Art, Politics, and Commerce in Chinese Cinema

edited by Ying Zhu
and Stanley Rosen
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Although motion pictures were exhibited and shot in China by foreigners within months of the first screenings in Europe and the United States, 1905 is the first year for which there is concrete evidence of films made in China by the Chinese themselves. In the decades that followed, Chinese cinema has been buffeted in response to the political and cultural upheavals of a Chinese society in transformation. With the founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in October 1949, the mainland Chinese film industry was consolidated and nationalized by the early 1950s under Communist Party directives. Film production in China from then until the mid-1980s imitated Soviet-style centralized planning, with state-ownership and subsidized production, turning out propaganda-driven films according to the state’s production targets. The end of the Maoist era brought a remarkable outpouring of Chinese cinema from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s. Popular political melodramas by the Shanghai-based veteran director Xie Jin co-existed with experimental art films by the Fourth and Fifth Generation filmmakers as critics and film practitioners earnestly debated the nature and functions of cinema. The art films created a buzz overseas, quickly becoming a critical revelation that put Chinese cinema forcefully onto the world map. Chinese cinema has made critical waves ever since, winning awards at international film festivals, big and small, with celebrated films such as Yellow Earth (Huang tudi, Chen Kaige, 1984), Raise the Red Lantern (Dahong denglong gaogao gua, Zhang Yimou, 1991), Platform (Zhantai, Jia Zhangke, 2000), Blind Shaft (Mang jing, Li Yang, 2003), and House of Flying Daggers (Shimian maifu, Zhang Yimou, 2004), landing in the critical and sometimes even popular pantheon of world cinema. Meanwhile, filmmakers such as Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige, and Jia Zhangke, at different times and for different reasons, have become the darlings of media critics in the United States, Europe, and Asia. A cottage industry of Chinese cinema studies subsequently emerged in the world of academia, and scholarship on Chinese cinema has rapidly proliferated in recent years, resulting in a succession of books and journal articles that cover a variety of topics from political economy to the style and authorship of Chinese cinema.

The Burgeoning Literature in Chinese Cinema Studies

In line with the increasing emphasis on globalization, a number of significant works encompass Greater China (the Mainland, Hong Kong, and Taiwan), ranging from those
that seek to be comprehensive\textsuperscript{2} to studies which are more tightly focused.\textsuperscript{3} What these books share, as a springboard, is a conceptual framework in their mapping of Chinese cinema that is inclusive of Chinese language and culture within the Greater China, reflecting the established mode of inquiry in Chinese cinema studies pioneered by several major anthologies over a decade ago.\textsuperscript{4} Such an all-inclusive approach has certainly enriched our understanding of Chinese cinema both as a conceptual grid and a diverse area of inquiry, yet it leaves little room for an in-depth examination of any particular production center of Chinese cinema, especially given the three centers’ distinctive political and economic systems as well as shifting cultural climates.\textsuperscript{5} While the cinema of Taiwan has only recently been addressed in book-length monographs, Hong Kong cinema has been more readily treated as an independent entity.\textsuperscript{6}

In light of the success of Chinese film abroad and the interest in the subject in the wider field of cinema and cultural studies, research monographs and edited volumes that focus exclusively on the cinema of the PRC have become more common; however, they most often concentrate on certain historical periods, cinematic movements, or specialized issues. One must start with Paul Clark’s then-landmark work published in the late 1980s, \textit{Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics since 1949}, which offered a widely read account of film production in the PRC from the late 1940s to the mid-1980s.\textsuperscript{7} Indeed, for a number of years this was the one standard must-read work for anyone interested in an overview of PRC film history. Clark’s more recent \textit{Reinventing China: A Generation and Its Films} narrows the focus to the post–Cultural Revolution Fifth Generation directors whose pioneering work brought Chinese cinema to the attention of international audiences.\textsuperscript{8} Several volumes examine the effects of recent market reforms on Chinese cinema, with an increasing focus on younger directors whose work has been featured at international film festivals and art house cinemas outside China, and often through “unofficial” distribution sources within China.\textsuperscript{9} Arguably, studies on these younger directors — sometimes labeled as the “Sixth Generation” to distinguish them from their more established predecessors from the Fifth Generation — have begun to dominate the field.\textsuperscript{10} In addition to volumes that concentrate on particular periods of PRC film history, there are also those that either examine only one aspect of Chinese cinema, albeit in considerable depth, or seek to put Chinese film studies into a larger context, including those which focus on gender issues or cultural theory.\textsuperscript{11}

Despite this burgeoning literature, however, systematic studies of the cinema of the PRC based on recent and comprehensive research examining the three major aspects of art, politics, and commerce that must be considered for a comprehensive understanding of a nation’s film industry have yet to emerge.\textsuperscript{12} Our volume, \textit{Art, Politics, and Commerce in Chinese Cinema}, attempts to fill this void by providing an up-to-date study focusing exclusively on the evolution of film production and consumption in mainland China, while noting the influence of Mainland cinema beyond its immediate borders. Such an extensive treatment of mainland Chinese cinema is particularly relevant, indeed long overdue, as Chinese cinema crossed its centenary threshold in 2005 with the film industry struggling, more than ever, to adapt to an increasingly globalized film practice driven by commercial imperatives.
Chinese Cinema with “Mainland Characteristics”

Given the transnational nature of virtually all cinema today — even the vaunted Hollywood model — and the obvious importance of Greater China in the production and distribution of virtually all successful “Mainland” films, it is useful to explain why we still feel it is necessary to maintain a Mainland focus in our volume. Indeed, the issues of “national cinema” and “Chinese-language cinema” are highly contested ones and many of the best recent studies have wrestled with the meaning of these expressions.  

First, the political system in the PRC remains Leninist in the control exercised by the party-state, led by the Chinese Communist Party. Thus, despite the many obvious changes during China’s reform period, “Socialism with Chinese characteristics” still mandates an important propaganda role for film, leading to tight censorship over controversial topics. Filmmakers who have violated directives, instructions, or guidelines established by the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT) have been punished by fines and outright bans, not just on the individual films guilty of the violation, but on the filmmaker him or herself. Recent examples include Jiang Wen’s *Devils on the Doorstep* (2000) and Lou Ye’s *Summer Palace* (2006), with the filmmakers banned for a number of years from making new films in China.  

Indeed, in a recent volume in which they interviewed twenty-one of China’s leading young film directors, Shaoyi Sun and Xun Li focus extensively on the censorship system, suggesting that it may be “the last obstacle to a healthy film industry.” Perhaps the most celebrated earlier case was Tian Zhuangzhuang’s *The Blue Kite*, an award-winning film from 1993 that received universal critical acclaim outside China, but has never been officially allowed distribution rights within China.  

The three films mentioned above are examples of a common problem faced by Chinese filmmakers who touch on “forbidden zones.” Before any film is allowed to be sent for exhibition abroad — including participation in an international film festival — the film must be cleared by state censors. Since film festivals have tight deadlines, and official clearance of any film with subject matter or individual scenes which are “controversial” is a complicated affair, filmmakers must carefully weigh the importance of entrance to a major international film festival such as Cannes, Venice, Berlin, or Tokyo against the predictable repercussions likely to follow from the Chinese film authorities. For art films with limited box-office prospects either in China or abroad, international exposure and acclaim are often essential to generate the level of interest that might lead to overseas distribution, and to provide the necessary funding for the filmmaker’s next project; indeed, most such films are co-productions relying on support from outside China, with the expectation that the film will find an international audience. It is in such dilemmas that we see the interplay of art, politics, and commerce most clearly, and this dilemma is likely to remain an important feature of mainland Chinese cinema for the foreseeable future. As a consequence of the concern with politics that all mainland Chinese filmmakers must entertain, a mindset that Perry Link has described as “enforced self-censorship” has developed, which occurs when a writer or filmmaker decides to avoid sensitive subjects or scenes, or alters such scenes in anticipation of
Although a variety of constraints confront filmmakers everywhere, this type of political relationship between the artist and the state does not really apply in Hong Kong or Taiwan.

Nevertheless, despite the continuing importance of the restrictions imposed by the Leninist system, the changing patterns under which films are produced and consumed, in which producers who are concerned with international distribution and the bottom line now play a more important role, have led to a far more complicated set of interactions between the Chinese state and its increasingly independent filmmakers. In the absence of the familiar state subsidies of the Maoist era, media and cultural units in postsocialist China are judged by their commercial success in a very crowded marketplace. State authorities and regulators fully understand this, even when the primary (political) values of the authorities are incongruent with the (commercial) values of the units they supervise. This has led to a system marked by negotiation, sometimes tacit and sometimes public, where cultural units may include their audience as a means of pressuring the authorities to exercise restraint in their control and regulation. After thirty years of reform, state-society relations are no longer a one-way street. Society has developed a momentum of its own and the state has to be concerned with and even to accommodate public opinion. What often occurs, therefore, is the government expressing an opinion (biaotai) against something, yet allowing the banned phenomenon, if it is popular enough, to exist despite the ban. There is a clear concern that policies that deviate too far from public expectations might affect the overriding value, which is promoting social stability. This is why you see the ebb and flow of policy, often with a lack of consistency. However, at the same time there are limits — often not clearly defined — beyond which state tolerance will be withdrawn.

The recent fate of Li Yu’s *Lost in Beijing* (Pingguo, 2007) — well documented in the Hollywood trade papers, the Western media, and on Chinese blogs — offers a useful illustration of perhaps the major theme of our volume, i.e. the continuing evolution of the relationship among the forces of commerce, art, and politics and the expansion of the number of players — domestic and international — who are now involved in this process. When *Lost in Beijing* was shown at the Berlin International Film Festival in February 2007, Li Yu and her producer Fang Li brought two versions — the uncensored director’s cut and a “censor-friendly” cut in which fifteen minutes had been removed — and then Li and Fang proceeded to engage in complex negotiations with Chinese film bureaucrats. In striking contrast with past practice, a good deal of the negotiation seemed to take place in public, with the filmmakers detailing the “debate” over the film to the world press. First, Li and her distribution and marketing partners made it clear that they would show the director’s cut at a “market screening” for potential buyers, ingeniously reasoning that since the screening was not open to the general public it would not violate the Film Bureau’s directive mandating the cuts that had to be made to receive official approval. Second, Li made it clear that the final decision on which version to screen for film festival audiences would be left to producer Fang Li. In the end, Fang opted to show the uncut version, arguing that he had “simply run out of time” to finish subtitling a sanitized version in German and English. Ironically, Fang and Li suggested that they
did not expect to be punished for defying the censors, telling a reporter that the film was fortunate not to win a prize. Such success would have been “a catastrophe,” since a prize-winning film would provoke “the prime minister or someone on that level … to discover what the fuss is about.” The censors did win out over the Chinese title of the film, which was changed to “Apple” after the Film Bureau found “Lost in Beijing” “too sensitive.” Among other issues, reportedly there was at least some concern, with the Olympics coming up in August 2008, that foreigners might think that Beijing was a difficult city to navigate.

But that was not the end of this complicated story. After several delays, the film was allowed to open on the Mainland in November 2007 in a 97-minute version — the Hong Kong and international version ran 114 minutes — and brought in about 17 million yuan in its first month. However, and inevitably, given the nature of information dissemination in China today, the seventeen minutes of footage of rape and class conflict from the original version was widely posted on the Internet. As a result, public screenings were summarily banned, and the producer and his production company were barred from making films for two years. Thus, the truncated film was only removed from theaters after its relatively successful run and, although SARFT had banned the film’s broadcast and circulation online, the authorities reportedly only suggested, rather than ordered, a ban on the distribution of the DVD. Producer Fang Li felt quite comfortable telling the press that “there has been little impact. Ticket sales are good so far.” Significantly, although a senior SARFT official had criticized the film for chasing international awards and insulting Chinese people instead of “consciously defend[ing] the honor of the motherland,” as he suggested that film directors should do, it was only when unnamed netizens posted the censored scenes online that the authorities felt compelled to act.

