However, the theoretical term 'Chinese-language cinema' is no longer adequate in contrast to the diversity of how people perceive their own Chinese-heritage identity, especially for those who do research and teach abroad and are to various degrees connected to the cultural heritage. In other words, how diaspora Chinese heritage defines 'Chineseness', directly influences how this group of scholars theorises the topic of Chinese cinema. 'Chinese-language cinema' is arguably not a sustainable term, as inevitably some overseas Chinese scholars would consider *themselves and their interests* in films outside of that category; a scholar's own identity perception determines their theorising on the topic of Chinese cinema.

In the 2000s, another new term focusing on language aspects was coined – 'Sinophone' – inspired by the previous efforts in postcolonial Francophone

studies.[41] 'Sinophone' in the field of Chinese cinema studies, as a new proposed theoretical paradigm, was first articulated by Shu-Mei Shih (2004, 2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014a and 2014b). Geremie Barmé (2005, 2008) also attempted to theorise the concept on several occasions, but it was Shih who was the pioneer of 'Sinophone' debates, and who persisted with it in her subsequent efforts. Initially, the word was developed for the studies of Chinese-language literature in a global context, and was later adopted for the studies of cinema and other visual culture. 'Sinophone' as a concept and a module of theoretical thinking has now matured academically into a specific paradigm, and is applied in examining a wide range of cultural texts and practices beyond literature. While the focus on minor ethnicities discussed previously attempts to emphasise internal 'plurality' within the nation state, the concept of 'Sinophone' pays attention to the external 'plurality' in relation to Chinese-heritage across the globe. Shih (2004) explains, 'by 'sinophone' literature I mean literature written in Chinese by Chinese-speaking writers in various parts of the world outside China, as distinguished from 'Chinese literature' – literature from China' (2004: 29). Geremie Barmé (2008) later refines the definition of the 'Sinophone world' as "one consisting of the individuals and communities who use one or another – or, indeed, a number – of China-originated languages and dialects to make meaning of and for the world, be it through speaking, reading, writing or via an engagement with various electronic media" (2008: 2). In Barmé's view, such new conceptualisation goes beyond the limited denotation that the word 'China' bears, and can include the wider Chinese diasporic communities around the world in cultural analysis. More importantly, apart from including the global diasporic community, 'Sinophone studies' also has a political ambition, 'a method that unsettles binaries and offers in their place the far richer potential of multidirectional

[41] Charles Forsdick (2003) gives the methodological definition: 'The persistent assertion of Francophone Postcolonial Studies as a field of enquiry in its own right reflects a constructively critical strategy emerging from dissatisfaction with both the *monolingual* emphases of postcolonial criticism […] and the *monocultural,* essentially metropolitan biases of French Studies' (36).

critiques' (Shih, 2010: 492). This not only aims at problematising China-centrism, but also 'the Eurocentric manner' of perceiving China or 'Chineseness' as a singularity. Therefore, it 'introduces difference, contradiction, and contingency into those [fixed Chinese] identities' (Shih, 2007: 35).

Following the efforts of both Shih and Barmé, the concept has been widely adopted for the studies of various, so-called 'global Chinese identities' across a wide range of cultural practices.[42] Such ambitious discourse covers the large scale of global cultural production, and its circulation generates several theoretical concerns. In his review on *Sinophone Studies: A Critical Reader* (by Shu-Mei Shih, Chien-hsin Tsai and Brian Bernards, 2013), in a further attempt to professionalise the discourse, Aaron Feng Lan (2014) points out that the 'epistemological confusion' and 'methodological loopholes' of this emerging 'problematic field' being 'no less unstable than ethnicity, simply cannot sustain consistent explorations of complex social relations overdetermined by production relations' (2014: 517). While articulators of this new discourse use the umbrella term to gather all different overseas minor dialectical practices as a 'resistance' against a Chinese 'regime of authenticity', in the light of a vague Marxian vein of postcolonial studies, such discourse construction is too ambitious to fulfil its agenda. Lan (2014) continues to criticise this concept as 'an English formulation committed to opening space for Sinitic voices, [which] is in fact enabled by the aphonia of Sinitic realities perpetuated in the Anglophone-dominated international cultural politics' (518).

As a subfield of postcolonial studies it is substantially contested and debated, and has already become a new theoretical foundation for studies of Chinese cinema, or the theoretical possibility of establishing a new field. Shih further developed her thinking in

[42] Sham, 2009; Shen, 2010; Yue, 2012; Leperlier, 2012; Chiang & Heinrich, 2013; McDonald, 2013; Tan, 2013; Groppe, 2013; Yue & Khoo, 2014; Lupke, 2016; Wu, 2016; Pecic, 2016.

studies of visual culture in *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone: Articulations across the Pacific* (2007). Through using the manifestations of 'Sinophone', she crystallises the theory as pertaining to 'not the ethnicity or race of the person but the languages he or she speaks in either vibrant or vanishing communities of those languages' (Shih, 2007: 30). In other words, the logic of any inquiry concerning the studies of cinema has a pre-supposed agenda of focusing on different languages, ideally orally. Acknowledging different dialects spoken in a film should not be looked at as an isolated text for a Sinophonic purpose. Many film scripts have included dialects in the world of filmmaking; if Sinophone studies concern the different dialects related to Chinese heritage spoken in films, then perhaps scholars ought to focus on the design of script of these films more specifically. What the Sinophone studies model encourages research to do, however, is to produce an interpretation of certain content to support the theorisation of such a concept. Such a model restricts the search for selected evidence to demonstrate the validity of the Theory of Sinophone.

After Shih's *Visuality and Identity*, the discourse of Sinophone as a methodological foundation became legitimised, and was adopted for the studies of Chinese cinema (at least there was an attempt to promote this discourse into the field's further professionaliasation). In 2011, a Call for Papers for a special issue on 'From Diasporic Cinemas to Sinophone Cinemas' was included in the *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*. As the guest editors, Audrey Yue and Olivia Khoo, express, this special issue focused 'on the new cinemas emanating from the Sinophone network' (2011: 169). The special issue was later expanded into an edited volume *Sinophone Cinemas* in 2014. This new academic discourse on Chinese cinema had origins elsewhere, and the specific network of academic language was articulated, endorsed and built up by several scholars. The foreword is written by the pioneering articulator of this discourse. Shih states:

> Sinophone cinema as an existential reality has over half a century of history, so is thus not at all new, but it has so far existed under such rubrics as Chinese-language cinema and Chinese diasporic cinema that have circumscribed its full recognition to varying extents. (Shih, 2014: viii)

The editors Yue and Khoo further propose:

> The chapters in this volume examine the critical efficacy of a methodological shift from diasporic cinemas to Sinophone cinemas in order to re-engage new sites of localization, multilingualism and difference that have emerged in Chinese film studies but that are not easily contained by the notion of diaspora. […] They engage the political economy of Sinophone film production, distribution, consumption and regulation; cinematic practices of Chinese and non-Chinese language resistance, complicity and transformation; Sinophone communities as sites of cultural production; and new visual economies and cultures. They present case studies of multilingual, multi-dialectal and multi-accented cinemas in their historical, social and cultural contexts, representing screen cultures from Britain, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Australia, Mainland China and the Chinese diasporas; and they canvass a range of formats including commercial co-productions, national cinemas, documentaries, digital videos and independent films, to consider what the intersection of Sinophone theory and the cinema can offer. (Yue & Khoo, 2011: 1)

If the above explains parts of the 'Sinophone Cinemas' agenda, then this project seems to be overambitious, resting its methodologies on an already overambitious and under-theorised concept of 'Sinophone'. The Sinophone concept has now secured its theoretical position within the studies of Chinese cinema, after a series of publications.

