

# Professor David Bordwell

## Doctor of Humanities *honoris causa*

### Citation

Professor David Bordwell is without a doubt the leading name in film scholarship today. He is Jacques Ledoux Professor of Film Studies Emeritus at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He has published over 20 groundbreaking books and more than 100 articles and book chapters on film history, film theory, and criticism. He also lends his time to lectures, interviews and an online blog, "Observations on Film Art". He is writing still, having published his latest, *Perplexing Plots: Popular Storytelling and the Poetics of Murder* for Columbia University Press, in 2023.

I am proud to read this citation, having studied with Professor Bordwell for seven years at Wisconsin in the late 1980s. As his PhD student and TA during this time, I learned a lot about doing research from one of the sharpest minds in the field.

Here is a taste of some of his most important books. Given the scope of Professor Bordwell's work and its impact, this requires some time, and focus.

Let us start with Hong Kong. Professor Bordwell is an authority on Hong Kong cinema. *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* was published in 2000 by Harvard University Press. This scholarly, yet lively, work celebrates the art and appeal of Hong Kong movies. Professor Bordwell made a series of trips to Hong Kong between 1995 and 2010, and wrote a dazzling account of the strategies taken by filmmakers, action directors and cinematographers to make "our" cinema the envy of the world. The second edition was published in 2010. This book was translated into traditional Chinese for readers here in 2001, and simplified Chinese in 2003. Professor Bordwell made many good friends on his trips here and considers Hong Kong as a second home. In 2001 he received the Sir Edward Youde Memorial Fund Visiting Professorship at The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts; in 2007 he was given the Asian Film Award for Excellence in Scholarship in Asian Cinema.

Professor Bordwell is also an authority on Japanese cinema. *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema* was published in 1988 (Princeton UP) and was a finalist in the Jay Leyda Prize competition held by the Anthology Film Archives. This book raised Yasujiro Ozu's reputation to the highest in Japanese and even world cinema, and this is a case of 'poetics', that is, the principles through which a representational medium takes form. A series of books were then published following this subject by Professor Bordwell. They include *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema* (1989), edited book *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies* (1996), and *Poetics of Cinema* (2007). In these works, Professor Bordwell explained and defended historical poetics, an approach that analyses the structure of motion picture texts, rather than interpretive flights of theory. Besides Ozu, Professor Bordwell has given us books about Carl Theodor Dreyer, Sergei Eisenstein, and Christopher Nolan.

Professor Bordwell co-wrote *Film Art* (first edition in 1979, now in its twelfth edition) and *Film History* (1994, now fourth edition). These were authored with his writing partner Kristin Thompson. Generations of students have absorbed film elements and film history from these books. These and many others have been translated into multiple languages, including Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Turkish, Czech,

Slovenian, Greek, Polish and Hungarian. These textbooks (in English) are regularly assigned to students here at Lingnan.

Professor Bordwell's work on American cinema best exemplifies his approach to film art. It stretches across the whole span of motion pictures, from precinema to silent pictures and classic studio movies to contemporary Hollywood films. Professor Bordwell does not just cover films, directors, and production companies but the conditions needed to make, circulate, and understand movies.

Consider *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (Columbia UP, 1985). Co-written with Kristin Thompson and Janet Staiger, this is a masterful account of how and why Hollywood rose to become the world's preeminent source of motion picture craft. Their method is democratic, drawing on hundreds of anonymous, forgotten pictures to test their propositions about how the industry worked as a whole. It is a striking book about the film industry, American capitalism, and the selling of talent in a global marketplace.

Just as impactful was *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Wisconsin UP, 1988), which combines narrative theory, philosophy, and psychology and offers a corrective to then orthodox assumptions about how the comprehension of film works. Here we find bracing thoughts on European filmmakers like Jean Luc Godard and Robert Bresson, the conventions of art cinema, and explanations of how these differ from classical Hollywood norms. Professor Bordwell conceives of narration as an event, or process and thus works as a distinct human activity, or exchange between filmmakers and their audiences.

There is no area of historical or contemporary film studies that Professor Bordwell has not addressed. Note such recent titles as *Reinventing Hollywood: How 1940s Filmmakers Changed Movie Storytelling* (Chicago UP, 2017); *Pandora's Digital Box: Films, Files, and the Future of Movies* (Irvington Way Press, 2012); *Minding Movies: Observations on the Art, Craft and Business of Filmmaking* (Chicago, 2011). And there are many, many more.

Professor David Bordwell's research is world leading; as teacher he has won a University Distinguished Teaching Award, a Guggenheim Fellowship, in 1991, and an Anthology Film Archive Award for Film Preservation in 2006. He was awarded an honorary degree by the University of Copenhagen in 1997. He has supervised 33 PhD dissertations and 17 of those were later published by university presses. Today he joins Lingnan University, Hong Kong with an honorary degree.

Mr Chairman, in recognition of Professor David Bordwell's outstanding achievements in scholarship and higher education, may I present him for conferment of the degree of Doctor of Humanities *honoris causa*.