An examination of the saga of Ang Lee’s Lust, Caution in the Mainland reveals an even more complicated relationship among Chinese film authorities, who sought to co-opt a world-class Chinese director, China’s online nationalists (who objected to the film’s “glorification of traitors and insult to patriots”), youth and middle middle-class filmgoers, bloggers, newspaper critics, and liberal intellectuals. Theatrical screenings were initially permitted in the Mainland in a sanitized version prepared by Lee himself, at the same time that the uncut version was available for those who could travel to Hong Kong. The contention over Lust, Caution highlights the “pluralization of interests” involved in cultural policy in China today.

Second, a focus on mainland China is justified because in many ways the Mainland has become the focus of global commercial film interests, not just from Greater China, but from Hollywood as well. Following upon the omnipresent publicity given to “the rise of China” or “the Chinese economic miracle,” there is great anticipation that a rising middle class of Chinese filmgoers with disposable income will be the salvation of the declining Hong Kong film industry and will be the new frontier for Hollywood’s expansion. Indeed, Hong Kong film producers have openly admitted that 80 percent of their market is mainland China and that no film can be made without consideration of its prospects up north. The Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA), signed between the governments of Hong Kong and the PRC on June 29, 2003, under which
Hong Kong films can enter the Mainland as co-productions without being subject to the quota restrictions foreign films are, has made the Hong Kong industry more dependent than ever on Mainland film authorities. In 2005, for example, five of the top six and seven of the top ten Chinese-language box-office hits in mainland China were Hong Kong films.\textsuperscript{23} In 2007, nine of the top ten domestic films at the box office were co-productions, most with a strong Hong Kong component.\textsuperscript{24} Given its new orientation, the decline of the Hong Kong film industry as a source of popular entertainment in Asian markets outside the Mainland has been frequently noted by Western critics.\textsuperscript{25}

Third, there is a strong historical dimension to our volume. Many of the chapters cover a broad swath of Mainland film history, when other Chinese-language cinemas were simply not relevant. Some of these chapters trace the evolution of Mainland cinema and the costs and benefits of moving from the isolation of the past to the global embeddedness of the present. Thus, a Mainland-centered approach can more clearly reveal the sometimes stark changes as we move through each of the periods considered.

Fourth, unlike many other studies of Chinese cinema, which quite understandably and appropriately offer a concentration on filmic textual analysis, we are interested not only in the “art” and aesthetics of film, but also in politics and commerce, as our subtitle notes. We see this approach as our “comparative advantage.” Had we focused solely on the art of film, the inclusion of Taiwan, for example, would make excellent sense since some of the world’s leading filmmakers, including Hou Hsiao-hsien, Tsai Ming-liang, and the recently deceased Edward Yang, are associated with that small island. In terms of film markets, however, Taiwan has been completely dominated by Hollywood and filmmakers from Taiwan must rely on success at international film festivals as the primary venues for their works. In short, when one considers the trinity of art, politics, and commerce together, a focus on mainland China becomes more understandable, indeed imperative.

Fifth, as if to validate the argument of the last paragraph, recent comments from those engaged in the Chinese film industry, from officials to filmmakers, have explicitly spoken of the importance of the commerce-art-politics nexus and its changing context. It is clear that the overseas box-office successes of Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, Hero, and House of Flying Daggers have fueled the ambitions of virtually everyone in the film community, from creative artists to industry bureaucrats, though their visions not surprisingly reflect their place within this community. For example, director Feng Xiaogang — whose work is addressed in several chapters in this volume — told The New York Times during the filming of The Banquet how his films were changing to reflect the times as we now live in an era where people are looking for more leisure and entertainment. As he put it, “Now China has gradually adopted a market economy…. Movies have changed from a propaganda tool to an art form and now to a commercial product. If someone continues to make movies according to the old rules, he’ll have no space to live in today’s market.”\textsuperscript{26}

High-ranking film officials have addressed the commerce-art-politics relationship as well. Significantly, however, they have reversed the order of importance. Unlike Feng,
who sees not only propaganda but apparently also art as out-of-date, Jiang Ping, vice president of the Film Bureau under SARFT, spoke in February 2007 on the need for a new kind of producer in China’s new era. In his formulation, China “now urgently needs film producers who are politically sensitive, aesthetically sophisticated and have a flair for marketing.” It was therefore not surprising that Yi Li’s Zhang Side, a biopic about a celebrated Chinese soldier who was immortalized in a “constantly read essay” by Mao Zedong, won most of the major Chinese film awards (best picture, director, and actor) in 2006, beating out such larger commercial successes as Stephen Chow’s Kung Fu Hustle, Feng’s A World Without Thieves, and Ronny Yu’s Fearless. Significantly, most of the nominated stars and filmmakers, such as Chow, Feng, and Zhang Yimou did not bother to attend the event. As suggested above in the comments by producer Fang Li of Lost in Beijing, however, new-era producers are more likely to emphasize “a flair for marketing” and the kind of political sensitivity that enables them to understand how to work the system successfully rather than promoting the values favored by film bureaucrats.

The Genesis and Organization of the Volume

In 2005, the celebration of the centenary of Chinese cinema was marked with tributes to Chinese cinema’s canonic texts in China and the rest of the world. In New York, the Film Society of Lincoln Center put together a high profile Chinese Cinema Retrospective in October, honoring the occasion with a three-week series that traced the history of mainland Chinese film through many of its celebrated texts. In attendance was the legendary filmmaker, Xie Jin, whose film career embodied the very dynamics of art, politics, and commerce that this volume seeks to explore. Embedded within the larger public celebration was an international by-invitation academic symposium sponsored by the City University of New York that provided an opportunity for in-depth exchanges among distinguished experts on the history and current state of Chinese cinema. The symposium featured eight roundtable discussions, covering topics ranging from history and the historiography of Chinese cinema, to the question of Chinese cinema and Chinese-language filmmaking, to Chinese documentary filmmaking, an area of inquiry long neglected. Specialists on Chinese cinema shared with each other their new research and discoveries. Significant themes and selected papers emerged from the symposium, which form the foundation of our edited volume. The volume further commissioned new papers to cover topics either not touched upon or that emerged during the symposium. A second conference to finalize the chapters was organized by the East Asian Studies Center at the University of Southern California and held on that campus in April 2008. In addition to all the authors, invited attendees included industry professionals from China and Hollywood, and film directors Feng Xiaogang and Li Yang.

It is indicative of the nature of contemporary Chinese film studies that our contributors represent a variety of disciplines and methodologies within the humanities and social sciences, including film/media studies, Asian studies, history, political science, sociology, communications, comparative literature, and Chinese language. Reflecting the
broad focus which encompasses aesthetics, politics, and the market, the chapters vary from close textual readings of the key films of individual filmmakers, to the changing dynamics of film culture and the politics of film in different historical periods, to statistical analyses of box-office results and home video markets.

Specifically, the volume is organized around three large areas of inquiry: the Chinese film industry and its local and global market; film politics, including major genres and their reception; and film art, focusing on style and authorship. Each chapter within a particular area builds upon, reflects on, and updates previous scholarship on mainland Chinese cinema while at the same time placing the current transformation within a larger framework. Part 1 of the book focuses on Chinese cinema as an industry and its domestic and global markets. Ying Zhu and Seio Nakajima’s chapter “The Evolution of Chinese Film as an Industry” charts the changing nature of film production in China from its inception in 1905 to current practices in the mid-2000s. The development of the industry is broadly divided into three periods: a commercial industry prior to the PRC era, a centralized and state-subsidized industry during the Maoist era, and a decentralized and marketized industry during the era of reform. The major emphasis is an examination of the decentralization and commercialization of the Chinese film industry in the era of marketization and its struggle under the shadow of Hollywood imports. As the trends of privatization, marketization, and globalization continue to strengthen, the Chinese film industry has moved closer to a Western-style industrial structure, management model, and market mechanism. The authors suggest that the adoption of the Hollywood institutional model alone will not be sufficient to enable the Chinese film industry to survive the increasingly competitive market environment in the WTO era; the future of the Chinese film industry rests upon the ability of its practitioners to make films that will resonate with its domestic audiences.

Examining the reception of Chinese films in the notoriously parochial American market, Stanley Rosen’s “Chinese Cinema’s International Market” assesses the Chinese film industry’s efforts to promote its films globally, seeking to counter Hollywood’s triumphant re-entry into the Chinese film market since the mid-1990s. The author suggests that despite some obvious successes, notably with the hybrid multinational films *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, Hero*, and *House of Flying Daggers*, Chinese cinema’s international venture appears to have fallen somewhat short of expectations. At the same time, he notes the limitations faced by any foreign language film, particularly in the highly competitive North American home market of Hollywood, where subtitled films, particularly those from more “exotic” markets such as Asia, have historically never fared well. Rosen reminds us that Hollywood’s vast distribution networks, production and marketing costs, and control of upscale screen venues will continue to sustain its ability in producing brand name (*pinpai*) blockbusters. Examining box-office data more closely, however, he notes that Chinese films in fact have in recent years fared better than those of any other nation, although the range of such successful films has been limited, in part by audience and critical expectations. By examining the reasons for the successes and failures of Chinese films, the chapter offers some suggested strategies
Chinese filmmakers might employ to enhance box-office success in the United States and the rest of the world.

Complementing Rosen’s chapter, in “American Films in China Prior to 1950,” Zhiwei Xiao provides a case study of American films’ reception in China during the Republican period (1911–1949). As the author reminds us, the cinematic style and narrative strategy of the native film productions were developed as a conscious effort to compete with Hollywood imports for the domestic market. Consequently, our knowledge of the reception of American films will provide insights into the historical legacy of the Chinese native filmmaking. Xiao’s chapter offers a corrective to what the author sees as a tendency in Chinese film studies to overlook the issue of film distribution/exhibition and the historical context of film practices.

Shujen Wang’s chapter, “Film Piracy and the DVD/VCD Market: Contradictions and Paradoxes,” maps the dynamic landscape of piracy and the DVD/VCD market in China. Incorporating theoretical and historical inquiries of network, globalization, and space, this chapter also explores the effects of technological changes and regulatory expansion and their impact on the Chinese film market. As the author notes, China has been celebrated as “the world’s fastest growing theatrical market” for Hollywood films but at the same time is castigated for having the world’s highest film piracy rate. Indeed, the Chinese film market at the turn of the millennium is marked by paradoxes and contraditions: state monopoly intersecting consumer capitalism, post-WTO transnational trade and intellectual property governance cutting across nationalist sentiments and local resistance. The boundaries between state and market, commerce and art, and art and politics, are increasingly blurred. Digital technology further heightens the tension between the licit and the illicit amid shifting balances of power and control among different networks and actors. The author argues that these paradoxical developments are symptomatic of complex underlying forces of globalization, digital technology, policy, and the changing state. With its implications for global capitalism and transnational politics, piracy in particular serves as a lens through which some of these issues are manifested.