While the discourse of territories, ethnicities and languages aims to bring to the fore the concept of 'plurality', the medium of cinema or film is used as a supplement to various cultural politics. Paul Willeman (1995) predicted the issue of dominant discourses appearing in the field of Chinese cinema studies:

> This expansion in academia's disciplinary field creates job and departmental expansion opportunities. The result is that scholars formed within the paradigm

> of Euro-American film theory are rushing to plant their flags on the terrain of, for instance, Chinese, Japanese, or Indian film studies. In that respect, those scholars and departments are actively delaying the advent of genuine comparative film studies by trying to impose the paradigms of Euro-American film and aesthetic theories upon non-European cultural practices. (Willeman, 1995: 26)

Theoretically, what has been defining the academic status of the new field of Chinese cinema studies is a series of debates founded on the discourses discussed above. The discourses of talking about the cinema through theorising it 'as territories' 'as ethnicities' and 'as languages' have a broader agenda to achieve a liberal 'plurality' manifesto through various interpretational practices of Chinese film texts. However, there is another discourse which also provided the theoretical space to support the institutionalisation of Chinese cinema studies in English-language academia – which is the 'discourse of Chinese cinema as independent'.

4.4 The Discourse of Chinese Cinema as Independent

Since the popularisation of Chinese cinema studies in English from the 1990s onwards, it is evident that scholars have been paying exceptional attention to independent Chinese films than to blockbuster productions. Such a preference has therefore generated a particular discourse, which this chapter calls the discourse of 'Chinese cinema as independent', to support a series of debates and activities that focus on this particular topic. The preference of academics for independent Chinese films can be understood through the following explanations.

While, as explained in the first section, Chow's version of 'cultural studies' is what set out the theoretical model for Chinese cinema studies in English, its interpretational liberation has an agenda to constantly seek for alternative and marginalised texts that are not

in the mainstream. This agenda is evident and has been clearly explained via the unpacking of the other discourses around 'territories', 'ethnicities' and 'languages'. Independent films therefore, fall into the category which is the ideal example for critics to practise their 'democratic' readings of Chinese films.

The focus on independent films fits perfectly well with the political agenda of 'cultural studies' for several reasons. While as explained, that the main interest in such theoretical model is to through democratic interpretation to liberate marginalised groups of people in any society, the connotation of 'independent' Chinese cinema here refers to a position that is perceived as always in struggles with the State or the Chinese government. The social and political subordinated position that independent Chinese films represent are in line with the 'cultural studies' model and its research motivation. In other words, for a period of time, independent Chinese films have been used by scholars who work on Chinese cinema as a case to protest against the so called government led 'censorship'. The purpose of these studies is to highlight this tension and political struggle, which is evident in most of the scholarships that focus on the case of independent Chinese films.

The theoretical struggle that Chinese independent films represent are not only a binary struggle with the State, but it has also been perceived that it is also in a struggling position with traditional film studies discourses. Pickowicz and Zhang (2006) argue:

> Chinese underground filmmaking attracted international attention in the early 1990s, but media coverage of it has occurred mostly outside China and has frequently filtered through Eurocentric lenses. On the academic side, a few scholarly works in English from the 1990s could not do justice to the immensely rich materials produced by Chinese underground films, whose social, ideological, and aesthetic significance calls for in-depth investigation. (Pickowicz & Zhang, 2006: vii).

Many would agree that there is a preference for scholars who work in the field of Chinese cinema studies to pay more attention to independent Chinese films. It is also evident that such a topic attracted a series of book length publication from 2000s onward.[43] The sentiment is similar across these different research, which is to through an active interpretation to 'recognise' certain independent Chinese films that otherwise do not normally go pass the censorship or receive a national release. Scholars, through their research, therefore act as a cultural critic to 'help' these films to be acknowledged by more overseas audience because how they have been repressed inside the country. However, the dilemma appears, when several independent Chinese directors slowly gained recognition by larger audience and eventually the censorship. For example, director Jia Zhangke and his films, have been one of the most popular topic for scholars to explore via various interpretations and also known as the most famous 'independent' director. However, since few years ago, director Jia began to make films with higher budget while eventually received certifications for a national release for his films. This important transition does not gain as much attention as when Jia was an independent director and where his films represented the 'materials' for what scholars needed exactly to support their 'cultural studies' interpretational liberation. The discourse of 'Chinese cinema as independent' can only use certain types of films to supports its studies and to legitimise their linguistic strategies. These films need to be made underground, normally without a public screening licence, without a national release status and are perceived as the subordinated group of artists in Chinese society. When directors such as Jia who has already moved on from his social position,

[43] Pickowicz & Zhang (eds.), 2006; Zhang, 2007; Zhou, 2007; Berry, Lu & Rofel (eds.) 2010; Robinson, 2013; Liang, 2014; Wang, 2014; Zhang & Zito, 2015; Wang, 2018a, 2018b)

scholars who are active in creating this discourse need to search for new evidence and material to maintain such a discourse.

The preference in identifying certain films are worth more to be studied is nothing new. As already discussed earlier in Chapter Two, a similar strategy was used by early film studies scholars to acquire artistic status for film, by theorising the definitive characteristics of film that were different from other forms of art. The logic in the context of Chinese cinema studies is similar and also aligned with Bourdieu's theoretical conceptualisation: the very creation of distinctiveness in any subject to be studied is ultimately a symbolic violence for orchestrating a hierarchy in knowledge disposition. This is the case for the field of Chinese cinema studies and its ongoing struggles. Independent films have been paid more attention to, with a preference exhibited by academic scholars, while blockbuster films and their reception have been commonly ignored and undermined.

