The Chinese Combat Film Since 1949: Variants of ‘Regulation’, ‘Reform’ and ‘Renewal’

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Bachelor of Arts with First Class Honours in Asian Studies

This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Murdoch University 2005
I declare that all the material contained within this thesis is my own research and contains as its main content work that has not been previously submitted for a degree at any tertiary institution.

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Abstract

This thesis examines variations of the Chinese ‘combat film’, from its origins within cinema in 1949, through to the contemporary period. My argument transposes the critical approach of ‘genre’, as a popular style within conventional film criticism, to a specific Chinese form. In particular, this study investigates the ‘combat film’ as a prevailing mode in Chinese cinema, with a particular history, form of progression and set of aesthetics.

The argument initially applies the ‘war film’ and ‘combat genre’ categorisations to Chinese forms. Consequently three major variants emerge, manifest in the ‘regulated’ (1949-1966), ‘reformed’ (1980s) and ‘renewed’ (1990s) styles, respectively. These modes are subsequently examined in rigorous narratological and cinematic contexts, resulting in an expanded conception of the Chinese ‘combat’ film.

This thesis offers an integrative appreciation of variegations of the Chinese ‘combat film’ since 1949, sutured to wider discursive and socio-political changes within the country. Moreover, this argument produces a framework for a more expansive and complex comprehension of Chinese cinema, one undergoing continual modes of re-negotiation as the medium progresses into the Twenty First Century.
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