Part 2 of the volume is devoted to film politics, broadly defined, and focuses on a number of popular and emerging film genres in Chinese cinema, including martial arts, animation, and documentary, and their reception. However, the section begins with an intriguing reassessment of a key turning point in Chinese film culture. Paul Clark’s chapter, “The Triumph of Cinema: Chinese Film Culture from the 1960s to the 1980s,” takes us back to an era when Chinese audiences eagerly flocked to cinema houses to watch any films available for public screening. Clark links together three time periods that have previously been treated separately, revealing the continuities and persistence of Chinese film culture (going to the movies and the impact of movies on audiences’ attitudes and tastes) prior to the Cultural Revolution, during the ten years of so-called “catastrophe,” and ending with the early 1980s. He argues that film occupied a central position in Chinese cultural life from the mid-1960s until the rise of the Fifth Generation filmmakers in the mid-1980s. As Clark elaborates, after their victory in 1949, the Communist Party leadership recognized the potential of film to create a new mass culture and present messages in identical form across the nation. In the 1950s, film-going
became a regular experience for urban Chinese, often organized by work units, so that this activity should not be viewed as strictly recreational. Because of a relatively low production level, there was space for imported films: indeed, studios supplemented their revenue by dubbing foreign films, often using actors who appeared on screen in local features. Clark makes the compelling point that, given the limited cinematic exposure, the standard treatment of transitions of time and location had to be learned by audiences new to cinema, which partly explains the relative simplicity and obviousness of many of the films from Chinese studios after 1949.

Stephen Teo’s chapter, “The Martial Arts Film in Chinese Cinema: Historicism and the National,” traces the evolution and current transformation of the Chinese genre with the highest profile, the martial arts film. Teo argues that, from the beginning, the martial arts genre imbibed influences from Hollywood and European genres while at the same time drawing from the fountain of China’s history and folkloric past. The genre was perceived as a signifier of Chinese national identity and cultural form that could be distinguished from the Westernized or Europeanized form. However, the success of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* at the start of the twenty-first century has made martial arts a transnational form. The author argues that recent films such as Chen Kaige’s *The Promise* (2005), Feng Xiaogang’s *The Banquet* (2006), and Zhang Yimou’s *Curse of the Golden Flower* (2006) are further demonstrations of the increasing transnationalization of martial arts. They could even be described as allegories of globalization.

John A. Lent and Ying Xu’s chapter, “Chinese Animation Film: From Experimentation to Digitalization,” traces the history of Chinese animation from the earliest works of the Wan brothers and lesser-known pioneers, through the lull of World War II, the golden eras of the Shanghai Animation Film Studio, the reorganization under a market economy, and the present state of astronomical expansion. As is evident in Lent and Xu’s account, during its eighty-year history, China’s animation has persisted and excelled under various types of political, economic, and socio-cultural conditions, including military invasions, civil war, dictatorships, and both planned and market economies. Despite at times formidable obstacles and unstable states of existence, China in the past produced some of the world’s most exquisite animation, and currently promises to be a global behemoth in production quantity.

Yingjin Zhang’s chapter, “Of Institutional Supervision and Individual Subjectivity: The History and Current State of Chinese Documentary,” is a critical survey of Chinese documentary filmmaking. It provides an historical overview of the rise of documentary filmmaking in early twentieth-century China and its development under direct state supervision through the socialist period. Special attention is given to the so-called “new documentary movement” in mainland China since the late 1980s. The chapter samples subjects (e.g., migration, prostitution, sexuality), styles (e.g., expository, observational, participatory, reflexive, performative), and special functions (e.g., educational, propagandist, alternative, oppositional, subversive) of new documentaries and situates this new trend of filmmaking in the context of transnational cultural politics (e.g., domestic marginalization, international film festivals, global media, and foreign
investment). The author argues that, overall, the recent documentary trajectory moves away from an obsession with grand history (war, revolution, or modernization) and toward a multitude of simultaneous images of fast-changing landscapes and mindscapes in contemporary China.

Part 3 moves to the third aspect of the volume, film art, focusing on style and authorship. Ying Zhu and Bruce Robinson’s chapter, “The Cinematic Transition of the Fifth Generation Auteurs,” takes us back to the early 1990s by tracing the Chinese Fifth Generation filmmakers’ cinematic transition from New Wave art film to post–New Wave classical film. The chapter addresses economic and textual strategies the Fifth Generation filmmakers, chiefly Chen Kaige, Tian Zhuangzhuang, and Zhang Yimou, utilized to compete with Hollywood for both global and domestic market shares. The authors argue that the core element of the Fifth Generation’s transition from art cinema to popular cinema is its reprising of a continuity narrative strategy. Zhu and Robinson discuss stylistic principles of post–New Wave and its cultural/cinematic heritage through textual analyses of the Fifth Generation films from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, examining Chen Kaige’s *Farewell My Concubine* (1993), Tian Zhuangzhuang’s *The Blue Kite* (1993), and Zhang Yimou’s films as a group during this period. The chapter also links the transition of the Fifth Generation with Chinese cinema’s general trend of commercialization during that time. Finally, the chapter discusses post–New Wave’s domestic bent since the late 1990s as the domestic market began to demonstrate its profit potential for films with popular appeal.

Liyan Qin’s chapter, “Transmedia Strategies of Appropriation and Visualization: The Case of Zhang Yimou’s Adaptation of Novels in His Early Films,” tackles the issue of film adaptation, an important topic given the close kinship between literature and film in Chinese cinema. After a brief overview of the past century of Chinese film adaptation, Qin focuses on the adaptation practice of Zhang Yimou, who has always preferred literary sources to original scripts. What interests the author is Zhang’s remodeling of novels into what became a trusted international brand: “the Zhang Yimou film.” What patterns underlie the alterations Zhang introduced? Why were these changes made? What image of China emerges from these films? How has this image itself changed over time? Qin examines Zhang’s early adaptation films from three intertwined angles: the “cultural” images he adds, the patriarchs and young lovers he represents, and the communist history he chooses to engage or ignore.

Shuqin Cui’s chapter, “Boundary Shifting: New Generation Filmmaking and Jia Zhangke’s Films,” moves on to spotlight the film practices of the post–Fifth Generation, what has commonly been labeled as the “independent generation.” The author argues that the desire to remain independent and the difficulty in doing so has caused these filmmakers to move between the margins and the mainstream and to make films both inside and outside the system. Cui’s chapter further highlights the film practice of one of the most influential post–Fifth Generation filmmakers, Jia Zhangke, to illustrate the point that the new generation has never ceased to negotiate a space between the periphery and the center, the local and the global. Finally, Cui reveals how, as the director interprets local space to reveal the abrupt dislocations in China’s
socio-economic landscape, he furthers his investigation by focusing on various forms of popular culture.

Ying Zhu’s chapter, “New Year Film as Chinese Blockbuster: From Feng Xiaogang’s Contemporary Urban Comedy to Zhang Yimou’s Period Drama,” shifts gears to look at domestic films and filmmakers who have garnered a large audience within China. The chapter discusses Chinese New Year film (hesui pian) as a domestic blockbuster genre and the role the popular TV practitioner-turned-filmmaker Feng Xiaogang has played in cultivating the lucrative Chinese New Year market. The only formidable force in making popular New Year films up until 2002, Feng’s dominance was challenged when Zhang Yimou’s martial arts debut Hero rapidly ascended to the top of the box office. With the success of his subsequent epic dramas, House of Flying Daggers and Curse of the Golden Flower, Zhang has clearly overtaken Feng as the domestic king of the box office. Zhu argues that the success of Zhang’s big-budget, epic-scale period drama, aided by a Hollywood-style marketing campaign, has transformed the Chinese New Year film from moderately budgeted urban comedies into massive period spectacles. It is worth noting that House of Flying Daggers was released to theaters in July and August of 2004, and thus sought to cultivate the Chinese summer season previously associated with animated films intended for children. Zhu’s chapter traces the evolution of the Chinese New Year film from its origins in Feng’s modest urban comedies to Zhang’s Hollywood-style high concept blockbuster films. It further explores the successes enjoyed by Feng’s New Year films among Chinese audiences, and then compares Feng’s textual strategies to those of Hollywood’s high concept films and Zhang’s period dramas. It seeks to illustrate and explain the gradual erosion of Feng’s New Year film formula and its replacement by textual and marketing strategies imported from Hollywood.

It goes without saying that the evolution of Chinese cinema manifests the general pattern of China’s socio-economic development, which has been driven by an overriding nationalism both in times of crisis and buoyancy. Nationalism in the forms of patriotism and “anti-foreignism” was the key force in Chinese cinema’s early expansion, contributing to the rise of Chinese cinema’s first entertainment wave and the industry’s initial institutional restructuring. As noted by several authors in this volume, nationalism in times of buoyancy is reflected through the industry’s push for the globalization of Chinese cinema, in particular the obsessive desire for the recognition of Chinese cinema in the U.S. film market, what we consider the “Hollywood complex.” “Going global,” however, is nothing new. Zhou Jianyun, a pioneer of Chinese cinema, argued as early as 1925 that internationalization would solve the crisis of Chinese cinema and that the development of the Chinese film industry must follow the direction of Western cinemas by moving beyond the boundaries of the nation-state. The current push for going Hollywood, therefore, derives less from a sound marketing strategy and appears to be more closely related to the nationalistic sentiment that measures the success of Chinese cinema in terms of the degree of recognition and confirmation from Hollywood, the center of the cinematic universe.

From film industry to film representation, film culture, and finally to topics of emerging interest, we have attempted to provide a comprehensive reappraisal of the state
of Chinese cinema as a research subject. We approach Chinese cinema from a variety of perspectives rooted in cinema studies, classical and contemporary. Chinese cinema is treated as an art form (style and narrative), an ideology (representation and culture), and a revenue-generating industry (finance and market). Highlighted are the issues of genre and authorship rooted in traditional film theory and criticism as well as issues of cultural industries and reception, which have emerged in contemporary cinema studies. Several chapters in the book situate the development of Chinese cinema within a comparative framework that accentuates Chinese cinema’s interaction with other national and regional cinemas, with the greatest attention given to the role Hollywood has played in shaping the evolution of Chinese cinema.

We acknowledge that limited space for a single volume prevents an exhaustive coverage that would otherwise provide a more balanced picture of the influence upon Chinese cinema of other national and regional film cultures. Moreover, while animation, adaptation, and documentary are singled out as new research avenues, other subjects equally worthy of attention have been omitted. For example, the issue of sexuality and the new DV (digital video) movement is regrettably left untouched, owing not only to space limitations, but also because this emergent area of research is only just beginning to attract adequate scholarly attention. What await our further attention are the popular domestic films that have long been the bread and butter of Chinese filmmakers and the staples of Chinese audiences. Produced and distributed through regular studio channels, these “conventional heartwarming melodramas” address topical issues in contemporary Chinese society.34 The moral tales they conjure up resonate with the majority of the moviegoers in China. Granted that feature films are increasingly eclipsed by television dramas as the most mundane popular entertainment vehicle, future coverage of Chinese cinema will benefit from coming to terms with the vernacular domestic films that Chinese audiences routinely encounter.35 In this regard, the recent death of highly popular and critically acclaimed director Xie Jin on October 18, 2008 at the age of eighty-four has already begun to generate renewed debate over the “Xie Jin model,” which some scholars have termed “the golden formula that guarantees ticket sales.”36 With an academic conference held in June 2009 at Shanghai University that focused on Xie’s work in the context of art, politics, and commerce, we look forward to scholarship from China that emphasizes, as we have in this volume, the interplay among these three key components of Chinese cinema.37
INTRODUCTION


2. This would include Sheldon Lu and Emilie Yeh, eds., Chinese Language Film: Historiography, Poetics, Politics (University of Hawaii Press, 2005), which charts the cinematic traditions of mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the Chinese diaspora from the beginning of Chinese film history to the present; Yingjin Zhang, Chinese National Cinema (Routledge, 2004) which provides, in broad strokes, a chronological history of Chinese film that encompasses the cinemas of Hong Kong, mainland China, and Taiwan; and Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, East Asian Screen Industries (British Film Institute, 2008), which offers in-depth case studies of the screen industries of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and mainland China in the context of their response to global trends, in particular the move to de-regulation.