Unlike the other discourses discussed in this chapter, the discourse of 'Chinse cinema as independent' and its strategies are even beyond textual interpretation. For this particular discourse, scholars have been participating in *creating* the materials for their studies by being actively involved in the appropriation of certain films and film festivals. Such a strategy is performed in both the US and the UK. In other words, in order to have films studied under this particular discourse, scholars have been organising screenings and archiving research projects and publications around the notion of independent Chinese films. From Bourdieu's perspective, these activities can be seen as the very materialisation of knowledge as the process of discourse-making.

To reveal the active roles that academics play in creating the distinctive preference toward independent films in the context of Chinese cinema studies, this section will present and evaluate two sets of findings. The first is 'The Memory Project' hosted by Duke University in the US, the second is a recent AHRC funded project titled 'Independent

Cinema in China, 1990 – 2017: State, Market and Film Culture' in the UK. According to Duke University's press release:

> Duke University Libraries has received a $40,000 grant from the *Council on East Asian Libraries of the Association for Asian Studies* to support the processing of the Memory Project archives. The grant comes from the *Innovation Grants for East Asian Librarians* program, inaugurated in 2015 with funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. During the two-year project, set to begin in July 2015, staff will arrange and describe this extensive collection of more than 1,000 interviews to significantly enhance the preliminary description and to normalize the various video formats for access and preservation. Subsequent to the grant, the library will develop a digital collection providing a robust discovery and display experience for researchers using the collection. (Duke University Libraries, 2015)

This is one of the important case to demonstrate a process of how the discourse 'of Chinese cinema as independent' is created, if we try to comprehend this event and its results within Bourdieu's framework of 'field'. The establishment of such an archive, is a process of not only the creation and reinforcement of this particular discourse, but also the creation of certain capital for scholars in the field of Chinese cinema studies to acquire to support their positioning in the field. Director Wu Wenguang is known as the 'father of Chinese independent documentary film'. For many years, he and his group have been making underground films without gaining national release in China. The memory Project touches on several sensitive topics including to use filming to record people's last memories of the Cultural Revolution event. The contrast that we see here is that, while his films are not widely or officially acknowledge by the state in China, setting up an archive to support his project by one of the most famous universities in the world has provided the project its legitimacy. Furthermore, the materials gathered through the archive immediately become raw materials for scholars to study, as a continuous support and main the discourse of 'Chinese cinema as independent'. In other words, the discourse creates a unspoken rule for

the field is to encourage other scholars to pay attention to independent films, to *create* the values in these materials for academic research purposes.

Similar process also took place in the UK, in terms of enriching the discourse of 'Chinese cinema as independent', revealed through a recent large scale AHRC funded research project. The project is titled 'Independent Cinema in China, 1990 – 2017: State Market and Film Culture'. In the project's official press release, it states:

> Censored, marginalized and largely inaccessible, independent cinema in the People's Republic of China is widely recognised as an important achievement of recent Chinese cinema. It functions as a dynamic force to challenge the concepts of art, truth, reality and ethnics constructed in official discourses and to explore alternative spaces, places, voices, and images that have been ignored or distorted in mainstream media. However, following a nationwide shut-down of independent film festivals and organizations in the PRC since 2012, there is a real danger that these works and the material culture surrounding them may disappear. This project aims to preserve independent films made in the PRC in the past three decades and to conduct comprehensive research into this unique but under-researched film culture. (UKRI, 2019)

The ambition for this four-year (2019 – 2023) funded research project is very clear, but more importantly, once again, in addition to Duke University's involvement in *creating* the research values of Chinese independent films, this recent AHRC funded project is another major force that sustains the discourse of 'Chinese cinema as independent' as one of the crucial interest in the field.

So far, there is an imbalance of interests where the discourse of 'Chinese cinema as independent' plays a more important role in comparison to commercial film or the latest film industry. In addition to other discourses as discussed previously, all current major discourses in the field of Chinese cinema are encourage and supported ty a lose adaptation of 'cultural studies' where its aim is to liberate marginalised groups through democratic interpretation of different film texts. As a result, mainstream Chinese cinema is seen as the opponent for these

struggles to take place in order for these discourses to be legitimised through specific linguistic strategies.

However, if we look at what research areas that scholars focus on regarding Chinese cinema in mainland China, then we would realise the limitation and exclusiveness that these three discourses signal. Below is a list of different topics covered by the *Journal of Beijing Film Academy* between 2017 and 2019. This chapter has gathered the main themes of all article publications in this journal between these two years and translated, compiled the list below to further support the argument made (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. A List of Article Categories Gathered from the Journal of Beijing Film Academy, 2017 – 2019

- Diary of Filmmaking by Directors
- The Latest Developments in Film Theory
- Chinese Film History
- International New Vision
- Visual Culture
- Documentary Studies
- VR
- Film Industry
- Moving Image Art
- Performing Art
- Film Technology
- Film Pedagogy

It is perhaps considerable why scholars from mainland China consider scholarship produced in English-language academia on Chinese cinema cannot be comprehended neither do they capture the latest industry development. However, if we understand the major discourses discussed in this chapter which composed the field of Chinese cinema studies in English in the context of this thesis has discussed in the previous chapters, then it can be argued that this is only a continuation of certain tradition. In other words, it can be argued that, as evidence, although the rise of Chinese cinema studies was a reaction toward its marginalised position within films studies, its own establishment as a new field in fact follow similar patterns and strategies. In Bourdieu's understanding, these are the ongoing struggles within a field that are inevitable, where unpacking the processes and the details of these struggles help us to better understand how a professional field operates and how different positions create preferences, agendas and interests as part of the habitus.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has argued that from the 1990s onwards, owing to postcolonial and cultural theorist such as Rey Chow's efforts in building a theoretical foundation for the studies of Chinese cinema via her take on 'cultural studies', a new scholarly space for the field of Chinese cinema studies finally gained a set a theoretical vocabularies to be recognised by academia. However, because of the specific interests that the theoretical model of Chow's 'cultural studies' has, the development of the field of Chinese cinema studies was constituted by the making of three particular discourses. In other words, based on the 'cultural studies' model and approach, the studies of Chinese films focused mainly on debates over the 'discourse of Chinese cinema as territories and ethnicities', the 'discourse of Chinese cinema as languages' and the 'discourse of Chinese cinema as independent'. The theorisation from

the 1990s onwards therefore paid much attention by scholars to the making of these discourses.

This chapter has unpacked each of these discourses, their rationales, logics and preferred framings, as well as arguing how scholars who follow the Chow's 'cultural studies' model as paradigm continue to emply a textual-based analysis approach which had already been criticised in films studies previously. This chapter has also argued further that for the 'discourse of Chinese cinema as independent', scholars have been involved in creating materials to support their studies and to sustain this discourse. This phenomenon therefore echoes to Bourdieu's notion of *habius,* where the field players (scholars in this context) inevitably and actively contribute to the status building of field.

