

MEMORIES OF THE FUTURE: RECEPTION STUDIES ON CHINESE SCIENCE-FICTION CINEMA, 1979 – 2016

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September, 2018

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

Title of Dissertation:
Memories of the Future: Reception Studies on Chinese Science-Fiction Cinema, 1979 – 2016

I have written this dissertation. Material from any outside source which I have used directly or indirectly is acknowledged accurately and I have made clear the extent to which it has been used.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to especially thank my dissertation supervisor, Prof. Julian Stringer for his help in supervising, advising, and revising the research direction to a proper level, and for the help he provided me throughout the academic year. I would also like to thank him for his boundless patience with me through what is certainly the most difficult period in my academic career.

I would also like to thank Prof. Paul Gladston, who now has left the university. As my previous supervisor, he also assisted me in supervising, advising, and revising, etc. Those supervision meetings with these two professors are significant to my research career indeed till present and will always be.

Finally, I want to thank my classmates of Ph.D. students for providing valuable comments to my work-in-progress paper. I also want to thank my family for showing great understanding in my absence from their lives for one year, and I hope to be able to make up for that in the near future.

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the history of the reception of science-fiction film in China from 1979 to 2016. It asks how Chinese audience received this genre in film discourse and in the industry and aims to address the research gap between the complexity of the construction of genre as a multi-dimensional process and the historically specific nature of the construction of Chinese science fiction as a category. The project focuses on three different contexts of reception history: Hollywood science-fiction film, domestic science-fiction film and literature-as-canon reception strategy in China. These contexts are used to outline the different texts relevant to the 'horizon of expectation' from reception theory. In exploring how Chinese film discourse and the Chinese film industry received science fiction as a genre, this project aims to interpret the integrated circulation of reception history of science-fiction films in China in a specific Chinese social and historical context. Overall, it argues that the literature-as-canon strategy was a crucial solution for genrification in the Chinese science-fiction film field from 1979 to 2016.

Keywords: Chinese Science-fiction Films, Reception Studies.

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Although most theories of film genre were originally borrowed from literary genre criticism, the study of film genre has established itself as a field separate from literary genre studies since the 1970s (Altman 1990: 13). After generations of development, film genre studies have evolved many broad theories. While some scholars have attempted to provide more concrete delimitations of each film genre (Grant 2007: 2), others claim that genres are easier to recognize than to define. Academics agree, however, that film genres cannot be classified in a rigid way (Thompson and Bordwell 2012: 319). Genre helps identify the unique properties of individual works by allowing comparison with other films that have similar qualities. Ultimately, the definition of a particular film genre is never static—it continuously changes depending on culturally and historically specific circumstances.

Genres may change over time through the addition or omission of certain elements. Some elements have been dominant as long as storytelling has existed while others are adaptations to changing social and cultural conditions (Grodal 2017: 2). The commercial character of a genre must be recognized because it influences how films are defined in specific historical circumstances (Strinati 2000: 82). The best way to conceptualise film genres is as a process rather than as a noun.

Film scholars have discussed this idea in terms of 'genre as a process'. This process is multi-dimensional, e.g. encompassing aspects of production, distribution, exhibition, cultural consumption among other factors. Here, Rick Altman's work in *Film / Genre* on the process of what he calls the 'genrification' of Hollywood films should be examined briefly. Rather than accepting the standard interpretation of genres as having a stable existence, distinct borders and a regular and predictable development shaped largely by the film industry's calculations of what audience want, Altman highlights the prevalence of genre-mixing in the Hollywood studio system and the slow and uncertain emergence of substantive genres. Change and transformation do not end with the emergence of an identifiable genre, since genre is 'not the permanent product of a singular origin, but the temporary by-product of an ongoing process' (Altman 1999: 54).

The construction of genre through multi-dimensional processes is also a culturally and historically specific phenomenon. For instance, a genre's meanings are distinctive in different contexts. Genre also exists as a critical construction that can invent genres by identifying content and cultural linkages. The genre is organised in ways that represent the global complexity of our social, cultural and economic lives in different ways. Rather than being limited to pure textual analysis, the study of genre necessarily requires the consideration of the contextual aspects of society and genre's relationship to cultural production

(Friedman & et al. 2007: xii).

How to unearth and understand the historically variable meanings associated with genre is a challenge for film genre researchers. We usually consider film genre in terms of generic conventions and industrial practices and seldom consider films from specific genres and genre classifications in relation to historically variable meanings that could lead us to examine multi-dimensional paradigms across a range of historical contexts and legacies. Genre theory emerged as an attempt to account for nationally specific genres, and this theoretical legacy continues to direct a great deal of contemporary genre studies. As a result, despite the fact that the cross-cultural production and consumption of films from specific genres and the multi-dimensional dissemination of genre formats and styles have been an integral part of films from specific genres, little attention has been paid to the construction of genre through multi-dimensional processes as a culturally and historically specific phenomenon within traditional film genre studies (Kim, 2009: 6).

In undertaking the challenge as discussed above, a researcher should seek to provide a sense of both the complexity of the construction of a film genre through historically specific processes and how the meaning of a specific genre is constructed and changes over time. The complexity of *film noir* provides a highly illustrative example of this idea. *Film noir* was not an industry invented term but a critical category that emerged in the aftermath of the Second World War from French critics after they saw certain Hollywood thrillers that had been produced during the war period but banned in France. Ever since the term entered film discourse, many books and articles have been published that debate whether the genre exists at all as well as what the limits of this 'genre' might be. As Naremore asserts that *film noir* is almost entirely a cultural idea, that is, 'a belated reading of classic Hollywood' that was filmmakers of 'the French New Wave, appropriated by reviewers, academics, and filmmakers, and then recycled on television' (Naremore 2008: 19).

As a bi-lingual researcher, I am well-placed to apply methods of English language film genre analysis to the study of Chinese cinema[1]. What are the advantages of this application? As illustrated by two old Chinese sayings, 'advice from others may help one overcome his shortcomings' (originally 'there are other hills whose stones are good for polishing jade', *Classic of Poetry*, 11th to 7th centuries B.C.), and 'you cannot see the forest for the trees' (originally as 'I cannot tell the true shape of Mountain Lu because I myself am on the mountain', Su Shi, *Written on the Wall at West Forest Temple*, 1084), different languages form distinctive ways of thinking so that the research can be more integrated and comprehensive once the research materials and methodology are from different languages. To expand the range of scholarly literature, I can involve with more previous relevant researches on film genres within different historical and cultural contexts. This thesis looks at Chinese science-fiction film as an indicative example of these complex historical and cross-cultural

[1] The terms of 'Chinese' and 'China' mentioned throughout this thesis all refer to People's Republic of China (PRC) unless there are additional annotations.

processes.

The core research questions in this study include: 'What are the processes by which Chinese science fiction is constructed as a film genre inside China?' and 'How does the genre's meaning shift across time in line with culturally and historically specific circumstances?'

Why Chinese science fiction?

Why is it important to study Chinese science fiction? First, both English and Chinese language academia lacks research into different aspects of the filmic genre's historical reception in China. No articles on this subject have been published to date in the *Journal of Chinese Cinema*, which is the only specialised journal in the field published in English. However, this publication has published numerous articles on genre, history and Chinese cinema. I summarise the most important articles here, to give a sense of the extent of the current discussion on genre and Chinese cinema history in English.

The first field of research is Chinese documentary, illustrated in Cui's (2016: 1 – 16) essay focusing on controversial Chinese social problems arising from the contradiction between economic development and ecological equilibrium. The second aspect is Chinese animation, e.g. Lamarre's (2016: 123 – 139) essay that aims to reconfigure Chinese film studies through historical and theoretical inquiries about the relationship between the animated and the cinematic. The third discursive aspect concentrates on Chinese film history and historiography, such as Zhang's (2016: 38 – 47) essay, which is organised around three principles: covering various territories, trajectories and historiographies (Lim and Ward 2011); investigating different aspects of history and geography, industry and institution, and art and media (Zhang 2013); and re-evaluating competing interpretations of history, form and structure (Rojas and Chow 2013) in order to trace the development of Chinese film history and historiography through a binary thinking approach. The fourth aspect of the corpus is the Tibetan cinema of Pema Tseden, especially Tseden's road movies. Berry's (2016: 89 – 105) essay, for instance, considers the use of the road movie genre as a response to the eclipse of the old 'minority nationalities' (shaoshu minzu) category of filmmaking in China and the rise of the market economy under Chinese neoliberalism. The fifth aspect focuses on the definitions of Chinese language cinema and Chinese cinema. Both of these corpuses (Fu, Indelicato & Qiu 2016: 54 – 60, Sun 2016: 61 – 66) emphasise the dispute regarding what constitutes 'China' and 'Chinese' among critics and scholars in the field who come from divergent political and cultural backgrounds. The last element of discussion focuses on Chinese cinematic consumption in the 21st century. For instance, Lu's (2016: 205 – 227) article considers the multiplex as a cinematic heterotopia and the state's support for multiplex development as a case study of the Chinese strategy of 'controlled commodification'.

The most important scholarly works in Chinese on Chinese science fiction as a genre can be summarised as follows. The corpus can be divided into two

schools based on the focus of the respective article: the school of reform and the school of introduction. The school of reform regards science-fiction films from Hollywood and other countries as a reference and based on this appeals for a series of domestic, multi-dimensional reforms with the goal of improving the domestic production of Chinese science-fiction films. The arguments from this school are diverse but the purpose is same—for China to demand its own science-fiction films in order to build a more complete film ecosystem.

The most significant publication from this school is the *Twenty Thousand Miles of Light and Shadow* (*guangying liang wanli*) written by the well-known science-fiction author and critic Zheng Jun (2012). This single book integrates most of the arguments present in all previously published fragmental essays, journalist reviews and theses on Chinese science fiction in Chinese academia. The book also provides Zheng's own perspective on interpreting the science-fiction film and Chinese science fiction as a genre. As Zheng elaborates, 'I discuss the principles governing the development of science-fiction film as an art, which differ from the discussions based on scientific principles in previous academic publications on this topic' (2012: 5). Zheng describes behind-the-scenes footage and introduces science-fiction films from the perspective of film and television production, including scriptwriting, directing, performance, props, photography, editing, investment and distribution. The purpose of this is to create a theoretical analysis tool for science-fiction films, to provide filmmakers with regularity and to emphasise that science-fiction films are art, not just audio-visual spectacle.

The school of introduction only introduces Hollywood and other foreign science-fiction films objectively and chronologically. One of the most important corpuses from this school is the astronomer turned science-fiction critic Jiang Xiaoyuan's *Science-fiction Film Guide* (2015), which presents Xiaoyuan's perspective of receiving the science-fiction film as 'reflecting science' and categorises Hollywood science-fiction film and television series into nine groups, which include alien civilization; time travel and parallel universes; the maker and creature; computers, the internet, virtual worlds and artificial intelligence; bioengineering ethics; earth environment; doomsday prophecy and catastrophe; dystopia; the unclassifiable and 'science-fiction like'.

Another critical text from the school of introduction is Dong Renwei's *China Science-fiction Memorabilia* (1891 – 2017), which records all the crucial events influencing the origin and 100-year development of Chinese science-fiction history chronologically. This corpus begins with Chinese science-fiction importation, translation and creation during the late Qing dynasty (1840 – 1912) and extends to contemporary discussions on the most significant novels of the Chinese science-fiction canon, such as the *Three-body Problem* trilogy by Liu Cixin (2006, 2008, 2010). This text can be used as a comprehensive historical reference for Chinese science fiction, as it chronicles all the historical events that significantly influenced the development of Chinese science-fiction film, literature, comic books and so on.

With respect to the most important scholarly works in English on Chinese

science fiction as a genre, fewer publications could be found on this topic, and most of these are short essays. These English works differ from their Chinese counterparts with regard to research emphasis. The English texts can be divided into four major types, which include Chinese science-fiction literature during the early stage of late Qing dynasty, contemporary Chinese science-fiction cinematic works in Hong Kong and Taiwan, specific science-fiction literary works of well-known Chinese science-fiction authors and an overall Chinese science-fiction chronicle from a Western perspective.

One of the most important essays from the first category is Ma Shaoling's (2013) essay. Dr. Ma, who is also a specialist in early Chinese science-fiction creation, utilises Xu Nianci's *Xin faluoxiansheng tan* (*A Tale of New Mr. Braggadocio*, 1905) as a case study to claim that categorising this short story as one of the first Chinese science-fiction narratives does not fully illustrate the complex hybridity of late Qing literary developments. She notes that this case should also alert us to the cultural homogeneity often assumed by the 'Western' genre of science-fiction (2013: 55).

One of the most representative essays from the writings on contemporary Chinese science-fiction cinematic works in Hong Kong and Taiwan is Wei Yang's (2013) essay. The author claims that the science-fiction genre remains largely underdeveloped and neglected by most Chinese filmmakers and critics. As more and more Hollywood science-fiction films have appeared in the Chinese-speaking world in recent decades, Wei asserts that a first wave of Chinese science-fiction films[2] began to be produced at the beginning of the 21st century once the genre proved its financial viability in the global market (2013: 133).

One of the most significant essays from the third group was written by Han Song (2013). The author reviews several acclaimed Chinese science-fiction writers and their works in this essay, including Chinese-Americans Ken Liu and Ted Chiang as well as the Chinese Liu Cixin and Wang Jinkang. By presenting the difficulties these science-fiction writers still face, Han asserts that the Chinese population today has no generic cognition about science fiction and are more interested in things that have a direct influence on their daily lives. He also appeals for a reform by the General Administration of Radio, Film, and Television of China that would allow market forces to test specific science-fiction topics rather than using administrative power to ban certain themes such as time-travel narratives (2013: 21).

One of the most significant essays from the last group was written by Andrew Liptak (2015). In this text, the author presents a comprehensive and highly detailed chronicle of Chinese science-fiction creation from the middle of the 19th century to 2015. In addition, many Chinese science-fiction literary works are recorded in this corpus that can only be found in English-speaking

[2] *2046*. Dir. Wong Kar-wai. Perf. Tony Leung Chiu Wai and Ziyi Zhang. Jet Tone Films, 2004.
Gui si [Silk]. Dir. Chao-bin Su. Perf. Chen Chang and Yôsuke Eguchi. Deltamac (Hong Kong), 2006.
Ji qi xia [Metallic Attraction: Kung Fu Cyborg]. Dir. Jeffrey Lau. Perf. Jun Hu and Betty Sun. Mei Ah Entertainment, 2009.
Quan cheng jie bei [City Under Siege]. Dir. Benny Chan. Perf. Mo-Chan Chik and Collin Chou. Universe Films, 2010.
Wei lai jing cha [Future X-Cops]. Dir. Jing Wong. Perf. Andy Lau and Barbie Hsu. Mega-Vision Pictures, 2010.

countries and are not in publication in mainland China. Liptak provides his own perspective on the future of Chinese science fiction and states that 'the answer lies in the state of China today: a country that has been catching up with an incredibly rapid technological and economic modernization on the world stage' (2015: 20).

Along the lines that these ongoing discussions of science fiction in the Chinese context signal the existence of a genre or an 'idea' (as per Naremore's discussion of *film noir*) in the process of being constructed. When considering these critical texts as discussed above, it is also important to bear in mind the increased contemporary importance of science fiction in China since 2002. The number of imported foreign blockbusters per year rose to 20 after China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001 as the quota of imported films increased (*China Culture Daily* 2018: C1). In 2002, the gross box office revenue generated by the Chinese film market was approximately 920 million yuan. Among this revenue, box office revenue for imported films was 420 million yuan, meaning the market share for foreign film revenues was nearly 50%. Hollywood films accounted for the majority of China's imported films. Generally, domestic Chinese films cannot compete with imported films, but certain individual directors' have created a brand effect by adopting a commercial operation mode for their films that has given them the strength to compete with imported movies. The production of feature films in China has increased by 51% compared to 2003, and 22.6% compared to 2004. With the increase of Chinese produced feature films, gross box office revenues have risen by nearly 2 billion yuan annually from 2003 to the present (Su 2016: 1).

As a result of increased production, China has become the world's third largest film producer, trailing only India and the US between 1994 and 2014. In 2012, China's total output skyrocketed to 745 films with domestic gross box office revenue of 17 billion yuan, compared to 91 films and 960 million yuan in 2000. In addition, China's domestic films outperformed foreign imports in terms of box office receipts for eight consecutive years from 2004 to 2011. Despite these gains, Hollywood's overwhelmingly successful science-fiction film *Avatar* garnered 1.32 billion yuan (roughly US$194 million) in theatres between January 4 and the end of March 2010, making China the film's top source of revenue overseas and enabling 20th Century Fox to net US$34 million from distribution in China (Su 2016: 2 – 3).

According to data analysis by Entgroup,[3] between 2012 and 2017 approximately 5% of the theatrically released films in China were science-fiction films and the average box office revenue per film was over 400 million (US$60.7 million). Only one domestic science-fiction film[4] was released each

[3] Entgroup is the leader of big data consulting for China's media and entertainment industry and encourages significant industrial breakthroughs through market intelligence generation, data collection and analysis. Entgroup integrates multi-screen interactive customer behaviour analysis, is dedicated to establishing a big data-sharing platform, extends online platform applications into off-line scenarios and aims to be the platform that effectively connects upstream and downstream entertainment resources.

[4] The following films constitute all the domestic science-fiction films released in China from 1979 to 2016: *Death-Ray On the Coral Island* (1980), *Hidden Shadow* (1981), *Dislocation* (1986), *A Man's World* (1987), *The Synthetic Man* (1988), *Wonder Boy* (1988), *The Head In The House* (1990), *The Ozone Layer Vanishes* (1990), *Rubiks-clock* (1990), *Dr. Invisible* (1991), *The Adventure Across The Screen* (1991), *The Venomous Kiss* (1992), *The Regenerative Warrior* (1995), *Crazy Rabbit*

year, leading to the consequence of unable to attract a large audience. Between one and two science-fiction films are co-produced by US and other countries annually and most of these do not achieve box office success in China. Notable exceptions include *Iron Man 3* and *Transformers: Age of Extinction*. The budgets of the top five domestic science-fiction films between 2012 and 2017 were all under 300 million yuan (US$45.5 million), while the budgets of the top five imported science-fiction movies[5] between 2012 and 2017 ranged from 1 billion yuan (US$151.8 million) to 2 billion yuan (US$303.5 million) (Entgroup.com 2018). Another survey conducted by Cao (2012) examined the difference in quantity of science-fiction film output between China and Hollywood. Cao found that China produced only eight science-fiction films during the 17 years between 1995 and 2011, while Hollywood produced 287 during the same period. There were between 14 and 20 science-fiction films produced in Hollywood annually during this time. Hollywood science-fiction films have been highly successful in China. Christopher Nolan's *Interstellar* earned 18% of its $675.1 million global total in China while *The Martian* drew 15% of its total $630 million in revenue in the country. Guillermo del Toro's *Pacific Rim* also performed well, earning $111.9 million in China (compared to $101.8 million in North America) in 2013, when the domestic box office was only half its current volume (Brzeski 2017: 1).

Given the academic and cultural landscapes outlined above, there are at least three aspects that are absent from the current scholarly literature on Chinese science-fiction film. The first is the lack of a sense of the complexity of the construction of genre as a multi-dimensional process. In most English and Chinese scholarly literatures, authors focus either on potential solutions to improve the deficiency of production and audience reception of Chinese science-fiction films (Han 2013: 21) or present a historical chronicle of the history of Chinese science-fiction creation (mostly related to literary, not cinematic works). The second aspect is a lack of scholarly literature discussing mainland Chinese science-fiction films, although some authors, such as Han Song, do draw attention to films from Hong Kong and Taiwan. Finally, current research lacks a sophisticated understanding of the historically specific nature of the construction of Chinese science fiction as a genre.

This thesis aims to address the problems outlined above and bridge the research gap between the complexity of the construction of genre as a multi-dimensional process and the historically specific nature of the construction of

(1997), *Star Appeal* (2004), *Thru the Moebius Strip* (Animation) (2005), *Super Typhoon* (2008), *Ace Mission* (2009), *Animen* (Animation) (2010), *Animen II* (Animation) (2012), *Unidentified* (2013), *Bugs* (2014), *Monsters* (2015), *Impossible* (2015), *On line* (2015), *Kwai Boo* (Animation) (2015), *Mr. Black: Green Star* (Animation) (2015), *Lost in the Pacific* (2016), *The Adventures of the Ugly Duckling* (Animation) (2016).

[5] The following films were the highest-grossing Hollywood science-fiction blockbusters in terms of their domestic box office revenues in U.S. dollars from 2002 to 2016: *Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones* (2002) (45 million), *Jurassic Park III* (2002) (17.5 million), *The Matrix Reloaded* (2003) (43 million), *The Matrix Revolutions* (2003) (43 million), *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines* (2003) (28.32 million), *Tomorrow* (2004) (82.5 million), *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* (2005) (75.54 million), *War of the Worlds* (2005) (53 million), *Transformers* (2007) (282 million), *2012* (2009) (466 million), *Transformers II: Revenge of the Fallen* (2009) (451 million), *G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra* (2009) (135 million), *Avatar* (2010) (1.32 billion), *Inception* (460 million), *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* (2011) (1 billion), *Men in Black 3* (2012) (504 million), *Journey 2: The Mysterious Island* (2012) (388 million), *Pacific Rim* (2013) (690 million), *Gravity* (2013) (436 million), *Transformers: Age of Extinction* (2014) (1.98 billion), *Interstellar* (2014) (751 million), *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* (2014) (711 million), *Jurassic World* (2015) (1.4 billion).

Chinese science-fiction in particular. While this thesis is limited in length and scope, it aims to make a modest and constructive attempt to address these problems by proposing that a reception studies approach (drawn largely from my reading of English language reception studies) can help address these research challenges.

A new approach to Chinese science fiction: Reception studies

Terry Eagleton refers to reception studies as 'a social and historical theory of meaning' (1983: 107), while Jonathan Culler, describing one theorist's approach, explains that it 'is not a way of interpreting works but an attempt to understand their changing intelligibility by identifying the codes and interpretative assumptions that give them meaning for different audience at different periods' (1981: 13). These definitions of the field emphasise that the task reception study engages is both historical and theoretical. It asks questions including what a text means for whom and under what circumstances, and considers changing values over time. Reception studies asks what types of meanings a text has and if these meanings have any effects (Staiger 2005: 2).