3. For example, Chris Berry’s edited volume, Chinese Films in Focus: 25 New Takes (BFI, 2004, 2008), now in a second edition, is a less ambitious yet equally daunting exercise in traversing Chinese-language films from the three production centers of Chinese cinema, focusing on key individual films from each location; Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar’s China on Screen: Cinema and Nation (Columbia University Press, 2006), which argues for the abandonment of “national cinema” as an analytic tool for the contested and constructed nature of “Chineseness” but at the same time groups together for academic treatment, under the rubric of “China,” celebrated film practitioners of Chinese heritage from mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the Chinese diaspora; and Rey Chow’s Sentimental Fabulations: Contemporary Chinese Films (Columbia University Press, 2007), which considers the persistence of the “sentimental mode” in a variety of Chinese-language films that appeal to the West.

5. For additional studies that encompass Greater China, but which depart from the cultural-linguistic framework, see Michael Berry’s *Speaking in Images: Interviews with Contemporary Chinese Filmmakers* (Columbia University Press, 2005); Wang Shuwen’s *Framing Piracy: Globalization and Film Distribution in Greater China* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2003); and Gary X. Xu’s *Sinascape: Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2007). However, in these cases the broad focus on Greater China is accompanied by the narrow focus on film directors (Berry), piracy and distribution (Wang), or case studies of individual films that illustrate the complex nature of transnational film production and consumption (Xu), leaving large areas of Chinese film and film history untouched.


12. One effort at comprehensiveness, growing out of a week-long Chinese film festival in October 2000, is Haili Kong and John A. Lent, eds., *100 Years of Chinese Cinema: A Generational Dialogue* (Eastbridge Press, 2006); however, as suggested in the title, the focus is on the generational differences that distinguish individual Chinese filmmakers rather than the system as a whole.
13. In their book, *China on Screen*, Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar argue for the abandonment of “national cinema” as an analytic tool and propose “cinema and the national” as a more productive framework as they showcase how movies from Greater China construct and contest different ideas of the Chinese nation. Sheldon Lu and Emile Yeh’s *Chinese Language Film* chooses to make do without deploying the notion of “nation” or “national” and to employ instead “Chinese-language cinema” in justifying their grouping of films from Greater China. Expressing the same frustration with the perceived inadequacy of the (Chinese) national cinema paradigm, Yingjin Zhang’s *Chinese National Cinema* chooses to employ discrete chapters on film industries in the Mainland, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Regardless of the nuances in their respective approaches, all three books have chosen to be inclusive in their canvas of Chinese cinema, covering a broad range of film practices within the confines of Greater China based on a cultural-linguistic model.

14. For a report on the seven-year ban on Jiang Wen, see ScreenDaily.com, July 13, 2000. Lou Ye’s case, in which he was reportedly banned for five years, has been extensively discussed in the Western media, with reports in *Variety*, September 18 and October 23, 2006; *The Los Angeles Times*, May 19, 2006, E9; ScreenDaily.com, April 24, 2006; and *The New York Times*, September 5, 2006, B2. In a sign of changing times, Lou told interviewers at the Pusan Film Festival in 2006 that he planned to continue working despite the ban (*Variety*, October 23–29, 2006, 12).


16. See the chapter on Fifth Generation filmmakers by Ying Zhu, which addresses this film in the context of Tian’s body of work.


23. See the detailed cover story “Xianggang dianying chunhui dalu” (The return of spring for Hong Kong films in the Mainland), *Yazhou zhoukan* (Asiaweek), March 26, 2006, 20–27.


29. It is worth noting that scholars have pointed out the extent to which the content and form of Chinese cinema have come to reflect the perceived value of international film festivals and transnational capitals. Paul Pickowicz’s essay, “Social and Political Dynamics of Underground Filmmaking in China” (in Pickowicz and Zhang’s edited volume, *From Underground to Independent*) deployed the framework of “new Occidentalism” to describe the need for Chinese filmmakers of global inspiration to make movies about China that they imagine foreign viewers would like to see. The Chinese filmmakers must now navigate between the imperatives of both the domestic censors and the overseas distributors.

30. High concept films are generally associated with formulaic mainstream films in which the story can be summarized in no more than one or two sentences, and the term is therefore used primarily in relation to Hollywood blockbusters. The term has also been associated with films that integrate production with marketing. See Justin Wyatt, *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood* (University of Texas Press, 1994) and Charles Fleming, *High Concept: Don Simpson and the Hollywood Culture of Excess* (Doubleday, 1998).

31. It should be noted that Feng has not gone quietly into the night in the competition with Zhang Yimou. His most recent New Year’s film, *If You Are the One* (*Feicheng wurao*), set a new box-office record in 2009.


36. The “Xie Jin model,” which Xie himself was never comfortable acknowledging, included an emphasis on Confucian values, the choice of popular subject matter, and the use of conventional melodramatic narratives. See Yingjin Zhang and Zhiwei Xiao, *Encyclopedia of Chinese Film* (Routledge, 1998), 376–77, and Rosen video interview with Xie in Los Angeles, April 8, 2002 (unreleased). After Xie’s death, controversial blogger Song Zude, a wealthy mainland Chinese TV and film producer known for his vicious critiques of Chinese celebrities and called “The King of Media Hype,” launched an attack on Xie, which brought down official and public abuse on Song himself.

CHAPTER 1

6. The number quoted comes from the 2008 Research Report on Chinese Film Industry (Beijing, China Film Press, 2008), 22.
9. The first Chinese film was made in Beijing in 1905 by a photo shop owner, Ren Qingtai. The film he made was a recorded version of a Beijing opera performed by a popular opera singer. Ren screened his film at a tea-house style exhibition site. See Ying Zhu, Chinese Cinema during the Era of Reform: The Ingenuity of the System (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 177.
11. Film distribution and exhibition in today’s China very much resembles the earlier period, driven by the demand for Hollywood features.
12. Film stocks were later imported to China from the United States. World War I made it possible for Hollywood to replace Europe as the dominant force in the Chinese film market.
13. The emergence of long narrative is considered by Chinese film historians as Chinese cinema’s real dawn.
16. See Zhiwei Xiao’s chapter in this volume for a detailed discussion on the presence of Hollywood films in China prior to the establishment of the People’s Republic of China.
18. The first sound film was introduced to China from the United States in 1929.


23. “Shanghai Film Studio” (Shanghai dianying zhipianchang), in *China Encyclopedia: Film*, 46.


25. For a more detailed account on the specialties of various studios see George Semsel’s “China,” in John A. Lent, ed., *The Asian Film Industry* (London: Christopher Helm, 1990), 11–33.


29. For a detailed discussion on film production and screening during this period, see Paul Clark’s chapter in this volume.


31. According to Ni Zhen during our interview in Beijing in the summer of 1997, within the first three years of the reform, the distribution-exhibition sector accumulated almost 1 billion yuan and invested roughly 500 million in expanding and strengthening the distribution/exhibition operations.

32. China Film Distribution and Exhibition Company (China Film, Zhongguo dianying faxing fangying gongsi) was established in 1951. A direct unit under the Ministry of Radio, Film & Television (MRFT), the company was in charge of film distribution nation-wide. For a detailed account of the evolution of China Film see Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh and Darrell William Davis’s article, “Re-nationalizing China’s Film Industry: Case Study on the China Film Group and Film Marketization,” *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, 2.1 (May 2008): 37–52.


36. This chapter mainly focuses on the impact of globalization on the domestic industrial structure. For the issue of globalization of Chinese film in terms of film exports abroad, see Stanley Rosen’s chapter in this volume.


38. Pan Lujian, “Aside from Red Cherry’s Commercial Operation” (Hong Yingtao zai shangye yunzuozhi wai), Film Art (Dianying yishu), 3 (1996): 6.


45. This view was also expressed by a Chinese film historian, Shao Mujun, in his essay “Chinese Film amidst the Tide of Reform,” in Wimal Dissanayake, ed., Cinema and Cultural Identity, 199–208.


47. Brent, “China,” 44.


49. Chinese Film Market, August 1997, 10–11. The total number of theaters in China in 1997 is not available.


53. Formed in 1999, CFG combined China Film Corporation, Beijing Film Studio, China Children’s Film Studio, China Film Co-production Corporation, China Film Equipment Corporation, China Movie Channel (Television), Beijing Film Developing and Printing & Video Laboratory, and Huayun Film & TV Compact Discs Company.

54. Zhang Xudong, Postsocialism and Cultural Politics: China in the Last Decade of the Twentieth Century (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 17

Chapter 2


2. For details on the box-office results of all Zhang Ziyi films which have had an American
release, see http://www.boxofficemojo.com/people/chart/?view=Actor&id=zhangziyi.htm.


4. See the comments of Politburo Standing Committee member Li Changchun, reported by the Xinhua News Agency (BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific — Political, August 27, 2007).

5. Some years ago when I asked Zhao Shi, widely seen as the “godmother” of Chinese film and now the deputy director-general of the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television, what she wanted from the United States, her immediate response was “reciprocity” in terms of releasing Chinese films in the United States, a message she has also conveyed to various American film studios. More recently, Zhou Tiedong, the former director of the American office of the China Film Import and Export Corporation, has been put in charge of a new office of Chinese film export promotion, with a similar mandate.


7. Up through 2005 at least, Chinese films have perhaps tended to be more successful in the West than in East Asia, although there has been particular interest in the performance of Chinese films in Korea and Japan. See the work of Zhao Muyuan, a Ph.D. candidate from Singapore currently at Qinghua University, including “Xinshiji Zhongguo dianying zai dongya piaofang shichang de geju (Report on the box office of Chinese films in the East Asian market), in Cui Baoguo, ed., 2007 nian: Zhongguo chuanmei chanye fazhan baogao (Report on development of China’s media industry 2007) (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2007), 290–308, and related articles in Dangdai dianying (Contemporary Cinema), 1 (2007): 129–34 (on Japan) and 2 (2007): 134–39 (on Korea). In 2005, only 6 of the 375 films imported into Japan were from mainland China, with 15 more from Hong Kong. By contrast, 153 (40.8 percent) were from Hollywood. In the same year, Chinese films garnered only 1.4 percent of the Korean box office, while Hollywood had 38.8 percent; Korean films took in 55 percent.


16. Associated Press, April 17, 2007. After Andrew Lau Wai-keung, the director of the Hong Kong hit *Infernal Affairs*, made his Hollywood directing debut he noted that “Going to Hollywood is every filmmaker’s ambition, including myself,” but he promised not to “forget about Chinese and Hong Kong movies.” *South China Morning Post*, November 29, 2007, 10.


20. “2006 U.S. Theatrical Market Statistics,” MPA website, 9. Reported negative costs represent the amount each studio invests in a film but do not include investments from non-MPA sources and therefore do not reflect the full costs of production for the average MPA film, which actually would be higher if the rising stream of outside investment money were factored in. See *The Hollywood Reporter*, March 7, 2007 (online).


26. For a detailed breakdown of box-office results and other data relating to Jackie Chan’s films and other Asian films that have been released in the United States, go to http://www.boxofficemojo.com.


28. Box-office data for the films described in this section derive from www.boxofficemojo.com, with additional information from the Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com).