Furthermore, these three discourses are also evidence, in my reading, which demonstrates how Chinese cinema studies in English-language academia complexly exemplifies a field of continuous struggles over different theoretical position-taking. In addition, examples of different research areas paid attention to by scholars in mainland China have been translated into English for purposes to illuminate the basis for a comparative framework to the major discourses discussed in this chapter. It explained how the latest focus on Chinese cinema in mainland China is different to the research preferences and agendas that are in the English-language context.

What further problematics does the current state of Chinese cinema studies as an academic field signal? The next chapter, Conclusion, will address these additional points and summarise how the research question has been answered throughout this thesis.

Conclusion

It has been quite a journey, reaching thus far in this PhD thesis. It is a journey, in a sense, whose research has enabled a junior scholar to gain a critical view of the scholarly development of film studies as well as Chinese cinema studies, of the relationship between the two fields and of the battles that previous scholars fought for their ambitions and their legacy. It was never the intension of this thesis to capture every single scholar's work throughout the development of film studies and Chinese cinema studies; this would have been impossible for any work like this to achieve. This thesis was neither designed to be a straight history of the discipline either; it was designed to be a critical reflection mapping out a broader picture of its scholarly development, the interactions among different theoretical positions and the results of those scholarly activities. It was designed to discover what were the main debates and discourses that contributed to the professionalisation of both film studies and Chinese cinema studies.

Through the findings gathered from several archival resources, this thesis took up an opportunity to reveal the civic activities of whom outside of academia, who showed equal if not more enthusiasm towards the cinema (see Chapter Two and Three). These materials gathered from various archival sources such as *The British Newspaper Archive* might not have been available to all, if not organised in this context, for this thesis. For instance, materials like such are not often used by scholars to support their research on Chinese films. In my view, however, these archival materials are as valuable as the scholarship produced by academics on films; each of the newspaper reports among the findings reveals an intimate connection between the audience and films with stories to which many can relate.

Perhaps this is also the time to express a confession. The initial idea for this research was in fact motivated by a personal curiosity, begun as early as 2007. My previous academic studies in film could be viewed as a result of the discipline's successful professionalisation. The reason for choosing the subject of film for undergraduate and postgraduate studies was straightforward: cinema, and how the medium could educate and liberate my mind, having fascinated me from an early age. I have learnt about different subjects through watching a variety of films where the moving pictures delivered a world I do not normally see or engage with in everyday life. Equally, I have been captivated by the art and practice of filmmaking, the technology of the camera and its capability to capture the world around us.

It was with such a fascination that I entered the discipline of film studies for academic inquiry, not wishing to have the fascination explained, but to have it enriched. Has this fascination deepened in these past years of studies? There seems to have been a constant tension throughout the years of research between the fascination which demands enhancement and the academic parameters within the discipline. Is there a contradiction between a curious mind and the boundaries that are set within a discipline or an academic field? Should there be? The more serious questions that need to be asked are therefore: Why does one study the cinema academically? What kind of knowledge does one want to produce? What does one want to use this knowledge for? These questions continue to be a guidance for the next stage of a PhD student's career development. It has now been almost twelve years that I been in the academic context, studying and researching cinema (Chinese or non-Chinese). Where will this journey head in the next ten years, following this PhD thesis?

It is through having undertaken this PhD research that I have made a decision, that my future research will not follow the previous battles fought for both the field of film studies and the field of Chinese cinema studies. The research to be conducted, as learnt from

this thesis, is to not only try to facilitate dialogue between scholars in and outside of China, when it comes to debates regarding the art and philosophy of cinema, but whose research will also have to be connected with the overall development of the film industry itself. On reflection, the battles and struggles that took place in academia over the field of film studies and Chinese cinema studies must have disappointed Semsel greatly for him to give up being an academic (see Appendix 1, an interview with Semsel) and decide to focus on his filmmaking practice instead, after his pioneering efforts in introducing the topic of Chinese cinema to films studies (1987, 1990, 1993). However, I still believe in the social function and responsibilities of the university. An academic is in a position to produce knowledge that is beyond an academic field's internal struggles over cultural capital, and with the ultimate aim of contributing knowledge to the industry and society more generally. Therefore, this thesis has achieved a function in providing the necessary background knowledge for informing such a decision on my future research. However, as this thesis is now almost complete, it will have to finish what it set out to achieve: to deliver a conclusion to the initial research question.

Summary Revisions of Existing Perceptions

Two main existing perceptions have been revised in this thesis, supported by newly discovered archival materials. While it has been acknowledged by many scholars that the period of 1970s and UK's *Screen* journal represent a landmark for the professionalisation of films studies an academic field, this thesis holds a different observation. According to findings presented in Chapter Two, in particular archival materials about the Society of Cinematologists, the discussions for pushing the topic of film to be recognised as an academic disciplines took place in the 1960s after the foundation of the society. This was evident in a series of articles written by Robert Gessner, director of the society also one of

the most active members and scholar during that time (see Chapter Two). In his consistent publications, Gessner as a literary studies professor, intended to open up a new space of inquiry to accommodate research on films which was not paid attention to by his literary peers at that time. In short, the new observation suggests that the professionalisation of film studies did not start with *Screen* during the 1970s in the UK, but with arguably with the Society of Climatologists in the 1960s, in the US.

The second perception which can be revised is the understanding of how Chinese films only became widely known by western critics and audience in the 1980s, after winning several awards at major European film festivals. Chinese scholars such as Sheldon Lu (1997) perceives the 1980s as the period when intellectual discussions about Chinese films in the west became apparent. However, as the archival materials gathered from *The British Newspaper Archive* suggest, that post-1949 Chinese films were screened and discussed among the UK public as early as the 1950s. Regular listings and articles are evident in both national and regional British newspapers. These newly discovered materials suggest regular community based activities dedicated to the appreciation and discussion of Chinese films. Therefore, most scholars' perception regarding the 1980s as the era where Chinese cinema entered the western critics' awareness is debatable. In summary, this thesis suggests a revision of this perception and proposes scholars to take the period of 1950s more seriously, to further make sense of the reception of Chinese films in the west, scholarly and publicly.