In film studies, reception studies and its underlying theory are grounded in history rather than philosophy, and as a result the discipline is primarily concerned with uncovering how actual audience interact with films. This makes reception studies unlike many other prominent film theories, which posit an idealized, ahistorical audience who passively absorbs meanings and messages embedded in the filmic text. Most of the classical film theories developed in the 1960s and 1970s, including structuralist, auteurist, formalist, Marxist and psychoanalytic theories, argue that the film's text is the site of meaning. In opposition to this, reception study is focused on researching the history of the interactions between real readers and texts, i.e. actual audience and films. This is called the audience-centred approach (Staiger, 2005: 8).

The most important conception of the audience-centred approach is 'horizon of expectation'. It is a term fundamental to German academic Hans Robert Jauss's reception theory. The concept is a component of his theory of literary history where his intention is to minimise the gulf between the schools of literature and history which have previously relegated the reader to play only a minor role in the interpretation of literature (Jauss and Benzinger 1970: 7 – 37). Specifically, it is the structure by which a person comprehends, decodes and appraises any text based on cultural codes and conventions particular to their time in history. These horizons are therefore historically flexible meaning readers may interpret and value a text differently from a previous generation. It emphasises the reader as an important element in the processing of texts. According to Jauss, the reader approaches a text armed with the knowledge and experience gained from interactions with other texts. These earlier texts arouse familiarity for the reader based on expectations and rules of genre and style. Jauss describes it this way, 'a literary work is not an object which stands by itself and which offers the same face to each reader in each period' (Belsey 2002: 30).

Thus reading is not an 'autonomous, free and individual' experience but rather a collection of mutual concepts fitting a period or a people (Chartier 2006: 129 – 139).

For a long time, traditional approaches to genre study assumed that genres (a) pre-exist audience and (b) guide audience reception. Reception studies interrogates both these assumptions. Reception studies draws more attention to various individuals' or groups' processing of genre. This approach can be seen as an appropriate way to acknowledge the activities of specific user groups, but only in order to embed reception in a boarder process-orientated and interactive analysis of competing user groups. Reception study refuses determinacy to textual structures taken alone but acknowledges the difficulty of extracting those textual structures from the institutions and social habits that frame them and lend them the appearance of constructing meaning independently (Altman 1990: 211).

It will be helpful to bring the insights outlined as discussed above to the study of Chinese science fiction as there has been a significant phenomenon in terms of the reception of science fiction as a genre in China since the 1990s to the present. China began to implement the film importation policy of revenue-sharing of foreign blockbusters in 1994.[6] Most imported films are from Hollywood and thus a large number of Hollywood blockbusters entered the Chinese film market. Chinese box office revenues rise annually, meaning the revenue proportion of Hollywood blockbusters increases as well. As box office revenues, academic research and the enormously high volume of online reviews reflect, Hollywood science-fiction blockbusters are well-received in China today. Hollywood science-fiction films exhibit a stark contrast with Chinese science-fiction films, which are of average quality and produced in small numbers. This comparison, together with the overall changes in the Chinese domestic film market, have led Chinese audience to initially choose Hollywood science-fiction blockbusters instead of domestic science-fiction films when selecting films in the genre. More and more Chinese film scholars and audience regard Hollywood science-fiction films as a standard that should be referenced when considering the production of domestic science-fiction films.

On the one hand, Yan Wu recalls that when he attended the premiere of George Lucas's *Star Wars* (1977) during China's 'American Movie Week' in 1985—which included showings of Robert Benton's *Kramer vs. Kramer* (1979), Michael Apted's *Coal Miner's Daughter* (1980) and Mark Rydell's *On Golden Pond* (1981)—Lucas's film was heavily criticized by audience members as no more than a 'children's game', that 'was simplistic and unappealing'. On the other hand, as stated above 'Hollywood sci-fi films have been smash successes'

[6] Starting in 1994, mainland China adopted the internationally common practice of revenue sharing and began to import about 10 foreign blockbusters per year. Most of these are Hollywood films. This practice, whereby foreign and domestic film distributors share the box office revenue generated by imported films, was considered a termination of the PRC's 40-year convention of purchasing outdated foreign films for a flat fee, as well as a remedy for China's debt-ridden state-owned studios. These foreign mega-productions caused an unprecedented stir in China. They seriously challenged and fundamentally transformed the Chinese domestic film industry and sparked a long-lasting debate on the validity of the government's cultural policy. Thus, the period from 1994 to the present offers the best opportunity to observe the impact of global Hollywood and transnational media capital on the reshaping the local cultural landscape.

in contemporary China. Despite this, Wei argues that Chinese science-fiction films are better understood as 'SF-themed' films in which science-fiction elements coexist with elements of other genres and are invariably used to support the purposes of these other genres (2013: 144). Therefore, it is highly significant to research what Chinese audience believe a science-fiction film should be and what a film from this genre means as a text in the contemporary Chinese film field. In order words, the expectations towards this specific film genre appear to differ greatly in the specific Chinese cultural and historical context. Here, film reception studies can be helpful in the study of Chinese science fiction.

In existing academic research there is only one essay that can be construed as a reception study on Chinese science-fiction film. Wei claims his approach is 'a genre analysis' as it considers the iconography and narrative structures of Chinese science-fiction film. The author primarily relies on Rick Altman's terminology and the semantic and syntactic aspects of the genre—particularly their reassigned meanings and values—by taking into account local cinematic conventions, domestic audience' expectations and other historical changes in China's film industry. Wei claims that taken together, these factors demonstrate a very different use of genre and a significant shift in the overall function of science-fiction elements (Wei 2013: 133).

More broadly, there are many studies on Chinese and foreign films that utilise reception theory in both Chinese and English academia. In Chinese academia, most studies propose that no text or creator of a text exists without an audience. This intuitive dialectic is a common assumption among these essays. For these scholars, the reader of a text or the viewer of a film should be a focal point of study. As mentioned above, this position is called the audience-centred approach. More importantly, these essays attempt to research the relationship between imported films and domestic Chinese ones using methodological approaches grounded in reception studies. For instance, one of the articles focuses on the 'influence research' method, mainly examining the reception and localization of the influence of imported foreign films with regard to Chinese films (Chen 2005: 33).

In English academia, the reception of Hollywood science-fiction films has been studied in the Japanese context. As Nagasawa elaborates that 'the influence of American culture on post-war Japan has been extensive and much Japanese science fiction reflects this, it is necessary to pursue the course of development of Japanese science fiction as it relates to American science fiction using methods of comparative literature' (Nagasawa 2016: 2).

Some scholars focus their attention on Chinese audience studies, which is one of the core research objects of film reception studies. Donald's essay discusses the history of audience research in China, with specific regard to media use by senior citizens. The study is particularly concerned with the concept of the subject-as-audience in a geo-politics that emphasises the recruitment of subjects to policy rather than debating and determining politics in advance of policy construction. Donald's article summarises how the general

audience in China has been understood since the founding of the PRC in 1949 and provides examples of the ways in which the audience as a concept has been approached (Donald, Edited by Butsch & Livingstone 2014: 135).

There are also many essays that use reception studies on film or film genre in different historically and culturally specific contexts in English academia. Most of these draw attention to film reception with regard to different genders, races, ethnicities and cultural and historical contexts. Some of these studies investigate film reception by gender within a particular nation. For example, Schultz claims that following the 2012 release of *Audre Lorde*: *The Berlin Years*, the film's reception confirmed Lorde's contribution to deepening interracial understanding. As Alexis Pauline Gumbs described, 'as a film created by a white German feminist colleague and comrade of Lorde's, the film importantly includes many of Lorde's imperatives to white feminist would-be allies' (2014: 201).

Other scholars research sub-generic film within different industrial contexts. For instance, Diffrient's essay elucidates the reasons for the initial failings of the film *Myra Breckinridge* (Michael Same, 1970) and argues that the director Same did a great deal to destabilize taste-based assumptions of 'trash' and 'art' while collapsing distinctions between Old Hollywood and New Hollywood through a radical, transgressive textuality (2013: 46).

Hughey's article documents how reviewers constitute a racialized interpretive community by studying the reviews of a feature film with implicit racial content. Reviewers rely on specific cultural frameworks to both contest and reproduce the notion of a 'post-racial' society. These interpretations equate non-whites with pathological and dysfunctional traits, frame hard work as a white normative characteristic and construct deterministic views of both Hollywood's abilities to represent progressive racial representations (2010: 475).

Köksal's article considers the problematic reception of Atom Egoyan's *Ararat* (2002) in Turkey, examining not only the film itself but also the literature produced on the subject published by journalists, opinion leaders and academics. Köksal argues that the official discourse on the Armenian genocide in Turkey also shaped discussions about the film in that country (2014: 45).

'Content analysis' could arguably be the most appropriate research method for my research because content analysis is a research technique used to create replicable and valid inferences by interpreting and coding textual material. By systematically evaluating texts (e.g., documents, oral communication, graphics), qualitative data can be converted into quantitative data. A methodologically valid content analysis does not assume meaning related to any unit of the text but instead considers the unit's meaning as determined by its context.

More importantly, content analysis is a research method for studying documents and communication artefacts, which can include texts of various formats, pictures, audio or video. It is generally used to examine patterns in communication in a replicable and systematic manner. One of the key advantages of using content analysis to analyse social phenomena is its non-invasive nature, in contrast to simulating social experiences or collecting survey

results.

In order to engage with the limited scholarly approaches to the historical reception of Chinese sci-fi as discussed above—but also in the context of the genre's evolution as an important cultural form in China in recent years—this thesis analyses three significant case studies from 1979 to 2016. The reason for choosing 1979 as the starting point for this research is because this was the year mainland China began to import science-fiction films from Hollywood, starting with Richard T. Heffron's *Futurewold* (1976 in the US and 1979 in China). In addition, 1979 was also the historical moment when the Chinese and U.S. governments signed a series of official cultural communication agreements, called 'American and Chinese cultural agreements', which stipulated that both countries would hold a series of 'Films Weeks' to screen equal numbers of films from the other country. *Futureworld* was one of the films that was screened as a result of these 'Films Weeks'. The year 1979 was the beginning of China receiving Hollywood films and science-fiction films, making it the perfect starting point for research focusing on the historically specific nature of the construction of Chinese science-fiction as a genre. The reason for selecting 2016 as the end year for this research is because this was the primary year that the filmmakers of *Three-body Problem* announced the distribution of an adapted film version of this novel since this novel has been formed as a canon in the contemporary Chinese science-fiction field.

As the genre of science fiction was originally imported from the Western world, it is important to ask which region has created films with the most impact on Chinese audience reception in China's attempts to create its own science-fiction films. According to the contemporary contextual and cinematic reception of science-fiction films in China reviewed above, the most influential region is Hollywood science-fiction. In addition, the director of the first Chinese science-fiction film claimed that she did not know what science-fiction films should be until she and her colleagues watched the first imported Hollywood science-fiction film, *Futureworld,* in 1979 (Zhang 2016: 3). In this regard, Chapter 1 aims to investigate how Hollywood science-fiction films as texts are the most frequent reference for Chinese science-fiction films in terms of production quality in China through analysing the reception of Hollywood science-fiction films in China between 1979 and 2001.[7] This chapter will mainly focus on generic identity as a historical process in order to understand the historically and culturally specific nature of science fiction as a genre in China compared with the reception of Hollywood science-fiction films.

In Chapter 1 I argue that the generic identity of science-fiction film in China is never the same as in its Hollywood context. Instead, this identity shifts

[7] The reason for selecting 2001 as the end year for the research in Chapter 1 is because China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001 and the associated film administration department of China implemented a thorough industrialized film reform. The department enforced policies that changed the previous mode of state-operated (guoying) film distribution into theatre-chain-based (yuanxian zhi) distribution. On 1 June 2002, the first group of 30 theatre chains were built in China based on 'the film reform by the new system of shareholding (gufen zhi) and grouping (jituan hua)' passed in 2000. These theatres changed the previous system of film distribution and release. In 2003, domestic investment became more convenient in the film production field with the result that this circumstance collapsed the previously closed status of 'in-the-system' (tizhi nei) production and absorbed more private investments. The film industry then began to expand rapidly as a cultural industry in the 21st century (China Culture Daily, 2018: D1).

as a multi-dimensional process within historically, politically, culturally and ideologically specific contexts over time in China, from the beginning of the reception of Hollywood science-fiction film in China to the contemporary moment in which Chinese audience have begun to regard science fiction as a film genre in its own right. According to reception studies, this differing generic identity shapes the unique way in which Chinese audience project their 'horizon of expectation' on this genre. More importantly, these expectations have a strong impact on how Chinese filmmakers began to create their own science-fiction films in the years following the release of Hollywood science-fiction films.

Most Chinese science-fiction films were adapted from literary sources in the science-fiction genre. In addition, according to most English and Chinese scholarly texts, the film form of science fiction is never separated from its literary form, and in fact these films have a strong connection with science-fiction literature throughout the history of Chinese science-fiction development. This is interesting because English scholars, such as William Johnson, have argued that 'we should not expect to understand the science fiction film simply by seeing it as an extension of the literary genre' (Telotte, 1999: 18), which is highly different from the genre's reception in the Chinese context. Therefore, film adaptation-as-reception can constitute a proper approach to researching Chinese science-fiction film reception. This is explored in Chapter 2. Reconceiving adaptation as a form of reception also calls for explicit attention to the transnational and cross-cultural dynamics of the process itself, especially as the agents on both the producing and the receiving side are rarely from a single nation or culture. Film adaptation functions historically to mediate the relationship between culture and politics, film, and society, in different times and in different places. For instance, in her essay Scholz (2009: 657) argues for a historical approach to American popular culture that reconfigures the classically defined adaptation phenomenon as a form of transnational reception, as the relationship between literary text and filmic adaptations can be approached from historical angles that emphasise social, political and cultural questions (2009: 658) which is constructively beneficial to the research of Chinese science-fiction reception. In this regard, Chapter 2 aims to interpret what types of meanings Chinese science-fiction films as texts possess for Chinese audience by interpreting Chinese domestic science-fiction film reception in the 1980s. Here, I consider two of the initial 'milestones' in Chinese science-fiction film history, *Death-Ray On the Coral Island* (*DCI*) (1980) and *Wonder Boy* (*WB*) (1988), within the framework of film adaptation in order to explore the historically and culturally specific nature that constructs Chinese science-fiction film as a genre.

In Chapter 2 I also argue that as most Chinese science-fiction films are adapted from literary works, the adaptation-as-reception mode has been rooted deeply into Chinese science-fiction circulation and the film field. Since Chinese science-fiction films tend to utilise local, pre-existing cinematic conventions, the development of science-fiction cinema in China is further complicated by the shifting historical and cultural context that moved towards hybridity and

intertextuality. This disrupted the genre's typical development by involving multiple political and educational values.

After examining the novels adapted into films in Chinese science-fiction history more closely, it becomes clear that all of these texts were somehow canonized before they were adapted, from the first awarded science-fiction novel (1979) and its adapted science-fiction film (1980) *Death-Ray On the Coral Island* to the most recently awarded novel and its science-fiction film adaptation (originally set for release in 2016) the *Three-body Problem*. In a sense, canon formation is a type of super-reception itself that selects, processes and advances the values it wishes to perpetuate (Citron, 2000: 169). Therefore, film canon formation as reception can be a suitable approach for researching Chinese science-fiction film reception, and this is presented in Chapter 3. For instance, in examining the promotional and marketing discourses around Rob Zombie's horror film *Halloween* (2007), Tompkins utilises film canon formation in his argument and illustrates how such reboot discourses reflexively incorporate 'critical' attitudes of canonical literacy, authorship and subcultural distinction as a way to maintain consumer ties and enhance brand loyalty. In turn, these attempts to fold aspects of film reception back into the production process afford industry insiders (i.e., directors, producers, distributors and marketers) the opportunity to overstate the cultural and historical importance of a franchise while presenting their subcultural credentials to genre fans (Tompkins 2014: 380). In this extent, Chapter 3 aims to research how Chinese audience' expectations changes toward Chinese science-fiction films during the given period through interpreting the problem using a case study of one of the most well-known contemporary Chinese science-fiction novels, the *Three-body Problem* (*TP*) trilogy by Liu Cixin (2006, 2008, 2010). This trilogy and its popularization in China today causes broad academic discussions and industrial appeals of adapting this trilogy into a series of science-fiction films. As the novels have been lauded as 'great' and 'milestones' in many journalistic reviews and in academic corpuses, I utilise the framework of film canon formation to observe the problem related to the *TP* and ask how and why the *TP* would be classified as part of the canon of Chinese science fiction.

In Chapter 3, I demonstrate that the literature-as-canon reception has existed for a long period of time in the reception history of Chinese science-fiction films. This means that only those canonized literary works can be adapted into films in order to satisfy Chinese audience' and critics' 'horizon of expectation' as this genre has been marginalized for almost a full century by the mainstream Chinese film and literature fields. The 'horizon of expectation' is also helpful to interrogate the historical differences of Chinese spectatorship as opposed to American spectatorship in terms of the reception of science-fiction films.

By investigating the multi-dimensional process of science fiction as a film genre in the specifically Chinese historical and cultural context, I emphasise on the core differences between the Western world and China regarding science-fiction reception through adaptation-as-reception and canon-formation-as-

reception modes. This analysis integrates three case studies to create a new approach to Chinese science-fiction reception studies.

As the key argument of this thesis I contend that the reception of science fiction films in China is a long-term, multi-dimensional process. Initially, it was formed by the reception of Hollywood science-fiction films and subsequent works. Then, it was complicated by historical, political and cultural contexts during a period that included many moments of shift and turning points. As this genre originated in the Western world, the Chinese science fiction never contains a stable meaning or even the simple entertaining function that science-fiction films from other regions possess. Instead, it has been regularly marginalized both in the literately and film fields. However, once recognized, science-fiction literary works canonized by authorities are often adapted into films and well-received by Chinese audience, science-fiction authors and science-fiction fans, as if the adaptation and canon formation are somehow the equivalent of receiving the genre of science fiction as one of the orthodox genres by the mainstream literature and art fields, which heavily impacts the creation and distribution of Chinese science-fiction cinematic and literary works. Therefore, the literature-as-canon strategy was the best path for genrification in the Chinese science-fiction film field from 1979 to 2016.

This thesis aims to bridge the research gap between the complexity of the construction of genre as a multi-dimensional process and the historically specific nature of the construction of Chinese science-fiction as a genre in particular. None of the previous English language or Chinese language scholarly publications have researched the generic problem of mainland Chinese science-fiction film within the methodology of reception studies. The thesis hopes to offer a modest and constructive attempt to address the research questions above by proposing that a reception studies approach will help address these research challenges.

The reason this thesis chooses to elucidate its central argument through a methodological approach grounded in reception studies is because the core contradiction of science-fiction genre in China demonstrates significant evidence of the problem related to audience' expectations of this specific genre, which differs greatly from that in other regions and cultures according to most of the English and Chinese articles I have reviewed that discuss the topics of Chinese science fiction and Hollywood science-fiction film research. In addition, most existing Chinese scholarly literature has paid too much attention to the text of Chinese science-fiction films rather than the attribution of meaning to those texts within the Chinese context. More importantly, the generic identity of science fiction is constantly complicated by shifting historical and cultural contexts towards hybridity and intertextuality in China. Therefore, I argue that relevant methods grounded in reception studies can be helpful in evaluating my core research questions, including 'What are the processes by which Chinese science fiction is constructed as a film genre inside China?' and 'How does the genre's meaning shift across time in line with culturally and historically specific circumstances?'.

CONCLUSION

This thesis explores the reception history of science-fiction films from 1979 to 2016 in China. It asks how Chinese audience receive this genre in film discourse and the film industry and seeks to bridge the gap between the complexity of the construction of genre as a multi-dimensional process and the historically specific nature of the construction of Chinese science-fiction as a genre in particular. Overall, the project focuses on three different contexts of reception history: Hollywood science-fiction films, domestic science-fiction films and the existing literature-as-canon reception strategy in China. These settings are used to outline the different texts that are relevant to the 'horizon of expectation' from reception theory. In illuminating how Chinese film discourse and the Chinese film industry receive science fiction as a genre, this project aims to interpret the integrated circulation of the reception history of science-fiction films in China under specific Chinese social and historical conditions. Overall, it argues that the literature-as-canon strategy was a crucial solution for genrification in the Chinese science-fiction film field from 1979 to 2016.

My aim in this thesis is to seek a broader understanding of science-fiction film in the Chinese context, where the genre's function is much different from its Hollywood counterpart and where it intersects with a different set of historical and cultural conventions. The complexity of the construction of the science-fiction genre as a process derives from culturally and historically specific contexts. This thesis attempts to research the inherent nature of the construction of the science-fiction genre in China by using the advantages of reception study methodology, which focuses on audience' expectations and uses multi-dimensional content analysis as the research method.

What further research might be conducted into Chinese sci-fi? The approach of using a questionnaire to survey specific audience groups could be utilised in the future, if possible, as audience' expectations have been changing rapidly in contemporary China. This approach might balance the qualitative nature of the content analysis I used in this thesis. Wei (2013: 144) claims that Chinese science-fiction film cannot be understood as a simple appropriation of the Western model if only because the development of the genre depends so heavily on evolving public tastes and local cinematic conventions. This culturally specific reading destabilizes the conventional meaning of science fiction as established in Western contexts and marks a significant repurposing of its function in Chinese film culture. Therefore, 'public tastes' as well as the 'horizon of expectation' should remain a future research priority in the scholarly analysis of the reception of Chinese science fiction. In fact, there are many new Chinese science-fiction films that were released after 2016, most of which are adapted from well-known Chinese science-fiction authors' literary works. These case studies might be investigated in future research.

Overall, as I discussed in the initial paragraphs of this thesis, the meaning of a film genre is never static. It continuously changes depending on culturally and historically specific circumstances. The English and Chinese scholarly

studies reviewed above, which research genre theory, Chinese cinema and reception studies, have already verified this proposition. I agree with this position and argue that 'genre as a process' is a multi-dimensional process. When a specific film genre encounters with different historical, geographical, cultural or political context, it will shift, become localized and be transformed over time according to different conventions and audience' expectations. This is because the construction of genre as multi-dimensional processes is also a culturally and historically specific phenomenon.