29. The American version of *The Grudge* also suggests some of the difficulties of taking an Asian film and remaking it, even with the same director, Shimuzu Takashi, in charge. First, to guarantee access to the target audience the film needed a PG-13 rating. Second, there are certain cultural concessions necessary in making the translation to Western
markets. As Manohla Dargis noted in her review, the result is “an unsatisfying hybrid of two very different film cultures … [and a film] cursed by one of the greatest evils known to studio filmmakers: the teenage demographic.” See “A House Even Ghostbusters Can’t Help,” *The New York Times*, October 22, 2004, B20.

30. www.boxofficemojo.com. The second most successful remake of a Chinese-language film was *Tortilla Soup* in 2001, a remake of Ang Lee’s *Eat Drink Man Woman*, which made $4.5 million in the United States and is no. 14 on the list of Asian remakes. Eleven of the top fourteen on the list are remakes of Japanese films.

31. Associated Press, February 26, 2007. For the difficulties Lau had in bringing his vision to the screen, see *South China Morning Post*, November 29, 2007, 10.


35. Forthcoming blockbusters include John Woo’s $80 million *Battle of Red Cliff*, Chen Kaige’s *Mei Lanfang*, and Stephen Chow’s *A Hope*.


37. Chinadaily.com, December 16, 2005. Despite a strong box office in China, Chen and the film have faced a good deal of ridicule in the Chinese press and on the Internet, highlighted by Hu Ge’s twenty-minute spoof entitled “The Blood Case That Started from a Steamed Bun.” See “Dang Kaige zaoyu Hu Ge” (When Kaige encountered Hu Ge), cover story in *Zhongguo xinwen zhouchan* (China Newsweek), 8 (March 6, 2006): 20–32. Chen in turn threatened to sue Hu for defamation, which turned the ridicule on the Internet into widespread anger at his arrogance.


41. Senh Duong, Rotten Tomatoes website, September 13, 2006.


Notes to pages 46–52

46. Owen Gleiberman, E.W.com, January 3, 2007. A separate paper could be written on the reception of Zhang Yimou’s films within China. For example, both Hero and House of Flying Daggers received mixed reviews. On House of Flying Daggers see “Zhang Stabbed by His ‘Dagger’,” China Daily, August 28, 2004 (online). On Zhang more generally see the many articles in the popular magazine Sanlian shenghuo zhoukan (Sanlian Life Weekly), 30 (July 26, 2004): 20–52. The cover, with a big picture of Zhang, offers the title “Zhang Yimou de yishu baquan” (Zhang Yimou: Hegemon of the arts).


53. This list can be found at http://moviemarshal.com/boxworld.html.


55. Pearl Harbor came in at no. 79 and, even though it is mostly about the effects of the Japanese attack on the United States, it was even more successful abroad than in the United States.


64. For a detailed discussion on the film see Ying Zhu’s chapter in this volume, “New Year Film as Chinese Blockbuster: From Feng Xiaogang’s Contemporary Urban Comedy to Zhang Yimou’s Period Drama.”
65. “*Big Shot* on Commercialism,” *China Daily*, December 20, 2001 (online).
72. “Banned Chinese Film Takes Top TriBeCa Prize,” *The New York Times*, May 2, 2005, B2. A separate paper could be written just on the banned or truncated Chinese films that have been featured at Western film festivals, such as Lou Ye’s *Summer Palace*, Li Yang’s *Blind Shaft*, and the original versions of Jia Zhangke’s *The World* and Li Yu’s *Lost in Beijing*.

**Chapter 3**


5. See the document dated November 1944 from Wang Jingwei government’s propaganda department to Shanghai municipal authorities, asking the latter to ban the display of photo pictures of American movie stars. Shanghai Municipal Archive (hereafter SMA), R001-18-01769.

6. Shanghai dianying zhi (A gazette of Shanghai cinema) (Shanghai, 1999) and Gu Zhonli, “Jiajin guochandan yingping de shengchan, tigao yingpian de zhi he liang” (Speed up the production of domestic films and improve their quality and quantity), in Dazhong dianying (Popular Cinema, hereafter DZHDY), 1.7 (September 16, 1950): 12–13.


9. Wei Taifeng, “Da guangming dibuguo Nanjing, Migaomei xinpian shouyingquan yizhu” (Grand was defeated by Nanjing, MGM’s premiere right changed hand), Yinghua (Movies), 11 (1934): 268–69.


13. Zheng Yimee, Yingtan jiawa — Dan Duyu he Yin Mingzhu (Memories of the film world — Dan Duyu and Yin Mingzhu) (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1982), 20.


16. “Shanghai dianying guanzhong de yiban taidu” (The general attitude of Shanghai’s movie goers), Dianying zhoukan (Movie Weekly), 27 (March 1939): 904.

17. “Shanghai zhipianye zhi qiongtu moyun” (The desperate film industry in Shanghai), Dianying zhoukan (Movie Weekly), 76 (April 1940): 5.
22. “The Hong Kong Motion Picture Trade,” Commerce Reports, October 29, 1923, 293.
23. “Bianzhe nahan” (Editor’s cries), Yininxing (Silverland), 3 (1928): 49.
25. See for examples, “Xuanju mei de waiguo dianying nannü mingxing” (Voting for the most beautiful foreign film stars), Yinmu zhibao (Screen Weekly), 16 (1931): 6.
29. See the secret report on Major Google and the Nationalist government’s internal discussion about the film in SMA, Q1-7-479, dated 1948.
30. See the preface to Su, ed., Yingtan bai xing ji (Who is who in Hollywood) (Tianjin: Da gong bao she, 1935).
32. “He Tingran jun zhi dianying tan” (T. J. Holt comments on film), Shenhua, August 8, 1926, reprinted in ZHWD, 99–100.
33. Bing Hong, “He duzhe tanhua” (Heart to heart with readers), Xininxing (Silverland), 4 (December 1928).
34. Xin Ping, Cong Shanghai faxian lishi, 1927–1937 (Discovering history in Shanghai) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1996), 38–44. Xin estimates that Shanghai’s population increased from 1,289,000 in 1910 to 2,641,000 in 1927. These statistics approximate the editor’s 3 million estimate.
36. “Ying guangda shimin zhengyi yaoqiu, Hu dianyingyuan ju ying meipian, ge bao tongshi ting zai meipian guanggao” (Yielding to the demand of the citizens, Shanghai’s cinemas stopped showing American films and newspapers advertisements), Wenhui bao, November 16, 1950.
38. See Mingxing banyue kan (Star Bi-Weekly), 1.2 (June 1933): 3.
39. Xin Leng, “Rendao xiandu guangan lu” (Preview comments on Humanity), Da gong bao, May 14, 1932.
41. Fei Mu, “Guopian guanzhong” (Domestic film audience), Dianying huabao (Movies), 36 (1936): 3.
42. “Shui duo le guopian shichang” (Who takes the audience away from domestic films), Yule zhoubao, 1.3 (1935): 76.
46. Chen Dabei, “Beijing dianying guanzhong de paibie” (The classification of Beijing’s movie goers), Zhongguo dianying zazhi (China Screen), 8 (1927), reprinted in ZHWD, 607.
47. It was reported in DS, 9: 1 (1940) that Grand Theater installed the first earphone system.
48. Fei Shi, “Li Zhuozhuo dui Zhang Yi buman” (Li is unhappy with Zhang), Ying wu xinwen (Movie and Dance News), 1.2 (1935): 5.
51. Liu Xu, “Xiandai nuxing xinmu zhong de yinmu duixiang” (Modern women’s most desired men — a response to screen images), Furen huabao (Women’s Pictorial), 31 (1935) and Da Bai, “Biaozhun nanzi de zhuanbian” (The change in the notion of ideal man), BYHB, 24 (1934): 1160.
52. Wang Baisou, “Yeshi jiaoyu” (It is also educational), Minguo ribao, March 7, 1931.
55. “Caozong shijie de dianying” (The movie made world), Xin yinxing (September 1929): 14.
57. Cheng Bugao, 39.
58. Zhou Shixun, “Yingxi tongyu” (Scathing comments about film), Dianying zazhi (Movie Magazine), 1: 3 (1932).
62. See Dianying yishu (Film Art), 1.1 (1932): 8.
64. “Zhong Mei dianying guanxi” (The reel relationship between China and the U.S.),
Dianying zhoukan (Movie Weekly), 83 (May 1940).


68. Gui Fengbo, “Dui jinhou zhipianye de jianyi” (My advice to film producers), Da gong bao, June 12, 1935.


70. Wu Yu, “Yinse de feng” (Silver wind), Dianying zhoukan (Movie Weekly), 26 (1939).

71. DS, 3.9 (1934): 176.

72. “Xingqi zaochang dianying shi ertong men de” (Sunday morning show belongs to children), Qingqing shangyi (Chingching Cinema), 5.17 (1940): 3.

73. “Meiguo yingjie zhi jinghua yundong” (The sanitization movement in American film industry), DS, 3.11 (1934): 208. See also Dianying shijie (Movie World), 2 (1934).

74. Xiao Guo, Zhongguo zaoqi yingxing (Movie stars from early Chinese cinema) (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1987), 49.

75. Dianying jiancha weiyuanhui gongzuo baogao (The work report of the national film censorship committee) (Nanjing, 1934), 66.

76. BYHB, 21 (December 1933): 1026.

77. Nanjing, No. 2 Historical Archives, 2(2)-268, dated July 1934.

78. See “Jinying feizhan yingpian” (The ban on anti-war films), Dianying shijie (The Movies), 7 (1934): 11 and Xian Cheng, “Shoudu de dianying guanzhong” (Film audience in the capital), Chen bao, October 6, 1932.


82. Yi Lang, “Mei ziben jingong Zhongguo dianying jie hou zenyang tupu muqian de weiji” (How to make breakthrough after the invasion of Chinese film industry by American capital), Dianying yishu (Film Art), 3 (1932), reprinted in ZHZDY, 92–93.

83. Pang Zichun, “Meiguo yingpian de midu” (The poisonous American films), Chen bao, October 4, 1932, 8.


86. “Guochan dianying de jinbu” (The progress of domestic productions), Shanghai yingtan (Shanghai Cinema Forum), 1: 3 (1943).

87. See Nanjing No. 2 Historical Archives, 12 (2) 2258, dated 1936 and SMA, S6-13-
612, Shanghai’s city council members appealed to the government to implement quota system, dated 1947.

88. For more details of this case, see the telegraph to NFCC, SMA, 235-2-1622, 62; PCA file, the folder under the title of the film, Herrick Marraret Library, Beverly Hill, CA; and JNGB, 1.1 (1932): 40.

89. SMA, S319-1-23.

90. “Zhipian ye yaoqing fangying ye taolun duifu waipian banfa” (Film producers invited exhibitors to discuss ways to deal with foreign films), SMA, S319-1-20, dated May 1948.

91. See the letter from John Hung-kwang Chow, the secretary of the Shanghai Cinema Exhibitors Guild, to A. Ohlmer, the secretary of the Film Board of Trade (China), dated March 28, 1946, Shanghai Municipal Archives, S319-01-00023.


CHAPTER 4


5. See Li Yaxin, “Zhonglu Huana yiyahuanya daoban dian mai zheng ban, zheng ban DVD mai 10 yuan” (CAV Warner play the piracy game by selling legitimate DVDs in piracy stores, legitimate copies are sold for ten renminbi), Diyi caijing ribao (First Financial Daily), December 13, 2006, tech.tom.com/2006-12-13/04B5/8605965/.htm/ (accessed May 14, 2008).

6. This is true especially in emerging economies.

7. See Yu-zhu Liu, ed., Wenhua sh chang shiwu quanshu (Overview of cultural market practice) (Beijing: Xinwa, 1999), 217. Other cultural markets include cultural entertainment, audiovisual, performance, print, artifacts, cultural tourism, artworks, stamps, and new culture.