Summary of Answers to the Research Question

At the beginning, this thesis asked: 'To what extent does Chinese cinema studies in English-language academia exemplify a field of discursive struggles over cultural capital?' Through its findings and analysis chapters, the thesis has provided three answers to this question,

supported by evidence gathered from a primary method of archival research following by a field analysis of selected materials. As Randal Johnson describes a 'field' is:

> […] structured by the distribution of available positions (e.g. consecrated artist vs striving artist, novel vs poetry, art for art's sake vs social art) and by the objective characteristics of the agents occupying them. The dynamic of the field is based on the struggles between these positions, a struggle often expressed in the conflict between the orthodoxy of established traditions and the heretical challenge of new modes of cultural practice, manifested as *preses de position* or position takings. (Johnson, 1993: 14)

In response to this definition of a 'field', Chinese cinema studies has certainly become a space where struggles occur among different position takings, occupied by agents (academic scholars). However, as this thesis has demonstrated, the activities which constituted the fight for positions in the field of Chinese cinema studies are, in fact, connected with other scholarly activities which took place throughout the development of film studies. In other words, as this thesis has suggested from the beginning, we cannot understand the making of the field of Chinese cinema studies without investigating its relations with other, more established, fields, such as film studies. Therefore, in order to answer the 'how' in the research question, three detailed answers have been provided in this thesis. In a logical and chronological order, these three answers can be summarised in the following paragraphs.

Firstly, historically and theoretically, owing to the internal battles and interests in the field of film studies, with their agendas fighting for the academic and artistic status of film, the topic of Chinese cinema was not included in its main debates. This fact was demonstrated by detailed analysis of three main discourses that contributed to the professionalisation of film studies in the period from the 1950s to the 1970s, namely 'the discourse of film as a discipline', 'the discourse of film as art' and 'the discourse of film as signification' (see Chapter Two).

Secondly as a result, the research topic of Chinese cinema studies was in a marginalised position during the period between the 1950s and early 1990s. Although scholars attempted to join in the three main discourses using the case of Chinese cinema, very little attention was paid and they did not transform the state of film studies. This argument was further supported through the presentation of a list of public discussions of Chinese films in the UK during the period, discovered via *The British Newspaper Archive*. Although the discussion of a possible 'film studies' began to emerge in China among intellectuals during the 1980s, and their writings were translated by scholars in the US and the UK as an attempt to further introduce the topic of Chinese cinema to English-language academia, these efforts were still not widely recognised by the field of film studies (see Chapter Three).

Thirdly, it is because of such a struggle as that faced by scholars interested in research Chinese films, from the 1990s onward, a series of writings supported by theories borrowed from cultural studies, postcolonial studies and poststructuralism appeared which eventually contributed to the professionalisation of the field of Chinese cinema studies in English. With similar patterns to how the field of film studies acquired its status in academia, the field of Chinese cinema studies likewise relied on certain academic discourses and the debates around them. These are 'the discourse of Chinese cinema as territories and ethnicities', 'the discourse of Chinese cinema as languages' and 'the discourse of Chinese cinema as independent'. Therefore, Chinese cinema studies has become a professional research field with most theorisation over the term 'Chinese cinema' being based on these three main discourses (see Chapter Four).

Further Problematics, Experiment in Solutions and Suggestions

Although the establishment of the field of Chinese cinema studies is a reaction toward the field of film studies and its main discourses, the new field also encountered struggles over academic recognition through the making of a set of new discourses. What are the further problematics which result from Chinese cinema studies becoming a professional field in English-language academia that are composed by these three main discourses? This conclusion has evaluated three main problematics: 1) A disconnection between scholarship produced in Chinese and in English and a lack of dialogue between scholars who work inside and outside of China on the research of cinema. 2) A disconnection between the scholarship produced in Chinese cinema studies in English and the film industry in China. 3) A lack of both professional and public knowledge regarding how the industry in the UK can collaborate with the Chinese film industry in the era of globalisation.

Throughout the course of undertaking this PhD research, several solutions have been practiced, outside of the thesis writing, to address these problematics. Further reference is provided in following paragraphs. First of all, since 2015, the author has established the Intellect China Library in collaboration with a UK publisher, Intellect. This is a book series that commissions, translates and publishes scholarship on cinema by Chinese scholars which has not been available in English. With this author as Series Editor and chief translator, the series has now published the following titles: *Beijing Film Academy Yearbook 2015* (2016); *Beijing Film Academy Yearbook 2016* (2017); *Beijing Film Academy Yearbook 2017* (2019) and *Film Studies in China: Selected Writings from* Contemporary Cinema (2018). As witnessed in Chapter Three, this practice is nothing new. The method of translation was already undertaken by other scholars such as Semsel and Berry during the late 1980s and the 1990s, as an attempt to introduce scholarship by Chinese intellectuals on cinema to the wider English-language academia. Therefore, this solution merely follows on from the previous

efforts of these two scholars, but this thesis identifies the practice as being an important and necessary process for bridging the gap between scholars who work inside and outside of China. In my view, it is important to have these translated materials published to bridge the cultural gap between two sides. Since their inception in 1984, as discussed, both the *Journal of Beijing Film Academy* and *Contemporary Cinema* included a broad range of topics in the studies of cinema. In contrast to the field of Chinese cinema studies in English-language academia, both journals in the Chinese context publish writings that engage with the practice of filmmaking as well as providing the latest updates on the film industry in China.

Second of all, in response to the second problematic, whilst a solution is yet to be identified, this conclusion would take up the opportunity for providing several suggestions. The field of Chinese cinema studies needs to undergo a collective reflection, regarding the essence of its research. The purposes of research in this field are to encouraged reconnection with the film industry and to support the industry's ongoing development as well as to provide critical reflection on how the industry can perform better. How can such reconnection take place? This thesis suggests a process of transformation which would need to cover several stages.

The first is a change in teaching curriculum. The design of future university courses on Chinese cinema would need to cover not only its theoretical aspect, but the historical, theoretical and industrial aspects of Chinese films. It is only by offering such a broad range of knowledge in teaching, that the curriculum could invite students to develop their interests in connecting with the industry and also gain confidence in believing that they can make change in the industry. The next generation of students who study Chinese cinema in the English would need to develop both the knowledge and skills for collaborating with film practitioners in different sectors, including the development, production, post-production,

distribution and exhibition of film. The next generation of students are encouraged to be educated to be more than critics; but also to be makers.

The second stage requires research to be transformed. How can scholars go beyond the main discourses that currently shape the field of Chinese cinema studies? How can new discourses be introduced to the field and given the same academic recognition? Who is responsible for delivering such transformation and how can we avoid further struggles over cultural capital occurring? The author realises that this transformation is beyond the capability of one single academic, and hence, she hopes that this thesis can provide the initial small step towards that larger project.