*Citation written and delivered by Professor Darrell William Davis*

# David Bordwell教授

榮譽人文學博士

## 贊辭

David Bordwell教授無疑是當今電影學術界的領軍人物。他是威斯康辛大學麥迪遜分校Jacques Ledoux電影研究榮休教授。他出版了20多本極具開創性的著作，發表了過百篇關於電影史、電影理論和評論的文章和書籍章節。他還投放時間舉辦講座、接受採訪，並開設了網誌「電影藝術評論」(Observations on Film Art)。他現在仍然繼續寫作，並於2023年經哥倫比亞大學出版社出版了他的最新著作《令人費解的情節：通俗敘事與謀殺詩學》(Perplexing Plots: Popular Storytelling and the Poetics of Murder)。

上世紀八十年代末，我曾在威斯康辛大學師從Bordwell教授七年，今天能夠宣讀這篇贊辭，深感榮幸。身為他的博士生和助教期間，我有幸從這位學界翹楚身上獲益良多。

以下我會介紹他的幾部重要著作。Bordwell教授著作等身，涉及範疇廣泛而且影響深遠，我們需要一些時間和精力去細味。

且讓我們從香港說起。Bordwell教授是香港電影的權威。《香港電影的秘密：娛樂的藝術》(Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment)一書於2000年由哈佛大學出版社出版。這本學術性強而又生動活潑的著作展示了香港電影的藝術和魅力。Bordwell教授在1995年至2010年期間多次前往香港，就電影製作人、武術指導和攝影師為使「我們的」電影享譽全球所採取的策略，作出了非常精彩的描述。該書的第二版於2010年出版；2001年，該書被翻譯成繁體中文，供香港的讀者閱讀；後來又於2003年被翻譯成簡體中文。Bordwell教授到訪香港期間結識了許多好朋友，並將香港視為他的第二家園。2001年，他獲得香港演藝學院尤德爵士紀念基金客座教授銜；2007年，他獲得亞洲電影卓越學者獎。

Bordwell教授也是研究日本電影的權威。他的著作《小津與電影詩學》(Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema)於1988年出版(普林斯頓大學出版社)，曾入圍由選集電影檔案館舉辦的Jay Leyda Prize比賽。這本書使小津安二郎在日本乃至世界電影界的聲譽攀上頂峰；Bordwell教授認為小津安二郎正是充分展示了電影「詩學」，即一個表現媒體依據的原則。Bordwell教授隨後出版了一系列關於這一主題的著作，包括《電影意義的追尋：電影解讀手法的剖析與反思》(Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema) (1989)、《後理論：重構電影研究》(Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies) (1996)和《電影詩學》(Poetics of Cinema) (2007)。在這些著作中，Bordwell教授解釋並捍衛了歷史詩學這一分析電影文本結構的方法。除了小津安二郎，Bordwell教授亦撰寫了關於Carl Theodor Dreyer、Sergei Eisenstein和Christopher Nolan的書籍。

Bordwell教授還與Kristin Thompson合著了《電影藝術》(Film Art) (1979年第一版，現為第12版)和《電影史》(Film History) (1994年出版，現為第四版)。一代又一代的學生從這些著作吸收了許多電影元素和電影史的知識。這些書籍和其他許多著作

已被翻譯成多種語言，包括中文、韓文、日文、西班牙文、法文、葡萄牙文、土耳其文、捷克文、斯洛維尼亞文、希臘文、波蘭文和匈牙利文，而英文版亦是嶺大學生需要閱讀的教科書。

Bordwell教授對美國電影的研究最能體現他研究電影藝術的方法。他的研究涵蓋了整個電影史——從前電影到無聲電影，從經典製片廠電影到當代好萊塢電影。Bordwell教授的研究不僅涉及電影、導演和製片公司，還包括製作、發行和理解電影所需的條件。

Bordwell教授與Kristin Thompson和Janet Staiger合著的《經典好萊塢電影：1960年以前的電影風格和製片模式》(The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960) (哥倫比亞大學出版社1985年出版)，對好萊塢如何以及為何能夠製作傲視世界的電影進行了精湛的闡述。他們從數百部寂寂無名、被遺忘的影片中汲取素材，驗證他們關於電影業如何運作的觀點。這是一本關於電影業、美國資本主義和在全球市場上爭取人才的著作，非常震撼人心。

同樣具有影響力的還有《電影敘事》(Narration in the Fiction Film) (威斯康辛大學出版社1988年出版)，該書結合了敘事理論、哲學和心理學，對當時關於電影應如何理解的正統假設進行了糾正。在這本書裡，Bordwell教授發表了他對歐洲電影製作人如Jean Luc Godard和Robert Bresson的看法，闡述了他對藝術電影慣例的創新見解，並解釋了這些慣例與經典好萊塢的規範有何不同。Bordwell教授將敘事視為一個事件或過程，一種獨特的人類活動，或者說是電影製作人與觀眾之間的交流。

Bordwell教授的研究足跡涉及整個歷史和當代電影研究領域。他近期出版的著作包括《重塑好萊塢：四十年代電影製作人如何改變電影敘事》(Reinventing Hollywood: How 1940s Filmmakers Changed Movie Storytelling) (芝加哥大學出版社2017年出版)、《潘朵拉的數碼盒子：電影、檔案和電影的未來》(Pandora's Digital Box: Films, Files, and the Future of Movies) (歐文頓出版社2012年出版)、《關注電影：對電影製作的藝術、工藝和商業的觀察》(Minding Movies: Observations on the Art, Craft and Business of Filmmaking) (芝加哥大學出版社2011年出版)，還有很多很多。

Bordwell教授的研究處於世界領先地位，為人師表的他曾獲頒大學傑出教學獎，並於1991年獲頒Guggenheim獎；2006年，他獲頒電影資料選集電影保育獎。他亦於1997年獲哥本哈根大學頒授榮譽學位，曾指導過33篇博士論文，其中17篇其後於大學出版社出版。而今天，他將獲香港嶺南大學授予榮譽博士學位。

主席先生，為表彰David Bordwell教授在學術研究和高等教育方面的傑出成就，我謹恭請閣下頒授榮譽人文學博士學位予David Bordwell教授。

贊辭由Darrell William Davis教授撰寫及宣讀