8. See MPAA website.
12. In 1998–1999, for example, because of the critical stance Disney’s *Kuntun* and Columbia’s *Seven Years in Tibet* took of China’s Tibet policies, both companies were temporarily banned from importing films to China; this gave the other majors an upper hand in getting the allotted ten revenue-sharing film slots.
15. As most emerging/transitional economies, however, the rise of the economic standard has not reached the point where most people can afford authentic legitimate luxury goods.
22. Initially, the Trade and Tariff Act of 1974 enabled the United States to take retaliatory action against any country that denied it rights granted by a trade agreement or unfairly restricted U.S. commerce. The cooperation among the copyright industries and the resulting lobbying leverage IIPA possessed led to the expansion and the change of language of the 1974 Trade Act. The Trade and Tariffs Act of 1984 extended the definition of unfair trade practices to include intellectual property rights violations. The 1984 Trade Act also empowered the USTR to undertake annual review of problem countries, which could result in a USTR investigation and subsequent trade sanctions. After its annual review, USTR would name TRIPS Copyright Cases, Potential Priority Foreign Countries, Priority Foreign Countries, Priority Watch List, Watch List, and Special Mention according to the severity of their offenses. See Wang, *Framing Piracy*, 33 and 39.
37. In 2004 there were 107 million VCD households, a steady increase since the launch of the player in 1994. See Screen Digest, “World DVD Growth Slows to Crawl: DVD Shipments Rise but Returns Are Slowed by Falling Prices.” 333, November 2005 (TableBase™ Accession #140196159).
38. See Shujen Wang, Framing Piracy, for a detailed account of the development of the VCD.
43. See also Table 4.1. China Telecom, “China Number of Internet Users for 2000 to 2005, and Number of Broadband Users for 2002 to 2005, and Both through June 2006,” February 2007, 14(2): 1, TableBase™ Accession #161119240.
44. Screen Digest, 2008.
47. While MPAA complains about its member companies’ loss in China due to the high piracy rate, it is the Chinese filmmakers who are bigger sufferers. In China, the piracy rate of MPAA member companies was 24 percent in 2005, it was 55 percent for Chinese filmmakers (or a loss of $2.6 billion). China Daily, “Movie Industry Counts Cost of Online Piracy,” April 12, 2007, www.chinadaily.com.cn (accessed October 8, 2008).
51. Ponte, “Coming Attractions.”
54. Even though the focus is still on the VCD and the DVD markets, pirates have moved towards the much more portable and cheaper burner labs. See MPA, “MPA Anti-piracy Enforcement Operations Show Shift in Tactics by Movie Pirates: Downloads, Difficulty-to-Detect Burner Labs Supplant Factory Production,” MPA Press release, February 7, 2006, www.mpa.org (accessed February 7, 2006). Inextricably connected to technological developments, piracy is linked to technology. It also has spatial implications. Burner labs are much more local. From large scale optical media production that are more expensive to burner labs that are low cost, local, and easy to set up and move.


60. The impressive growth of DVD has compensated for the decline in VHS and VCD spending. Worldwide spending on DVD in 2004, for example, was $48 billion and at more than five times spending on VHS and an increase of 31 percent (*Screen Digest*, “China Yet to Realise Video Potential”). Another indicator of the strength of DVD is the compound annual growth rate (CAGR). Between 1997 and 2004, DVD spending grew at CAGR of 154 percent, while the VHS spending witnessed a decline of 16 percent, and VCD spending just over 10 percent (ibid.). Retail DVD has also far surpassed the rental DVD market. DVD household on the other hand has grown at CAGR of close to 140 percent since 1997 when the format launched. *Screen Digest*, “World DVD Growth Slows to Crawl.”


62. According to “IIPA 2007 Special 301 Reports, Appendix B: Methodology,” piracy level estimates are based on the percentage of potential market lost to piracy. It involves the calculations of revenue losses, legitimate market sizes, and potential legitimate markets without piracy to arrive at the final estimates. See 2007spec301methodology.pdf at www.iipa.com/2007_SPEC301_TOC.htm (accessed May 27, 2008).


**Chapter 5**

1. The figures are from Tian Jingqing, *Beijing dianyingye shiji, 1949–1990* (Historical events in the Beijing film industry) (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 1999), 184–85. The film had first been released in China the previous September as part of a North Korean film festival.


6. The titles and further viewing figures are given in Yu Li, ed., *Zhongguo dianying zuhuanye shi yanjiu: dianying zhipian, faxing, fangying juan* (Research on Chinese film

7. The figures are from Tian Jingqing, Beijing dianyingye shiji, 157–58. Later in the Cultural Revolution perhaps the most widely watched Chinese film star to rival Mao was Cambodia’s Prince Norodom Sihanouk, whose meetings and travels were covered in full-length documentaries and newsreels.

8. See, for example, the advertisements in Yunnan ribao (Yunnan Daily), May 20, 1967, 4, where the documentary on Mao’s fifth and sixth inspection of Red Guards is listed, along with other performance displays of Maoist loyalty.

9. See the collected programmes from the 1964 convention, held in the rare book collection of the National Library, Wenhua bu Beijing bianzhe kan, ed., Jingju xiandaixi guanmo yanchu dahui jiemudan (heding ben) (Programmes of the modern-subject Peking opera performance convention) (Beijing, 1964), n.p. Many of the originary films had, of course, started as spoken dramas (huaju).


11. In an interview in Beijing, July 3, 2002, the cinematographer Li Wenhua suggested to me that Jiang Qing had rejected the first version of the film because the Pearl River Film Studio projector lens and booth glass were dirty, giving a murky quality to the print Jiang Qing watched there.


13. See the interview with Yu Yang, Dianying yishu (Film Art), 4 (August 1993): 82 and 84.


15. Tian Jingqing, Beijing dianyingye shiji, 184.


17. Tian Jingqing, Beijing dianyingye shiji, 184–85.


19. Zhong Ying, “Jinyibu fazhan nongcun dianying fangying wang” (Further develop the rural film projection network), Hongqi (Red Flag), 6 (June 1975): 50–53. The Fujian figures are from Guangming ribao (Guangming Daily), January 31, 1974, 2. The Beijing figures are from Tian Jingqing, Beijing dianyingye shiji, 190.


21. Boulder Bay on stage includes a kind of fantasy sequence in which the heroes battle underwater. It also was unusual in including a married central character. For further discussion, see Paul Clark, The Chinese Cultural Revolution: A History (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 50–54.

22. On the fate of satire and other comedies in 1957, see Paul Clark, Chinese Cinema, 70–79.

24. For a group biography of these and five other Fifth Generation filmmakers, see Paul Clark, Reinventing China: A Generation and Its Films (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2005), part 1, 10–53.

25. See Clark, Reinventing China, 155, 156–58.

CHAPTER 6

1. Translations of shenguai wuxia pian (in some accounts, the order is reversed, thus wuxia shenguai pian, without necessarily changing the meaning of the term) vary with different authors: Zhang Zhen translates it as “martial arts-magic spirit film” (see An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema, 1896–1937 [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005], 199; see also her essay “Bodies in the Air: The Magic of Science and the Fate of the Early ‘Martial Arts’ Film in China,” in Sheldon Lu and Emilie Yeh, eds., Chinese-Language Film: Historiography, Poetics, Politics [Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005], 52–75, 53). Yingjin Zhang translates shenguai pian as “films of immortals and demons” and refers generically to “martial arts films” without reference to wuxia pian (see Chinese National Cinema [New York and London: Routledge, 2004], 40). My translation of shenguai is closer to Yingjin Zhang’s, while in translating wuxia as “martial chivalry,” I wish to denote the element of chivalry as being essential to the genre.

2. Film historians Hu Jubin and Li Suyuan tell us that shenguai and wuxia were two separate and distinct genres. According to Hu and Li, the shenguai connection brought the element of the supernatural to wuxia, which essentially expresses the warrior tradition and lifestyle. As a supernatural genre, shenguai possessed its own characteristics. See Li Suyuan and Hu Jubin, Zhongguo wusheng dianying shi (A history of the silent Chinese cinema) (Beijing: China Film Press, 1996), 222.

3. The film magazine Yinxing (Silver Star), published in the 1920s, edited by Lu Mengshu, advocated a movement known as “New Heroism” (xin yingxiong zhuyi), loosely based on the ideas of Romain Rolland. The movement emphasized heroism with a strongly humanist element which could be useful in fostering a military tradition (shangwu) that had long disappeared in China. No doubt, the emphasis on militarism was a response to the perceived weakness of the scholar tradition which had let the nation down and contributed to the decline of China “from being the Middle Kingdom for centuries to the ‘Sickman of Asia’ in just two generations’ time,” as Tu Wei-ming has put it. See Tu, “Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center,” Daedalus, Vol. 120, No. 2 (Spring 1991): 1–32, 23.

4. One representative view was expressed by the leftist May Fourth writer Mao Dun (pseudonym of Shen Yanbing) in an essay, “Fengjian de xiao shimin wenyi” (Literature and arts of the feudalistic petty urban bourgeoisie), published in the magazine Dongfang zazhi (Eastern Miscellany), 30:3 (January 1, 1933). Mao Dun criticized the Burning of the Red Lotus Temple series for drawing its material from feudal thought, and considered that its chief aim was to propagate feudalism. The heroism expressed in these films, according to Mao Dun, was of an unhealthy kind because it transformed revolutionary class struggle into private feuds.
5. Among the reforms and prohibitions which came into effect in 1931, the KMT government had also banned celebration of the Lunar New Year, and abolished the internal transit tax known as likin (lijin), levied by the provinces.


7. See Fu, works cited in note above. See Li Daoxin, *Zhongguo dianying shi 1937–1945* (Chinese film history 1937–1945) (Beijing: Shifan University Press, 2000), for an assessment of the whole war period, including films produced in Shanghai after it was fully occupied by Japan following Pearl Harbor.

8. The guzhuang genre was already popular in the 1920s well before the craze of shenguai wuxia pian. In fact, the shenguai genre was early on connected with the guzhuang film, as demonstrated by the 1927 production of *Pansi dong* (Cave of the silken coil) based on an episode from the classic *Xiyou ji* (Journey to the west), and through this connection, one could say that the action elements in the story eventually evolved into a full-fledged wuxia form. Dai Jinhua associates the early martial arts films with guzhuang baishi pian (classical-costumed tales of anecdotal history), which took their ancient stories from popular tradition. In fact, she tends to see wuxia films as a sub-type within the larger, generic form of guzhuang baishi pian (such a tendency not to recognize wuxia as a genre category on the part of a Mainland critic such as Dai reflects perhaps the long history in which the genre was banned in China, resulting in critical neglect until quite recently). See Dai Jinhua, “Order/Anti-Order: Representation of Identity in Hong Kong Action Movies,” in Meaghan Morris, Siu-Leung Li, and Stephen Chan, eds., *Hong Kong Connections: Transnational Imagination in Action Cinema* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), 81–94.

9. Nothing epitomized the charged political atmosphere of the times more than the incident which occurred in Chongqing on the day of the premiere in January 1940 of *Mulan Joins the Army*. A mob invaded the projection room, grabbed the print, and burnt it outside the street. For a description of the event, see Fu, *Between Shanghai and Hong Kong*, 43–48.


13. Tu Wei-ming’s claim that China’s semi-colonial experience had “severely damaged her spiritual life and her ability to tap indigenous symbolic resources” may strike a relevant chord here. See Tu, “Cultural China,” 2.