Third of all, in response to the third problematic raised above, the solution that has been practised since 2018 is to release research results immediately via online media platforms, in a language that is completely separate from the battles over discourses in both the field of film studies and the field of Chinese cinema. This thesis has discovered that as soon as a scholar joins in the theoretical debates, it becomes impossible for such knowledge to be transferred to either the public or the industry. The only way to escape these unwritten rules and parameters in the field of film studies, or the field of Chinese cinema studies, it is to write outside of those discourses. However, how can these case studies be rewritten in an academic language to be published in scholarly journal? This is something that needs further investigation and experiment. So far, the challenges faced by this experiment is that, most of these public facing articles become difficult to be reconverted into an academic language, for an academic purpose. What we need to ask further here is that, whether such conversion is necessary, while the initial research knowledge is already shared and available in the public domain? How can an academic balance producing knowledge that is accessible to both the public, the industry and which, at the same time, performs satisfactorily in the academic context so as to be accepted by her peers? The solution of releasing knowledge via online

media platforms is nothing new and is, in fact, informed by the insights gathered from the archival research in this thesis (see Chapter Three). By going through all the articles published in newspapers about Chinese cinema in the UK during the 1950s to the 1970s, the author sincerely felt that the knowledge contained in these articles is much more accessible than that produced under the three main discourses in the field of Chinese cinema studies. Therefore, this suggested solution is only a continuation of existing previous practices.

Limitations and Potential Future Research

Owing to the scope and capacity of this thesis, it is inevitable that it also contains limitations. These limitations will be addressed in this section. Chapter One intended to initiate a dialogue between Pierre Bourdieu and scholars that were critical about the development of films studies (David Bordwell, Noël Carroll and D.N. Rodowick). Here I would suggest there is scope to further develop a theoretical framework, where the dialogue can in fact constitute a new framework-building that did not exist in film studies before. This is one direction to which, perhaps, future scholars can pay more attention. How can a critical account of film studies be conducted and under what theoretical framework? This thesis has provided a new initiative and wishes to provide an exploration that other scholars can build their works upon.

In the archival research for Chapter Three, additional information can be included to make the evidence even stronger, by conducting further research on the newspaper archive in the US's context. This thesis has conducted the first stage of research and discovered over 1,000 items that are relevant to both keyword searches on 'Chinese film' and 'Chinese cinema'. Additional findings to reveal how Chinese scholars conduct research on none Chinese films are also important to create a comparative understanding of different

paradigms – whether scholars in China also create different discourse to organise their studies of none Chinese films?

Furthermore, all archival evidence gathered in this thesis can be opened up as a separate topic to be further investigated. For instance, all the evidence can support a good case study on civic activities and engagement with Chinese film culture in the UK and the US. A richer research on the cultural history of these activities will make an even more compelling comparison to the development of Chinese cinema studies sin English, or film studies more generally. Such a model of research has been practised by Richard MacDonald, as exemplified by his book *The Appreciation of Film: The Post-war Film Society Movement and Film Culture in Britain* (2016). In other words, academics need to realise the equal importance of non-academic engagements with film as art and culture, and reveal the value in the public's capability of producing knowledge and intellectual discussion around films.

This thesis has not included one single analysis of film as other standard film studies theses might have done. The justification is clear: this has been an investigation into the studies of cinema, not a study on films. This author shares the same critical view with David Bordwell, his 'Interpretation Inc.' and Pierre Bourdieu's critique on judgements via taste. The act of interpretation is not recognised by this thesis as a research method, as explained by Bordwell and discussed by this thesis in Chapter One. If not interpretation, what else can justify the studies of cinema? This urgent question certainly needs to be open to debates as a potential future research topic.

This PhD thesis hopes to provide the first experiment as a basis to encourage future research by other scholars. Apart from the limitations and new research potentials mentioned above, this thesis hopes to inspire others to continue to question several important points raised by this conclusion. It is important for us to continue to search for and experiment with different solutions to the identified problematics relating to the field of Chinese cinema

studies and the field of film studies more generally. Some basic questions can be taken with us each time when a new research project is established: Why do we research about Chinese cinema (or cinema in general)? How can scholars not become what Bourdieu calls the 'field players' that contribute to the forming of a particular field and its operation that is primarily based on struggles and battles over cultural capital? What would the consequences be if a scholar works outside of the context of an academic field and its petametres? Should these consequences be encouraged or condemned? What should scholars write about in their research in relation to film and who should be the audience? Should research on films be connected to the industry and if so, how?

Ultimately, a crucial realisation enabled by this thesis is to question what the essence of research is and how can it be achieved. Instead of the classical question in asking what the essence of film is, perhaps it is time for us to ask, once again, what the essence of Chinese cinema studies could become in the future?

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Transcription with George S. Semsel, March 2013

When and how did you become interested in Chinese cinema?

I had a long-standing, somewhat romanticized interest in China before I became interested in its films, and there's no need to bore you with that. In the early 1980s, my late wife, Rosemary, began to teach ESL to scholars visiting Ohio University from the PRC and we served as a host family for two of them. They encouraged me to seek a position in China as a "Foreign Expert." On this advice, I applied to the Ministry of Education for a position and was accepted. This was in 1981-82. Once I knew we were going to spend at least a year in China, I began to look at whatever materials on Chinese film (in English) that I could find. There was very little of substance, most of it quite dated. My primary resource was Jay Leyda's book *Dianying/Electric Shadows: An Account of Films and the Film Audience* in China (MIT Press, 1972). When I realized how little had been done on this subject, I became more deeply interested in it though I had no concrete plan as to how to undertake the necessary research. Then, a most remarkable turn in my fortunes changed everything. The Ministry of Education wrote asking me if instead of teaching English, I would accept instead an appointment to the China Film Corporation's Import and Export Division within the Ministry of Culture. I was overjoyed. The shift in the appointment delayed my China adventure one year, which actually helped me since it gave me more time to study things beforehand. In August 1984, with my late wife and youngest son, Thaddeus, in his early teens, I arrived in Beijing.

On the first paper you wrote about Chinese films, what did you want to achieve?

Actually, my first papers about Chinese film were written for *China's Screen*. Since I had found little on the subject available in the U.S., I thought it might be useful to write a few articles for the China Film Corporation's publicity journal. I called the series *an American Looks at Chinese Film*. I hoped it would bring wider attention to the rising film industry in China. The magazine was published in Chinese, English, Spanish and French, and was a major means at the time of making Chinese films known to overseas distributors.

I thought my task was to produce sufficient literature in English on the subject of Chinese film that Chinese scholars would intensify their efforts and China would begin to produce a more significant literature of its own. I thought it somewhat pretentious of me to go into China and tell people there what their films were all about. This is, incidentally, one of the reasons I later moved away from the subject. It would have been easy for me to produce more books and articles. Once I felt I had succeeded in my task and Chinese scholars had engaged the subject, I should gracefully move away from it. Perhaps one sign of this success is the publication of Ma Ning's first book and the promise of another already in the works.

What was the field like in the studies of Chinese cinema in the States back in the 1980s and 1990s?