CHAPTER 1

SCIENCE FICTION AS A FILM GENRE:

THE RECEPTION OF HOLLYWOOD SCIENCE-FICTION FILMS IN CHINA 1979 – 2001

1.1 Research frameworks

As I discussed in the Introduction, although the cross-cultural production and consumption of films from specific genres and the multi-dimensional dissemination of genre formats and styles are an integral part of films from specific genres, little attention has been paid to the construction of genre through multi-dimensional processes as a culturally and historically specific phenomenon within traditional film genre studies. This chapter aims to investigate how Hollywood science-fiction films as texts are frequently referenced in comparison to Chinese science-fiction films in terms of production quality in China by presenting the reception of Hollywood science-fiction films in China from 1979 to 2001. This chapter focuses on the influence that Hollywood science-fiction films have had on Chinese audience and how they began to receive this film genre after the Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1976) when Hollywood films were again permitted for import into China. To achieve this, Neale's (1990: 45 – 66) genre-as-process and Klinger's (1997: 107 – 128) synchronic and diachronic approaches are used as frameworks.

As stated in the Introduction, film genres are never static and are easier to recognize than to define. As a film genre, science fiction shares this nature. Previously, in English language academia, some film scholars attempted to provide science-fiction films with explicit and solid definitions, for example defining science fiction as 'a genre which tends to be concerned…with public situation and social crisis'. Science fiction was said to involve the 'unexpected and broad cultural consequences of technological accomplishment in order to test the ability of society and its institutions to withstand or embrace the challenge of radical or even global transformation' (Gehring 1988: 229). Other scholars tried to define science-fiction films using a series of typically structural modes of themes (Telotte 2004: 16 – 24). Again, a genre cannot be defined in such a rigid way, especially within the cross-cultural context between Hollywood and China.

Neale adopts Altman's approach of genre as a multi-dimensional process and argues that genres not only consist of films but also systems of expectation and hypothesis. These systems involve the various regimes of verisimilitude, which can be defined as generic verisimilitude and social or cultural verisimilitude. Neale claims that 'generic knowledge becomes a form of cultural knowledge, a component of public opinion' and that 'the generically

verisimilitudinous ingredients of a film are often least compatible with regimes of cultural verisimilitude' (Neale 1990: 48). As Neale disagrees that 'the aim of generic analysis is the re-definition of a corpus of films', he argues that 'genre' should be perceived as such in the course of history as 'genres exist in excess of a corpus of works' (Neale 1990: 51).

Thus, Neale presents the approach of genre-as-process within his own framework. More specifically, he proposes that the nature of genres can manifest as an interaction between three levels: 'the level of expectation, the level of the generic corpus, and the level of the "rules" or "norms" that govern both'. However, Neale also argues that since the rules of genre-as-process can vary widely or be simply reproduced, it is 'difficult to list exhaustively the characteristic components of individual genres' (Neale 1990: 56).

Consequently, the author offers a proper approach for understanding genre history, which I summarise as the sustained displacement of the dominant genre within a specific social and historical context. This approach aims to replace the steady, cumulative film genre discourse with the dynamic principle of evolution, which is "in the sense of a 'struggle' and 'break' with immediate predecessors through a contemporary recourse to something older" (Neale 1990: 60).

The third approach suggested by Neale argues that when a new branch of a film genre is discontinuously generated from a formerly dominant genre it may add new elements and eliminate older ones to adapt to the current social-historical context. This new genre can be recognized by its relevant generic corpus, re-defined by systems of genres (rules and norms) and refined by its horizon of expectations, which consist of and are reanimated by public opinion. Once public opinion popularizes this new genre and the generic corpus later historicizes it, it may become the new dominant genre. To my understanding, as a periodic alternation of 'canonization – automation – restructuring – canonization (new)' is activated, this new dominant genre will be displaced by yet another new branch of genre from a previous institutional discourse to the transitional stage of being reshaped by the public opinion, and subsequently, being localized with regional characteristics.

Neale's framework appears to contain a specifically instructive interpretation with regard to a particular film genre as process. As this thesis is based on the methodological theory grounded in reception studies and the research method of content analysis that derives from this theory, this chapter demands a more applicable framework system—specifically an approach that can analyse the complexity of construction of science fiction as a genre in China during the period under study. This chapter demands another framework that can analyse all textual and contextual material as reception content in the cross-cultural context, and Barbara Klinger's synchronic and diachronic approaches grounded in reception theory meets this requirement (Klinger 1997: 107 – 128).

Klinger's concern lies in the 'potential for reception studies to recover adequately a film's past, to reconstruct fully a film's relation to social and historical processes' and the film text's 'multiple historicities: the contradictory modes of its social inscription synchronically, as well as its "serial reinscriptions"

diachronically' (Klinger 1997: 107). Klinger draws from Fernand Braudel's concept of *histoire totale* (total history) to argue that this concept can be applied to film studies with a cinematic version of *histoire totale* in social and historical contexts. The *histoire totale* should be 'involved in the production of a particular event, effecting a historical synthesis, and [an] integrated picture of synchronic as well as diachronic change'. Klinger also claims that 'studying a film's connection to a single external field, such as reviews, is obviously not enough to portray exhaustively the elements involved in a film's social circulation' (Klinger, 1997: 109). As a result, the author cites Janet Staiger's assertion that 'the prime objective of materialist approaches' is to attempt 'a historical *explanation* of the event of interpreting a text' by 'tracing the range of interpretive strategies available in particular social formations' (1992: 80 – 81).

Klinger presents two distinctive and interconnected approaches: synchronic and diachronic research with sophisticated discourses. She argues that synchronic research attempts to evaluate a film's standard interpretation and may neglect later 'alterations with the ascendancy of new cultural eras'. Meanwhile, diachronic research 'forces consideration of a film's fluid, changeable and volatile relation to history…through diverse institutions and historical circumstances over the decades subsequent to initial release dates' (Klinger 1997: 112). Thus, Klinger believes that if one utilises both the synchronic and diachronic research methods in reception studies of film history it may be possible to provide a more integrated picture of the total history of a film.

Klinger divides the synchronic approach into three categories. The first encompasses areas 'associated with the production of a film', which she classifies as 'cinematic practices' that 'generate all sorts of materials'. This grouping includes 'film production', which relates to filmmaking, film technique and even the influence of the genre; 'film distribution', which discusses how films would appear theatrically both nationally and internationally; 'film exhibition', which concerns the public presentation of films; and 'film personnel', which is related to directors, scriptwriters and performers, etc.

The second approach is 'closely affiliated with a film's appearance' and is named 'intertextual zones'. This subdivision includes 'other businesses and industries', and extends to fashion, advertising, science and technology and in the case of science-fiction even the mechanical manufactory industry. It also includes many other fields such as 'other media and arts', like painting, comic books, music, etc.; 'review journalism', i.e. film criticism that appears in newspapers, magazines, radio and television; and 'star journalism and fan culture'.

The last category is called 'social and historical contexts' and encompasses a broader range of areas such as 'the economy', which is related to cinematic institutions, their practices and their alliances with other media and businesses; 'law' related to film censorship and regulations; 'religion' related to particular plots or sets with explicit or implicit content that may affect the reception of

films in other nations; ‘politics’, which relates to film policies or other official platforms for international cinematic communications; ‘class’, which is affected by the presentation of characters and influences the reception by audience from different regions and classes; ‘race and ethnicity’, which is related to the social constitution of ethnic and racial identities; ‘gender and sexual difference’, which involves social developments constituting definitions of femininity, masculinity and sexuality; ‘family’, which is affected by social forces present in the film; ‘ideology’, which explores how ideology influences and shapes the reception of films; and ‘synchronic cross-cultural reception’, which investigates the reception of films in foreign countries with distinctive contexts.

The diachronic approach is the combination of ‘cinematic practices’ and ‘intertextual zones’ that is called as ‘practices and zones’. This subdivision combines ‘revivals and retrospectives’, i.e. when films are revived in art museums, film festivals or archives, or previously censored versions of films are restored; ‘reviews’, which criticize the film on a professional level in order to appeal to new or old audience; ‘academic theory, criticism and history’, which comment on the film from various academic and historical perspectives; ‘broadcast, satellite and cable television’, which includes not only the broadcast of the film but also the soundtrack or simply a special program consisted of the film; ‘video and laserdisc reproduction’, including soundtrack albums; ‘fan culture’, which relates to coteries of fans or fan clubs based on the film; ‘biographical legend’ about the film personnel; and finally ‘diachronic cross-cultural reception’, which refers to older films from one country being distributed later in a new one through events such as film festivals.

Based on my knowledge of this field, it appears highly desirable to utilise ‘synchronic’ and ‘diachronic’ research in film genre studies. As discussed above, each genre as a process may shift during distinctive time periods. However, there is still no concrete method for observing and interpreting how a film genre can be transformed and evaluated by audience from different regions and cultures. The subdivisions and included fields in these two approaches enrich the historical approach of genre-as-process to allow the inspection of one film or one film genre through the use of comprehensive ‘grids’ that are flexible in both time and spatial dimensions, like ‘historical microscopes’. These grids are utilised to observe the case film from different perspectives and angles. Taken together, they create a total historical picture of a film within a macroscopic social and historical context.

Not all the films studied here leave synchronically or diachronically historical materials in every area mentioned above. This does not mean that there is no need to utilise these ‘microscopes’ to examine the absence of specific historical materials. On the contrary, the absence itself may also demonstrate an authentic circumstance of the film’s reception history. Klinger states that this total paradigm aims to interrogate such contextual elements to understand how they helped negotiate the film’s social meanings and public reception, attempting to pinpoint the meanings in circulation at a given historical moment.

Through Neale’s genre-as-process and ‘sustained displacement of the

dominant genre within the social and historical context', along with Klinger's synchronic and diachronic approaches to reception studies of film history, this chapter analyses the films *Futureworld* (1976 in the US and 1979 in China), *Westworld* (1973 in the US and 1989 in China) and *Star Wars IV* (1977 in the US and 1985 in China), *Star Wars V* (1980 in the US and early 1990s on television in China) as the primary case studies. In addition, *Superman* (1978 in the US and 1986 in China), *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977 in the US and 1990 in China), *Jurassic Park* (1993 in the US and 1995 in China), *The Matrix* (1999 in the US and 2000 in China) and *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982 in the US and restricted screening in China with public release in 2002) as supplementary cases to investigate how Chinese audience project their 'horizon of expectation' on the science-fiction film as a genre through historical and cultural processes.

1.2 Political impact and historical context

If this chapter aims to discuss Hollywood science-fiction film reception within 'cinematic practices' and 'intertextual zones', it cannot avoid integrating the political premises from the 'social and historical context' that directly impact the importation and reception of Hollywood films in China.

According to journalist Xia Chen's investigation, between the end of the Second World War in 1945 and the liberation of Shanghai in 1949, Shanghai imported nearly 2,000 American films (Xia 2002: 34). In November of 1950, a writer named Zhao Han published an article titled 'Sweeping away impacts of American imperialist films and cleaning up the fear to the US' in *Popular Cinema* (*dazhong dianying*) (Zhao 1950: B1). The article declared that before the victory of the Allies in the Second World War, there were 350 American imperialist films imported to China (Republic of China, 1911 – 1949) annually, and after the war that number increased to 450. Zhao Han writes that one can imagine 'how it [Hollywood films] could hurt people's minds like a fierce beast'. Hollywood films ceased to be released in China from 15 November 1950. In an article titled 'The one-year glorious successes achieved by China film industry' *People's Daily* (*renmin ribao*) asserted that the Chinese film industry 'had already exterminated' the Hollywood films that could 'poison the Chinese people' (*People's Daily* 1951: D1). Importantly, from 1950 to 1976 there was only one so-called progressive Hollywood film, *Salt of the Earth* (1954), imported to China from abroad (Xia 2002: 35).

After the establishment of the PRC in 1949, the US did not acknowledge the legitimacy of the new Chinese government founded by the Chinese Communist Party until the early 1970s, when global political patterns and powers shifted radically. As the political consideration by Chairman Mao Zedong and Premier Zhou Enlai, U.S. President Richard Nixon (1969 – 1974) made an official political visit when invited by the Chinese government in 1972, which marked the first time a U.S. President visited China. On 28 February, 1972, China and the US officially published a joint communique later titled 'The

Shanghai Communique'. After this turning point, the two governments eventually came to an agreement through negotiation on 16 December 1978 known as the 'Joint Communique on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations Between the People's Republic of China and the United States of America' (Hu and Chen 1998: 851; 1151). This declaration not only announced that peaceful diplomatic relations would become effective on 1 January 1979, but also resulted in a series of subsequent official cultural communication agreements, called 'American and Chinese cultural agreements', which stipulated that both countries would hold a series of 'Film Weeks' and screen equal numbers of films from the partnering country. As a result, the first 'Chinese Film Week' (Lan 1981: 10) and the first 'American Film Week' (Pu 1981: 8) were held in the US and China in 1981 (Shi 2007: 1).

Although the political environment surrounding the cultural domains between the two nations had shifted, individuals in the film industry, such as filmmakers and critics, still needed time to adjust to this significant change. In 1980, Xia Yan, a well-known Chinese author, literary and artistic theorist, and the fourth and fifth president of the Chinese Film Association (CFA) claimed that a debate recently raised by a comrade regarding whether wenyi (literature and art) should serve politics and be politically affiliated demanded further discussion during an academic conference hold by the CFA (Xia 1980: 2). This signalled that some artists were unable to accept the new, changing landscape of literature and art creation and criticism.

Thus, there are two key points in these reviews as discussed above under the 'social and historical context'. The first is the claim in the 'The Shanghai Communique' that the social system and foreign policies between the US and China have an essential distinction (Hu and Chen 1998: 851; 1151). China and the US were respectively socialist and capitalist economies during that period. Based on this, how would a socialist China receive a science-fiction film distributed by a capitalist US? The second point to note is that Chinese audience had conceived of the US as an integrated icon of 'American imperialism' since 1949. With this in mind, what types of expectations would Chinese audience have in terms of Hollywood science-fiction films as a genre?

1.3 Case studies: Hollywood science-fiction films in China

1.3.1 Case film: *Futureworld* in China, 1979

As all the films studied here were released diachronically in China rather than synchronically as in the US, the diachronic materials of the *Westworld* (1973, 1989) and *Futureworld* (1976, 1979) series are evaluated first through diachronic 'practices and zones' in China. *Futureworld* (1976) is a sequel to *Westworld* (1973) which was released in the US in 1976 but distributed in China in 1979, three years after the original distribution in its original country. China bought a three-to-five-year screening right for *Futureworld* (*The New York Times* 1979: 42) by means of outright purchase in 1979 (Culture Dept. of

Chinese People's Liberation Army 1984). This was one of the first seven films[8], and the very first Hollywood science-fiction film, that China imported from the US since the ban on US film imports in 1950.

The content analysed in this study with respect to *Futureworld* include: three reviews (Chen 1979: 18 – 19, Su 1979: 25, Yi 1979: 19; 3), a comic book and a domestic version of the film poster created in 1979, one journalistic review (Xiao 1980: 34 – 36) on film production in 1980, one technological article (Huang 1982: 34 – 37) published in 1982, a review (Zhai 1987: B2) written by a filmgoer in 1987 and one academic historical review published in 1999 (Zheng, 1999: 30 – 32). Nothing could be found relating to broadcast, satellite, cable television or video and laserdisc reproduction from 1979 to 2001. There was only one biographical article introducing Michael Crichton, the director of *Westworld* (Wu 1994: 37). Wu, the author of this article states that Crichton was a well-known film director with whom Chinese audience were very familiar. Chinese audience generally appreciated his films, including *Westworld* (1973, 1989), *Coma* (1978) and *Jurassic Park* (1993). However, Wu does not mention *Futureworld* when citing *Westworld*.

I first analyse all the essential characteristics these materials contain and then state my observations based on the structure of genre-as-process and elements from the diachronic approach.

First, there are four points in the three journalistic reviews from 1979 worthy of mention. The first is the genre identity of the film. Both Chen (1979: 18) and Su (1979: 25) use 'American science-fiction (kexue huanxiang, kehuan) film' directly to describe *Futureworld*. Yi (1979: 19) drew on a discursive discourse related to the area of 'other business and industry' discussing the development of android manufacturing and mechanical application, which I believe constitutes indirect evidence that the film was recognized as a science-fiction film. The next point is that both Chen (1979: 18 – 19) and Su (1979: 25) described the film with abundant imagination and profound meaning or cutting-edge computerised special visual effects in order to appreciate the film as a high 'merit science-fiction film'. The third point relates to the criticism of this film with respect to cross-cultural distinctions. Both Chen (1979: 18 – 19) and Su (1979: 19) used the word 'capitalism' (ziben zhuyi) in their review. More seriously, Chen (1979: 18 – 19) regarded the control of artificial intelligence (AI)[9] over human beings as a cautionary tale. He took Delos[10] as a metaphor signifying some superpowers and the tourists as leaders of other countries who became 'brainwashed and manipulated' by Delos. Chen declared that this film depicted how the bourgeois careerist would never succeed in ruling the world and emphasised the warning function of this film. Finally, all three authors

[8] The other six films included five Charlie Chaplin films, *Modern Times* (1936), *Limelight* (1952, 1979), *City Lights* (1931, 1979), *The Kid* (1921, 1979) and *The Idle Class* (1921, 1979), and a so-called 'progressive' film called *Convoy* (1978, 1979) directed by Sam Peckinpah.

[9] Artificial intelligence (AI, also known as machine intelligence) is intelligence displayed by machines, in contrast with the natural intelligence displayed by humans and other animals. In computer science, AI research is defined as the study of 'intelligent agents', which are defined as any device that perceives its environment and takes actions that maximize its chance of success at some goal. Colloquially, the term 'artificial intelligence' is applied when a machine mimics 'cognitive' functions that humans associate with other human minds, such as 'learning' and 'problem solving'.

[10] Delos is the name of both the company and its high-tech tourist attraction in space in *Futureworld*.

discussed AI and its development of technology to different degrees.

The second artefact, the comic book (also as known as a cinematic tiny-figure book (dianying xiao ren shu)) of *Futureworld* only focused on the film narration in a graphic way from the area of 'other media and arts' by a massive publishing organisation, the China Film Publishing House (CFPH 1979). This unique type of Chinese publication is akin to graphic novels with snapshots taken directly from many domestic and international films. Sometimes, these books would be composed from hand-drawn pictures copied from films that were well-received and popular with Chinese audience at that time. This art form was mainly popular among children and only sometimes with adults (Qian 1982: 13 – 17, Wang 1982: 11 – 23).

The third object, the film poster, was a Chinese version created for the film when it came to Chinese theatres in 1979 (Figure 3). Compared with many American versions (Figure 4 – 6) this poster appears to be quite different and more simplified. Both the colour usage and the figures the poster displays draw attention to the silhouettes of the two protagonists and the large figure of an eye. A similar eye appears during the opening credits of the film. More importantly, the eye figure is surrounded by six circle-like patterns in this poster. The purpose of these seems to be to emphasise the eye, giving it a somewhat eerie appearance. This could reflect how Chinese distributors wanted audience to understand the attraction of this film (Figure 3).

From my perspective, there are three conclusions that should be discussed with regard to the materials from 1979. The first is that while the distinctive ideologies of the US and China did impact the reception of *Futureworld* they did not affect the reception of its generic identity as a science-fiction film in China (Chen 1979: 18 – 19, Su 1979: 19; 3). The second conclusion is that authors of the reviews classified *Futureworld* as a science-fiction film with absolute certainty, even though there is no critical discussion as to whether or why it could be considered a science-fiction film. In other words, the authors appear to already have a pre-existing generic conception of science-fiction as a genre. The third conclusion is that none of these authors questioned the film's true quality compared with other science-fiction films and simply appreciated it through one-sided comments. Overall, this specific film meets their expectations of what a science-fiction film should be.

In the US, in contrast, one of the reviews of the film (Eder 1976: 10) depicted *Futureworld* as 'the most ordinary kind of hardware science fiction, full of computers and empty of thought'. Another reviewer commented that 'Crichton had nothing to do with *Futureworld*, a presentable but also unimaginative sequel, which suffers from the lack of a clever idea or two' (Arnold 1976: B1). Thus, the reason why Chinese audience received *Futureworld* differently from US audience might be the result of the reverse distribution order of the two films, which meant Chinese audience might not have had access to *Westworld* in 1979.

1.3.2 *Futureworld*: After its distribution in China

I attempt to interpret the subsequent materials as a totality and later combine this interpretation with previous analyses in order to outline the complete reception structure of *Futureworld* in China. There are three tendencies that appear in these materials:

The first is that some authors begin to focus their attention on analysing and summarising what a high-quality science-fiction film should be and how Chinese science-fiction films like *DCI* (1980) could be improved. These authors use Hollywood science-fiction films as a benchmark for such improvement (Xiao 1980: 34 – 35). This tendency becomes a more systematic discourse in Xiao (1980: 34 – 35) and Zheng's (1999: 60 – 64) academic essays. They reinforce the concept that a science-fiction film should possess rich imagination. In China, *Futureworld* was received as a high merit science-fiction film and was described by Xiao (1980: 34 – 36), Zhai (1987: B2) and Zheng (1999: 60 – 64) as a model to be referenced and learned from. Zheng (1999: 60) even declared *Futureworld* to be better than *Westworld* in many aspects, including its imaginative quality, the diegetic spheres created and the degree of thrill.

The second tendency is that all the authors abandoned ideological discourse after 1980. No vocabulary terms such as 'capitalism', 'bourgeois careerist', or even 'super powers' can be found after this date. All of the authors focused on the high quality of *Futureworld* in terms of its production and genre identity as a science-fiction film.

The third tendency is that Xiao (1980: 34 – 36), Huang (1982: 34 – 37), Zhai (1987: B2) and Zheng (1999: 60 – 64) did not mention AI in their writing, although Huang (1982) excavated a discursive discourse on the paper-making business that was unrelated to the film itself. These inclinations convey at least the speculation that *Futureworld* was somehow symbolized as representative of a 'Hollywood merit science-fiction film' in China until 1999.