14. The idea of culture where the structure of “the national” had eroded becomes more important. As Ernest Gellner has suggested, culture becomes essential to a person’s identity if he or she is not held in place by a structure of stable relationships implicit in

15. The British colony also served in other ways to preserve Chinese customary practices and cultural forms, such as Lunar New Year festivities and Cantonese opera, discouraged or banned by the KMT government. See Barbara Ward, “Regional Operas and Their Audiences: Evidence from Hong Kong,” in David Johnson, Andrew J. Nathan, and Evelyn S. Rawski, eds., Popular Culture in Late Imperial China (Taipei: SMC Publishing, 1987). In 1931, a Singapore Straits Times correspondent reported that, following the edict to ban Chinese New Year festivities, there was a “big influx to Hong Kong of people from Canton, bent on celebrating the festival with all the age-old ritual of China.” See “Hong Kong Letter,” The Straits Times, February 21, 1931, 6.

16. After the Japanese surrender, Taiwan experienced a brief period of practically no censorship during which shenguai wuxia serials produced in 1920s Shanghai such as the eighteen-episode Burning of the Red Lotus Temple were released in the island, to great business. See Ye Longyan, Taiwan dianying shi (A history of cinema in Taiwan) (Taipei: Chinese Taipei Film Archive, 1994), 92.

17. See Zhang Zhen, “Bodies in the Air,” in Lu and Yeh, eds., Chinese-Language Film, 52.

18. Maige erfeng (a pseudonym meaning Microphone), “Yueyu pian de guoqu weilai” (Cantonese cinema: its past and future), Dianying shijie (Movie World), no. 2 (Hong Kong: August 5, 1950).


20. Wu Pang, Wo yu Huang Feihong (Wong Fei-hung and I) (Hong Kong: published by Wu Pang, 1995), 5.

21. For a discussion of the realism issue and Wong Fei-hung’s Confucianist ideals, see the excellent article by Hector Rodriguez, “Hong Kong Popular Culture as an Interpretive Arena: The Huang Feihong Film Series,” Screen, 38.1 (Spring 1997): 1–24.

22. For example, in 1972 following the boom in kung fu films, the government in Singapore, a key market for Hong Kong films, announced a ban on violence in film, specifically targeting Hong Kong martial arts films. See The Sunday Times (Singapore), May 21, 1972.

23. The term “new school” (xinpai) was appropriated from literature, used to refer to the novels of Jin Yong and Liang Yuseng which came into popularity in the 1950s through their serialization in newspapers.

24. Leon Hunt’s Kung Fu Cult Masters, From Bruce Lee to Crouching Tiger (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2003) is representative of this view, though Hunt shows that he is aware of the distinction between kung fu and wuxia (6–9). In the main, the book deals with kung fu cinema and hardly touches on the wuxia film, save for examples such as Crouching Tiger and Hero.

25. For an English translation of Shi ji, see Burton Watson’s Records of the Grand Historian of China (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1961), in two volumes. Records contains two chapters dealing with xia, namely Youxia liezhuan (Biographies of knights-errant), and Cike liezhuan (Biographies of assassins).

26. See James Liu’s The Chinese Knight-Errant (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1967) for a standard account, in English, of the history and literature of xia.

28. Ibid.
32. The Hong Kong critic Sek Kei points out that Zhou Xiaowen’s *The Emperor’s Shadow* was not yet, in 1996, “wuxia-ized” (*wuxia hua*), meaning that it remains essentially a historical genre film (the type identified by Dai Jinhua as *guzhuang baishi pian*), and that it was only with Zhang Yimou’s *Hero* that the grand spectacle of history became entangled with the *wuxia* blockbuster. See Sek Kei, “Huangjin jia you zhengzhi yingshe?” (“Is there political allegory in *Curse of the Golden Flower*?”), *Mingpao*, December 29, 2006. For a highly critical analysis of all three Qin emperor and assassin films, see the chapter “Nanren de gushi” (A male story), in Dai Jinhua’s *Xingbie Zhongguo* (Gendering China) (Taipei: Rye Field, 2006), 159–98.
33. It must also be stated that the same nationalist spirit is present in the kung fu genre, as evidenced in Ronny Yu’s *Fearless* (2006), starring Jet Li as the nationalist kung fu fighter, Huo Yuanjia.
36. Ibid., 143. Dai Jinhua’s critique of *Hero*, on the other hand, asserts the primacy of perspective (invariably male and patriarchal) over space, and that such a perspective reveals the filmmakers choosing to stand unabashedly on the side of “power, conquest, might.” See Dai Jinhua, *Xingbie Zhongguo*, 181.
39. King Hu’s films in particular were exemplary: Yingjin Zhang states that they “exhibit powerful Chinese national characteristics,” and being set in remote historical times, “invited an allegorical reading” (emphases his). See Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema*, 141.
42. I am grateful to Professor Chua Beng Huat of the National University of Singapore for this observation.
43. See my essay “Wuxia Redux: Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon as a Model of Late Transnational Production,” in Morris et al., *Hong Kong Connections*, 191–204.
45. Berry, “From National Cinema to Cinema and the National,” 149.
CHAPTER 7

8. Zhang, Ershi Shi ji, gave 1933 as the date of Dog Detective.
9. Quoted in Zhang, Ershi Shi ji, 40.
14. Te, interview.
15. Te, interview.
16. Te, interview.
17. Hu Jing Qing, interview with authors, Shanghai, June 17, 2001.
22. Te, interview.
26. Te, interview.
27. Te, interview.
28. Chen, interview.
33. Qian, interview.
34. Ma, interview.
35. Te, interview.
36. Yan, interview; Chang Guangxi, interview with authors, Shanghai, June 17, 2001.
37. Zhan, interview.
40. Liu, untitled keynote speech.
43. Wang, interview.

Chapter 8

1. For documentary film in Hong Kong and Taiwan, see relevant sections in Fang Fang, Zhongguo jilupian fazhan shi (History of the development of Chinese documentary cinema) (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2003), and Shan Wanli, Zhongguo jilu dianying shi (History of Chinese documentary film) (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 2005); see also Robert Chi, “The New Taiwanese Documentary,” Modern Chinese Literature and Culture, 15, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 146–96.
4. Fang Fang, Zhongguo jilupian fazhan shi, 44–47.


8. Fang Fang, Zhongguo jilupian fazhan shi, 85.


25. For new documentary’s departure from the logocentric tradition in modern Chinese visual culture, see Paola Voci, “From the Center to the Periphery: Chinese Documentary’s Visual Conjectures,” Modern Chinese Literature and Culture, 16, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 65–113.

26. For CCTV programs, see Liang Jianzeng and Sun Kewen, eds., Dongfang shikong de rizi (Days with the Eastern horizons) (Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 2003); Liang Jianzeng Sun Kewen, and Chen Meng, eds., Shihua shishuo (Speaking in earnest) (Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 2003).

27. Lü Xinyu, Jilu Zhongguo, 229.

29. Fang Fang, Zhongguo jilupian fazhan shi, 345; Wang Weici, Jilu yu tansuo, 542–73.

30. For an example of the transformation of official television programming in CETV (China Education Television) during this period, see Yingchi Chu, Chinese Documentaries, 95–116.


32. Lü Xinyu, Jilu Zhongguo, 204.

33. Cui Weiping, “Zhongguo dalu duli zhizuo de shengzhang kongjian” (Space for the growth of the independent documentary in mainland China), Ershi yishi (Hong Kong), 77 (June 2003): 84–94.


36. Lü Xinyu, Jilu Zhongguo, 141, 97. Shi Jian was a co-founder of the youth film experimental group “SWYC” — an acronym for “Structure, Wave, Young, Cinema”; the first letter in each term refers to a letter from each member’s name: Shi Jian, Wang Zijun (Beijing TV), Kuang Yang (China Academy of Social Sciences), and Chen Jue (TV Drama Production Center) — which independently produced I Graduated (Wo biye le, 1992) to articulate college graduates’ personal views; see Fang Fang, Zhongguo jilupian fazhan shi, 363–64. Contrary to Lü, Zhang Tongdao only recognizes a television documentary “movement” inside the official system; see Shan Wanli, ed., Jilu dianying wenxian (Compendium of documentary studies) (Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 2001), 826.


38. As Ishizaka Kenji observes, “Of all the Asian filmmakers, the Chinese have by far been the most profoundly influenced by Ogawa Shinsuke … even though they have never seen the films!” See Abé Mark Nornes, Forest of Pressure: Ogawa Shinsuke and
As Nornes recalls, Wu Wenguang admitted in Japan that he never made it through any of Ogawa’s documentaries.


When confronted by security guards outside government buildings, Duan and Jiang did not disclose that they were not state employees. See Mei Bing and Zhu Jingjiang, *Zhongguo duli jilu dang’an* (Records of China’s independent documentary cinema) (Xi’an: Shaanxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2004), 6.

Shan Wanli, *Zhongguo jilu dianying shi*, 422. Duan received from CCTV 160,000–170,000 yuan (US$20,000–21,000) for each feature-length documentary; see Fang Fang, *Zhongguo jilupian fazhan shi*, 393.


Mei Bing and Zhu Jingjiang, *Zhongguo duli jilu dang’an*, 18. While working on *The Silk Road* (*Sichou zhi lu*, 1980), a television series co-produced with Japan, the Chinese crew insisted on hiring pretty actresses to pose in the melon field whereas the Japanese zoomed in on real farmers in ragged clothing; see Fang Fang, *Zhongguo jilupian fazhan shi*, 312.

For a study of *The Box*, see Yingjin Zhang, “Thinking outside the Box: Mediation of Imaging and Information in Contemporary Chinese Independent Documentary,” *Screen*, 48, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 179–92.


Zhu Rikun and Wan Xiaogang, eds., *Duli jilu: duihua Zhongguo xinrui daoyan* (Independent records: interviews with Chinese cutting-edge directors) (Beijing: Zhongguo minzu sheying yishu chubanshe, 2005), 1. To distinguish it from three other types of documentary in the 1990s, namely “mainstream,” “elite” (jingying), and “populist” (dazhong), Zhang Tongdao defines “marginal documentary” as an underground production focused on marginalized people and expressive of non-mainstream — albeit not anti-mainstream — ideology; see Shan Wanli, ed., *Jilu dianying wenxian*, 842–43.

For further elaboration, see Yingjin Zhang, “My Camera Doesn’t Lie? Questions of Truth, Subjectivity, and Audience in Chinese Independent Film and Video,” in Pickowicz and Zhang, eds., *From Underground to Independent*, 23–45.

55. Apart from publications mentioned above, see relevant sections in Cheng Qingsong, Kandejian de yingxiang (Films permitted for watching) (Shanghai: Sanlian shudian, 2004), and Zhang Xianmin and Zhang Yaxuan, Yigeren de yingxiang: DV wanquan shouce (All about DV: works, creation, comments) (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 2003).