In the 1980s, Chinese film, if taught at all, was a small segment of courses given to Asian or, perhaps, international cinemas. When I returned from China in 1985, I offered a one-term course in Chinese film on both graduate and undergraduate levels. To the best of my knowledge, it was the only course in the country at that time that was given to film from the People's Republic, though it is possible that one could find a similar course the West Coast. To my great surprise, the course was jam-packed. People were eager to learn about China, including its film.

China was a popular subject, but it was still terribly unknown in the USA. Students didn't know much at all about the PRC, and I found myself lecturing about China before talking about its films. Sadly, enough, when I retired, in 1999, I was still appalled with the lack of knowledge in the States about the People's Republic.

Scholars were also eager. At the annual session of the Society for Cinema Studies I attended in 1986, I believe, the Asian Cinema Studies Association was formed from a small but very eager group of scholars. The problem was the lack of materials. China released very few films, and written data hardly existed. People like Myra Binford and Gina Marchetti formed the nucleus of the group which showed signs of expanding quickly. Not too long after that, the ACSS held a combined conference with the Ohio University Film Conference, my home university, and an edition of *Wide Angle*, which the O.U. Film School published at that time was given to some of the papers presented.

How did you come up with the idea of editing Chinese Film Theory?

My first book, *Chinese Film: The State of the Art in the People's Republic* (1987) provided introductory materials on the subject, but it was only a beginning.

As American scholars began to undertake studies of Chinese film, the literature expanded, but almost all of it was given to observations about Chinese film from a western point of view. Writings by the Chinese about Chinese film were simply not available. Worse, those who knew the language tended to disparage the writings, claiming they were not worth reading. I spoke about this with two of my Chinese students, Xia Hong, and Hou Jianping, his wife at that time, who had worked with me at China Film in Beijing. Before coming to Ohio University, Xia Hong had edited *Dianying Yishu* and had a broad knowledge of the subject. Hou Jianping, an excellent translator, had seen almost of the most recent Chinese films and was familiar with the rise of the industry following the *cultural revolution*. We

decided to put together a book of translations which would help solve the problem. *Chinese Film Theory: A Guide to the New Era* (1990), was more or less an overview of the subject. By good fortune, at the time we were putting this first collection together, Chen Xihe, among the earliest film scholars in China to pursue graduate film studies in Beijing and a friend of Xia Hong, was undertaking doctoral studies at The Ohio State University, a sister university not too far away. He and Xia Hong approached me and suggested we produce a second collection. *Film in Contemporary China: Critical Debates 1979-1980* (1993), concentrated on the current debates at the time which were dealing with film art in directions not considered acceptable for some time in China.

What is your understanding of Chinese film theory, if there is any?

I must confess I am not up to date on the current literature, but I imagine the amount of writings available has expanded greatly since the first surge of the film industry in the mid-1980s. I have read as much of the available work in English as I can, but I no longer see myself as a deep scholar of the subject. As I mentioned, Ma Ning, who I believe is now teaching at Shanghai University, has published his first book, which I take as a good sign of this progress. The work of You Fei, in Beijing, is another.

As scholars of Chinese cinema studies, is it necessary for us to tell apart Chinese film theory from traditional Western theories?

China born Henry Lin, for many years the Dean of the College of Fine Arts at Ohio University, was a potter. When speaking one year about the arts, he had this to say: “When I make a pot, I don’t make a Chinese pot. I just make a pot.”

I first came upon this question in the mid-1980s, and I still find it somewhat curious, a small part of China’s seemingly endless insistence that its culture be recognized as distinct and

different from all others which it is, of course, by its very nature. Western writers have developed a vocabulary as well as a line of thinking over almost as many years as film has existed, and it is reasonable for all students of film to draw upon that tradition no matter where they live. But having said that, let me say this. There are two areas which Chinese film scholars should address in depth if they have not done so already. The first is the relationship of minorities to the mainstream, how they are perceived and used in film. The second is the way peoples whose written language is based in the ideogram look at the world, because I believe it is unquestionably distinct from the way those of us from the west, with a different language base do.

If you had to recommend a single piece of literature on Chinese cinema, which one would that be?

There still is not all that much available. For a single introductory work, I would recommend Yingjin Zhang's *Chinese National Cinema* (Rutledge, 2004). I understand Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar have a book out. I haven't seen it, but I would assume it would be centred upon the theoretical. Both books should include bibliographical materials.

People I know in the USA teaching about Chinese film tell me they rely on packets of articles more than they do on single texts.

What is the future of researching and teaching Chinese cinema in the Sates? Where do scholars aim to go, and where will they arrive?

I believe there will continue to be a relatively small group of film scholars centred in the Asian Cinema Studies Society, or perhaps, the Society for Cinema Studies, but the numbers will not increase substantially. The studies will remain for the most part on the west coast, where the Asian population is large, and at the more sophisticated research universities.

(Some years ago, I tried to establish a centre for the study of Chinese film at Ohio University. I thought this would be valuable for the many professors teaching in the Midwestern universities. I already had assembled a large collection of film (on tape) and numerous written materials. It was almost impossible to convince the administration of the wisdom of such a centre. I had argued that such a centre would be unique to the university and would attract a number of students from other areas. To seed it, I donated my entire collection of materials to the library, but when I retired, the idea was allowed to slowly die out as did the teaching of Chinese film.)

Chinese film will continue to be taught as part of a section on Asian or East Asian cinema in basic film appreciation courses. The literature now part of the introductory standard, Bordwell and Thompson's *Film Art: An Introduction* will, with appropriate editing, probably suffice for many years. Here and there across the USA will be scholars offering more substantial courses, but they will remain few in number.
Unless another "movement" such as the rise of the Fifth Generation occurs, I don't think research into Chinese film will change much. The excitement and enthusiasm are gone, both in China, I fear, and abroad.

I myself have of late been interested in the rise of the independent and often "underground" documentary movement. There is a substantial and growing body of work that seems centred through the Li Xianting Film Fund and the Song Zhuang Art Community. At least, that is where things seem to be happening, but I don't know how well the "movement" (if such it is) is being sustained.

Appendix 4: Interview Transcription with Chris Berry, March 2013

When and how did you become interested in Chinese cinema?

I studied Chinese at Leeds University from 1977 to 1981. During that time, my interest in cinema in general grew. There were few Mandarin speakers in the UK at that time. The University used films from the People's Republic to train us in aural comprehension. The films (from the Mao era, of course) were very unusual to me. I'm not sure I liked them, but I wrote my undergraduate thesis on them. It started from there.

What fascinates you the most about Chinese cinema, as an audience, and also as a scholar?

This is very difficult to answer. Chinese cinema is very diverse, and I relate to it in many different ways! But I will say that the films I enjoy the most are not always the films that interest me that most as a scholar. For example, I wrote my PhD dissertation on the cycle of films made about the Cultural Revolution during the period immediately after the Cultural Revolution (1977-1981). The films are very melodramatic, and their style seemed quite old-fashioned in the 1980s, when I was looking at them. So, I cannot pretend that I liked them. But they were fascinating to me!