Overall, *Futureworld* consistently held a unique position in the reception history of Hollywood science-fiction films in China. It was the first publicly released film of its genre and was seen as a typical Hollywood science-fiction film during the period of study. Surprisingly, the generic identity of this film tends to be less revised than any other Hollywood science-fiction film in China, despite being against the regulation of genre as a shifting process. Some reviews also listed *Futureworld* along with domestic science-fiction films like *DCI* (1980) in order to appeal to the Chinese film industry to emulate it (Xiao 1980: 34 – 36, Zhai 1987: B2). The discourses found in all the materials consistently mentioned the film as having traditional characteristics of a science-fiction film, such as robots, AI, social crisis in a future context, etc. At the time, it was the only film that made a sensation in China which possessed an element of AI. Artificial intelligence was recognized by Chinese audience as a persuasive characteristic of a science-fiction film. As Zheng recalls, when *Futureworld* was released and screening the Chinese public had no method of entertainment except watching movies and reading novels. The author also claims that he

remembers having personally seen this film in theatres three times. Each time, he recalls, the theatre was filled with moviegoers (Zheng 1999: 60).

1.3.3 Case film: *Westworld* in China, 1989

The first problem with the two '*World*' films is the reverse order of their importation and distribution in China. Figures 1 and 2 present the records of importation of *Futureworld* and *Westworld* in China in 1979 and 1988, respectively. However, why would China import *Futureworld* first instead of the original *Westworld* (1973)?

Some reviews and journalistic articles provide clues regarding this question. The China Film Company (later known as the China Film Group) spent $1 million annually (Zhou 1995: 14) on purchasing certain out-of-date foreign films that were second-rate or even third-rate in terms of quality and had a low average price of $20,000 to $30,000. The China Film Company could not buy the most recent high-quality foreign films due to their limited financial resources at that time (Fang 2002: 52).

Financial considerations may have been the main reason behind the choice to purchase *Futureworld*, as the budget for *Westworld* was $1.25 million (Anon 1974: 19) and the movie had grossed $11 million in total box office profits through a later re-release by the end of 1976 (*Variety* 1976: 44). This was more than three times the profit generated by *Futureworld*, which only earned box office revenues of $3 million.

Upon *Westworld*'s (1973, 1989) release in China in 1989 there was no explicit response to the film. This stood in great contrast to the reception of the film's sequel *Futureworld*, which had caused a great sensation in 1979. In this research, very few materials addressing the reception of *Westworld* between 1979 and 2001 were found. One exception was 'The Examination and Approval Form for Imported Films' of *Westworld* from the China Film Distribution and Screening Company (Figure 2). In Zheng Jun's article 'Science-fiction Film in China', he (1999: 60) argued that *Futureworld* was much better than *Westworld* as a science-fiction film. It thus appears that the reverse distribution order of these two films may have resulted in the sensation of *Futureworld* being unmatched by that of *Westworld* in China. The inversely distinctive receptions of these two films is also the main difference in terms of the reception of these films in the US and China, respectively. Additionally, the film industry had been heavily influenced by the television industry, leading to a downward trend during the time that *Westworld* was released (Zheng 1999: 60 – 61).

Examining only one or two film cases may not be adequate to create my own structure for interpreting the reception of all Hollywood science-fiction films in China during the time period under study. For this reason, the reception of *Star Wars IV* (1977, 1985) is investigated below.

1.3.4 Case film: The *Star Wars* series in China

According to all the materials found that relate to *Star Wars IV* (1977, 1985), there are two remaining mysteries around its Chinese distribution. The first is that although *Star Wars IV* was publicly released in China in 1985 during the second 'American Film Week'[11] (Xue 1985: 35, Yang 1992: 29, Shi 2007: 1), relevant journalistic reviews and academic texts precede the distribution of this film in China. These first appear in 1978 (Han 1978: 273 – 287) and 1979 (Zhi 1979: 27 – 28, *Movie Review* 1979: 24), as well as in 1980 (*Movie Review* 1980: 9), 1981 (Wu 1981: 27, Zhu and Yu 1981: 18 – 19), 1983 (Hu 1983: 52 – 59) and 1984 (Zhuang 1984: 29, Li 1984: 249 – 251). The other mystery is why China imported *Futureworld* instead of *Star Wars IV*.

There are two explanations that could explain the first mystery. One is that *Star Wars IV* could have been screened for certain groups of audience through internal movies in China after it released in 1977 in the US.[12] This theory is based on the fact that Han (1978: 273 – 287) published his article in a periodical that was internally distributed.[13] The other explanation is that none of the writers or scholars in China had access to this film and they only obtained knowledge of it by reading and referencing articles written by foreign authors. I am inclined towards the former explanation because these Chinese writers were all filmmakers and senior film scholars, meaning they could have accessed to the film via internal movies. Furthermore, in these materials they not only addressed the storyline in detail but also described the visual special effects in the film explicitly. They seemed to know both the film itself and the sensation it had caused in the US.

The second mystery could be explained by financial factors. The budget of *Star Wars IV* was $13 million and the box office revenue was $461 million in the US and $314 million overseas, coming to $775 million in total. It became the highest-grossing film of all time. In comparison, *Futureworld*'s budget was only $2.5 million and box office revenues came to only $3 million by 15 August 1976 (IMDb, Wikipedia). As discussed, China could not afford to purchase a film as expensive as *Star Wars IV* due to its film importation policy at that time.

The content analysed in this study with respect to *Star Wars IV* includes 10 reviews, academic theoretical essays and 'biographical legends' (Han 1978: 273 – 287, *Movie Review* 1979: 28, *Movie Review* 1979: 24, *Movie Review* 1980: 9, Zhi 1979: 27 – 28, Wu 1981: 27, Zhu 1981: 18 – 19, Hu 1983: 52 – 59, Zhuang

[11] There were five American films screened including *Kramer vs. Kramer* (1979), *On Golden Pond* (1982), *Coal Miner's Daughter* (1980), *The Turning Point* (1977) and *Star Wars* (1977).

[12] 'Internal movies' is short for 'internal reference films'. This refers to films imported not for commercial use but provided to special groups or individuals for evaluation. These films were only provided to select senior officers of the central government and agents of the foreign affairs department in order to make them aware of the current situation of politics, economics, culture and military affairs around the world. The 'internal reference films' existed before the Cultural Revolution, but the implications of those existing before the Cultural Revolution and those during the Cultural Revolution were completely different. Those 'internal reference films' before the Cultural Revolution refer to films that could not be released publicly, while those during the Cultural Revolution were only screened for the 'Gang of Four' and relatives, although some films would be screened for partial members from the literature and art group and some from special departments for reference.

[13] Han's article was published in a periodical called *World Cinema* (*shijie dianying*) and was titled *Cinema Art Collection of Translation (dianying yishu yicong*) in 1978. More importantly, there is a note printed on the cover of the article which reads 'internal distribution' (see Figure 4), which means the article's distribution was to be confined to a particular minor circulation, especially the government and specific bureaus in China.

1984: 29, Li 1984: 249 – 251) published before 1985. Many more texts published after 1985 that mention *Star Wars IV* were also found. The screening of this film could be seen as a typical diachronic 'revival and retrospect' during the second 'American Film Week' in 1985. The Chinese dubbed version of *Star Wars V* was broadcasted on some local televisions in the early 1990s in China. Additionally, there were various 'cinematic tiny-figure books' that adapted the story. There were also some versions of original soundtracks, pirated videotapes, laserdiscs, VCD, DVD and three episodes of a 52-episode special program introducing the *Star Wars* trilogy distributed during the period.

Despite *Star Wars IV* and *V* being released in China as part of 'American Film Week' and on local televisions, *Star Wars VI* was not released in China at any point between 1979 and 2001. *Star Wars I* (1999) was the first officially imported revenue-sharing film of the *Star Wars* completed series (from *I* to *VII*). It was released in China in 1999.

Firstly, the reception of this series differed greatly from 1979 to 2001 in both printed media and academic theoretical fields. In early articles like those published by Han (1978: 273 – 287), Zhi (1979: 27 – 28), etc., all the authors criticized *Star Wars IV* as 'a childlike, naïve fairy tale that happened in space' and stated that it represented 'a retrogressive ideology of a feudal dynasty change' that 'should be cautioned against as a new trend of capitalistic propaganda to poison audience'. Although the authors classified *Star Wars IV* as a 'science-fiction film', none of them seemed to agree that the story could be categorised as standard science fiction. They declared the film to be an out-of-date, boring story with a space setting (*Movie Review* 1979). They all utilised the binary opposition judgements of 'escapism' (taobi zhuyi) and 'self-reflection' (ziwo fanxing) as their framework for interpreting *Star Wars IV*. They concluded that the film was a good example of 'escapism' and entertaining U.S. audience with the use of special effects.

Subsequently and surprisingly, the reception of this film in all fields rapidly changed after its screening during the second 'American Film Week' in 1985. The authors of critical texts and journalistic reviews shifted their angles of criticisms to pure appreciation of the film in terms of its generation of overseas sensation, great achievements at the U.S. box office, abundant imagination and its high-tech filming technique. These authors omitted analysis of the story and turned to interpretation through more discourses on generic identity. One of author classified it as a science-fiction film that also combined other genres, including Western film and war film such as *Triumph of the Will* (1935), as well as fantasy film such as *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) (Li 1985: 241). Other authors claimed that *Star Wars IV* was a typical Hollywood science-fiction film until Zhang Donglin (1994: 42) categorised it as 'hard science-fiction'.[14] Gu (1998:

[14] 'Hard science fiction' is a category of science fiction characterised by an emphasis on scientific accuracy. The term was first used in print in 1957 by P. Schuyler Miller in a review of John W. Campbell's *Islands of Space* in *Astounding Science Fiction*. The complementary term 'soft science fiction' first appeared in the late 1970s. The term is formed by analogy with the popular distinction between the 'hard' (natural) and 'soft' (social) sciences. Science fiction critic Gary Westfahl argues that neither term is part of a rigorous taxonomy; instead they are approximate ways of characterising stories that reviewers and commentators have found useful.

95 – 102) was the first to mention the film using 'action' and 'adventure' as its generic identities in his academic review combining a biography of the director, the total history of the film and the culture behind the total history. Eventually, it became a 'milestone' in Chinese science-fiction film reception history (Tao and Zhao 1998: 58 – 59).

In the comic book field, some early painters never saw *Star Wars* when they were painting their works about the film. These painters painted their comic books only with their own imaginations to the real film in the early 1980s. They used their own ideas to re-create the characters, storylines, props and sets so that these comic books were more similar to fan-made works of 'fan culture' (Ming *et al.* 1980: 7 – 31, Song 1980: 5 – 49). Other artists seemed to copy the original story from the film but also integrated some of their own interpretations into their comics (Huang and Kai 1981: 19 – 34, Yi 1982: 23 – 56, Yu and Yang 1982: 32 – 78, Song 1982: 21 – 64). All the artists focused on the storytelling and re-arrangement of the film through graphs under the cross-cultural context between China and US at that time, such as the Chinese-looking characters and Chinese-style re-arranged and re-interpreted literary depictions, etc.

In the areas of broadcast, satellite and cable television, video and laserdisc reproduction, most CDs, VCDs and DVDs appeared only after 2002. Audiocassettes of the soundtrack were hardly existed. This was also the case with videotapes of the trilogy during the 1980s. In the early 1990s, some local televisions broadcasted the Chinese dubbed version of *Star Wars V* (Lan 2006: 12 – 18). In 1997, the High-tech Audio-visual Media Corporation of China Film Publishing House distributed a 52-episode special program called 'The Science-fiction World and Future Era' through China Central Television (CCTV) and several other mainstream television channels. The 26th episode of this series was '*Star Wars: A New Hope* and Laserdisc Technique', the 27th was '*Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* and Computer Read-only Laserdisc', and the 46th was '*Star Wars: The Return of Jedi* and Military Aircraft in the Past and Present'. Every episode mentioned above used half its duration to introduce narrations and productions of the trilogy and the other half to introduce the latest technologies in digital media storage and even military technology. This was related to 'other businesses and industries'.

In these areas, it appears that the *Star Wars* films were better received than any other Hollywood science-fiction film in China since 1985. Not only were abundant relevant commodities produced since 1985, but the affluent types and styles of these commodities also demonstrated the popularization of the first two films of the trilogy due to both the circulation of comic books and audio-visual discs (although most of these were pirated before 2002).

In sum, there are three similarities among the reception processes of the cases studied above. The first is that all relevant reviews and academic theoretical essays criticized these films within ideological criticisms initially but rapidly shifted. Subsequently, the authors of the analysed materials would only comment on these films as high merit representatives of Hollywood science-fiction films. Some of these authors discussed combined sub-generic identities

but most only asserted that the Hollywood science-fiction films as discussed above were pure science-fiction films. The second similarity is that although some of these films had not been released to the public, some reviewers and scholars were able to conduct their reviews and formulate criticism regardless. They commented on these films and published their works even when these films were not available to Chinese audience, who were unable to provide any of their own responses. The third similarity is that all of the comic books and audio-visual commodities related to these films emphasised duplicating the storylines or re-creating characters and plots in order to repeat the narratives of these films. The purposes of these materials could have been to either help those who had no access to these films or to relive the experience of these films with current fans.

1.4 Supplementary case films

Although the two 'World' series and *Star Wars* series were the most science-fiction films in Chinese reception sphere mainly during the period, other films like *Superman* (1978, 1986), *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977, 1990), *Jurassic Park* (1993, 1995), *The Matrix* (1999, 2000) and *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982, 2002) also generated constructive materials within historical and cultural contexts.

The reception materials of these films mostly demonstrate a similar pattern as those of the two 'World' films and *Star Wars* series, including generic discourse, perspective of commentary and the historical process of their receptions. For instance, several reviews from 1979 to 2001 mentioned *Superman* as 'a good young man who does not smoke or drink and saves the world again' (Wen 1979: 11). Wei (2001: 1 – 2) asserted that *Superman* was a purely exemplified Hollywood science-fiction film, listing it as one of the films 'known by every family'.

Steven Spielberg's films were highly appreciated. *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977, 1990) and *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982, 2002) were depicted as 'science-fiction films that are full of human compassion' (Hu 1983: 57). Interestingly, Spielberg's works were also labelled as 'escapism' and 'entertaining films' similar to George Lucas's *Star Wars* in the early 1980s. Again, this criticism was displaced by the discussion of 'computerised, high-tech visual effects' in the 1990s. Debates were raised about why China could not produce such science-fiction films (Wang 1997: 1 – 5) during the discussions of *Jurassic Park* (1993, 1995) and *The Matrix* (1999, 2000). Furthermore, the occurrence of corpuses as discussed above consistently preceded the initial public distribution of these films in China, meaning the public's viewing experience did not influence the reception of these films by critics and scholars.

1.5 Conclusion

Imported Hollywood science-fiction films changed the reception of science-fiction films in China as a genre gradually from 1979 to 2001. At the beginning of this changing process in 1979, I propose the system of meta-binary discourse as my own structure of content analysis. This term refers to discussions by academics and ordinary audience that split the commentary of a particular film into positive and negative perspectives, forming two binary oppositions. The positive aspect contains debates of cinematic subject, narrative, film technique and discursive topics while the negative one involves arguments on distinctive ideologies, politics and national contexts. The former emphasises the advantages and benefits that the specific, imported Hollywood science-fiction film brings to Chinese audience while the latter focuses on the effect of 'reverse typicality' (fanmian dianxing) that the story of the film conveys.

After the primary stage of reception, this system of meta-binary discourse branches into several subdivisions. The original positive reception is transformed into three subdivisions. The first appealed to the Chinese film industry to emulate 'high-quality' Hollywood science-fiction films as 'models'. The second only focuses on the discursive discourse in 'other business and industries'. The third solely emphasised the latest film techniques of production and post-production. The original negative reception decayed rapidly, especially when the film reviewed was publicly distributed throughout China.

From the late 1980s to 2001, many reviews appealed for an increase of local Chinese science-fiction film production. They cited Hollywood science-fiction films frequently when discussing science-fiction film. The positive reception of these films replaced the negative one. This positive reception became a negotiation between the admiration of Hollywood science-fiction films and implicit criticism of Chinese film censorship (Zhai 1987: B2; Wang 1989: 43 – 53; Zhu, 1991: 6; Li 1992: 71 – 79; 108; Shen 1992: 23 – 24; Wang 1997: 1 – 5). Some authors even contended that certain so-called Chinese 'science-fiction' films, such as *The Lonely Spirit in an Old Building* (1989) and *The Head in the House* (1990), were actually horror films or fantasy films with elements of pseudo-science and superstition (Zhu 1991: 6). This is in line with the argument that Wei proposes in his essay where he asserts that Chinese science-fiction films seldom demonstrate the kind of science-based vision or exploration that mark many ambitious science-fiction films in the West. In part due to the genre's Hollywood monopoly, Chinese science-fiction films tend to utilise local pre-existing cinematic conventions and are intermixed with other genres that range from fantasy, to ghost and horror stories, to romances to martial-arts films (Wei 2013: 147).

The third subdivision of authors began to take on a pessimistic tone in their reviews and academic writing with respect to the quality of Chinese film technique. These authors highlighted the gap of film technique between the film industries of the two countries with specific examples such as *Jurassic Park* (1993, 1995) and *The Matrix* (1999, 2000). They also claimed a great falling

behind of the Chinese film industry in terms of special effects, especially computer high-tech graphical production (Rui and Shen 1994: 79, Ge 1995: 33 – 43, Sun 1997: 38).

One of the complexities of the construction of science fiction's reception as a genre was seen in the contradiction between the reception of the postponed distribution and the pre-viewing. The date of distribution never impacted the positive reception of any of science-fiction films in China. However, it did affect the dissolution of the negative reception of some films like *Star Wars* and *Superman*. For example, *Star Wars* was criticized as 'escapism' and a 'naïve fairy tale' in various publications from 1978 to 1984. This characterisation persisted until the public screening of the film during the second 'American Film Week' in 1985.

With regard to genre as a multi-dimensional process, the presentation of scientific, high-tech special effects, richly imaginative plots and advanced film production techniques were the three primary elements emphasised with regard to the reception of the science-fiction genre. All of these elements are also present in the positive reception. Despite Hao Jian and Zheng Jun attempted to introduce and excavate the academic discourse on film genre and science-fiction film since the late 1980s (Hao and Yang 1988: 41 – 51, Zheng 1999: 60 – 64), neither author provided any comprehensively systematic analyses or integrations before 2001. It seems that the discourse on science-fiction films was present only in fragmental debates in some reviews and academic essays during the period. However, the three elements could be regarded as a negotiation as well when discussing Chinese domestic science-fiction films, as the authors argued that science-fiction films like the *DCI* (1980) or *WB* (1988) lacked these three elements, as did the science-fiction genre in general. Hollywood science-fiction films in China became a templet that Chinese film scholars and audience gradually came to regard as a standard reference in order to judge Chinese domestic science-fiction film production.

CHAPTER 2

FILM ADAPTATION OF SCIENCE-FICTION LITERATURE:

CHINESE DOMESTIC SCIENCE-FICTION FILMS 1980 – 1988

2.1 Research frameworks

As stated in the Introduction, the existing research on science-fiction films produced in mainland China lacks adequate emphasis in both English and Chinese scholarly literatures. Therefore, this chapter aims to interpret what types of meanings mainland Chinese science-fiction films as texts possess, as constructed by Chinese audience. This is achieved by interpreting domestic Chinese science-fiction film reception in the 1980s, investigating how the representative case films were produced and exploring under what types of historically and culturally specific contexts these films were made. As most domestic Chinese science-fiction films are adapted from literary works, the adaptation-as-reception mode has been deeply rooted into Chinese science-fiction circulation and the science-fiction film space. Since Chinese science-fiction films tend to use pre-existing cinematic conventions local to their spaces of production, the development of science-fiction cinema in China is further complicated by the historical and cultural contexts shifting towards hybridity and intertextuality. This disrupts the genre's typical development through the involvement of multiple exogenous political and educational values.

In contrast to *Futureworld* (1976, 1979) and *Star Wars* (1977, 1985), the case study films in this chapter, *DCI* (1980) and *WB* (1988), were adapted from a novel and a children's story, respectively. There are many other domestic Chinese science-fiction films adapted from literary works that were created in the 1980s. These include *The Shadow of a Ghost* (1981) by Ji Hongxu adapted from Ji Sanmeng's novel *Strange Shadow in a Mansion of a Monarch* (1981) and *The Head in The House* (1989) adapted from Alexander R. Belyaev's novel *Professor Dowell's Head* (1925).

The primary development stage of Chinese science-fiction creation, including creation of both novels and films, lasted for almost 50 years after the establishment of the PRC and exhibited 'two prosperous climaxes'. The first high point occurred between 1949 and the beginning of the Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1976) and the second appeared in the period between the end of the Cultural Revolution and 1983 (Dong 2017: 24). The well-known science-fiction authors from these periods were the central forces of Chinese science-fiction creation and included Zheng Wenguang (*Flying to the Sagittarius* 1978), Tong

Enzheng (*Death-Ray On the Coral Island,* the novel, 1978) and Ye Yonglie (*Little Smart Roaming the Future,* 1978), among others.

Based on the nature of the films studied in this chapter the research framework used here first examines several relevant theoretical essays on the problem of film adaptation. Essentially, according to the many scholarly literatures on film adaptation, there are three main types of approaches for creating a film based on an existing literary text. The only one from English scholarly literature that might be practically beneficial to this chapter is the grammar of transformation.

The grammar of transformation is a theory proposed by Robert Stam (2000: 54 – 76), who provided a potential framework that can be referenced in this chapter. Stam posited that the original novel can be seen as a 'situated utterance produced in one medium and in one historical context, then transformed into another equally situated utterance that is produced in a different context and in a different medium'. Subsequently, the film adaptation of a novel can absorb and alter the genres and texts available through the grids of ambient discourses and ideologies and be mediated by a series of filters including studio style, ideological fashion, political constraints, auteurist predilections, charismatic stars, economic advantage or disadvantage and evolving technology.

In Chinese academia, there was also only one approach to film adaptation that could be practically beneficial to this chapter. This is Huang's (2003: 71 – 72) approach to adaptation in the specific Chinese historical and cultural context. Huang elaborated several conditions that might prevent selected novels from being adapted into films during the 1980s in China. He noted that works with high literary value that were written by unknown authors, works created by famous authors but lacking narrative and action properties, works with unique subject matter that contained sentiments against the contemporary political system and ideology or deviant from the social mainstream, work with strong literary properties that only excavated the character's inner personality with weak narrative plots, works of avant-garde experimentation, and finally works that were popular, entertaining and had strong narration but lacked literary properties and creativity would all be difficult to adapt to film. Huang believed that filmmakers must find 'a balance among the aesthetic, social and consumption values' and that they must follow the realistic strategy of 'surviving in the planned economic system, and developing in the primary socialist economic market'.