Chapter 9

1. We will explain Zhang Yimou’s usage of the term later in the chapter.
5. Bai Jingsheng, “Throwing away the Walking Stick of Drama,” in George Semsel et al., eds., Chinese Film Theory (New York: Praeger, 1990), 5–9, quote from 8.
9. Red Sorghum was a major box-office success in China. Tickets in Beijing were twice as expensive as the average urban price and there was a brisk trade in black market tickets. See Chris Berry’s article “Market Forces: China’s ‘Fifth Generation’ Faces the Bottom Line,” in Chris Berry, ed., Perspectives on Chinese Cinema (London: BFI, 1991), 114–24.
10. The Chinese film critic Chen Muo, in his somewhat broad categorization of Chinese cinema, suggests that commercial cinema naturally comprises government-sponsored picture, art picture, and entertainment picture. See Chen Muo, Anthology of Chen Muo’s Film Criticism (Nanchang: Baihuazhou Art and Literature Press, 1997).
12. When Zhang started making the film, the relationship between the Mainland and Taiwan was decent enough to provide some official Mainland encouragement and support for his efforts. While he was making the film the cross-straits relationship soured so he went through the motions to complete what he knew would not be a successful film. This anecdote was relayed to me by Stanley Rosen who asked about the film when he interviewed Zhang Yimou years ago.
17. See Tony Rayns, “To Live,” Sight and Sound, October 1994. Zhang’s disadvantaged family background might partially explain his greater disdain for elitism and his easier transition from New Wave to post–New Wave than the Fifth Generation’s other two major figures Chen Kaige and Tian Zhuangzhuang who came from privileged families.
26. For detailed discussions on Chinese New Year film see my essay in the same book, “New Year Film as Chinese Blockbuster: From Feng Xiaogang’s Contemporary Urban Comedy to Zhang Yimou’s Period Drama.”
27. Zhao Yuezhi traces the first official use of the term “soft power” to the “Report of the Party’s 16th National Congress” (2002), in a section titled “Cultural Construction and Cultural System Reform.” The document, Zhao reports, called for “the development of ‘comprehensive national strength’ (zonghe guoli) — that is, both economic power and cultural or ‘soft power’ (ruan shili) in a competitive global context.” Zhao Yuezhi, Communication in China (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 108–9.
29. For a brilliant alternative reading, see Shelly Kraicer’s review online at http://www.chinesecinemas.org/hero.html.
31. Tian came from a privileged family. His father served as the head of Beijing Studio, and his mother the head of the Children’s Studio. Both of them were well-accomplished film actors.
34. See Xia Shangzhou’s interview with Tian published in Dianying yishu, 266.3 (1999): 17–20.
36. Lopate, Odd Man Out, 60. I include a few relevant passages here:
Tian: “But after I finished Horse Thief, there was a period when I didn’t make any films; this had a lot to do with censorship issues. Anyway, I began to question my own films. I realized the kind of film I was making before could only create sensations in people by evoking a mood. At the time I was quite happy with this. But I gradually realized that there was something emotional lacking in Horse Thief. Perhaps it was the portrayal of humans — the humans are too simplified. See, when I first started making films I was interested in the ideological problems of China as a whole. Gradually I became more interested in the people surrounding me and their psychology.”

Lopate: “But, for instance, the camera seems more distanced in Horse Thief, and there are more shots that seem there just for their formal beauty. It’s a more formalistic work. In Blue Kite, the camera is closer, more middle-distance, and every shot advances the story. Would you care to comment?”

Tian: “I can only say I agree with all the things you’ve said so far. It was only after I made Horse Thief that I came to an understanding of this problem. It’s not a problem of myself only, but my whole generation. We were pursuing something that was on the surface. We were formalists. Looking for formal beauty. A beautiful story, a beautiful environment, very beautiful colors, beautiful sound. Almost like an exhibition.”

37. Hong Kong made Concubine its entry for the foreign film Oscar when the Chinese government refused to allow it to enter the competition.
40. Zha, China Pop.
42. See the report “Chinese Revolution,” World Press Review, March 1993, 47.
43. The last change was condemned by the critics in Hong Kong as mainland China’s usual denial of the colony’s location as a space of new order. Yet being from Taiwan where traditional Chinese culture was even more carefully preserved than on the Mainland, I suspect that Hsu would be particularly concerned with Hong Kong’s subject position under the British shadow.
46. Zha, China Pop.
50. Hjort, Danish Cinema, 520–32.
51. For a discussion of Zhang’s blockbuster turn see Ying Zhu’s chapter in this volume, “New Year Film as Chinese Blockbuster: From Feng Xiaogang’s Contemporary Urban Comedy to Zhang Yimou’s Period Drama.”

Chapter 10

1. “Butterfly” literature was a form of popular literature in the early Republic years, and can encompass such sub-genres as romances, detective, and martial arts stories. From 1921 to 1931, that is, almost all the years before the emergence of leftist films, many of the Chinese films made involved Butterfly writers. One Butterfly writer, Bao Tianxiao, wrote screenplays and novels at the same time. He was hired by Mingxing studio as a scriptwriter in 1924, and wrote seven screenplays.

2. One significant exception was *Spring Silkworms* (*Chuncan*, 1933), based on a story newly published by Mao Dun and developed into a screenplay by Xia Yan. This was the first time that a literary work in the May Fourth tradition was adapted.

3. Examples include *Mother and Son* (*Mu yu zi*, 1947), based on Russian playwright Alexander Ostrovsky’s play *Innocent as Charged*, and *Night Inn* (*Yedian*, 1947), based on Maxim Gorky’s play *The Lower Depths*. Both films tell Chinese versions of the Russian stories.


5. The practice of injecting “correct” and “modern” messages had already been prevalent before 1949 when filmmakers dealt with traditional Chinese literature.


9. See Rey Chow, *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995). Chow links film with other means of “exhibiting ethnic culture,” saying that film “therefore serves as a major instrument for making the visuality of exotic cultures part of our everyday mediatized experience around the globe. Because of this, film belongs as much with disciplines such as anthropology and ethnography as it does with literature, women’s studies, sociology, and media studies” (27).


13. Zhang Yimou, interview, “Wei Zhongguo dianying zouxiang shijie pulu” (Pave the
road for Chinese films to go to the world), in *Zhang Yimou* (Changsha: Hunan wenyi chubanshe, 1996), 386.


18. See ibid., *Yu Zhang Yimou duihua*, 149.

**CHAPTER 11**


2. Gu Changwei, who served as cinematographer for most of Zhang Yimou’s films, cannot be labeled new generation. However, *Peacock*, Gu’s debut as a director, tells a coming-of-age story.

3. Wang Xiaoshuai, Jia Zhangke, and Zhang Yang, together with other young directors, are the leading figures of the new generation. They embody a similar historical past, but their films, especially their early ones, reflect personal marks and different styles. The recent return to historical investigation indicates a collective posture of returning to the center.


8. Ibid., 229.


11. The character introduces himself as “Little Sister” and is addressed as such. The explanation for why the young man carries a girl’s name lies not simply in the fact that his mother expected a girl; the name also reflects the migrant’s loss of identity.

“Cyberspace” refers to the various information resources available through computer networks and the Internet. It also includes “communities” electronically connected via such resources. It distinguishes the digital, or computer-based, world from the physical world.


*Little Flower* (Xiaohua, 1979) is a sappy drama that integrates sentiment with a war theme.

Raj Kapoor’s *Awaara* (1951), known as *Liulangzhe* (Drifter) in Chinese, was a popular foreign film in Mao’s China. Its melodramatic narrative and song/dance numbers exposed ordinary Chinese to an Indian or Bollywood imagination. Viewers from that generation still hum the theme song from *Awaara*.


The “Hainan Incident” refers to the collision between a U.S. EP-3 (an intelligence-gathering aircraft) and a Chinese F-8 military jet over Hainan, China, in 2001. The incident raised tensions between the two governments on the issue of international security and the use of air space.


The Three Gorges Dam Project has remained a socio-political controversy and enormous economic undertaking. The project, imagined almost a century ago and idealized under Mao’s regime, will complete construction by 2009. The ultimate consequences include the forced migration of millions of people and the flooding of hundreds of towns and villages as well as historical and cultural sites. For further reading, please see Deirdre Chetham, *Before the Deluge: The Vanishing World of the Yangtze’s Three Gorges* (a personal account) and Dai Qing, *The River Dragon Has Come? The Three Gorges Dam and the Fate of China's Yangtze River and Its People* (a collection of essays by Chinese scholars).

Liu Xiaodong, an oil painting artist and faculty member at the Central Academy of Fine Art, has created series of art works on the subject of Three Gorges Migrants. The pieces that Jia Zhangke documented in *Dong* and cited in *Still Life* are part of the field work titled “Wenchuang” (Warm bed). The first part focuses on the migrants in the Gorges and the second centers on a group of sex workers in Thailand. Liu appeared as the lead character in Wang Xiaoshuai’s directorial debut, *The Days*, 1993.


31. Jia Zhangke’s documentary *Dong* captured a heartbreaking sequence, where Liu Xiaodong travels to a village to locate the family of a migrant who has been killed by falling rubble. After viewing the documentary, it is troubling to see how Jia uses the image of the dead body for his “created hero.”


**Chapter 12**


4. The opening day of the New Year season has been gradually pushed back from Christmas Eve to early December to take advantage of many group screening activities paid for by big companies as part of their pre–New Year employee’s appreciation efforts.

5. In a similar fashion, Hollywood event films are distinct for the simple reason that they often announce themselves as such.


7. On a budget of $1.3 million, the film is a domestic hit, taking in 43 million RMB ($5.3 million) at the box office, the second-highest grossing film in China at the time.

8. The film reaped in 50,000,000 yuan at the box office.

9. The film broke box-office records and raked in $6.4 million (a large number by Chinese standards), finishing ahead of the hit Hong Kong movie *Infernal Affairs III* at the box office.


11. Five other New Year films of the same year including Zhang Yimou’s *Happy Times* have all absorbed private financing.


14. Stanley Rosen observed the same pattern in Feng’s cinematic evolution in his chapter in the same volume, “Chinese Cinema’s International Market.”

15. The film set all-time box-office records in Beijing, earning more than $1.23 million in receipts. Only *Titanic* outperformed the film in Beijing.

17. The Chinese have yet to operate in the “supersystem” of multimedia marketing that spins a web of commercial exploitation around contemporary movie franchises.


19. According to Geng Yuejin, vice president of Huayi, the film’s distributor, the movie had a four-day gross of 5 million yuan (US$600,000) in Beijing alone. In Shanghai and Sichuan, box-office receipts tripled that of *Cell Phone* for the same period. Even in Hong Kong, the daily tally has reached HK$400,000, which is a record for this season.


27. *Night Feast* is also translated as *The Banquet*. It lost its bid to Zhang Yimou’s new historical epic *Curse of the Golden Flower* as the Oscar contender from the PRC. Instead, Feng’s picture is selected to enter the 2007 Oscar competition as a Hong Kong film.

28. Xiaohua Sun, “Zhang stabbed by his ‘Dagger’,” *China Daily*, August 28, 2004, www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2004-08/28/content_369678.htm (accessed June 5, 2007). (The survey also found that Feng Xiaogang’s films are genuinely liked by many.) Against the overwhelming criticism, Tong Gang, director of the Film Administration Bureau, was vocal in his praise for *Daggers*, saying that in the fierce competition with imported blockbusters, the movie safeguards the dignity of locally made movies and shows the confidence and strength needed for locally made movies to enter the international market. Tong adds that the media should be more tolerant and create a favorable media environment for movies like *Daggers*. Zhang has been on good terms with the government.

29. As I commented in my earlier work on Zhang Yimou’s film career, Chinese filmmakers are more attuned to the critical reception of their films than their Western counterparts. For a detailed discussion see Ying Zhu, *Chinese Cinema during the Era of Reform: The Ingenuity of the System* (Praeger, 2003).

30. Attentive to criticism as usual, Zhang focused on a good story and good screenplay for his most recent film, *Curse of the Golden Flower*, which came out to critical and popular acclaim in September 2006 when the film had a limited screening in Beijing to qualify as an Oscar contender.

33. It is reported that Charles Rivkin, the newly appointed chief executive officer of the award-winning U.S. animation studio Wild Brain, Inc. wrote to the Chinese State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television, expressing his dismay that China’s submissions to the Oscars for the past five years were historical and martial arts dramas. See the Chinese online report, “Sprint towards Oscar,” Sina.com, http://ent.sina.com.cn/m/c/2006-09-28/01301266335.html.
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