Which specific areas do you focus on in the research of Chinese cinema?

Again, it's hard to answer. I have been doing this for over 30 years. However, I can tell you I started out with post-49 People's Republic cinema, because I was trained at Leeds in contemporary Chinese culture and in Mandarin. I don't speak Cantonese. That means that I don't really feel able to write much at Stephen Chow movies! Or Taiwanese-language films from the 1950s. The focus of my research has changed at different times. I think the next

project I would like to work on is the film culture of the Cultural Revolution decade -- where films were shown, what people wrote about them, what films were popular, and so on. But I don't know if I will get the opportunity to do that.

What are your methodologies for your research?

It depends on what I'm trying to find out. In the past, Zhang Yingjin has written that I have "dismissed" audience research. I think that's going a bit too far. In the 1980s, I really don't think that people were ready to talk frankly about their engagement with films to a foreigner, and even now I doubt that I would get very far with certain topics. For example, a couple of years ago I got interested in the "tongrennv" phenomenon and why those women were interested in consuming and composing gay male narratives and phantasies. I did have some very interesting meetings with some women. But the "tongrennv" phenomenon is like an exclusive club, and although the women I met liked hanging out with each other, I don't think they were ready to talk about it a lot even to other Chinese women, never mind to a foreign man. On the other hand, I was asked to write something about film and fashion. It's a long story to explain, but I was interested in the question of whether film played a role in people's decisions about what to wear during the Cultural Revolution. And I was able to do some very interesting work with groups of people who had been young then. I worked with a Chinese colleague, and we did the interviews as group interviews. My colleague suggested that we should make it like a little party, with some tea and cakes. And that was a very good idea. It was also a good idea to show them some clips to job their memories and to ask them to bring along photos from the time. But we did make one mistake. We were both worried that our interviewees might be freaked out by dealing with a foreigner, and so we decided to interview them in fairly larger groups. Wrong! They were so eager to talk. Our biggest problem was getting them to talk one at a time. So, it all depends on what I'm trying to do.

I am aware that your education background first began with Chinese Studies, has this provided you any benefits for researching Chinese cinema in general?

Well, it means I had learnt some Chinese before I started! It also means I had done quite a bit of reading about history, culture, politics, and so on.

Is there a difference between researching and teaching Chinese cinema as Chinese Studies and as Film Studies in general? Is there a bridge scholar can build between the two different perspectives?

I think this depends a lot on the academic system you are working in. In the United States, the BA is a 4-year programme, and students are encouraged to take courses from more than one department. So, a Chinese cinema course would almost certainly be offered to students in Chinese Studies, Film Studies, and more. But in the UK, where there is only a 3-year BA and each department is more or less a separate kingdom, there will be greater differences. For example, if taught in a Chinese Studies Department, there might be an expectation of Chinese language ability, but no background in Film Studies would be expected, and vice versa. I think the American-style system is much stronger in this regard, but I doubt that the UK will introduce a 4th year in the BA programme, like Hong Kong has done. We cannot afford to catch up with Hong Kong or places like that anymore, I'm afraid.

Does it require a process of cultural translation for teaching Chinese cinema in the West, if so, how do you do so to your students?

Yes, we cannot assume our students know much about China, so we have to be prepared to explain a bit. But these days there are often Chinese students in our classes, so they can also be called on to help out with some of that explanation. This can be very pedagogically productive, as it creates more conversation and exchange amongst students.

Have you come across any difficulties while teaching Chinese cinema to students that share a different cultural background? (difficulties such as problems that students might have in understanding certain types of contents, context, philosophy?)

Not really. The biggest "problems" I have run into have been with some students of Chinese backgrounds who have very strong opinions on certain things. For example, when I teach undergraduate Chinese cinema, I show films from different Chinese places. But sometimes, people have complained that they think I am prejudiced against Taiwan because they believe I am not showing enough Taiwanese films, for example. On the other hand, I also had a very vigorous and vocal complaint from another Taiwanese student who insisted that Taiwan was not "Chinese" in any way, and that therefore I should not be showing Taiwanese films in a Chinese cinema course at all. I try to accommodate everyone, but sometimes you can't succeed!

Do you think there should be a specific theory in researching Chinese cinema, combining both the theories that were developed within Western discourses, and also Chinese philosophical and aesthetic tradition? In year 1990, Chinese Film Theory: A Guide to the New Era was published, edited by George S. Semsel, Xia Hong and Hou Jianping. The volume collects essays that aim to argue or establish the thought of bringing Chinese film theory into the studies of cinema. Over 20 years later, the thought of Chinese film theory is still on the edge and yet to be developed further by scholars; and to be widely accepted by others. IF, there will be Chinese Film Theory, what do you think it would be?

I think research into Chinese film theory is emerging as a big topic. In 2008 I was involved in a 2-day conference called "Geographies of Film Theory." I think the assumption of many colleagues who worked in European and/or American film theory was that film theory started out in the West and them travelled elsewhere. But during the event, many of us who

work on other parts of the world disagreed. First, it is a mistake to assume this imperial metropolitan temporality of a spread outwards to the "periphery." For example, Pudovkin was translated into Chinese before his work was translated into English, from what I understand. Second, it is a mistake to think that there was no Chinese film theory from the beginnings of cinema. A lot of what we call "film theory" today was originally written as responses to the phenomenon of cinema by public intellectuals in Western countries. Public intellectuals in China in the teens, twenties, and thirties also wrote similar essays responding in various ways to film. It's just that we -- and I include many Chinese scholars in that "we" -- have not been accustomed to thinking of that as "film theory," too. This is rapidly changing. There was a big conference in Michigan last September, which I could not attend, because I was just starting my new job at King's. But I think we will see much more translate and analysis of various film theories from various eras in various parts of Asia now. And why should that theory only be useful for understanding Asian film? If Western film theory is useful for understanding Asian films, why shouldn't Asian film theory be useful for understanding Western films? After all, a lot of it was written at least as much in response to Western films as to Asian films. In fact, isn't it time we stopped the East-West dichotomizing?

What is the future of researching and teaching Chinese cinema in the UK? Where do we aim to go, and where will we arrive at?

Another huge question that is impossible to answer! I think the even larger question is about the future of British academia. As you know, the government has tripled the tuition fees for British undergraduate students. Funding for postgraduates is very difficult to get. Our BA is only 3 years, our MA is only 1 year, and our PhD is only 3 years. Everything is quite threadbare, and that worries me a lot. But as long as China is an increasingly important

player on the world stage and the UK wants and needs to know more about China, I'm sure the exhibition and study of Chinese cinema will have a strong role to play locally.

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