Based on Huang's arguments, I summarise a series of rules and norms that is practically functional to the adaptation-as-reception framework in this chapter. Huang described the following qualities as the particular features that 'an adaptable novel' should contain: 'the fame of the author', 'narrative and action properties', 'a proper political thought or ideology', 'a normal formula of storytelling (not experimental)' and 'a literary property and creativity' at that time, a sentiment echoed by Stam in his reference to 'ideological fashion' and 'political constraints'. Based on the 'studio style' proposed by Stam's 'grammar of transformation', the first mainland Chinese science-fiction film *DCI* (1980)

and the first mainland Chinese children's science-fiction film *WB* (1988) can be analysed as case studies.

2.2 *Death-Ray On the Coral Island* (1980): The first science-fiction film in mainland China

The original novel, titled *'Death-Ray On the Coral Island'* was completed in 1964. The *Teenager Literature and Arts* periodical was set to publish the text and had already proofread it but its publication was eventually cancelled because some the novel's contents were not suitable for the political environment at that time. During the Cultural Revolution, the draft only just survived—seemingly by miracles. After *People's Literature* re-invited the author to write a science-fiction novel in 1978, Tong Enzheng edited and submitted this novel to the publication (Tong 1980: 57). The publication of this novel was aided by a policy published in 1978 that asserted that 'science and technology are productive powers' and moreover the publication of this policy 'was the spring for the Chinese science and technology field' (Ministry of Science and Technology of PRC 2008).

At the same time as the first Hollywood science-fiction film *Futureworld* (1979) was distributed in China, the first domestic science-fiction film *DCI* (*shanhu dao shang de siguang*) (1980) was being produced by the Shanghai Film Studio (Tong 1980: 58).

2.2.1 Political and historical context

Liu (2013: 1) and Yang (2017: 2) both clarify in their articles that 'the superpower' characterised as the villain both in the novel and the film is meant to be the Soviet Union. As such, it is necessary to understand the multi-dimensional contexts that existed between China and the Soviet Union in the 1950s and 1960s.

From 1956 to the 1960s, the Sino-Soviet dispute had consistently drawn attention as one of the more fascinating spectacles in international politics. After a post-1949 honeymoon relationship in accord with the best principles of international revolutionary solidarity, the PRC and the Soviet Union began, from about 1956 onwards, to descend into increasingly bitter mutual hostilities and recrimination. Ideological differences featured prominently in the propaganda onslaughts from both sides, but the underlying causes of the conflict had much more to do with realpolitik issues than with competition between Beijing and Moscow for recognition as the true source of communist wisdom. These issues were typical problems stemming from insecurity in the face of mutually perceived military threat and, in the case of China, unassuaged resentment over territorial encroachments by its neighbour during the era of European colonial expansion (Day 1985: ix).

George Malenkov resigned the Soviet premiership on 8 March 1955 and was succeeded by Marshal Bulganin, who stated in one of his first official

statements that 'China can count in all circumstances on the aid of the USSR'. Moscow Radio announced on 1 May that an agreement with China regarding Soviet aid in atomic research for peaceful purposes had been signed. It was stated that the agreement provided for (a) the completion of the necessary preparatory work in 1955-56 and the supply of experimental atomic piles and accelerators; (b) the free supply of scientific and technical information required for the installation of this apparatus and the loan of Soviet specialists; (c) the supply of sufficient quantities of fissile material and radioactive isotopes until China was able to keep its atomic piles working without further Soviet aid; and (d) the training of the Chinese in nuclear physics (Day, 1985: 4). Under a secret agreement signed on 15 October 1957, the USSR undertook to supply the necessary scientific information and technical materials to enable China to manufacture its own nuclear weapons. This was never executed and its existence was revealed by China only in 1963 (Day 1985: 8).

At the 21st Soviet Communist Party congress, held from 27 January to 5 February 1959, no open signs of tension between the USSR and China appeared. In his report to the congress Khrushchev described 'the aggressive policy of the USA towards the Chinese People's Republic and other peace-loving states' as the main source of tension in the Far East, and suggested the creation of a nuclear-free zone in the Far East and the Pacific. He also stated that 'the Communist Party of China is employing many original forms of socialist construction, but we have no disagreements with it…We are in full and complete agreement with our brother party in China, though in many respects its methods of building socialism do not resemble our own'. In his address to the congress, Chinese premier Zhou Enlai spoke of the 'eternal and unbreakable' friendship between the USSR and China and read a message from Mao praising Khrushchev's 'correct leadership', but made no reference to the latter's proposal for a nuclear-free zone in the Far East (Day 1985: 13).

On 20 June 1959, the USSR repudiated the secret agreement of 1957 on the supply of aid to China in manufacturing nuclear weapons. This reversal of policy, which was deeply resented by the Chinese and contributed to bringing about the fall of Marshal Peng Dehuai, was apparently motivated by Khrushchev's desire to achieve a rapprochement with the US, his plan for a nuclear-free zone in the Far East and his distrust of the increasingly bellicose tendencies of China's foreign policy. A Chinese broadcast of 15 August 1963, which first revealed details of the agreement, asserted that its repudiation was intended 'as a gift for the Soviet leader to take to Eisenhower when visiting the USA in September' (Day 1985: 13).

In April 1960 the Chinese Communist Party for the first time made public its ideological differences with the Soviet party, although until the end of 1962 both sides refrained from attacking each other directly. The Chinese directed their attacks ostensibly against 'revisionists' in general and the Yugoslavs in particular, often using criticism of the positions taken by the Italian Communist Party (then led by the pro-Soviet Palmiro Togliatti) as an oblique way of attacking Soviet leadership. The Soviet Communists directed their polemics

against ‘dogmatists’ in general (Day 1985: 17).

The Chinese Communist Party journal *Red Flag* published on 16 April 1960, include the first of a series of substantial articles entitled ‘Long Live Leninism’, which emphatically stated the Chinese view on many political issues in dispute. While accepting the principle of peaceful coexistence and contending that Communists must seek to avoid a major war, it maintained that the danger of such a war would remain as long as capitalism existed. It rejected the view that a nuclear war would destroy civilization and declared that ‘on the ruins of destroyed imperialism the victorious peoples will create with tremendous speed a civilization a thousand times higher than the capitalist system, and will build their bright future’. The articles also distinguished between major wars and local wars arising from revolutionary movements, the latter of which could only assist the progress of the revolution. Quoting Lenin’s support of the view that the transition to socialism was impossible without revolutionary violence, the articles advocated that all revolutionary movements should be supported ‘resolutely and without the least reservation’. Soviet spokesmen speedily replied to this political challenge. Otto Kuusinen (a member of the party presidium) stated in a speech on 22 April 1960 that there existed ‘a division in the ruling quarters of the imperialist states’, and that ‘side by side with the hardened enemies of peace there appear sober-thinking statesmen who realize that a war fought with the new means of mass destruction would be madness’. He went on to criticize those who held dogmatically to the view that imperialism was aggressive and failed to realize the need to save mankind from another war (Day 1985: 18).

After the unpleasant negotiation during the Bucharest Conference in June 1960, the Soviet government informed the Chinese government on 16 July 1960 of its decision to withdraw all Soviet technicians working in China the following month. This unilateral decision, which aroused greater resentment in China than any other action of the Soviet government with the possible exception of the repudiation of the agreement on nuclear weapons, struck a crushing blow to China’s economy at a time when the country was suffering from a series of natural disasters described by Beijing Radio as ‘without parallel in the past century’, including drought, typhoons, floods and plagues of locusts and other insects. According to later Chinese statements, 1,390 experts were withdrawn, 343 contracts concerning technical aid were cancelled and 257 projects of scientific and technical cooperation ended with the result that many projects in progress had to be suspended and some factories and mines that were conducting trial production could not go into full production according to schedule (Day 1985: 19; 21). It was these historically and culturally specific contexts that heavily impacted the creation of the novel *DCI*, which describes the major conflict between Chinese protagonists and foreign villains in 1964.

2.2.2 The fame of the author

The fame of the author had a significant impact on the reception of a

science-fiction work in the late 1970s and the 1980s due to the marginalized position of the science-fiction genre within mainstream Chinese literature. In order words, only significant works written by well-known science-fiction authors could be received by the public as texts worthy of being adapted to film (Huang 2003: 71). Tong Enzheng was one of the more well-known science-fiction authors during this period. According to the *China Science-fiction Chronicle of Events* (*zhongguo kehuan da shiji*) (Dong 2017), Tong Enzheng was a representative author in both of the development stages (1949 - 1966 and 1976 - 1983) of Chinese science fiction. Moreover, his novel *DCI* was a representative work during the second wave of Chinese science-fiction creation.

2.2.3 Narrative and action properties and beyond

Death-Ray On the Coral Island was written in 1964 and published in *People's Literature* in 1978. The reputation of *People's Literature* was extremely significant at the time. *People's Literature* was created by the China Writers Association in 1949, and was well-known as 'the most authoritative' (Bian 2011: 51) and 'crucial literature periodical' (Zheng 2009: 13) in China. It was regarded as the most authoritative publication of mainstream literature in China (although there were not many other types of literature during this period). The works published in *People's Literature* were highly recognized and widely appreciated.

After its publication, the novel caused a significant sensation in China. This type of phenomenon is fundamentally different from those that occur today. According to the reception of Chinese science fiction, at that time there was no concept of 'science fiction fans' in China and no science-fiction community. This situation persisted until the mid-1980s. During this period the number of science fiction readers may not have been larger than today, but the readers at that time came from all walks of life. This is completely different from today's science-fiction 'fandom literature' (piaoyou wenxue), which is somewhat homogenous. The composition of science-fiction readers thus meant that an excellent science-fiction novel would have a significant influence across society, and *Death-Ray On the Coral Island* was just this type of excellent novel.

At the time of *DCI*'s publication there was an authoritative award in China called the Creation Award for an Excellent National Short Story, which was first given by the China Writers Association in 1978 (Ma 2005: 3, Shen 2016: 2, Dong 2017: 19). This award was highly influential in the literary field, and a considerable proportion of famous writers were rapidly well-known due to this award. Although before *DCI* was published there had been sporadic science-fiction novels printed in various journals, *DCI* was a revolutionary science-fiction novel. In this novel, the popularization of science was not the primary element. Instead, the political nature of the novel was significant, and this gave audience a new understanding of science fiction (Liu, 2013: 2).

2.2.4 Ideological fashion and political constraints

Tong (1980) asserted that three out of four protagonists dying in a single novel went against the cultural regulation by the Gang of Four[15] during the Cultural Revolution. During that period, an author could be criticized as 'containing problems related to political positions' if any 'good' character died in his or her writing. Although the novel was published after receiving an award in 1978, some of Tong's friends in the literature field informed him that it was still improper to have too many protagonists die in a single text. They even suggested that Tong change the original title *'Death-Ray On the Coral Island'* (*shanhudao shang 'de' siguang*) to '*All Dead On the Coral Island'* (*shanhudao shang 'dou' siguang*). Tong did not respond to this criticism and kept his original title, and it is possible to perceive a subtle sense of 'ideological fashion' in the period just after the Cultural Revolution. Tong declared that the primary purpose of writing the novel was to contribute his own small effort towards 'the course of exterminating the remaining evil force of the Gang of Four', and 'to portray positive characters of those overseas Chinese scientists in terms of their thoughts and works'.

After the novel's release, the Soviet publication *Prague* printed an article commenting on the work stating that it was full of national chauvinism, but it was also a symbol of the thawing of Chinese literature, and that various perspectives that had never been seen before began to appear. The USSR showed great politeness for a novel that treated it as a villain (Liu 2013: 2).

In the film adaptation, science and technology are divided into two classes: working for justice and working for evil. Service to a righteous state or succumbing to an evil force (through commercial and military channels) are the two possible fates for a technology. Because of this distinction between righteousness and evil, the national identity of China even surpassed the restrictions of nationality (American-Chinese professor Zhao Qian sent research results back to China). The film praised the patriotic scientists Zhao Qian and Chen Tianhong, condemned imperialism and capitalism, and posited that Dr. Matai's overwhelmingly naïve perspective that the natural sciences have no political attributes required strong revision.

The film faithfully presented the plot of the original novel. Like the novel, the film as a whole had a strong ideological tendency to criticize the capitalist system and the so-called antagonistic 'superpower' (i.e. the USSR) as well as praise patriotism that does not fear this superpower. Due to the characteristics of the story's theme and ideological inclination, the film version of *DCI* presents these historical and cultural characteristics in its own unique way. This filmic nature of combining science-fiction content with patriotic, anti-spy political

[15] The Gang of Four was a political faction composed of four Chinese Communist Party officials. They came to prominence during the Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1976) and were later charged with a series of treasonous crimes. The gang's leading figure was Mao Zedong's last wife Jiang Qing. The other members were Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and Wang Hongwen. The Gang of Four controlled the organs of power of the Communist Party of China throughout the later stages of the Cultural Revolution, although it remains unclear which major decisions were made by Mao Zedong and carried out by the Gang, and which were the result of the Gang of Four's own planning.

themes is not common in Western science-fiction films such as those produced in Hollywood. This illustrates the multi-dimensional and adaptable nature of science fiction as a film genre being complicated and altered within various cross-cultural contexts.

In the 1960s and 1970s Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated for a variety of complicated reasons. The USSR was considered by China to be on a revisionist path and Khrushchev was described as 'the spokesman for capitalism'. Therefore, the film version of *DCI* aims to present the distinctions between socialist values and capitalist values.

Why would this science-fiction film possess such a strong political character? In the 1960s and 1970s in China it was popular for science-fiction works to include realistic and politicized themes. When Tong Enzheng discussed the reception of the novel and film, he emphasised that *DCI* was a 'scientific literature-art work' rather than a 'science popularization work'. The work attempts to 'clarify that natural scientists must serve a certain class in a hierarchical society' (Tong 1980: 57). This argument, which associates natural science with politics, is not unique to Tong Enzheng or contemporary science-fiction authors in general. The natural sciences must serve national development and national defence. In the 1940s, Xia Yan's science-fiction play *Fascist Bacteria* (1942) had already demonstrated the tendency of including realistic and politicized themes in a clear and obvious way.

The emphasis on the relationship between science and politics had been developing in the confrontations between Chinese and Western politics, economies and cultures since the second half of the 19th century. In the early decades of the establishment of the PRC, complex, multi-dimensional domestic and international situations had highlighted the significance of science. The tendency in science-fiction literature to explore this relationship is consistent with the understanding of the role of technology and scientists in Chinese society. For this reason, science-fiction films all exhibit the same cultural point of view, namely that scientific results have political attributes and scientists have nationally hierarchical attributes. Combining the topics of science, politics and justice is one of the characteristics among the Chinese domestic films as the science-fiction genre in the historically and culturally specific context in China (Yang 2017: 2).

Despite the belief that science and technology are closely related to national fate and ideology, the conception of science and technology on a philosophical level is not a cinematic concern. Understanding modern science and technology in a tool-based way and equating this with pre-modern traditional techniques allows a film to present the tension between technology and human social life directly as an ideological conflict (Yang 2017: 2 – 3).

Therefore, both the 'high-power battery' and 'death-ray weapon' in *DCI* refer to the nuclear weapons co-researched through the cooperation between China and the USSR. The villain who kills Dr. Zhao Qian and cheats Dr. Matai is meant to represent the USSR. The conflict between justice and evil set on the coral island is also a metaphor meant to reflect the confrontation between the

two nations. The villain first makes a false accusation against Dr. Matai and sends him to jail, then rescues Dr. Matai from prison and arranges for him to continue his scientific research on an isolated island. The villain then waits to use his inventions for evil and cheats Dr. Matai. These plotlines appear reasonable within the complex historical context described above. The novel and the film both reflect a sense of anger and defiance from the Chinese after discovering the truth about the 'friendly' Soviet Union, which did not sincerely intend to help China research the development of its own nuclear weapons.

2.2.5 Auteurist predilections

Tong elaborated three points related to *DCI* in his article 'About the *Death-Ray On the Coral Island*' (1980). These are summarised below.

Firstly, all characters depicted in the novel are either overseas Chinese or Chinese individuals of foreign nationality. According to Tong, he did not depict these characters as spies in sunglasses as was common in many other (Chinese) films. Instead, he praised them for their devotion to science and affection for their motherland. More importantly, the author declared that it should be 'common sense' after the Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1976) to assume that most of the overseas Chinese and Chinese of foreign nationality were good people. The reason Tong emphasised this as 'common sense' was because during the Cultural Revolution the idea was purported that anyone who had relatives in foreign countries could be labelled as having 'foreign relations', which 'was equivalent to…maintaining illicit relations with a foreign country'. During this time, many innocent individuals were investigated, arrested and tortured due to their 'foreign relations' (Tong 1980: 57).

Secondly, Tong claimed that while science has no nationality, the scientist does. He intended to write about overseas scientists fighting against the hegemony and presenting their way of maintaining the world peace. Although they are constantly focused on their scientific research and do not need to know about or participate in political activities, they must still be concerned with justice during the course of their career and at the very least must consider how their inventions will be used in application (Tong 1980: 58).

Thirdly, Tong reinforced the nature of 'science-fiction literature and art' (kehuan wenyi) of this novel and appealed for boarder attention to the genre on the part of readers and editors (Tong 1980: 58).

2.2.6 Studio style

The film was produced by the Shanghai Film Studio (SFS). According to literature editor Shen Ji, after the Cultural Revolution when many aspects of life returned to normal, the SFS was divided into several northern and southern sub-groups such as the Shanghai group, the Jiangsu provincial group and the Zhejiang provincial group, etc. These subgroups collected and managed literary sources from their surrounding regions. Then, Shen Ji came back to the literature

department of SFS. Shi Fangyu, the vice president of SFS at the time, was also the director of the literature department of the studio, and Shi appointed Shen to be the dean of the Shanghai group. Shen had 'five crew members and several scripts to be read' (Shen 2016: 2).

During Shen's subsequent working, he quickly noticed the awarded novel published by *People's Literature*. The author was one of his old friends and was an archaeology professor at Sichuan University. Shen thought this novel could be adapted into a film based on his professional experience and he contacted Tong. Beijing Film Studio (BFS) had already proposed the adaptation and had contacted the author. However, based on the friendship between Shen and Tong, the author declared that he would prefer to give the priority of adaptation to Shen, who stated 'If we [SFS] did not want to do it, then he would pass [the rights] to the BFS.' In this 'competitive situation', Shen immediately reported the situation to Vice-president Shi, who 'thought it could be adapted to a film like I did' (Shen 2016: 2 – 3).

However, during the following conference President Xu Sangchu claimed that there was no previous case of a story being directly adapted into a film without an already existent script. Sheng recalls, 'Vice president Shi gave me a hint with his eyes. Then I told President Xu that since I was an editor for this film studio, as long as I thought the story was able to be adapted into film, IT WAS always adapted into film at last.' Shen then listed several well-known, high-quality Chinese films that he had produced before the Cultural Revolution. This embarrassed President Xu and he went silent, and Vice-president Shi dismissed the conference quickly. After the conference, Vice president Shi asked Shen privately to submit a script as soon as possible. He then promised Shen that they would shoot the film as long as the script was good enough. Shen subsequently went to Sichuan province to contact Tong immediately and discuss the film adaptation agenda (Shen 2016: 3).

With Tong's authorization Shen wrote a synopsis and insisted on listing Tong as the scriptwriter (Shen 2016: 3), despite Tong had agreed to give the title of scriptwriter to Shen instead. Sheng refused this suggestion because of his occupational regulation that 'as an editor, we cannot replace the job of writing for the scriptwriters or for the authors of the novels'. Nevertheless, Tong insisted and fully trusted Shen, as did Tong's brother, who was a scientist of nuclear physics after Tong's brother read Shen's synopsis and gave a positive response (Shen 2016: 4).

Thus Shen Ji was the scriptwriter of the film *DCI* (1980), which is verified in Tong's description about how he wrote the novel (Tong 1980: 58). After permission for shooting was given by President Xu upon reading Shen's synopsis, Shen contacted Zhang Hongmei, who had never directed a feature film before but became the director of *DCI*.

Shen elaborated that he chose Zhang Hongmei to be the potential director of *DCI* for two main reasons. First, Zhang was the daughter of Zhang Jiluan, who was the chef editor of *Ta Kung Po*, one of the most famous newspapers in China (1912 – 1949). The second reason was that Zhang had worked as the

assistant director of *Jinsha River* (1963 by SFS). Initially Zhang refused to be the director of the film. After Shen told her no one would criticize her if she failed because this would be her first time directing she accepted the challenge (Shen 2016: 5).

However, according to Zhang Hongmei's own recollections, Shen Ji did not approach her and ask her to direct the film—she only mentioned the fear and uncertainty she had before shooting. Zhang Hongmei stated, 'I had been an assistant director several times and this time I proposed to the studio that I wanted to make a film of my own' (Ma 2005: 3).

2.2.7 Charismatic stars

As Stam (2000: 61) elaborated, 'along with character and performer, the cinema offers still another entity denied in the novel: the dubber (postsynchroniser), allowing for further permutations of character and voice'. It is interesting to note that some of the leading characters, like the male protagonist Chen Tianhong and the villain Bleiches, in the film were performed by voice performers from the Shanghai Film Dubbing Studio (shanghai dianying yizhipian chang, SFDS), which was divided from but still belonged to the SFS (Ma 2005: 3, Shen 2016: 2). Previously, all foreign characters in Chinese films would be played by performers from the Xinjiang province.[16] *Death-Ray On the Coral Island* needed an actor who could play the role of the evil general manager of the transnational company. Qiu Yuefeng, who was a voice performer from SFDS, recommended himself for this role after learning about the ongoing production. He was a 'half-blood' and looked like a true foreigner. More importantly, he had dubbed many foreign characters successfully before (Ma 2005: 4). Based on the many dubbed films at the time, it was clear that dubbers from SFDS were good at imitating Mandarin with a type of foreign accent. This included dubbing for the film *Futureworld* as well as others.

There is one character original to the film version of *DCI*, Zhao Mengna, who is the daughter of the scientist Zhao Qian and the fiancée of the male protagonist Chen Tianhong. The *DCI*'s novel form was a typical 'Monk Play' (heshang xi), meaning no female characters existed at all. The addition of the character Zhao Mengna was similar to the usage of the character Hong Changqing in *The Red Detachment of Women* (1960) and the character Lady Wuxia in *The Shaolin Temple* (1982) (Ma 2005: 5). Other than this, the film adhered closely to the original plot of the novel. The biggest adaptation was the addition of the character Zhao Mengna, who saves Tianhong's life at the end of the film in place of Tianhong's self-rescue in the novel.

Overall, the addition of Mengna did not influence the plot too greatly (Yang 2017: 3). Liu Cixin, who wrote the *TP* trilogy discussed in Chapter 3,

[16] Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (aka Xinjiang province) is home to a number of ethnic groups, including the Uyghur, Han, Kazakhs, Hui, Tajiks, Kyrgyz, Mongols and Russians. More than a dozen autonomous prefectures and counties for minorities exist in Xinjiang.

commented on this female character more subjectively. He asserted that there was a tendency of adding some romantic plotlines as 'condiments' (zuoliao) into films in the 1980s. The film adaptation of *DCI* did not escape this trend. Liu Cixin argued that this female character had 'neither impact on the story nor unique personality, and even no charm at all' (*Douban Movie* 2013: 1).

2.2.8 Economic advantage or disadvantage

No specific data could be found on budget or box office revenues for this film, although the *China Science-fiction Chronicle of Events* (Dong, 2017: 18) recorded *DCI* as 'a well-received and popular film by all Chinese audience as the first Chinese science-fiction film'. According to Shen's recollections (2005: 3, 2016: 4) the film caused a great sensation. The 'attendance rate of audience' (shangzuolü) reached 95% and Shen stated that as it was 'the first domestic Chinese science-fiction film, I thought the audience also loved to watch it'. Here, Shen used the term 'attendance rate of audience' not 'box office'. According to Zhu and Rosen (2010: 1), 'film production in China from then [the early 1950s] until the mid-1980s imitated Soviet-style centralized planning, with state-censorship and subsidized production, turning out propaganda-driven films according to the state's production targets'. As the film was released in 1980, which was still during this period, we can speculate that the 'attendance rate of audience' must differ from the 'box office' in an economic way. It may be difficult to tell whether the film was popular due to its pure entertainment value or its hidden political implications. However, the added female protagonist may have made the film more 'entertaining'.

2.2.9 Evolving technology

The crucial scientific and technological invention in both the novel and the film is the 'high-power laser weapon' (referred to in the title as the 'Death-Ray', or 'siguang'). At the time the novel was written in 1964, laser technology had only been developed fairly recently. It was still novel to imagine this technology as some sort of powerful weapon. However, in the late 1970s, laser technology implemented in weaponry had already been utilised. At this point, the science-fiction ideas about this technology had become outdated. Scientists in relevant fields began to criticize the descriptions of the technology both in the novel and film (Tong 1980: 58).

Furthermore, different from the movie there was no robot in the novel. The director explained that she did not know what a science-fiction film was when she directed *DCI*, which was her first film. During this period, she watched *Futureworld*, which was still an internal movie at that point, and learned what a robot was. Subsequently, she added a robot to the film, imitating those in *Futureworld* (Ma 2005: 5). This robot was only in one scene and does not appear again in the film. Its only purpose seems to be to lead the male protagonist to discover the underground lab. The film does not pay any attention to this added

'character', and it appears to be a prop rather than a character.

Surprisingly, Zhang recalled that the studio did invite some scientists as consultants in the early stages of the film: 'Their thoughts focused on "scientific principles" too much despite our wish to emphasise character and plot'. Zhang also claimed that the studio attempted to make neither pure entertainment nor pure science education documentary. Rather, they aimed to create a feature film that emphasised a noble scientific spirit and argued that science does not belong to individuals but to their motherland and its people (Ma 2005: 6).

2.3 *Wonder Boy*: A negotiation between science-fiction and children film

Wonder Boy (1988) was adapted by Zhang Zhilu's children's novel and produced by Children's Film Studio (China) (CFSC). It was highly popular in China when it was released and was awarded a Chinese Film Child Cow Award (Zuo 2006: 5). '*Wonder Boy* was the first real children's science-fiction film in Chinese film history' (Lin 2008: 140 – 142).

2.3.1 Cultural and historical context

It is necessary to review some crucial historical events that represent the story of all 'wonder children' under a broader 'social and historical context'. There was a tendency to criticize all the science-fiction novels in China derived from the 'Anti-spiritual Pollution Campaign' (qingchu jingshen wuran yundong) from 1980 to 1983 (Qian 1994: 213 – 214). The direct consequence of this on the Chinese science-fiction field can be divided into three specific, sequential outcomes, which are elaborated below.

Firstly, there was a debate regarding whether science-fiction should belong to science education or fantasy literature after the 'galactic fever' engendered by *Star Wars* in 1977. There were two schools of science-fiction creation and criticism. One was called the 'school of science education or science popularization (SE or SP)' (kepu pai) and the other was the 'school of literature fantasy (LF)' (wenxue pai). The British science-fiction writer Brian Aldiss came to visit China in 1979 and advocated in favour of the school of LF in his statement on the purpose of science-fiction, in which he claimed that 'science-fiction is a genre of literature…it should not teach scientific knowledge or foresee the future but describe and imagine the future'. Subsequently, authors from the school of LF began to use Aldiss's opinion to reaffirm the 'true purpose of science-fiction' while authors from the school of SE remained shocked by Aldiss's statement and refused to accept his ideas. Unfortunately, *China Youth Daily* (the arena in which this confrontation unfolded) only published articles from the SE school in the second round of debate despite the articles from both sides were published in the first round. This resulted in an unfair perception of the inferiority of the LF school (Du 1981: 101 – 119).

Secondly, the debate on distinctive creative concepts transformed into political, ideological accusations by 1983. The lead accuser was the so-called

'father of the Chinese space and missile program', Qian Xuesen, also known as Hsue-Shen Tsien,[17] who had supported the SE school in the beginning of the debate in the late 1970s. In 1980, an article was published that caused an immense sensation in *People's Literature* (Huo 2011: 376). In this article, Qian suggested that science fiction should consider the 'Four Modernisms' for Chinese peasants and the national economy. He became much fiercer in this argument in 1983, which was the year of the 'Anti-spiritual Pollution Campaign'. Qian then asserted that 'all science fiction was a pseudo-science created only by novelists within their crazy imaginations'. Qian delivered a speech to the China Association for Science and Technology on 31 October 1983 that included criticism from an academic from the Chinese Academy of Sciences with regard to the film *Star Wars*. The series was considered by this academic to be a typical example of the nonsense constructed by Western capitalism and the idea of everlasting space exploitation. Qian asserted that 'someone used SE or science fiction to disseminate bourgeois ideas and feudalism'. He also suggested paying attention to the films as their impact could 'spread broadly'. Qian reaffirmed this argument in 1980 and noted that 'this kind of ridiculous science-fiction creation is a kind of pollution for the public' (*Guangming Daily* 1983: D3).

Finally, the debate's entanglement with the political shift described above had a serious impact on the normal development of Chinese science-fiction films and literature. After the 'Anti-spiritual Pollution Campaign' there were approximately 8-10 years of stagnation in Chinese science-fiction creation. Only one science-fiction periodical survived while 19 collapsed. Two of the four main science-fiction authors mentioned above died during this period. Liu Cixin recalled that 'there were totally 10 years that I could not find a place to publish any science-fiction creations' (*The Beijing News* 2008: B1).

However, existing contextual conditions were much more complicated and controversial with regard to the film *WB* (1988). This film involved children who possessed 'special talents' or 'parapsychological capabilities'[18] (teyi gongneng). The context for this film was related to the social and cultural environments that had developed in China since 1979. For example, there was a report that 'Dazu county found a girl who could read with her ears; the relevant provincial departments began to investigate by doing scientific research on her' on 11 March 1979 (*Sichuan Daily* 1979: 5). After this report, according to statistics from the State Scientific and Technological Commission, between 14 March and 5 May 1979 a total of 20 children from 12 different provinces reported being able to read with various organs (Tu 2003: 2).

[17] Qian Xuesen, or Hsue-Shen Tsien (11 December 1911 – 31 October 2009), was a Chinese engineer who contributed to the fields of aerodynamics and rocket science. Recruited from MIT, he joined Theodore von Karman's group at Caltech and participated in the founding of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Later, he returned to China and made important contributions to China's missile and space program.

[18] Parapsychology is the study of paranormal and psychic phenomena, including telepathy, precognition, clairvoyance, psychokinesis, near-death experiences, reincarnation, apparitional experiences and other paranormal claims. It is identified as a pseudo-science by a vast majority of mainstream scientists. Parapsychology research is largely conducted by private institutions in several countries and funded through private donations, and the subject rarely appears in mainstream science journals. Parapsychology has been criticized for continuing investigation despite being unable to provide convincing evidence for the existence of any psychic phenomena after more than a century of research.

Related to this, Hu Yaobang, who at the time was the Minister of the Central Propaganda Department of China, stated that local governments and associated officers should be blamed for these rumours because children themselves were not capable of telling such ridiculous lies (Tu 2003: 3). Subsequently, Ye Shengtao and other well-known Chinese authors published articles claiming that 'we [Chinese] should be shamed for this kind of behaviour'. After all, "we [Chinese] have started to conduct the 'Four Modernisms' now". In this way, all of these authors claimed that those 'wonder children' incidents reported were obviously pseudo-science (Ye 1979: 12).

Despite these denouncements, a scientist named Gu Hansen from the Chinese Academy of Sciences Institute of Nuclear Research published an article about a substance associated with 'qigong' (literally meaning 'life energy cultivation') and the findings of which were later confirmed by Qian Xuesen (Gu 1979: 17 – 19). Qian was the first to propose the conception of 'somatic science' based on 'qigong'. After this, several newspapers, universities, hospitals, institutions and film production companies from Hong Kong began to disseminate these authors' 'discovery' by publishing articles, essays, academic research reports, documentaries, etc. All of these outlets wanted to express that 'somatic science' could have real, scientific backing (Tu 2003: 3).

Some 'talented' people were invited to perform their 'parapsychological capabilities' in front of several philosophers. Subsequently, these philosophers added supplements to a new version of the book *The Principle of Dialectical Materialism* (edited by China's Ministry of Education) according to their beliefs about the existence of 'somatic science' during the book revision conference in 1980. Several scientific conferences were held and institutions created in Chongqing, Sichuan, Shanghai, Beijing and other regions in the following 10 years that studied somatic science. There are at least two similarities across all of the news, events and activities related to this idea. The first is that there was always a 'qigong' master present who could use only his or her 'Chi' to cure patients from any diseases. The other was the presence of children with incredible 'parapsychological capabilities', such as synesthetic reading or other considerable abilities. This social phenomenon persisted until the end of the 1980s (Tu 2003: 4).

What I attempt to argue here is not whether 'qigong' is a pseudo-science or what position prime scientist Qian Xuesen took based on his paradoxical concepts and attitudes towards science-fiction and 'somatic science'. The reason for considering this phenomenon is to provide a 'social and historical context' that may be related to the creation of *WB* in a clear way. It is relevant to note that at the time *WB* was being developed mainstream Chinese scientists believed in 'somatic science'. The government also supported this belief through scientific funding and propaganda platforms. It would be difficult to argue that Chinese science-fiction audience would not be influenced by this phenomenon at all, as both the scientific and political domains supported the existence of 'somatic science'.

2.3.2 Fame of the author

As discussed in the previous case study, only significant works written by well-known science-fiction authors could be received by the public as works worthy of film adaptation (Huang 2003: 71). Both the author and scriptwriter of *WB*, Zhang Zhilu was originally well-received for his children's novels such as *The Huihui and Queen Huaban* (1980-1981), which received many awards and was published by the periodical *Children's Literature* in 1981. He also majored in physics at the Capital Normal University (*Film Personage* 2012: 3).

2.3.3 Narrative and action properties and beyond

According to Zhang's own recollections, the ideas in the novel and the script of *WB* came to him almost at the same time. When deciding whether become the editor of *Children's Literature* or *China Teenager Publishing House*, Zhang chose to be the editor, and subsequently the dean, of the Script and Literature Department at the CFSC from 1982 onward (*Film Personage* 2012: 3 – 4). In the 1980s there was a film policy put in place by government that there must be one new film per month for child audience. As a result of this policy, the CFSC was tasked with five children's film productions per year. Other prominent studios, such as SFS, Changchun Film Studio and E'mei Film Studio, were tasked with the other seven works each year. As a result of this quota, *WB* was released first in film form, with the first copy of the novel published much later in 2010.

Thus, it seems that the governmental film requirement and auteruist suitability were more influential for *WB* than for *DCI*. Thus, Stam's 'grammar of transformation' is used as an analytical framework to observe how the project developed.

2.3.4 Studio style

As previously mentioned, in 1987 Zhang Zhilu was the dean of the Script and Literature Department of the CFSC and with several other editors in the department was tasked with generating five feasible children's film scripts every year. In 1987, CFSC President Song Chong and the editors of the Script and Literature Department held a conference to discuss possible topics for film scripts in the following year. However, President Song was not satisfied with what they had achieved after several colleagues had proposed their topics in the form of scripts, synopses or general ideas (Li and Yan 2016: 4).

At that time, Zhang was working on a full-length children's novel. The main character was a young boy with powerful static electricity abilities. He called this character the 'electric boy' (daidian de haizi). During the conference, Zhang suddenly recalled his electric boy, and told President Song that 'there was a boy containing powerful electricity [who is] really awesome. Once thieves slipped into his home but were zapped by him and had to cry out. However,

even his parents cannot touch him. They would be [shocked] even by kissing him. Therefore, the little boy became very lonely. He did not want to carry electricity…' President Song told Zhang immediately that he wanted Zhang to draft this story quickly as possible. Song would go on to direct a film based on this story himself once Zhang finished the script (Li and Yan 2016: 5).

What President Song said encouraged Zhang, and he finished the first draft of the script in one month during his leisure time. The script was initially entitled *A Child with Electricity*. Zhang revised it twice and the final version was renamed *WB* (*pili Beibei*). At that time, the word 'wonder' (pili, literally means 'thunderbolt') was not commonly used, although according to Zhang's memory it was still a fashionable word. In the autumn of 1987, the film *WB* went into production. Zhang also wrote the first version of the novel *WB* at this time (Li and Yan 2016: 6).

2.3.5 Auteurist predilections

As Zhang was an author children's literature, all his initial motivations of creation derived from children. Zhang claimed that there should be more education of imagination during cultivating children constantly. If a child could obtain such an education of imagination during the process of his or her growth, then he or she would be more open-minded. In addition, Zhang was also an author who was fascinated with phenomena of natural science in his daily life as he had been a physical teacher before he worked for CFSC. 'The weather in Beijing is always dry, especially in the spring, with the result that there is strong static electricity in clothing and some metal furniture at all times'. Zhang was always shocked by the static electricity of his own clothes. While working in the CFSC, the idea of a boy who carries this electricity suddenly came into his mind. This was the original inspiration for *WB* (*Film Personage* 2012: 5).

2.3.6 Charismatic stars

According to an interview with Zhang Jing, the actor who played the protagonist Beibei (CCTV 6 2009[19]), Jing was nine years old when he took on the role of Beibei. Jing's parents had sent him to the local City Children's Palace[20] to study stage performance and other arts when he was six, meaning by the time he appeared in *WB* he was already a 'talented' child actor. Other actors in the film were not well-known stars at that time and remain relatively unknown today. Most of them only appeared in this film, with the exception of the actor Qiao Qi, who played the role of the old scientist who conducts experiments on Beibei. He also played the role of Dr. Matai in the *DCI* (1980).

[19] China Central Television Channel 6.
[20] The Children's Palace is the public facility in China where children engage in extra-curricular activities, such as learning music, foreign languages, computing skills and playing sports.

2.3.7 Economic advantage or disadvantage

According to Zhang Zhilu (2016: 3), there was a premiere *of WB* in Shanghai in 1988. He remembers sitting in the theatre with the child audience. One boy came into the theatre late and one of his peers told him to sit down quickly because the film was amazing. Zheng Jun (1999: 60) thought that '[the film] was a good example of children's science-fiction film'. The budget of *WB* was 'only 470 thousand Chinese Yuan' (Li and Yan 2016: 6). There was no reliable data found in terms of box office sales or the 'attendance rate of audience' for this film. As the film was part of the production and distribution agendas designated by the central government (*Film Personage* 2012: 6), it could be regarded as equivalent to welfare for the entire Chinese children's audience at that time.

2.3.8 Evolving technology

The technology featured in *WB* was more realistic than the 'high-power atom battery' and 'high-power laser weapon' in *DCI*. Zhang stated that he utilised a small quantity of a common scientific phenomenon that most people ignore in their daily lives. He explained that the inspiration and scientific principles behind *WB* are Beibei's special abilities: 'Many people would think it too ordinary. It is just static electricity. However, I took it further within my imagination. Suppose that there was a boy who contained so much static electricity so that no one could touch him. Besides, what could he do with this electricity?' (*Film Personage* 2012: 6 – 7). We see many scenes in which Beibei uses his power to turn traffic lights green, control machines remotely, emit powerful electricity through his hands, etc.

Additionally, it is also interesting to note that Beibei's 'power' was given to him by a so-called 'cosmic man' (yuzhou ren). Neither the film nor the novel explains too much about this cosmic man. However, some scholars regarded the plot related to this 'cosmic man' as a philosophical question that the author wished to ask his child audience through the mouth of the character. The question remains, however, of whether Beibei is a child of human beings or aliens. This question is closely related to the question of 'Where do I come from?' that every child will ask (Liu 2015: 3).

2.4 Conclusion

As texts, mainland domestic Chinese science-fiction films have possessed multi-dimensional meanings since the 1980s. Two of the initial 'milestones' in Chinese science-fiction film history, i.e. *DCI* (1980) and *WB* (1988) were examined here within the framework of film adaptation. Patriotic political inclinations and Chinese socialist ideology had a strong impact on the historically and culturally specific nature influencing Chinese domestic science-fiction films as a genre in the former case, while the goals of science education

for children and fascination with 'somatic science' related to supernatural talents and mutant children experiment were more influential in the latter case. Ultimately, both the films strongly reflect their historical and cultural contexts during specific time periods in China.

I argue that as most Chinese science-fiction films are adapted from literary works, the adaptation-as-reception mode has become rooted deeply in the Chinese science-fiction film field. Since Chinese science-fiction films tend to refer back to local pre-existing cinematic conventions, the development of science-fiction cinema in China has been further complicated by the historical and cultural context shifting towards hybridity and intertextuality, which disrupted the genre's typical development by involving multiple political and educational values.

Besides the extant historical and cultural context and the literary works that the films were based on, the 'film personnel' associated with a particular production also contributed a great deal to the process of adaptation-as-reception. Shen Ji and Zhang Zhilu were two major 'dominant persons' involved with the two case films. To some extent, Shen was more dominant than Zhang in terms of the overall process of production. It is surprising to note that there could be individuals who had this type of impact on a specific film's production in the context of transformation and mediation between the 'imitated Soviet-style centralized planning with state-censorship and subsidized production, turning out propaganda-driven films according to the state's production targets' and 'commercialization and popular entertainment' of Chinese cinema in the 1980s (Zhu 2003: 3).

In the case of *DCI*, there are five key points that should be noted. These include Shen's formal position and his literature editing experience, the fame and quality of the original novel, the strong personal relationship between the 'dominant' person and the author of novel, the hidden help from the vice president of the studio, and the willingness and various capabilities to implement the adaptation task of the 'dominant person'.

In the case of *WB*, there are four key points of note. This include Zhang's authorship of both the novel and film script, Zhang's formal position and his creative writing experience, the immediately relevant film policy implemented by the government, and the predilections of both author and director as being similar to those of the president of the studio.

As the editor and scriptwriter, Shen served not just as a 'literature editor' but also as a 'production manager' and beyond for *DCI.* By comparison, in *WB* Zhang only focused on the literary conception and creation rather than concrete production or organisation. Shen was the sole individual who found the project and endeavoured to create the film from the very beginning. He contacted the novelist, the studio leaders and the director and attempted to persuade all of these individuals to continue working on the project (Shen 2016: 5). Therefore, Shen was the dominant actor involved in this project.

After summarising the dominant persons according to Klinger's 'film personnel' classification, it is interesting to note the themes present in both films.

Both films discuss the relationship between science, technology and human beings. The former film focused more on the conflict between scientists and their nationality or feelings of patriotism, while the latter emphasises the individual struggle of possessing special power that keeps the protagonist from being assimilated into society. Both films encourage individuals to consider collective benefit rather than individual value. This sentiment can be seen at the end of both films with respect to the main characters' fates. Both Dr. Zhao and Dr. Matai died protecting their inventions from villains of other countries, while Beibei sacrificed his special powers in order to return to normal life with his loved ones. This type of collectivism represents a profound and unique Chinese science-fiction cultural context that differs from U.S. science-fiction, which features individualistic superheroes.

CHAPTER 3

FILM CANON FORMATION OF SCIENCE FICTION: *THE THREE-BODY PROBLEM AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE PAST AND FUTURE OF CHINESE SCIENCE-FICTION CINEMA*

3.1 Research frameworks

This chapter aims to research how Chinese audience' expectation changes toward Chinese science-fiction films during the given period through interpreting the problem using a case study of one of the most well-known contemporary Chinese science-fiction novels, the *Three-body Problem* (*TP*) trilogy by Liu Cixin (2006, 2008, 2010). This trilogy and its popularization in China today has incited broad discussions and appeals for its adaptation into a series of science-fiction films. As the novels have been described as 'great' and 'a milestone' in many journalistic reviews and academic corpuses, I utilise the framework of film canon formation in order to observe the problem related to the *TP* and ask how and why the *TP* could enter the canon of Chinese science fiction.

In this chapter, I demonstrate that the literature-as-canon strategy has existed for a long period in the reception history of Chinese science-fiction film, with the implication that in order to satisfy Chinese audience' and critics' 'horizon of expectation', only canonized literary works can be adapted into film. This is related to the almost full century of marginalization of science fiction by mainstream Chinese film and literature fields.

The act of canonizing film works can be traced to the first list of films—Paul Rotha's 1930 *The Film Till Now*. This work privileged silent and realist films and contained one of the first 'outstanding' film lists, which is for a reason for many of the selections and the only major text on film at that time (Christie 2002: 24 – 27). Afterward, canon formation began to develop among mainstream journalist reviewers, academic critics and in the film industry (Rosenbaum 2000: xiv). Lists of 'great' films have appeared ever since, and these films are received as superior and outstanding compared to others.

In Staiger's 'The Politics of Film Canons', she defines canon formation in popular and academic film criticism, theoretical work and historical writing as the practice of choosing certain films for study while ignoring others (1985: 4). Staiger argues that film canons are used by various groups, from journalist film reviewers, to professional organisations, to academics. Moreover, she argues that the impulses dictating canon formation fall under the politics of three spheres of influence, i.e. the politics of admission, selection and the academy

(Lupo 2011: 221).

As the politics of admission is not related to the analysis in this chapter, I decide to discuss the other two politics straightforward. In the politics of selection, Staiger proclaims that no single film scholar is capable of analysing all the films produced before and during his or her lifetime, meaning it becomes necessary to select a set of certain films over others, which is known as 'a politics of inclusion and exclusion of films' (Staiger 1985: 8). Staiger argues that the problem here is that some films become the centre of attention while others fall to the margins.

There are three rationales that comprise the 'politics of selection'. The third may be the most valuable to my discussion here. This is 'evaluative selection', and Staiger considers this rationale to be where 'politics [are] most definitely involved'. Staiger asserts that 'claims for universality are disguises for achieving uniformity, for suppressing through the power of canonic discourse optional value systems'. In other words, evaluative selection may use the power of politics to achieve a cultural hegemony rather than multiplicity or 'an asserted "barbarism"' (1985: 10).

In the 'politics of the academy', Staiger asserts that 'not only a canon of films exists but also a canon of literature about film and a canon of film methodologies. The significance of this to women, to minorities, to those discriminated against because of sexual orientation, is apparent'. By questioning the ignorance of the existence of canon formation in the academy and the paradox between 'plurality' and 'consensus', Staiger asks how we should canonize 'if we wish to eliminate a politics of power' (1985: 19).

Another noteworthy essay related to canonization is Christopher Long's *Revising The Film Canon* (2006: 17 – 35). Long revises Jonathan Rosenbaum's two books on film canon formation, *Movie Mutations* (2003) and *Essential Cinema* (2004), based on the two recommendations Staiger offers in her essay. Long claims that 'from Staiger we can conclude that canons are inevitable and that they operate in the political sphere. Therefore, the question is *not whether* canons should be proposed, but rather *who* will propose them' (2006: 20).

In considering *Essential Cinema*, Long argues that the new canon Rosenbaum creates gives rise to a new argument. This argument is directly relevant to my research question in this chapter, i.e. if canons are inevitably validated by many previous scholars, and the most important question should not to be 'Should they be formed?' but rather 'Who should form them?', for the reason that no individual's canon should be considered definitive.

In sum, the questions of *how*, *who* (canon maker) and *for whom* (the canon receiver) are the essence of film canon formation when utilising a literature-as-canon reception framework. As J. F. English demonstrates, our contemporary society is awash in the giving and receiving of awards, and the increase in canon-making that is occurring simultaneously is partly due to this same tendency (Lupo 2011: 5). According to several of the scholars discussed above, one of the purposes of film canon-making is to implement a politics of inclusion and exclusion as if those professional institutions of cultural hegemony can do

the same as well. Canon-making is not only about profit in terms of box office revenue or other forms of benefits, but also about contending with the power of politics. I argue in this thesis that the complexity of the construction of science-fiction film as a multi-dimensional process can never be separated from the historically and socially specific context in which the genre develops. Therefore, it is important to review the complete process that constructed the past perception (reception) of science-fiction film as a genre in China.

3.2 The perception of the past: Chinese science-fiction films

First, it is important to note that science fiction as a genre had suffered formidable obstructions from the 'politics of admission' from its very importation. However, a motive of science popularization as the essence of science-fiction art existed even in the beginning of the genre's development. This was perhaps the primary value of this genre acknowledged by both the Chinese literature and criticism spheres for a great length of time. In addition, this tendency of regarding science popularization as the essence of science-fiction art also influenced the 'politics of inclusion and exclusion' of specific works and generated a unique system of 'evaluative selection' during the period.

There were two major influences on Chinese science-fiction canon formation after the establishment of the PRC. The first was a series of governmental policies on domestic science and arts, and the other was particular foreign science-fiction creations.

Domestically, there was a promotion of 'marching to the science' (xiang kexue jinjun) from 1956 to 1957, which referred to rebuilding the country through learning about and utilising science and technology (Ministry of Science and Technology of PRC 1956). This promotion was a typical case in which literature and the arts served as a utilitarian instrument for 'evaluative selection' repeatedly reinforced by the cultural hegemony of the central government.

Internationally, many works by Jules Gabriel Verne (1828 – 1905) were translated and were widely popular among teenage Chinese readers during this period (Zheng 1979: 69 – 74). Verne's science-fiction novels were canonized as excellent science-fiction texts for a long period in China after the genre was first introduced (Dong 2017: 2). In 1959, Yang proclaimed that Verne's works could enrich Chinese teenagers' education and stimulate their thirst for knowledge of science and technology. In other words, this genre was still fulfilling its duty as a science popularization mechanism (Yang 1959: 125 – 129). In addition, science-fiction films imported from the USSR were dominant in the sphere of domestic science-fiction film distribution and reception from 1949 until the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. This was also evidently political, as Staiger proposed in 'The Politics of Canon', because the two nations shared a similar ideology and cultural hegemony. Again, the nature of science popularization of these Soviet films was the dominant reason for their importation.

In the 1960s, ‘wenyi ba tiao’ (The Eight Suggestions on Contemporary Works of Literature and Arts) were published as another domestic policy on the arts. This policy promoted the ‘politics of selection’ for science-fiction novels from 1962 to 1963. This was also the period in which the novel version of Tong’s *DCI* (1964) was written (*News of the Communist Party of China* 1962: 6). These events reveal a strong relationship between national policy, canon formation and the creation of literature and other art forms. Certain orthodox periodicals, like *People’s Literature,* determined the ‘evaluation selection’ for the canon. Science fiction was still marginal at that time, and there was only one essay published that provided an explicit discussion on the properties of science-fiction as a genre from 1949 to 1976. In this essay, Lan (1961: 42 – 43) elaborated three purposes that this genre should achieve. These purposes demonstrated an intention to canonize the science-fiction genre as an apparatus for ‘making the future a better place’ and ‘cultivating teenagers’. Moreover, they confined the diversity of the science-fiction genre to certain specificities and ‘included and excluded’ what science fiction should aim to achieve.

A national science conference was held in 1978 that welcomed another domestic policy on science called ‘the spring of science’. However, despite the existence of this political support, canon formation of Chinese science-fiction literature was still confronted with problems and obstructions. In this context, the award winning novel version of *DCI* (1979) not only provided the opportunity for filmmakers to adapt the text into a film but the awarded incident itself also encouraged other science-fiction authors to start creating again. They all saw this case as a sign that science fiction could somehow be canonized by the orthodox literature and art fields even though science fiction had been being marginalized for a long period of time prior to this (Dong 2017: 19).

However, the controversies over science-fiction canons constantly derived from the essence of this genre. What could be canonized as ‘science-fiction’ in China? The only consistent argument was whether science fiction belonged to science popularization (xing ‘ke’, abbreviated to SP below) or literary fiction (xing ‘wen’, abbreviated to LF below). The former school had a longer dominant history than the latter. Furthermore, the SP school also revealed an inclination of pragmatism regarding science and technology through science fiction because of various economic and political circumstances in China at that time. It was argued that science and technology were for building the country, not for entertainment. This may have been the primary principle of ‘evaluation selection’ behind all of the arguments made by SP scholars, as it is absolutely ‘politically correct’ (zhengzhi zhengque), which is a priority for any forms of any type of art to be received, adapted or canonized in China.

From 1980 to 1983, the tendency to criticize all science-fiction creations was combined with the ‘Anti-spiritual Pollution Campaign’ (qingchu jingshen wuran yundong) in China. This campaign obstructed prospects for Chinese science-fiction severely. As previously discussed, the so-called ‘somatic science’ proposed by the well-known Chinese scientist Qian Xuesen *canonized* ‘qigong’ as a ‘science’ even while science-fiction creation became *marginalized* as a

'pseudo-science' (Gu 1979: 17). During this time, the SP school won and repressed the LP school.

Meanwhile, science-fiction films also engaged in constructing its own shifting process, which differed from the 'battles' in the literature field. On the contrary, the main purpose of the film field was to encourage the promotion of domestic science-fiction films. Some scholars, like Xiao (1980: 34; 36) proposed that imagination should be the core of science-fiction film, while the opponents to this idea, like Hu (1983: 56), categorised most U.S. science-fiction films as 'entertaining film for escaping reality'. These opponents insisted that science-fiction should inspire a thirst for knowledge of science and technology in teenage audience.

Although the reception to foreign science-fiction films began to shift rapidly after the second 'American Film Week' held in China in 1985, the reception to domestic science-fiction films remained. Despite reviewers such as Wang (1985: 15) proclaiming directly that 'we need science-fiction films', he and other advocates still believed that science-fiction film could serve the shifting society in China as a tool for better developing the country due to the genre's properties of enlightenment and science popularization.

Later, reviewers like Qin (1986: 29) began to implement some 'classifications' of the 'politics of selection' regarding several themes or subject matters that science-fiction film could engage with, such as space and alien life, high-tech weapons, androids and even medical technology. In 1986, a conference held by the China Film Art Institution and the Beijing Film Academy discussed 'reacquainting Hollywood films' and 'the necessity of researching film genre'. However, none of the subsequent publications discussed the genre of science fiction, even though some began to introduce Thomas Schatz's *Hollywood Genres*. These publications referenced this book in order to elaborate the conception of Hollywood films and appeal to the Chinese film industry to pay greater attention to film genres.

The distribution of *WB* (1988) appeared to remedy 'the deficiency of domestic science-fiction film' temporarily, but this somewhat transformed the concept of 'science-fiction' into 'science-fiction plus science popularization for child audience', as there was a demand for stimulating the desire for knowledge of science and technology. Afterwards, several so-called 'children's science-fiction' films were created. These 'children's science-fiction' films reflected that the conception of 'science-fiction plus science popularization for child audience' seemed to be more acceptable to both the SP and the LF schools such as the associated films *WB* (1988), *The Ozone Layer Vanishes* (1990), *Rubiks-clock* (1990), *The Adventure Across the Screen* (1991), *The Venomous Kiss* (1992) and *Crazy Rabbit* (1997). Some of these 'children's science-fiction films' were more similar to fairy tales or allegories that were designed to educate the target audience of young audience and help them understand certain truths about how a person should be or how to protect the environment. Therefore, science fiction started to become equivalent to 'science education' to some degree in the years following the release of *WB*. More importantly, this trend led to the phenomenon

of Chinese science fiction being characterised as a childish genre. This impression persisted in mainstream Chinese literature and film fields until the *TP* received awards and entered the public eye.

Fortunately, the trends in science-fiction canon formation and the recognition of this genre continued to shift throughout the 1990s. Zheng Jun (1999: 63 – 64) claimed that science-fiction films were first among all forms of science-fiction creation in terms of market capacity. The profit from one successful science-fiction film cannot be exceeded by science-fiction writing regardless of how many profitable science-fiction novels are published. Science-fiction films had replaced science-fiction novels and began take on the role of spokesman for science fiction as an art from the end of the 1970s onwards in terms of influential power. Therefore, the development of Chinese science-fiction film was crucial to the development of Chinese science fiction in general. Zheng Jun asserted that 'the distribution of one single domestic science-fiction film may happen to generate the turning point for the total Chinese science-fiction industry' (1999: 64). This assertion may be one of the most crucial premises for the motivation to adapt the *TP* into a film and its role in canon formation.

3.3 The perception of the future: Chinese science-fiction films

The perception of science fiction shifted rapidly after 2001 when China entered the World Trade Organization, especially after the creation of the 'Global Chinese Science-fiction Nebula Award' (2010) by the World Chinese Science Fiction Association. Chinese film scholars and science-fiction authors began to rethink the genre of science-fiction in more diverse ways in distinctive discussions, publications and reviews.

As a science-fiction author, Qian Lifang once told a journalist that "maybe once we mention 'fiction', then the 'fiction' must be related to children and have nothing to do with the adult world" (*Shandong Business Report* 2012: 7). The popularity of science-fiction developed rather late and suffered from many setbacks in China. Qian argued that the Chinese cannot blame their ignorance on conventional literature periodicals since, according to her, there are not very many Chinese science-fiction works that can be labelled as 'great'. This kind of reception has persisted until recent times, and it severely obstructs the canon formation of Chinese science fiction.

Fortunately, this trend seems to have fully reversed since the release of Liu Cixin's *TP* trilogy, especially after it received awards in 2015. Due to its prominence, it is important to consider the complete story of the *TP* within the film canon formation proposed by Staiger in order to determine how this novel was canonized and who canonized it.

First of all, it should be noted that this was the first Chinese science-fiction work ever to receive such a high number of significant domestic and international awards and nominations. A list of the awards and nominations granted to the *TP* since 2006 is presented below:

2006 Yinhe (Galaxy Award) (China)	awarded;
2015 Hugo Award for Best Novel	awarded;
2014 Nebula Award for Best Novel	nominated;
2015 Locus Award for Best Science-fiction Novel	nominated;
2015 Prometheus Award	nominated;
2015 John W. Campbell Memorial Award	nominated;
2017 Kurd-Laßwitz-Preis for Best Foreign Science-fiction work	awarded;
2017 Premio Ignotus for Foreign Novel	awarded;
2017 Grand Prix de l'Imaginaire for Foreign Novel	nominated.

Initially, essays on the *TP* trilogy were difficult to find in any academic field. However, the mainstream Chinese media began to disseminate *TP* trilogy immediately after the trilogy began receiving awards. Subsequently, there appear several groups as 'receivers' which are also 'canon makers' to be responsible for the act of canonizing the *TP* as a 'masterpiece' within their distinctive methods. I label these in terms of 'communities' and discuss each of them using detailed evidence below.

3.3.1 Celebrity fans

The first group is comprised of celebrities. These individuals claim to be fans of the *TP* novels and they introduce, quote and recommend the *TP* trilogy to the Chinese and Western public via blogs, journalistic articles and other types of media dissemination.

Examples of members of this group include Pony Ma, Zhou Hongyi, and some of founders of internet companies. In addition, certain media professionals and internet stars began talking about and recommending the *TP* trilogy. An estimated number of 700,000 readers had read this trilogy by 2015 (*Southern Rural Daily*, 2015: 3). There are two remarkable public incidents related to the *TP* trilogy. One is that Fu Ying, the China National People's Congress spokesman, cited phrases from *TP* in order to state the unclear weapon problem of North Korea. The other is that the author Liu Cixin became the vice-chairman of the Shanxi Province Writers Association (Yang 2017: 29).

Internationally, the English version of the *TP* has also drawn the attention of many 'successful people' as well as ordinary foreign readers. Barack Obama, former president of the US, discussed his appreciation of the *TP* during an interview with the *New York Times*. He stated that the scope of the work was immense and the trilogy was enjoyable to read. He claimed that this may be partly have been due to his 'day-to-day problems with Congress which seem to be fairly petty'. He joked that those problems were not something to worry about considering that aliens were about to invade according to the *TP* trilogy (Kakutani 2017: 1). After his recommendation, the sales of the *TP* began to increase rapidly on *Amazon* in the U.S. Similarly, Mark Zuckerberg, founder and CEO of *Facebook*, commented on his personal *Facebook* page that the *TP* trilogy would be 'a fun break from all the economics and social science books I

have read recently' (Feloni 2015: 1). George R.R. Martin, who is well-known for his *A Song of Ice and Fire* series (1996 – present), also commented on the *TP* in one of his online blog posts: 'This is an unusual book, a unique blend of scientific and philosophical speculation, politics and history, conspiracy theory and cosmology, where kings and emperors from both western and Chinese histories mingle in a dreamlike game world, while cops and physicists deal with global conspiracies, murders, and alien invasions in the real world. It is a worthy nominee (of an award for science fiction)' (Martin 2015: 1).

3.3.2 Literary critics

The second community is literary academia, more precisely literary critics. Pan (2017: 2) claims that there is a consistent lack of research on science-fiction literature in domestic Chinese literature and culture spheres. Existing academic periodicals only evaluate so-called 'conventional literature'. Any 'special matter' (zhuan ti) or 'special discussion' (zhuan lun) on the current development of Chinese science fiction is rarely found. However, this circumstance also changed after Liu Cixin's novel began to receive awards, and media and academic discussions arose immediately after the *TP* trilogy began receiving recognition. Pan identifies four fields that Chinese academia discusses and researches with regard to the *TP*.

The first area is 'ethical problems' and 'humanistic concern'. Pan cites one argument from an essay by Yang, which states that while science is absolutely rational, literature can present the humanity (Yang 2013: 11). As Liu proposes his own basic concept of the universe called the 'Zero Ethic Universe', Gu also claims that Liu manifests a concern for the survival of the human species based on great distinctions between the human beings and the aliens 'through the reflection of humanity' (Gu 2014: 13).

The second area of focus is the 'postmodernism characteristics [and] styles of narration and writing' used in this text. As part of this category, Pan quotes two essays that discuss the *TP* from the perspective of 'new-classicism' (xin gudian zhuyi) (Wu and Fang 2006: 2) and 'post-humanism' (Liu 2009: 19), respectively. The 'new-classicism' referenced here is not equivalent to 'neoclassicism', and in fact, it is actually 'classicism' that is discussed in both Wu and Fang's essays. The authors emphasise the importance of 'classicism' in the field of 'science-fiction author research' and 'science-fiction history research' in 'Western academia'. The essays claim that Liu Cixin's *TP* can be classified as part of the canon of classic science-fiction novels in many aspects, such as in its narrative style and description of the great power of science and nature. In her essay, Liu Zhenzhen's utilises 'post-humanism' to analyse the consequences after the human encountering the aliens and the attitude of the author towards the human race in general in the *TP*. Cheng in his (2009: 4) essay also interprets Liu Cixin's *TP* with respect to 'narrative strategies' and 'cultural spiritual features', arguing that the text falls under the classification of postmodernism. From my perspective, this essay should be included in this area

as well because Cheng's discussion involves more basic features of postmodernism than Liu Zhenzhen's essay's on 'post-humanism'.

The third area is the 'aesthetic features, character image, and the symptom of era'. Pan notes that the term 'sense of a wonder aesthetic' is proposed in Wang's (2016: 70 – 78) essay and is based on C. P. Snow's theory of communication between the 'two cultures' of modern society (the sciences and humanities) from his *The Two Cultures* (1959: xlv). Moreover, Wang also asks 'what science-fiction is' as part of her discussion. She claims that the *TP* explores the process of how human beings break through the limitation of cognition'. Pan goes on to list several other essays discussing the aesthetic value of the *TP*, but most of these only focus on the characteristics of the Chinese national image and patriotic emotion in the *TP*. Pan also cites Zhao's (2015: 15) essay, which discusses the potential problems within the *TP* after the text received awards. Zhao asserts that the success of *TP* cannot be a model for a regeneration of success for the popular culture. Zhao also notes that there are still many unsolved problems regarding rhetoric, narration and characters in the *TP*.

The fourth area is 'translation, recommendation and dissemination'. In this regime, many critics analyse the *TP* linguistically in the cross-cultural dimension of translation. For instance, Lang (2015: 21) uses feminist strategies of translation to analyse the vocabularies utilised in the awarded English version of the text and to interpret the effect of these vocabularies. Many authors in this category claim that it is the successful strategies of translation and dissemination that ultimately resulted in the *TP* receiving the Hugo award.

3.3.3 Journalistic reviewers

The third community is comprised of journalistic reviewers from newspapers, online publications and feature stories. The crucial distinction between this community and the academic one can be found in the topics and inclinations in their discussions.

Firstly, most of members from this group called attention to the possibility of a film adaptation of the *TP* trilogy in several different ways. The most popular method was to cite statements from some of the members from the first and second communities, and people related to these communities such as science-fiction, film or literature critics, researchers from the film academy, the author himself and even other well-known science-fiction author-as-critics.

Secondly, the style of canonizing the *TP* by most of individuals in this community is also highly coherent. At the beginning, members of this group would discuss the 'greatness' of the novel *TP*, mainly because of the awards it has acquired since 2015. Then, they went on to cite claims from some 'professionals' from distinctively industrial areas in order to state the present circumstances in the contemporary Chinese science-fiction field, film industry and Hollywood science-fiction blockbuster market in China. An integrated concern of members of this group is whether China can produce its own science-

fiction blockbusters within the advantage of the awarded *TP*. This type of tendentious encouragement for a film adaptation of the *TP* exists broadly within this community. More importantly, such encouragement cannot be found within the community of literary critics. Most of the reviewers used the performance of a Hollywood science-fiction blockbuster, such as *Interstellar* (2014), to evaluate contemporary circumstances in the Chinese film industry and science-fiction creation field.

However, most of the members of this group offer severe critiques on whether the Chinese film industry has the ability to produce this type of blockbuster film with regard to existing film technique and many other relevant resources. Some of them also argue that it may be unnecessary to make the *TP* into a blockbuster, and that it might benefit from being adapted into another type of science-fiction film. For example, Zhang (2016: 2) notes that the Japanese scholar Uehara Kaori approaches the problem of film adaptation of the *TP* from another angle—i.e. the analysis of characters. She attempts to analyse the young girl and beautiful young girl figures in the books, and argues that Liu Cixin's novel is a kind of 'character-based novel'. This means that the text does not use realistic methods to construct the narration but instead utilises an animation-like style known as 'animated realism'. The 'animated realism' provides the reception of *TP* with a new frame of reference.

Thirdly, this group attempts to canonize other items, such as specific years and the *TP* text itself, as significant to the prospect of Chinese science-fiction film. Some members of this group even quote Liu Cixin himself and members from other communities as stating that 'the year of 2015, 2016 and the subsequent year of 2017 could be the first year of Chinese science-fiction blockbuster distribution'.

In addition, Liu Cixin has become a favourite interviewee in this community. The author told journalistic reviewers that he had received more than 10 invitations to give exclusive interviews related to questions about *Interstellar* (2014) in the first 10 days after it was released. He stated that he would 'feel disgusted repeating the same words again and again during these interviews' (Ma and Bai 2014: 2). There has been a continuous media obsession surrounding Liu Cixin that has included various interviews, relevant short news reports and exclusive interviews published in paper media, on popular websites and even on We-media platforms. This coverage has become a multi-dimensional dissemination. This type of 'magnificent viewing' has appeared to pull Chinese science-fiction literature from its marginal position to the forefront of mainstream Chinese literature.

Finally, there has been a tendency to neglect other science-fiction works. Although there are other Chinese science-fiction novels with similar narrative structures as the *TP*, the media's focus has seemed to be to 'embrace' the *TP* closely the majority of the time. Even though Liu Cixin has written other novels, such as *The Wandering Earth* (2000) and *The Rural Teacher* (2001), which have been confirmed as being set for film adaptation by various film companies and production teams, when these books are mentioned publicly they are always

associated with the *TP*. Statistically, the sales volume of Liu's other works were not able to attain the level of best seller even though his other works had received science-fiction fans' broad acclaim before the *TP* trilogy stated to gain notoriety. The *Three-body Problem III: Death's End* was published in 2010 and brought the sales volume of the *TP* series to a new high. By August 2015, sales of the *TP* series in China had exceeded one million copies in total (Pan 2017: 3).

3.3.4 Creators and critics of the science-fiction and film fields

The fourth community mainly encompasses Chinese science-fiction authors, scholars, critics, some filmmakers, film critics and researchers. Their critiques on the *TP* are based more on a macro perspective of the present and future of Chinese science-fiction film partly as a result of the popular discussions publicised by the third community with regard to the *TP*. Some of the most salient arguments in this community regarding why the Chinese film industry has lacked a science-fiction genre for so long are discussed below.

The first argument is that the Chinese film industry lacks relevant experienced 'professionals' to achieve film adaptation. In this argument, the main obstruction to the development of a science-fiction genre is identified as the Chinese filmmaker. There are three primary opinions as to why this lack of professionals exists: the lack of extensive horizon due to the Chinese educational system, the lack of experience in producing pertinent science-fiction films and the lack of a 'main brain' in a potential science-fiction film group. All of these arguments claim that due to the lack of talented filmmakers the Chinese film industry requires a longer time period to 'catch up' with the standard of Hollywood films or even to develop a 'Chinese' standard.

The second argument is that although the *TP* novel is excellent in many aspects, such as in its innovative nature, narration and character development, etc., any prospective film version will not be able to extend the legend the literary works have created. There are two major debates that are part of this argument. One contends that the *TP* novel lacks inherent film adaptability, while the other claims that regardless of whether a film version is successful or not the result will have a negative influence on prospective Chinese science-fiction films. Chen Ling argues, for example, that if a film version of *TP* fails people will believe that Chinese science-fiction film cannot do better. If it succeeds (without taking into account any of the costs), it will become part of a 'good canon' that cannot be exceeded. Filmmakers who wish to work in this genre later would encounter the undeveloped industrial chain of science-fiction film and lose their confidence in being able to make another canonical film.

3.3.5 Involved film companies

The fifth community is the film industry, more precisely, those film

companies that have attempted to purchase the *intellectual property* (IP)[21] rights to *TP* and utilise these to make a profit through film adaptation. The news that the *TP* trilogy would be adapted to film had been spreading in the science-fiction field since 2009 after the publishing of the *Three-body Problem III: Death's End*, and this was confirmed by many individuals from both the science-fiction field and the film field.

The first time when filmmakers were interested in the *TP* novel can be traced back to the moment this novel was serialized in the *Science-fiction World* (kehuan shijie) in 2006. The year of 2006 happened to be the 40th anniversary of the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, which was of great importance to this novel as the origin story of the *TP* has a direct relation to the Cultural Revolution. It makes the *TP* to be outstanding compared with other science-fiction works in terms of the design of background story. However, the attention it received did not reach that of online serialized adventure or fantasy stories, which were more popular at that time. Liu Cixin's choices (offered by the market) were 'not too many' during that period (Ma and Bai 2014: 1 – 2).

The film adaptation rights of the *TP* were sold to a new, aggressive film director named Zhang Fanfan at the beginning of 2013. This news became a very popular topic on many film websites. Interestingly, Liu Cixin confirmed that the adaptation rights had been sold for many years even before the novel's positive reception by the public. Liu Cixin has also stated that he will not interfere in the adaptation of the film version of the *TP*. Moreover, there are not as many filmmakers who want to adapt this story to film as many people imagined.

Some film industry 'insiders' argue that the work of casting and shooting the adapted film was not accomplished in the summer of 2013. Progress was not seen until the end of September of that year, when a record of a film titled the *Three-body Problem: Episode I* appeared on the official website of the State Administration of Radio Film and Television. This record indicates that information about the film was submitted by Beijing Bai Xing She Culture Development Co., Ltd.'s Song Chunyu, who cooperates with Zhang Fanfan in the production of thrillers and took the position of scriptwriter for the *TP*'s film adaptation. A well-known film critic Peng Yan confirmed that Liu Cixin has not yet been involved with the adaptation of the work and moreover that Liu Cixin has not seen the script, although it has been sent to him (Yang 2015: 88 – 89).

Over a year passed after the record information announcement of the film project and nearly nothing new about the adaptation of the work became known. Suddenly, at the end of October 2014 certain Sina microblogs reported that a new film company, Yoozoo Film (which was owned by the online game company Yoozoo games), would take over the film adaptation and production. The person in charge was the former special assistant to the chairman of the board of Galloping Horse, writer Kong Xiangzhao. The film planner of *TP*, the

[21] Intellectual property (IP) is a category of property that includes intangible creations of the human intellect. Intellectual property encompasses two types of rights; industrial property rights (trademarks, patents, designations of origin, industrial designs and models) and copyright.

vice-chief editor of *Science-fiction World* (kehuan shijie), confirmed that the adaptation rights of the three novels now belonged to Yoozoo Film. The price for the adaptation rights paid by Yoozoo was said to be 'very low' according to some individuals from the film industry (Yang 2015: 89).

In the past, filmmakers used their experience and professional technique to emphasise the text itself. They believed that a famous director, big stars and a professional scriptwriter were the crucial parts of a film. Today however, the new, thriving internet film companies focus on content due to their more innovative ideas. They cherish the IP rather than the text itself because the meaning of IP had transcended its origins in copyright from the perspective of these companies. Now, IP can be regarded as a fusion agent bringing together literature, film and television, and video games. It has come to represent a commercial mode of innovation. In addition, these companies believe the 'story' (i.e. 'big IP') will stand the test of time, even if certain production elements do not. It will create more and more profits continuously once it becomes a canon.

From the perspective of Lin Qi, who is the chairman of the board of Yoozoo Film, the *TP* has the potential to become a classic work. Moreover, he believes that it can become a significant canon. In a public letter, Lin Qi claimed: 'We wish to bring the IP of *TP* out. We plan to do this by using the most professional and international team to adapt *TP* into video games. The *TP*, this amazing story, can be a novel, film, and also manga. We can even invite the most capable game producer to design a console game based on the *TP*. Then, the *TP* will attract wider audience' (Yang 2015: 89).

3.4 Conclusion

The changes that Chinese science-fiction films have undergone during the period of study are the result of the historically and culturally specific nature of construction of Chinese science-fiction as a genre. The *TP* as part of the science-fiction canon has sparked broad discussions and appeals for its adaptation into a series of science-fiction films. The literature-as-canon reception has existed for a long period of time as part of the reception history of Chinese science-fiction film, which means only canonized literary works can be adapted to film form in order to satisfy both Chinese audience' and critics' 'horizon of expectation', since this genre has been marginalized along with the conception of 'science popularization' and 'children's fairy tales' for almost a full century in mainstream Chinese film and literary fields.

Although the release of the film version of the *TP* may not occur by the time this thesis is published, as discussed above many distinctive arguments around this canonical science-fiction work have already arisen in five prominent communities. As stated in the framework section of this chapter, the question of whether a work should be canonized is not as important as the question of who is responsible for this canonization. In the case of the *TP*, only the journalistic review community appeals strongly for the film adaptation of the *TP*. Despite the other four communities having distinctive discourses on the *TP*, these

communities generally discuss the novel version of the *TP*. The journalistic review community believes that the act of canonizing the *TP* is a good opportunity to achieve the purpose of canon formation of Chinese science fiction, even with only one text on the 'canon list'.

Finally, I wish to utilise several questions proposed by the Chinese science-fiction researcher Zheng Jun to end this chapter. There are three major problems initially proposed in Zheng's book that could refine the discussions on canon formation of the *TP* and conclude the integrated circumstance of canon formation of Chinese science-fiction films.

The first is that Chinese science-fiction film consistently lacks the full generic identity of science-fiction. This argument is consistent with Han Song's observation of 'science-fiction themed' film, not science-fiction film (2013: 21). For a long period of time, certain Chinese filmmakers did not know how to make a science-fiction film 'be more like a science-fiction'. This was especially prevalent from 1980 to 2000. Zheng asserts that there are too many other elements associated with these films that keep them from being canonized as science-fiction films directly. For instance, the *DCI* (1980) was released under the label of an 'anti-spy' film, while other subsequent science-fiction works were regarded as 'horror' films. The confusion of generic identity is consistent among early science-fiction films even though most contemporary critics have confirmed these films as part of the science-fiction film canon.

The second point is that Chinese science-fiction films 'should have taken some time to develop sufficiently so as to produce artful works', similar to Staiger's proposal of a 'maturation' ploy in the 'politics of admission'. In other words, Chinese science-fiction film only had between 20 and 30 years to develop. By contrast, the contemporary achievements of Hollywood science-fiction films did not occur until after an initial development period of almost 60 years. At the end of the 20th century, the level and capability of Chinese science-fiction films had only matched those of Hollywood science-fiction films from the 1970s, such as the *Star Wars* trilogy (1977), and perhaps had not even reached this level in some respects.

The third problem that Zheng describes is the many political factors that influence the expression of Chinese science-fiction films. These factors led to some 'science-fiction' films not being produced for the science-fiction genre at all. For instance, the films *The Ozone Layer Vanishes* (1990), *Rubiks-clock* (1990) and *The Venomous Kiss* (1992) claimed to have been produced for World Environment Day, while other so-called 'science-fiction' films were actually 'ghost' films, such as *The Shadow of a Ghost* (qianying) (1981). The reason these films were classified as science-fiction was primarily because the concept of a ghost existing in the human world went against the Chinese communist ideology of materialism, and thus also against government propaganda. Therefore, in these films there was always a 'scientific' explanation for every 'ghost'.

Eventually, as Staiger argues, canon formation is inevitable. Based on this reality the most relevant question is 'What kinds of science-fiction films does

China truly need, including the *TP?*' This question along with the whole story around *TP* is a typical example of the 'politics of inclusion and exclusion' that 'centre one while marginalizing others'. The ultimate purpose is to conduct canon formation in order to contend with external political powers by utilising the power of politics or in this case, the power of the 'awarded novel'. The motive of this act of canon formation derives from the previous situation Chinese science fiction had been in. This previous situation was that Chinese science fiction had been constantly forced to add science-popularization inclination and childish trend.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

How Chinese audience receive the genre of science-fiction film reveals the complexity of the construction of genre as a multi-dimensional process and the historically specific nature of the construction of Chinese science-fiction as a genre in particular. Overall, this thesis has focused on three different contexts of reception history, including Hollywood science-fiction films, domestic science-fiction films and the literature-as-canon reception strategy in China by interpreting the integrated circulation of the reception history of science-fiction films in China in the specific Chinese social and historical context. It argues that the literature-as-canon strategy was a crucial solution for genrification in the Chinese science-fiction film field from 1979 to 2016. As I discussed previously, the meaning of a film genre is never static. It continuously changes depending on culturally and historically specific circumstances. The English and Chinese scholarly literatures reviewed above that relate to genre theory, Chinese cinema and reception studies have already verified this proposition. I agree with these arguments and further contend that 'genre as a process' is multi-dimensional. When a specific film genre encounters different historical, geographical, cultural and/or political contexts, it will shift, be localized and be transformed according to different historical and cultural conventions and audience' expectations. The reason for this is that the construction of genre through multi-dimensional processes is also a culturally and historically specific phenomenon.

The future of this research

The perspectives of future research on Chinese science-fiction films could be divided into four major avenues of research according to the recent academic corpuses and journalistic reviews.

The first avenue is comparative research on the distance between Chinese science-fiction films and those from other countries. This kind of research could begin by studying the late 1970s when *Futureworld* (1979) was released in China. Today, Hollywood science-fiction blockbusters seem to be mentioned mainly whenever an article or book attempts to argue the deficiencies in Chinese science-fiction films compared with those from other countries (Wu 2014: 2 – 3). This type of text often takes the latest Hollywood science-fiction films that have been successful at the box office in both the U.S. and China as examples (Su 2016: 2). The implication here is a necessity to reference the mode, style and many other qualities of these Hollywood films in order to identify the insufficiencies in the Chinese science-fiction film industry (Zheng 2017: 2). From my perspective, this may be an improper trend. As China has long chosen to reference Hollywood, we will constantly regard these films as a model to study or 'imitate' in the future. The industrial system of Hollywood films has

been developing for nearly 100 years, with the result that its ability to produce high-quality films in any genre seems inevitable. However, the problem with this perspective is that China might not possess the resources and systems that Hollywood currently has. Therefore, it is open to debate whether China should continue to reference Hollywood as a model to learn from of take it as a successful case to reference. Moreover, it should be asked what China can really learn from the success of Hollywood or other science-fiction films.

The second avenue for future research is the discussion of whether the Chinese film industry possesses the capability to produce science-fiction films and what kinds of science-fiction films it should create. This vein of argument tends to assert that the Chinese film market is already sufficiently mature and can produce high-quality films from specific genres, such as swordsman films and films in other genres, including the genre of science fiction (Hong and Han 2005: 1). Proponents of this argument also list the requirements of producing high-quality science-fiction film from their perspective and provide an analysis of what sorts of capabilities the Chinese film industry should seek to develop in the future if China wishes to make its own science-fiction films (Zhang 2006: B1). Most of the insufficiencies identified can be divided into two subdivisions: specific film technique and adequate filmmaking talent. This argumentative trend began to gain traction in 2002 in China. This tendency will continue to develop as long as there is no significant science-fiction film produced and distributed in China in the future. Unlike the debates between the SP and LF discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, this argument focuses on the proposition that the Chinese film industry and its audience are already aware of what a science-fiction film is. As there is no single answer to this problem, this argument can be repeated and made endlessly unless a science-fiction film industry and market is developed in China in the future.

The third area for future research is investigation into Chinese audience feedback on domestic science-fiction films. The reason I use the term ‘feedback’ not ‘reception’ here is because most of these arguments and investigations only emphasise the ‘Chinese audience’ expectations’, and do not focus on how the science-fiction genre is received. Proponents of this argument attempt to cite so-called ‘questionnaires’ or ‘interviews’ in order to reveal the ‘true voice’ of contemporary Chinese audience. This kind of research utilises collected data and feedback from interviewees and then describes the results related to the problems and future of Chinese science-fiction films. For instance, according to the results of one investigation, 73.6% of interviewees claimed that they expected more science-fiction works to be adapted into films in the future. From the perspective of these interviewees, most of the insufficiencies in science-fiction films lie in three aspects: the lack of imagination on the part of film directors (68.3%), the lack of high-quality workers in special effects (61.1%), and the lack of scriptwriters able to create good science-fiction stories with adequate scientific knowledge (55.5%). Other factors included limited freedom for creation (37.9%), investors’ lack of knowledge towards the science-fiction genre (35.7%), the high cost of investment in film production (25.2%), the lack

of confidence of the public in the domestic Chinese science-fiction film industry (21.9%) and the average interest of audience with regard to science and technology (10.1%), among others (Sun 2014: 1 – 2). This constellation of problems and feedback can continue to exist for a long period in the future even though there will appear a remarkable Chinese domestic science-fiction film. The problem remained here is that there is too few science-fiction film existed. Perhaps the question of reception is still not as urgent as Chinese audience' demands.

The final possibility for future research is the discussion of methods for promoting the production of domestic science-fiction films. In fact, this topic is often included in all of the research branches mentioned above. Methods for promoting science-fiction films can be considered the ultimate common purpose of all types of relevant materials that research the future of domestic science-fiction films. More interestingly, there are two major groups within this discussion that have previously gone unnoticed. The first one appeals to Chinese filmmakers to 'produce the science-fiction micro-film' (Zheng 2012: 105 – 122, Sun 2014: 2) while the other one points out that some of the previous Hollywood science-fiction blockbusters 'use special effects indiscriminately' so that these 'canonized Hollywood science-fiction blockbusters should be regarded with a new different perspective' contemporarily as they may 'not be the best reference to Chinese filmmakers' (Tong 2017: 1). Ultimately, the future of research on Chinese science-fiction films may focus on these arguments from new perspectives. After all, the reason for researching this topic is to determine how to improve Chinese science-fiction films in a more Chinese context in the future.

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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1:

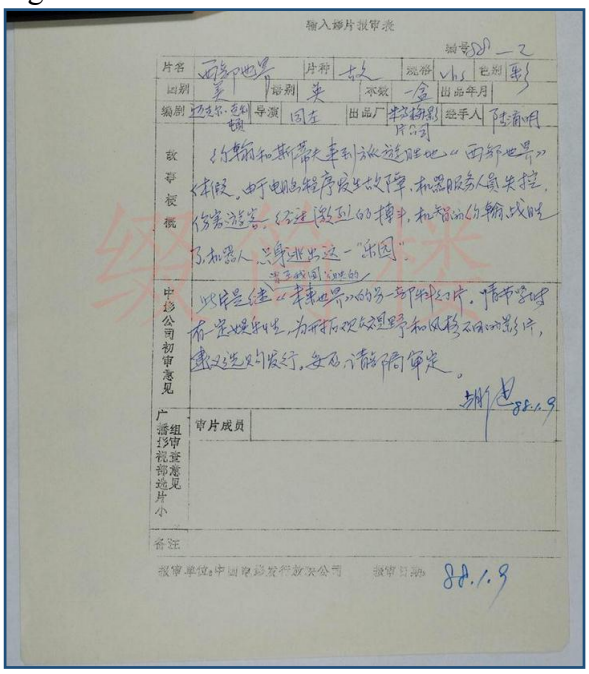


附件 2：1979 年进口电影

序号	电影名称	进口国	内容
1	看不见的要塞	朝鲜	
2	金刚山的姑娘	朝鲜	革命+亲情
3	安东根击毙伊藤博文	朝鲜	
4	政权，真理（上下）	罗马尼亚	
5	光阴	罗马尼亚	
6	延期宣判	罗马尼亚	
7	三天三夜（宽）	罗马尼亚	
8	黎明前到达	南斯拉夫	共产党员越狱成功
9	苏捷斯卡战役（宽）	南斯拉夫	反法西斯战斗
10	缩小包围圈	南斯拉夫	
11	２６个画面里的占领	南斯拉夫	反法西斯战斗
12	南方铁路之战	南斯拉夫	反法西斯战斗
13	吟公主（宽）	日本	爱情历史故事
14	故乡（宽）	日本	
15	生死恋（宽）	日本	
16	我的老师	日本	
17	金环蚀	日本	揭露日本金权政治
18	龙子太郎（宽）	日本	动画
19	冷酷的心	墨西哥	爱情家庭情仇
20	叶塞尼亚	墨西哥	剧情爱情
21	玛丽娅	墨西哥	爱情
22	巴黎圣母院（宽）	法国	名著改编
23	沉默的人	法国	苏联克格勃分子破坏活动
24	佐罗	法＼意	侠义片，阿兰德隆主演，引发轰动效应
25	疯狂的贵族	法国	喜剧历史
26	简爱	英国	名著改编
27	女英烈传	英国	反德国法西斯斗争中的女英雄
28	尼罗河上的惨案（遮）	英国	破案
29	摩登时代	美国	卓别林
30	未来世界	美国	科幻
31	车队（文革后第一部美国片）	美国	卡车司机反抗警察暴政
32	舞台生涯	美国	卓别林
33	城市之光	美国	卓别林
34	寻子遇仙记	美国	卓别林
35	悠闲阶级	美国	卓别林

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Figure 2:



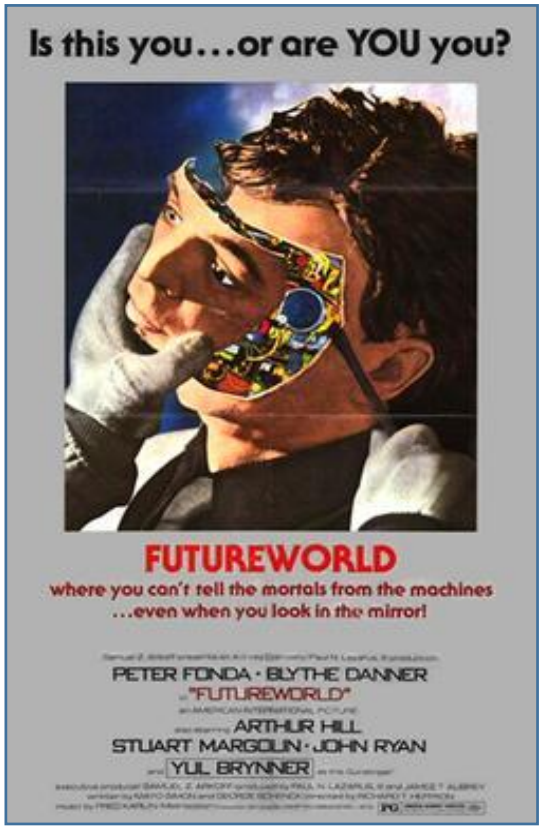
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Figure 3:



The film poster (Chinese version): *Futureworld*, 'U.S. coloured feature film'.

Figure 4:



The film poster, international version one: *Futureworld*

Figure 5:



The film poster, international version two: *Futureworld*

Figure 6:



The film poster, international version three: *Futureworld*

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